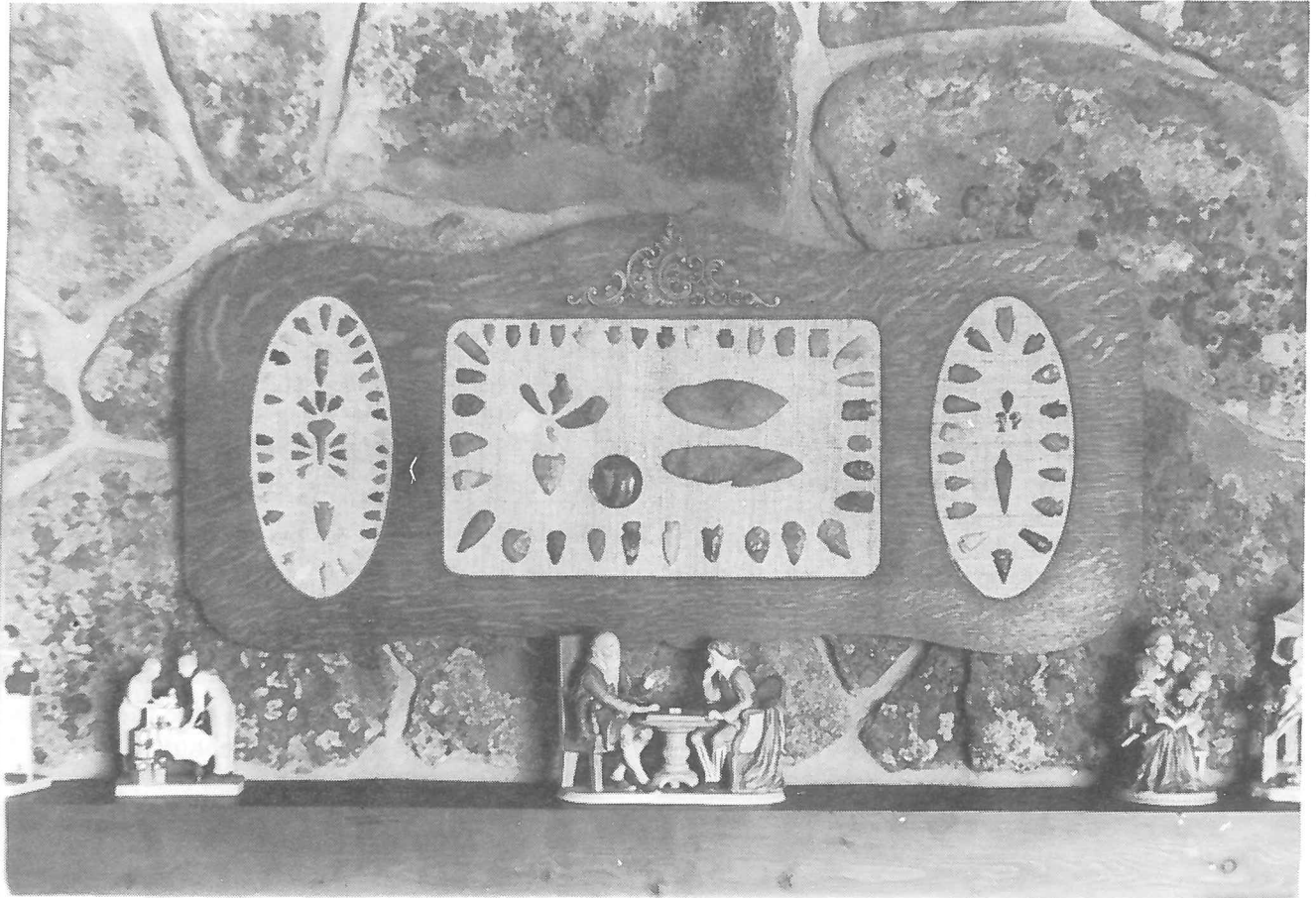


# ARROWHEADS: Jim Barnhill

By William Smith



I (William Smith) have always been interested in hunting Indian artifacts. I have always wanted to learn more about the different types and categories of artifacts and more ways to find them. After researching this area for people who know more about this subject, I found Jim Barnhill to be knowledgeable in this field. The following story is a composite of the information I found.

Jim Barnhill has been a resident of Steamboat Springs for approximately fifteen years. He lives here with his wife, Waunita, and they have two children. He is the manager of Boise Cascade and a great admirer of relics, especially Indian artifacts. He began his story: "I still have the first arrowhead I ever found. I found it down near Colorado Springs where we used to live. We still go back there and look in the same area, even though we haven't been back in several

years. I knew what I had found because my mother had a few arrowheads that she has kept over the years. It was really exciting to find something like that.

"I really love to hunt artifacts, and so does my wife. It's a form of relaxation for us, and finding something from the past which has a history and meaning behind it, is a real feeling of satisfaction. When we find a perfectly shaped arrowhead we can just imagine the work that went into making it. I was really excited when I found my first one, because finding a piece of history like that really gives a person a rush."

I wanted to know more about where arrowheads might be found. Jim told me, "First off we look for old campsites. We look on hillsides or near where there is or used to be water. Then we look for bluffs within one or two miles of that water. If there are a lot of springs around,



**"These shell beads came from the San Francisco area."**

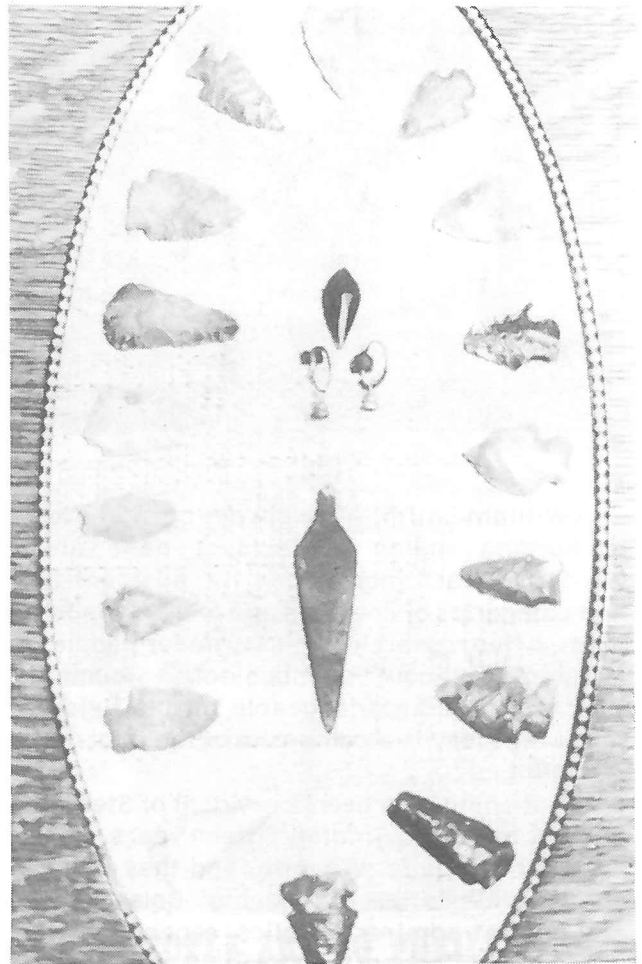
especially springs which are extremely old, chances are pretty good we might find some artifacts there. Some existing springs are several hundred years old.

"My wife and I also look for teepee rings and campsites. A teepee ring is a circle of large stones which is used to hold down the bottom edge of the teepee. We look for hunting grounds or any place where the Indians used to camp. We concentrate our efforts on campsites. We've found a few arrow points around the teepee rings, and campgrounds, but we've never found

them right in burial grounds. We normally look all around campgrounds.

"Most of our artifacts were found in or around campsites. We've seen some burial trees, and we have found one or two in Wyoming. As I've said, we don't hunt in those areas because of the respect we have for those particular areas and there are not too many artifacts there. We dig in firepits, and there was one particular campground, in one firepit, where my son and I found several nice arrowheads and a really nice long spear point. We've been sifting a firepit along the Colorado-Wyoming border for seven years. That's where we found the shell beads, the ones which supposedly came from the San Francisco area. We found them one at a time over a couple of years and then strung them together in a logical pattern.

"We also found some pieces of pottery, but it wasn't glazed, so it had deteriorated badly. We don't go into pottery too much, because most pottery is buried and we do most of our hunting on the surface. We have never found any artifacts made of bone. I suppose the climate is so moist that most of the stuff has decomposed. We've found some objects made of metal. Now



**"Metal arrows are not too common."**



**"Most of these arrows were found in the same area."**

whether the white man or the Indian made then, I don't know. We have not found any Folsom\* points. I have one that my mother gave me.

"The type of stone that we find most arrows made of is flint. Most of the points\* we find are made of some type of agate or petrified wood which is of the same hardness. We find many made of agate (petrified fish eggs) which is highly prized by rock collectors.

"Stunners are an interesting type of point that were used to render animals unconscious and to kill small birds and rabbits. Often, I think they were made out of a point which had a broken tip and then reworked. In certain areas one side of a point is worked fine, but the other side is hardly touched. I think that they make them out of chips and by-products of another point. Then again I think it's like anything else, some took more pride in what they did; some were very good craftsmen and others just weren't as good with their hands. We've found a lot of places where they just chipped flint off rocks, that's documented. In the Spanish Diggings area of Wyoming the Indians walked in and picked up the pieces of flint they wanted, to take back to camp and make points. It's in areas like these that we find thousands of little chips. We have a few areas to hunt where we find big chips all in a bunch.

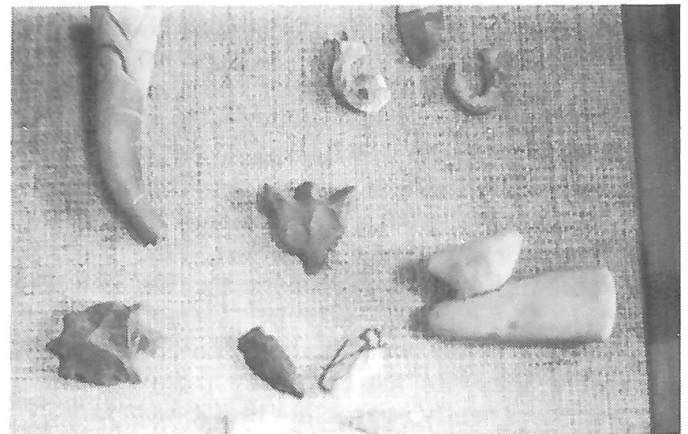
\* See Glossary

"There is a basic difference in styles, and the reason I think we find a lot of whole arrows and other artifacts is that they were just left because of a change in 'ages'. In other words, they went into the metal age and stone points were no longer practical. I'm not sure if from one generation to the other an Indian passed on his possessions or if they were buried with him. I think that a lot of points weren't buried. Like anything else, the Indian children liked to play with them and they lost some points. Most of the campgrounds then were pretty sandy, so it was probably pretty easy to lose things. That is why we can find whole points buried in sand."

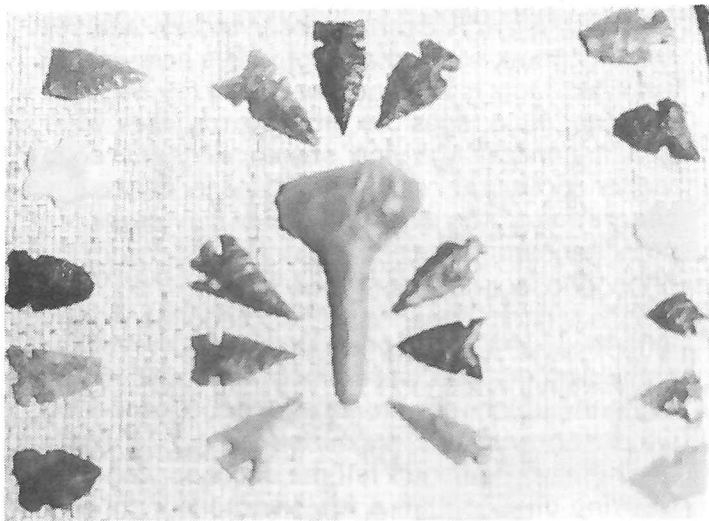
Jim then went on to tell me about some really exciting days he had a few years back. "I was returning to the pick-up truck after a dig, and it had just started to snow. I came over this little hill and dropped down into a draw, and there was a big sand bar with a firepit between the two draws. After 30 minutes of walking around the pit I found about twelve arrowheads. Another time I found one particular firepit, and there were five or six arrowheads there. It's only once in a while that we get lucky enough to find a spot where no one else has been.

"We've been hunting in the same area for fourteen years; basically we hunt in a 25 mile radius of this one spot, and we still have not covered all the possibilities. Normally, if we find an area where there was a lot of water, we find artifacts.

"We find a lot of monos\* but very few metates\* because of the sandstone. Sandstone is very thin and the metates break quite easily. I found one in the summer of 1983 that was six inches thick but we have not found many others because sandstone deteriorates so quickly. We do have one piece that came from Arizona; it's made out of lava rock. I've seen some others two or three times as big even eight to ten inches deep. Those came from the farming-type Indian village



**"Arrows are not the only thing Indians made."**



**"Some arrows are so sharp that we can tell they were never used."**

similar to the tribes in Mesa Verde.

The Indians in this area moved back and forth between winter and summer hunting grounds, and that's why the metates are shallow; they just weren't used that much. The Indians would come over here and use a piece of stone, then go back home and use a different piece of stone, etc. It was just too much weight and trouble to transport those kinds of things from summer to winter camps. So, even though several hundred stone blocks may have been used as metates, the wear is partial as to make the stone unrecognizable as an artifact."

I asked about the difficulty of making shafts and finding them. "I think as far as shafts go, they had to be fairly flexible but still fairly rigid, so they would move through the air. I think it was easy to make a shaft back in those days due to the profusion of willows. However, as far as finding any, the climate has changed considerably since the Indians were here thousands of years ago. The entire area was covered with water. I doubt that there has been much change in climate over the last couple hundred years.

"We hunt on private property and we always ask permission and we have never had any problems. Even people who just lease the land will generally give us permission. There's been a time or two when ranchers had livestock problems. A couple of years ago we saw some work horses loose and we called the ranch foreman. They were able to catch the horses before they got too far away from the ranch. Ranchers really appreciate that kind of help.

"My wife and I have never hunted arrows right here in Steamboat, but we've hunted just south of Milner. The hunting in this area would be really good if it weren't for the grass foliage and the silt washing down. In areas such as Wyoming and

Brown's Park the hunting is very good because there is not much vegetation, and the wind blows away a lot of the top soil.

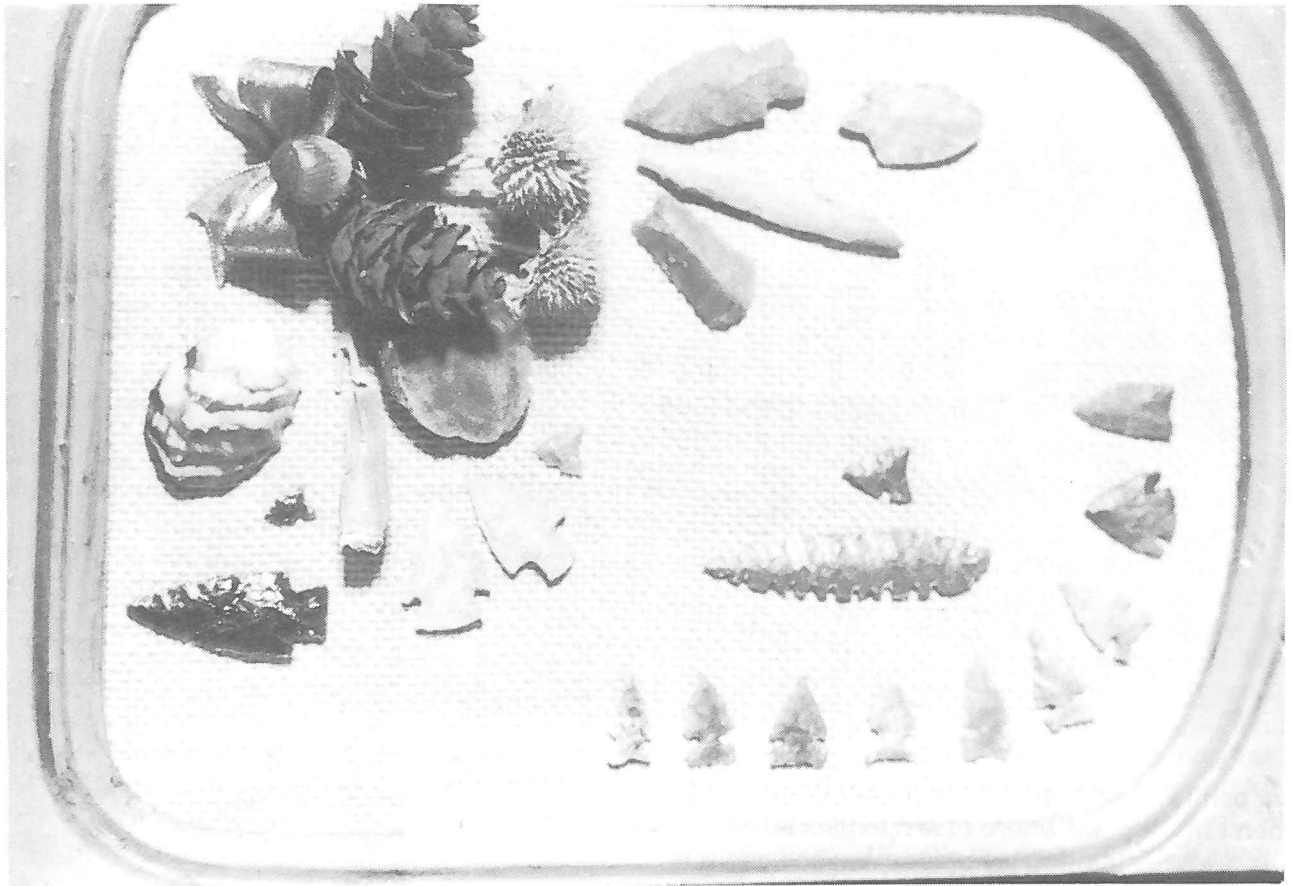
"We sometimes go hunting for a week, but usually it's just a couple of days. One has to be careful when hunting points in a dry, hot climate because of the constant threat of rattlesnakes. We have never been bitten, but just in case we take precautions against snake bites. We wear high top leather boots, and that way if a snake strikes, there is less chance of the fangs reaching our legs."

Next I wanted to know if a lot of people hunt arrowheads. Jim said, "Not too many people do. I know of half a dozen families in this area who do hunt artifacts. We don't see too many people out looking, even though there's more people around these days. There's not that many people interested in the hobby, and it is a pretty costly one. There are less people who hunt now than there used to be, why that is I don't know.

"I suppose there is a market for buying and trading points, but it's hard to tell a reproduction from a real one. If a person makes a point today, it's still a real arrowhead. The market isn't as good as one would think it is. For unusual pieces I suppose there is a market, but the only value they would have is to the person who collects them.



**Jim's collection**



**"Our best find ever was this ceremonial point that my wife found."**

"The best that we have ever found was a ceremonial point which my wife found. I don't know what all the cuts were for, but there were several of them like that. The one over the fireplace (pointing to display) there has an extra ear\*, and I don't know what they used that for. I think they may have been used as jewelry along with very small points that most people refer to as bird points. Even though they are called bird points I don't believe they were used to kill birds. I think they were used as decoration. Some of the pieces are so sharp and fine that we can't tell they have ever been used for hunting. That's why we find so many bird points around campgrounds. We think they were lost off clothing and necklaces.

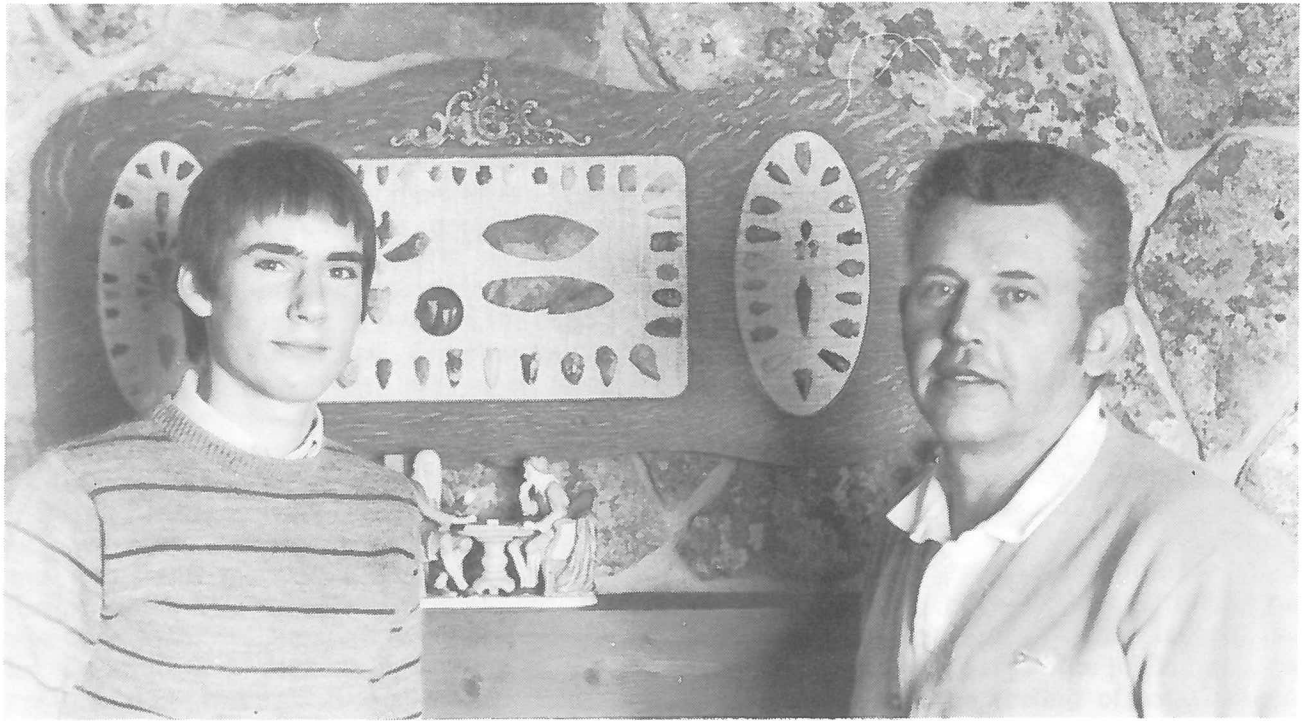
"I don't know what our oldest find is. I suppose we might be able to determine the age by comparing the styles of different eras, but our newest find can be determined by logic. If you figure the Indians stopped making stone points around the late 1600s or the early 1700s, most stone artifacts have to be at least 300 years old.

"Scrapers\* are not so easy to date because the style has remained unchanged for several thousand years. It's a great feeling of satisfaction when we find a point. We can appreciate the maker who would take enough pride

and time to make something that beautiful. One can save it and preserve it for future generations.

"Surface finds, sooner or later, are going to be lost through erosion, animals and livestock. Animals step on them and break them and then they can't be preserved. By leaving them on the ground we find many which are broken and chipped. The Indians, of course, broke them too, but I think more have been destroyed by animals over a period of time. In another hundred years it will be worse if the artifacts are not preserved."

Ever since I, William, have been able to walk, I have gone arrowhead hunting with my parents or grandparents. At first I hunted east of our home in Denver, around Sand Creek, and then as I grew older I was allowed to go on trips to Wyoming and western Colorado. Since moving to Steamboat seven years ago, my family and I have found many new areas in which to hunt artifacts. We have found many different types of points of varying style, shape and material. The amount which can be found in this same area is amazing. A person may find two arrows laying side by side which come from two totally different peoples and/or times. Hunting points takes time and effort, but it is worth it since no



two points are the same. I am always surprised when I find a point where I least expect it.

Arrowhead hunting is not for everyone and it is a skill that one must acquire. Hunting is available to almost anyone living in Colorado. The Indians have at one time or another been in every portion of this state. Who knows, maybe even in your own backyard?



### Terms of Artifact Hunting

**Point** — The tree or leaf shaped stone head that is placed on the end of an arrow shaft.

**Ear** — Projecting points made by cutting notches into the side opposite the point of an arrow.

**Artifact** — Any stone, metal, bone or flint rock that has been used by the Indians.

**Folsom point** — Leaf shaped flint projectile with longitudinal grooves on each face to allow for a good flow of blood.

**Metate** — A large block of stone with a concave upper surface, used in conjunction with a mono, to grind grain and nuts.

**Mono** — An oval shaped stone worn smooth on one or two sides, used with metate to grind grain and nuts.

**Scrapers** — A flint rock sharpened along one edge, which is used to clean animal hides.