

Celebration Park, near Melba, Idaho:

How Don Crabtree materials are used at Celebration Park

By Nicki Schwend, director, Canyon County Parks, Cultural & Natural Resources.

Canyon County Parks, Cultural & Natural Resources, Idaho, owns and operates

Celebration Park, the state's only archaeology park. Celebration Park is renowned for its variety and quality of educational programming where students directly engage with the rich cultural and natural history of southwest Idaho. Each interpretive program includes guided tours specifically designed to immerse students and visitors in the landscape, history, and archaeology of southern Idaho.

The flagship field-trip program, **Stories in Stone**, is by far the most popular; a place-based archaeological experience designed for 4th grade students who are studying Idaho history. Students are rotated through four programs: a petroglyph trail tour, ancient hunting skills on an atlatl range, a hike to the historic Guffey Railroad Bridge (1897), and a Lithic Lifeways presentation in the **Crossroads Museum**.

The Lithic Lifeways program discusses how people lived and survived in ancient times and what archaeologists have come to understand about ancient people's skills, tools, and other material goods, including how they were used and how they were made. It is in the Lithic Lifeways program that the ancient worldwide techniques of flint knapping, or the art of shaping stone into tools and other objects, is discussed. The types and qualities of different rocks are examined, and universal lithic reduction techniques of pecking, percussion, and pressure flaking are demonstrated.

Because obsidian was frequently used to make lithic tools in southern Idaho, its qualities are discussed at length, including its unique molecular makeup, which allows it to break in predictable ways and that result in the sharpest edges known to nature. It is here that students and visitors are taught about the **famous Idahoan and experimental archaeologist Don Crabtree** and his infamous heart surgeries using obsidian tools he crafted when working with his heart surgeon. The sharpness of obsidian combined with the shock and awe of obsidian blades used in heart surgeries catches everyone's attention; they're listening and focused when Don's Idaho roots, his importance in revolutionizing archaeology through experimental archaeology, and his insight on lithic technology and discussed.

With the generous donation of **Don Crabtree points** (2023) now on display in the Crossroad Museum, Don's story and importance to archaeology are ideally solidified in the visitor's experience through the engaging educational programming, the physical presence of 19 of Don's lithic pieces, his Idaho roots, and the recognition of just how

lucky Celebration Park is to have such a donation when most of his work is held elsewhere.

Canyon County Parks, Cultural & Natural Resources is eternally grateful to Julia Anderson, Don's niece, and her husband Kenneth Giles for the donation of Don's work, and their support of the mission and importance of Celebration Park's educational programs.

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Websites: <https://www.canyoncounty.id.gov/project/celebration-park/>

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