

DEBITAGE

Bits & Pieces ... Remnants Left Behind ... By & For Flint Knappers

Volume I

Number 3



“Chunks & Spalls” For Knapping.

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Back in the day, people would find pieces of stone, to make their tools and weapons, along rivers and streams. Large gravel-like chunks which fit in their hands.

We do the same thing today.

However, eventually they found source beds with layers of stone like cherts and flints, and they discovered that obsidian could be retrieved at certain volcanic flows. These flows and layers of useful stone were vast and desirable resources, with great expanses of small chunks and sometimes massive boulders.

That is where mastery of large *“hammer stones”* became a valuable talent. And these source beds and volcanic flows became valuable quarry resources which were utilized for generations.

Knapper’s Eyes Tend To Be Bigger Than Their Stomachs When It Comes To Gathering Supplies Of Good Stone

Today, we also have access to large volcanic boulders of obsidian or dacit or basalt; and to vast deposits of bedded chert or novaculite or flint. The challenge has long been to produce smaller pieces of a size and weight to be transported or traded.

These relatively smaller chips broken off of large boulders or beds are called *“Spalls”*.

The scaled-up-in-size hammer stones used to break the *“spalls”* off boulders are called *“mauls”*. These mauls were sometimes mounted on handles, or they could be held with two hands. Either



A nodule of gray Texas flint, sometimes called “blue” ... from the Georgetown Hill Country.



This nodule of “Kentucky Hornstone” was the source for this Paleo reproduction, below.





Above, white Novaculite, silver sheen and mahogany obsidian spalls. Black obsidian, below.



way, they were used to make “spalls” from boulders, following the same proven rules of physical practice in working stone with hammer stones and soft hammers, just on a larger scale.

A Spall Is A Chip Is A Spall

Even though a spall may be as big as you can possibly hold in both hands, in its essential form it is just a large chip of stone.

You can sometimes see the “*bulb of percussion*” where the source stone was struck to break off the spall, just like on the gray and black “*Silver Sheen*” obsidian spall in the photo here, with three large spalls, next to the 109 - 110 cm marks on the tape.

The methods we use to shape a spall are the same as working with a chip to make a small tool or projectile point, except at a larger scale.

For expediency much of this work is done by percussion, rather than with pressure flaking.

The “*Mahogany*” obsidian and the white “*novaculite*” spall were trimmed around the edges after the spalls were made.

This trimming prepares the edges of the fairly thick spalls for more percussion work to thin the spall into a useful preform.

Start with larger percussion tools and as your work progresses, shift to smaller percussion tools, for precision and to prevent breaking the preform into two tools.

“*Spalls*” can range from small (3" x 5" x 1" thick) to medium (4" x 6" x 1"), large (6" x 8" x 2"), and up to very large (8" x 12" x 3" or even bigger).

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From the flint knapping workshop of

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