

Route 1
Kimberly, Idaho

Sept. 25, 1965

Mr. Leslie B. Davis, President
Montana Archaeological Society
Northern Montana College
Havre, Montana

Dear Mr. Davis:

Thank you for your letter of Sept. 20th regarding the archaeological utility of obsidian hydration dating procedure. I am glad to learn of your work on the transportation and exchange of obsidian by aboriginal man. I feel one cannot underestimate the importance of a study of materials used for flaked tool implements and their distribution in time and space.

At the present time, I am attempting to write a paper on lithic materials used in the flaked tool industry and their relationship to the many techniques involved in their manufacture. I feel that the discarded flakes and debitage may be of as much use as the finished forms in determining techniques and distribution. I have to confine my work to techniques but have tried to project the importance of your type of work.

I am sorry I do not fully understand the hydration of obsidian other than that it could be useful in dating surface material and relating the origin.

I sent Barney Reeves some obsidian from different localities but, as I remember, I did not identify them as to location.

After thirty years of trying to locate lithic materials, I realize that there are really very few sources of obsidian in Idaho. At least the known sources are very few. However, I will give you what information I have.

The obsidian of Yellowstone area has little that is usable for tools other than small projectile points. Much of it is filled with pockets of chrysoberlite and, when I gathered some there, I could not find any suitable for making blades or large bifacial tools. There is some obsidian near Pocatello, Idaho that has much internal pressure and has starch fractured badly. There is a little obsidian near Sweet, Idaho of good quality, but it is found in small pieces.

a lot of ignimbrite - a reconstituted tuffa - is fairly common in Southern Idaho and is easily confused with obsidian. This material may or may not be of use to you.

I have just returned from Glass Butte, Oregon with a supply of obsidian. It is the largest source of this material that I know of. Some others are - Silver Lake, Oregon, Northwestern Nevada, near Cedarville, Calif., Cose Hot Springs west of Little Lake Calif, Glass Mountain west of Bishop Calif., Fishlake Valley, Nevada southwest of Tenopah, Clearlake, California and the snowflake obsidian from South of Salt Lake City, Utah.

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Leslie B.Davis -#2

There may be many more sites in Idaho, but the Southern part of the State is mostly covered with extrusive Basalt and the Central part Granit and pre-cambrian rocks.

Dr. Robert Heizer, University of California at Berkeley is also interested in obsidian of Meso-america - their source and distribution.

Have you made any use of the Neutron Activation process in determining the trace elements in obsidian - could be interesting in confining sources.

As soon as I complete the article on obsidian I will send you a copy.

Sincerely,

Don E. Crabtree