

ENGRAVED STONES OF CEDAR VALLEY, UTAH

BY

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My parents and relatives have hunted arrowheads in the Cedar Valley for thirty years. During that period, they have explored most of the hills in the area. On one outing, they were exploring a new area near Black Canyon that had just been railed. They started up a small, steep hill and as they hiked up, they found rocks with scratches and designs on them. All such stones in a 40 foot area were picked up. There were 38 rocks of similar makeup and eight artifacts (parts of arrowheads and scrapers) found. My aunt and uncle put them in a paper bag and took them home. I didn't know about them until one day when I was telling my parents about some rocks with writing I had found. They told me about the rocks they had found years ago, and I was able to acquire them after a time. Here's what I know about them now.

Since they were found on the side of a slope, it is hard to determine their original situation. They vary greatly in style and form, so it can't be said they all have the same symbolic meanings. They were found in an area that would have been good for hunting, gathering pine nuts or harvesting seeds. The rocks could have worked their way down the hill by erosional forces from a small ceremonial site at the top.

This Cedar Valley collection is composed of thirty-six stones including eight with scratches with no apparent design. These include straight lines and complex lines. There are twelve stones made with complex lines and designs that show intentional plan. One looks as though it was used to keep a record of some type. Of the remaining sixteen stones, one has a tree-like design, one has a design resembling a teepee symbol similar to those found in southern Nevada, four have rows of designs, and ten are designed to look like figurines. It does not appear they were made by the same artist.

None of the stones have signs of secondary usage as a tool, therefore they were probably fetishes or ceremonial objects. Many have lichen growth and irregular surfaces. None appear to have been given a particular shape before being incised. Composition varies, sandstone and steatite being most common.

Using comparison to try to determine style, I found Santini's collection from Spring Mountain, Pahrump Valley, and Stump Springs in southern Nevada had drawings with similarities in design (similar to that on Fig. 1a). Similarities in style include horizontal lines with vertical lines extending to either edge, "sunburst designs", the three-quarter circle design, the tree-like symbol (similar to those on Figs. 2a), and zig-zag type designs and teepee designs (Fig. 3a-e).

Warner (1981) knows of twenty-one locations in the Great Basin area where similar stones have been found. Designs are similar, with stones being divided into sections and different designs etched into each part (Fig. 4a).

Aikens (1970) in his report on Hogup Cave includes thirty incised stones. Some of these have markings similar to the Cedar Valley stones (Figs. 5a-b). Fig. 5a is very similar to Fig. 5b, the shape being about the same, and having a center section with markings going out horizontally from it. Most of the rocks from his collection are smooth surfaced, where the Cedar Valley stones

are irregularly shaped.

Dalley (1976) reports on ground stone artifacts, incised stones, and incised tablets from Thomas Shelter and Swallow Shelter Utah . From Thomas Shelter one tablet-type rock was found with markings similar to the Cedar Valley type (Figs. 6b-c). There were about 60 stones found in Swallow Shelter, three of which were found in pieces in a "nest" of grass at the bottom of one of the strata (Swallow Shelter page 9).

Lee (1978) stated the greater number of stones studied made for an easier comparison. There are stones with almost identical crosshatch and zigzag designs, as well as stones with random scratches like many of the Cedar Valley stones. One particular stone cited in Lee's thesis has the same type of scorekeeping style as one of the Cedar Valley stones (Figs. 8a-b). Of particular interest to me are the shapes of the stones in that collection, which, although random, are similar to the Cedar Valley collection.

As my research continues, I find that there is no one style that is evident in any of the collections, which is true of the Cedar Valley collection.

Research on style shows that workmanship of the Cedar Valley stones seems to be most similar to that found on similar stones in the Great Basin area. Many of the Cedar Valley stones could fit right in with the Santini collection.

I have seen the same design motifs in other elements of Indian culture. Jesse Warner drew my attention to a slide of a Barrier Canyon anthropomorph with a design across its chest using small dots with lines coming out of them, horizontal bands across the chest, and zigzags on the side of it that are the same pattern as on the Cedar Valley stones.

Strong (1976) shows a picture of a decorated bone ornament or tool found in the Klamath Lakes area from the LeRoy Gienger collection. It is a long pointed instrument decorated with rows of lines like one of the Cedar Valley stones (Fig 10a).

Seaman (1975) has a photograph of a carved paint mortar from the Hodges collection that is carved with bands and rows of triangles and zigzags (Fig 10d).

I have seen rock art panels at Waterflow, New Mexico and Moab, Utah in which straight lines with zigzags connected to them have been carved in the panels, sometimes over pre-existing petroglyphs. Other examples may be found at many rock art sites in the Great Basin.

In many cases, incised stones were found in living areas such as caves where Indians spent a great deal of time. Many of the stones seem to have been used for sharpening stone knives, in the making of arrowheads, in making points on drills or bone knives, or in beadmaking. Random holes or scratches are present in many of the Cedar Valley stones, which would lend themselves to these uses, since sandstone is so soft. The stones are small enough to be portable.

It is my opinion that a number of these stones were used for ceremonial purposes. They are more highly decorated than any I have studied to date, and must have taken quite a long time to create. It is not hard to imagine people using this kind of stone for an offering. They exhibit extremely fine workmanship and detail.

It seems strange to me that both the utilitarian and the ceremonial type stones would be found in such a remote area where these were discovered. It is known that a camping area where the Piute Indians lived until historic times is within a few miles of there, which leads me to believe that this was an old camp, and these stones were left as offerings.

In conclusion, Indian rock writing is a field we are just beginning to assess. A number of people have collections of these stones, and many of them were anxious to share what they had with me. As I studied these other collections, it became clear that more study is necessary before any conclusions can be made. The answers probably lie somewhere in an unknown collection yet to be studied or discovered. I invite anyone with sincere desire in furthering the studies of rock writing to view my collection, as I feel it has significant value.

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American Indian Rock Art, Vol. VI. American Rock Art
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All stones are shown actual size unless otherwise indicated. Markings are as exact as possible.

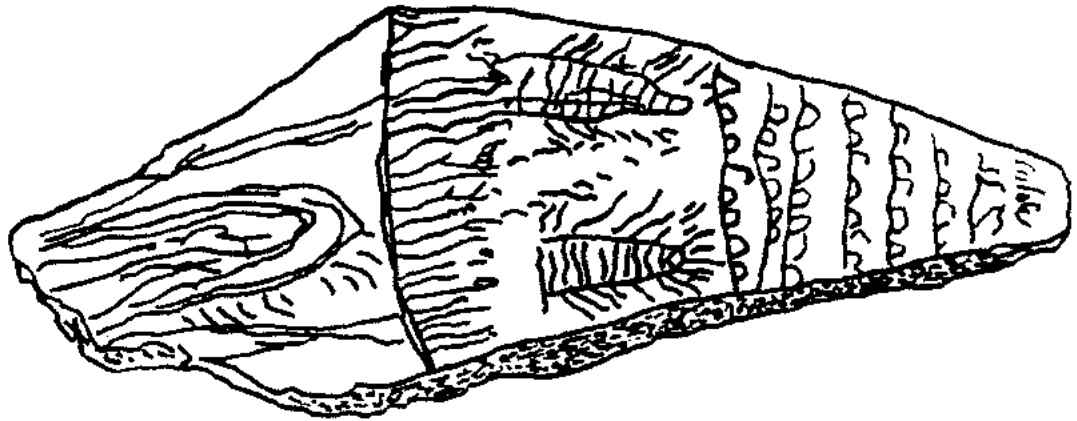


Figure 1a. Combination incised stone found in many areas of southern Nevada.

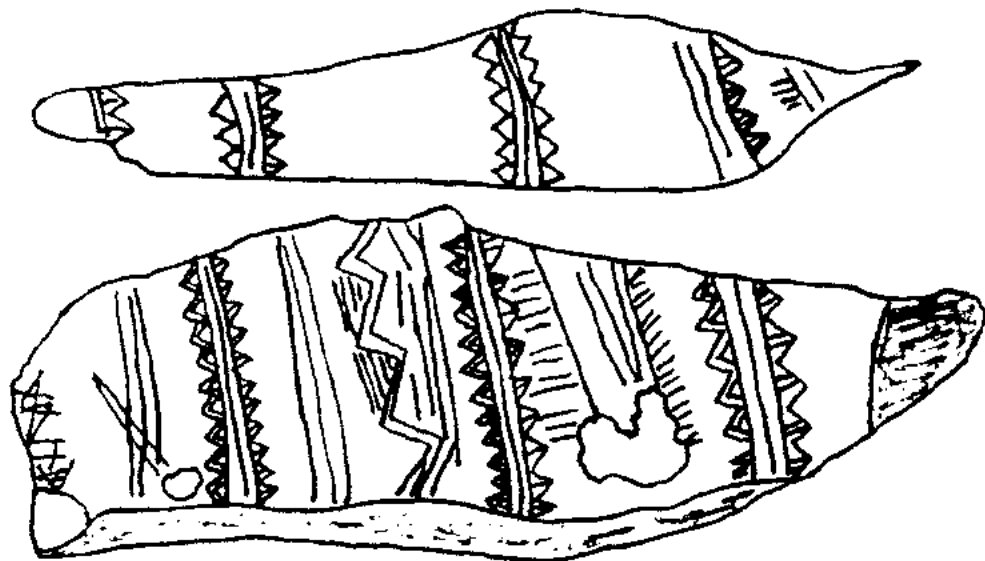


Figure 1b. Cedar Valley Site (front and side).

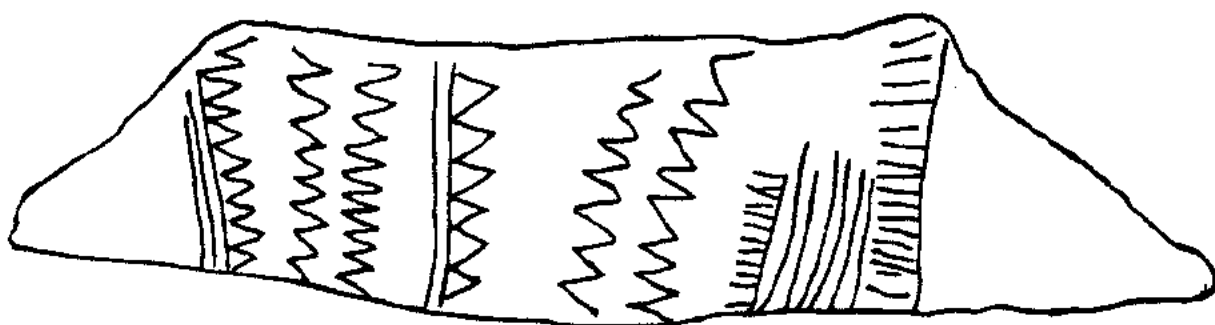
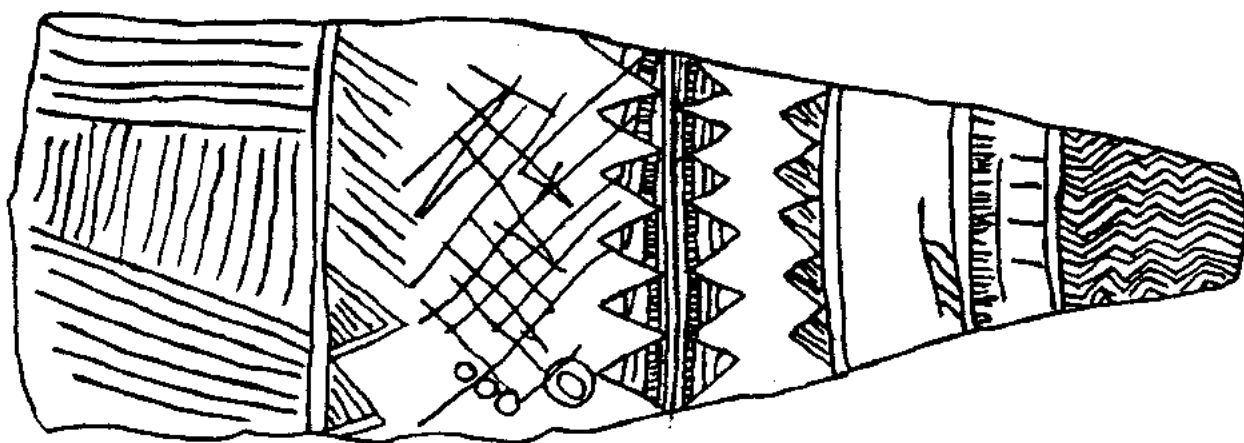


Figure 1c. Cedar Valley Site (front and side).

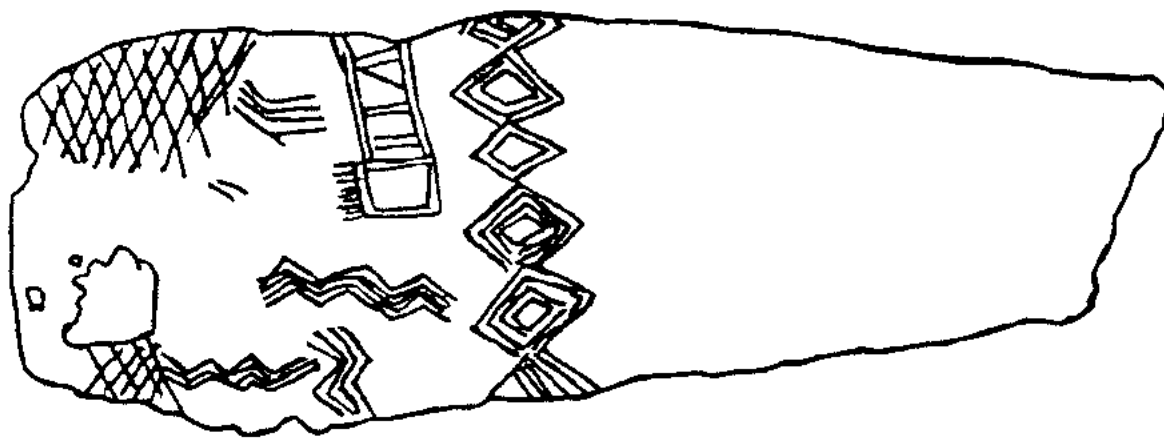


Figure 1d. Cedar Valley Site.

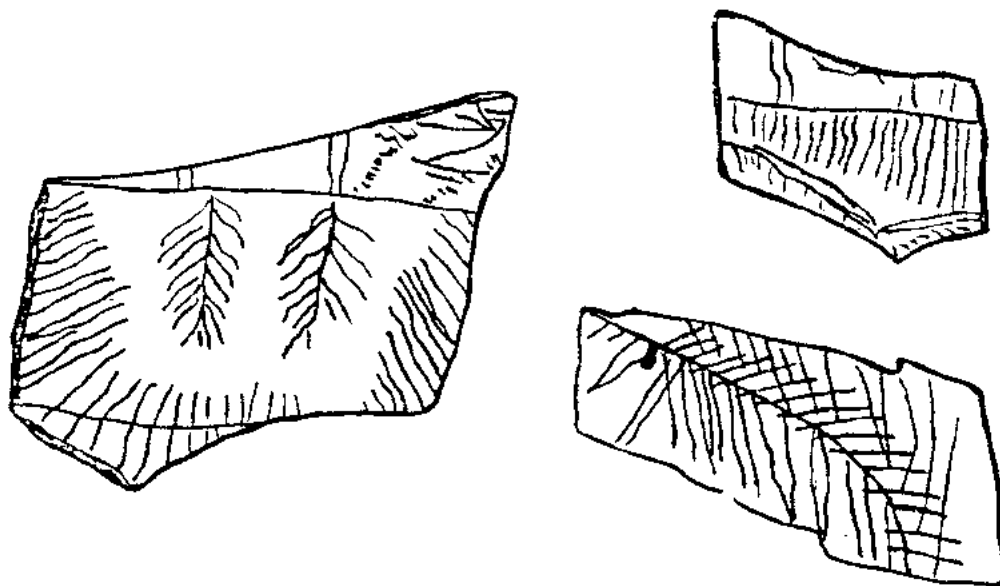


Figure 2a. Buster Wilson Site #3. Spring Mountains, Clark County, Nevada.

Figure 2b. Cedar Valley Site.

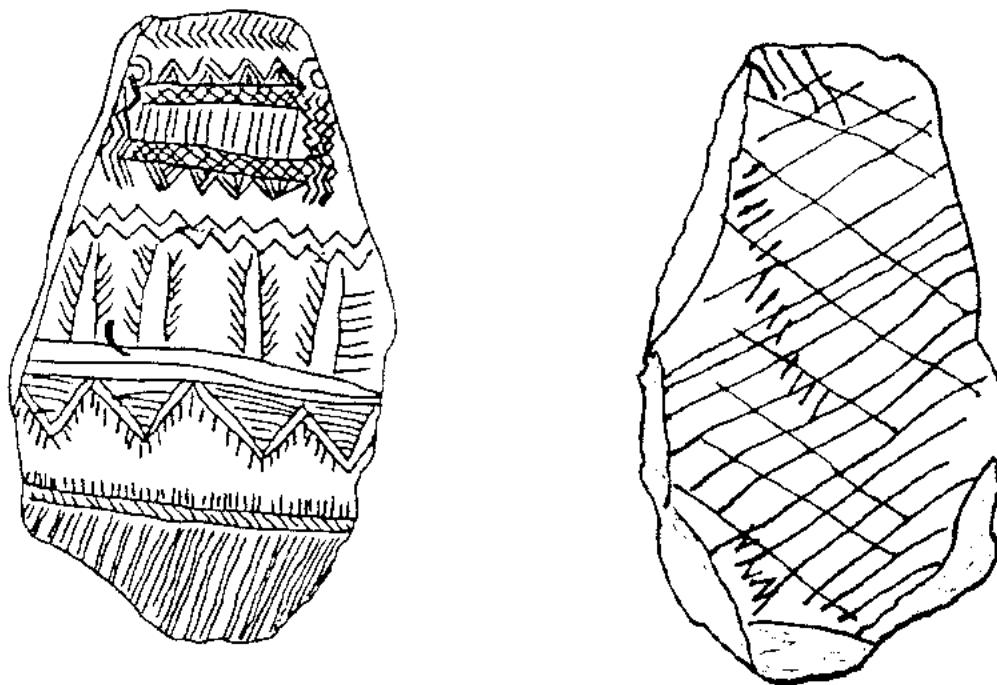


Figure 2c. Cedar Valley Site (front and reverse).

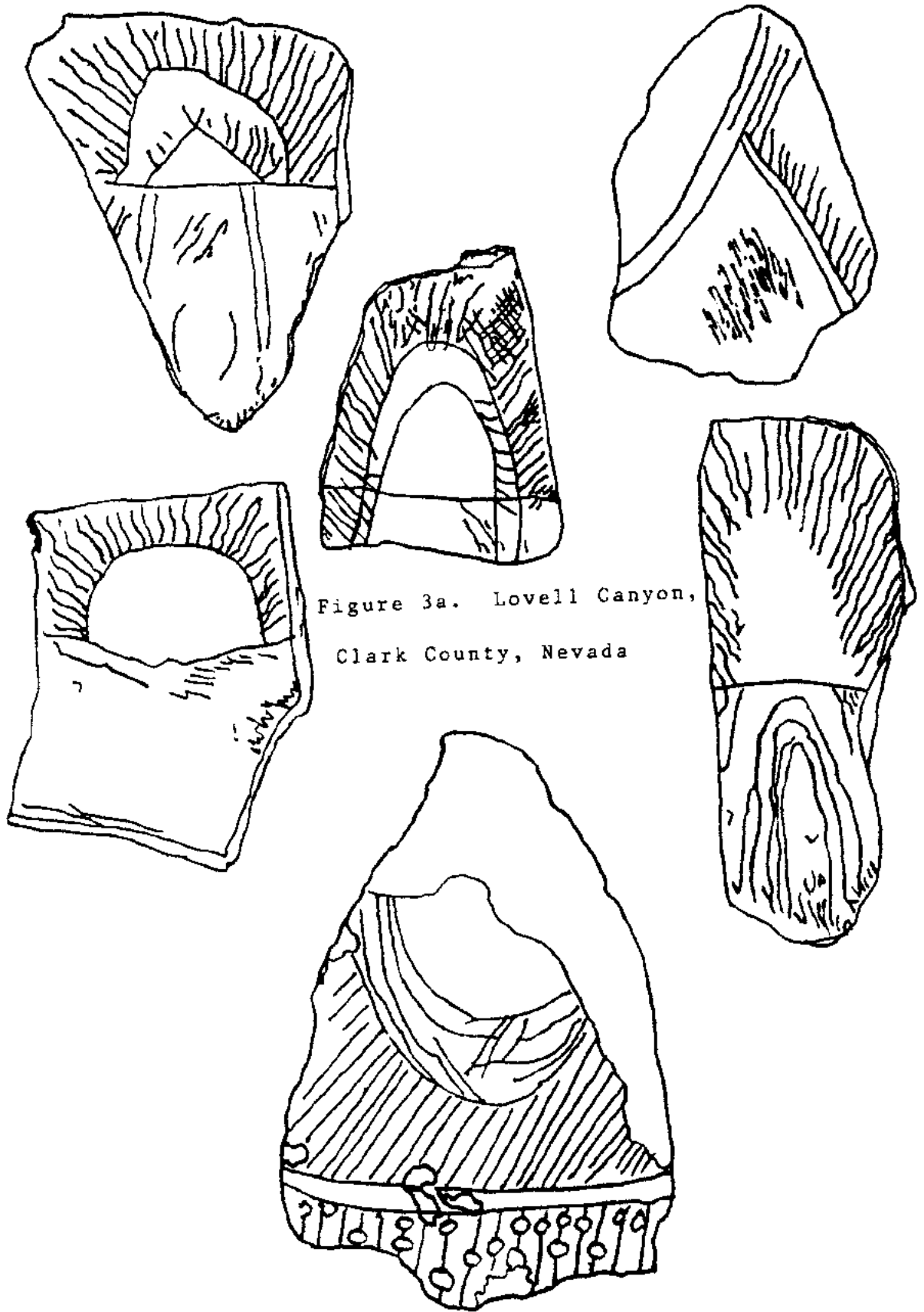


Figure 3a. Lovell Canyon,
Clark County, Nevada

Figure 3b. Cedar Valley Site.

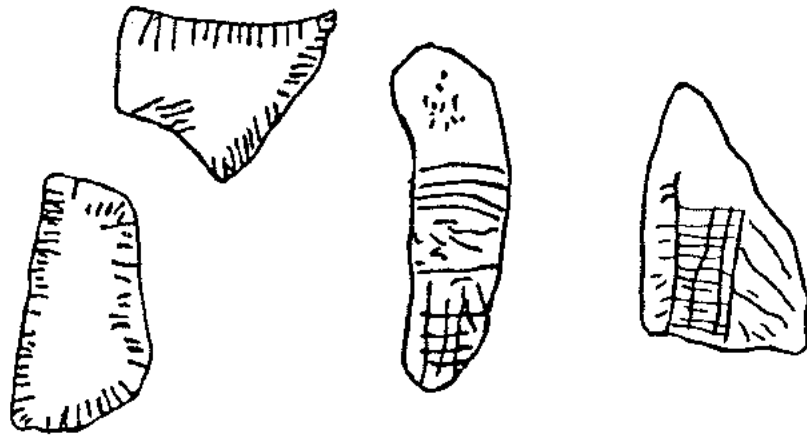


Figure 4a. Great Basin Salt Flats.

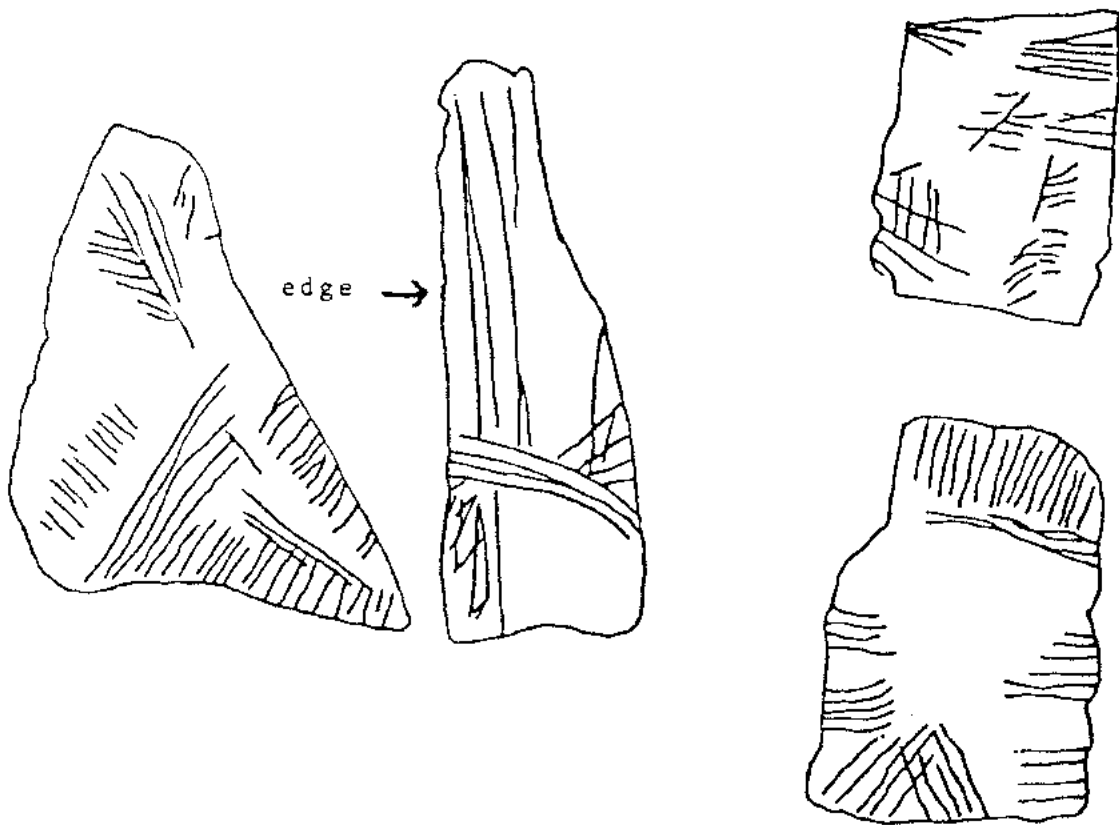


Figure 4b. Cedar Valley Site.

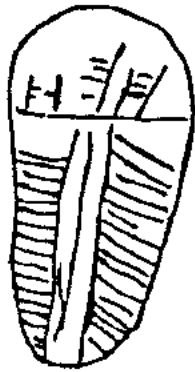


Figure 5a. Hogup Cave.

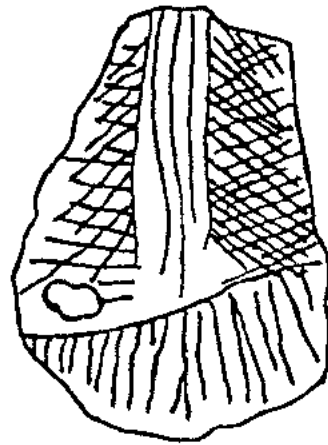


Figure 5b. Cedar Valley Site.

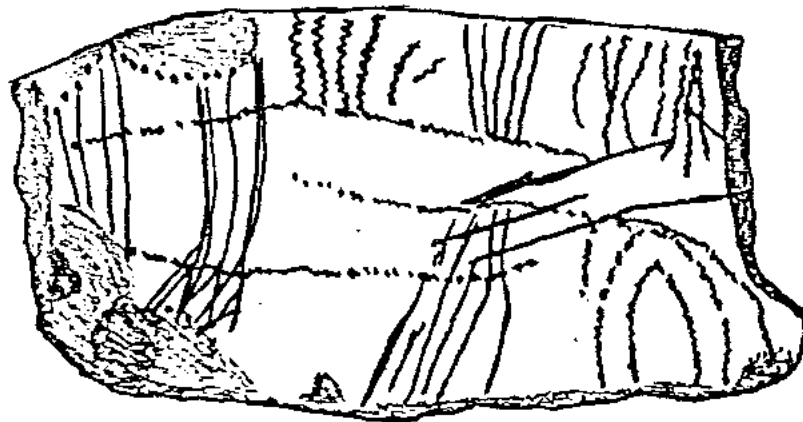


Figure 5c. Incised stone, Thomas Shelter
(author's drawing, smaller than actual size).

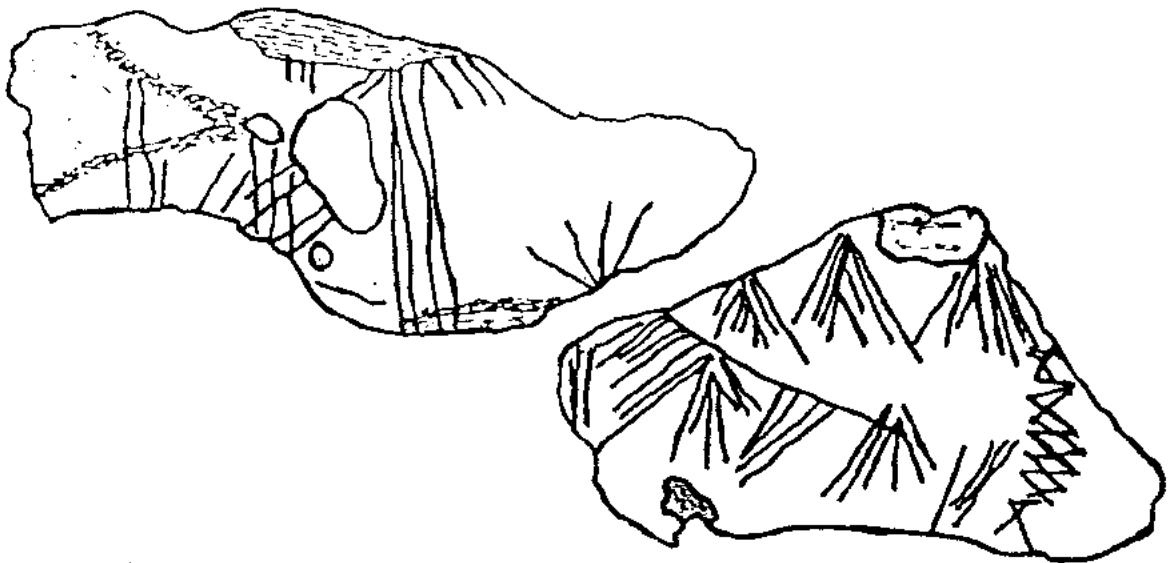


Figure 5d. Cedar Valley Site.

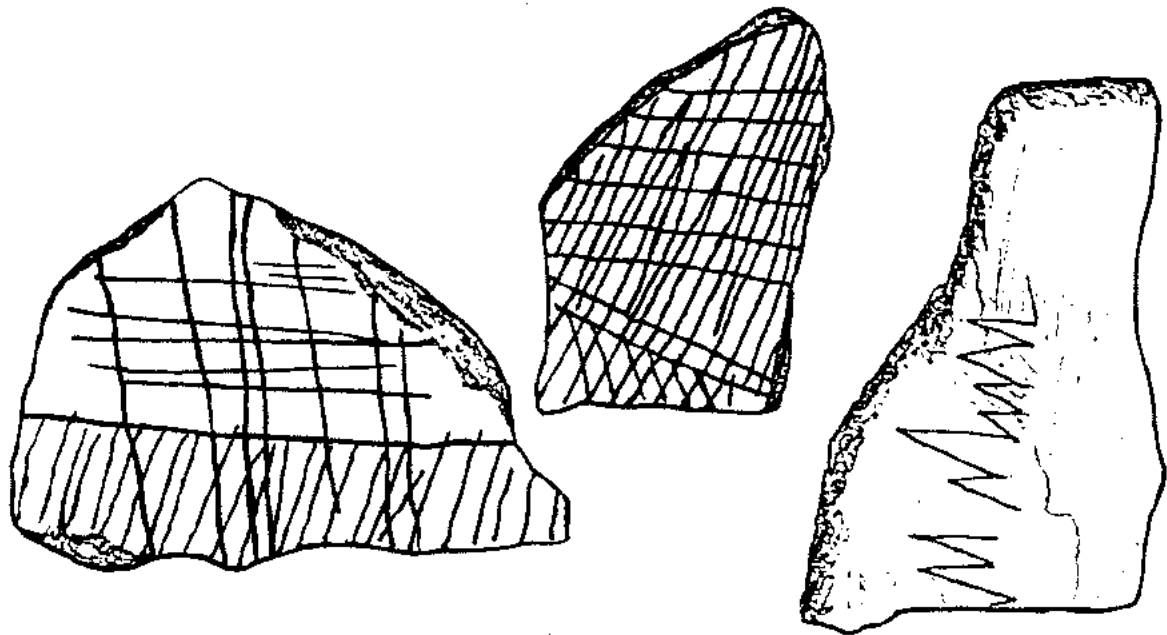


Figure 6a. Swallow Shelter.

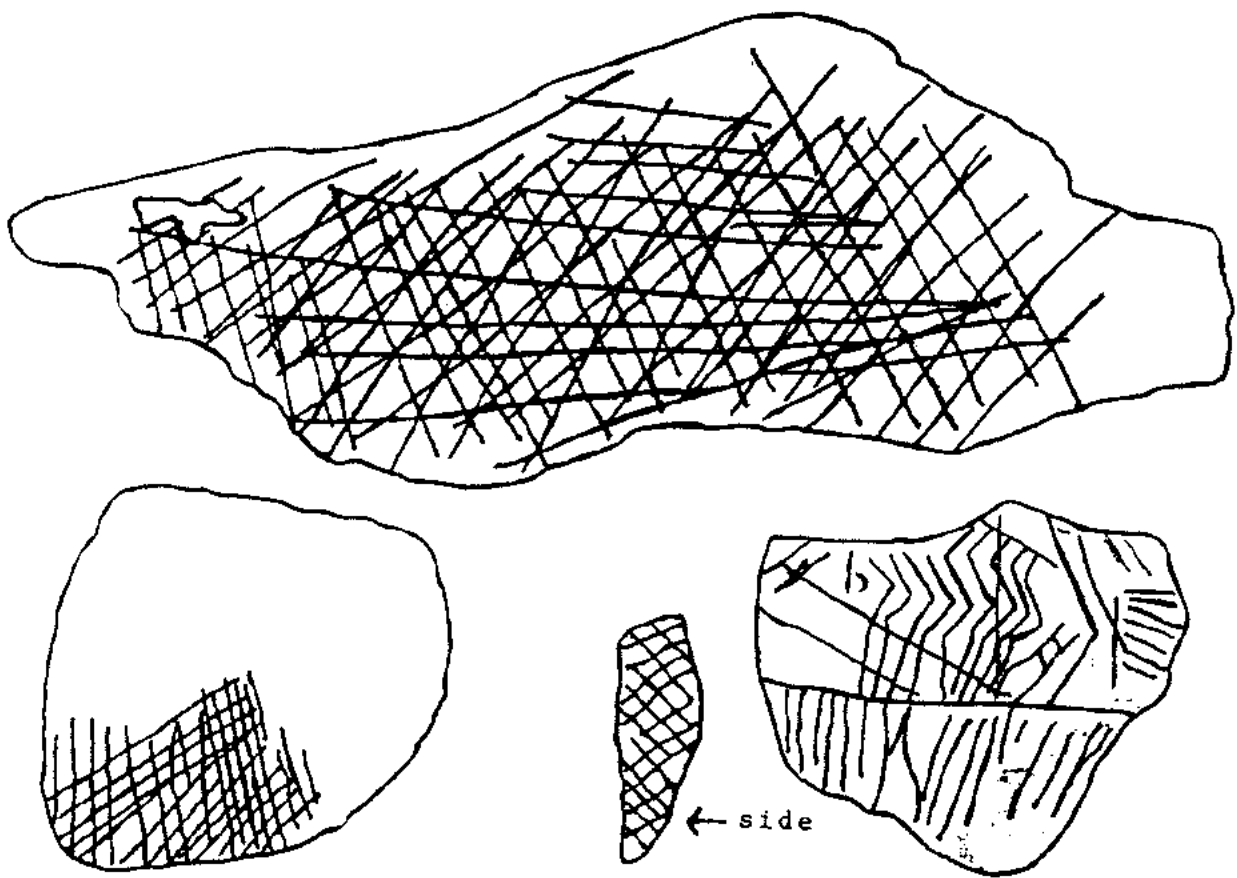


Figure 6b. Cedar Valley Site.

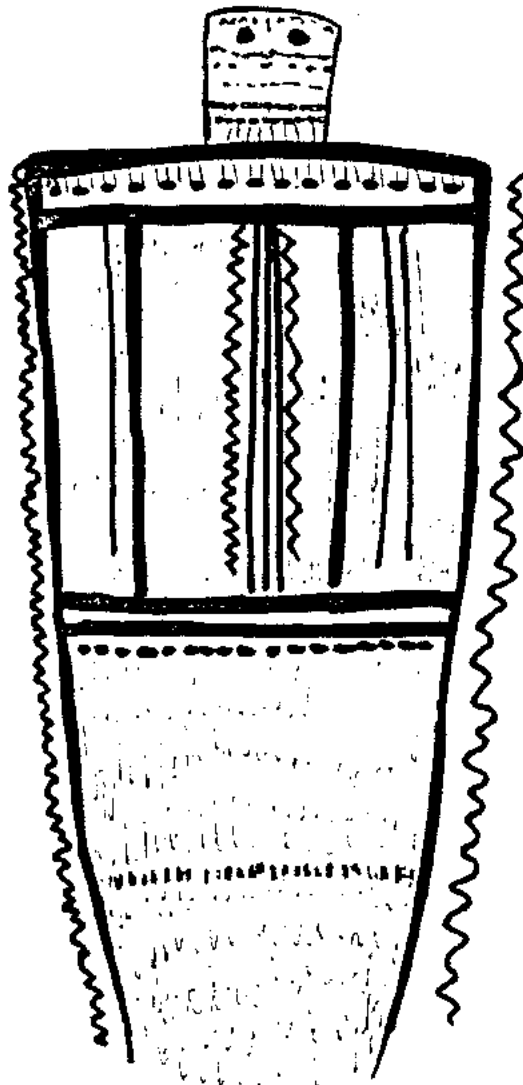


Figure 7a. Barrier Canyon anthropomorph (author's drawing, reduced size).

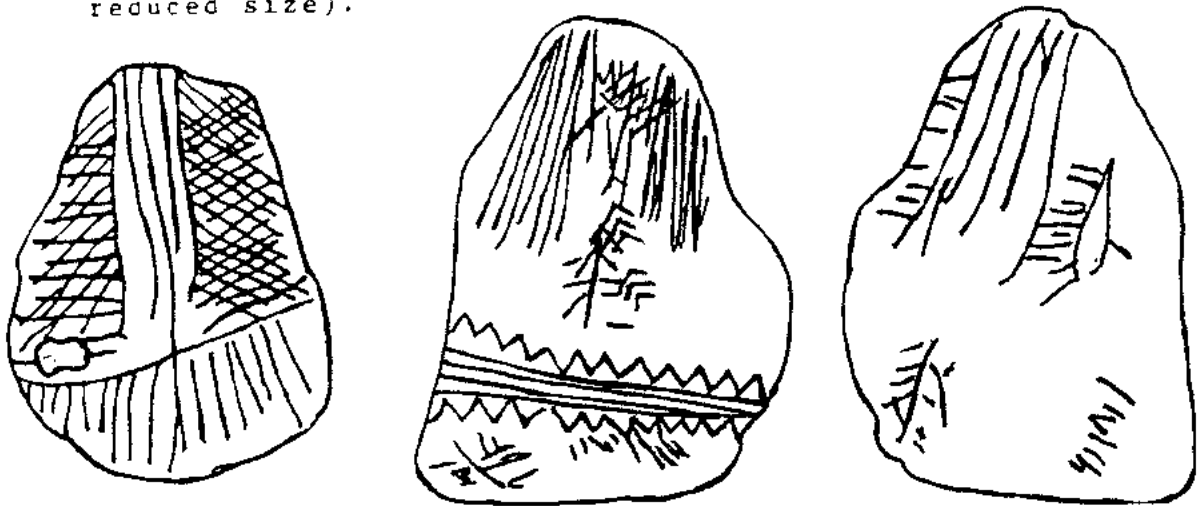


Figure 7b. Cedar Valley Site.

Figure 7c. Cedar Valley Site (front and reverse).



Figure 8a. Decorated bone ornament or tool
LeRoy Gienger Collection (Klamath Lakes area)
(author's drawing, smaller than actual size).

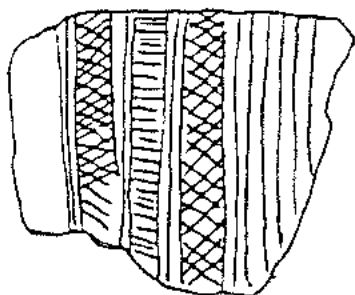


Figure 8b. Cedar Valley Site.



Figure 9a. Carved paint mortar, Hodges Collection.

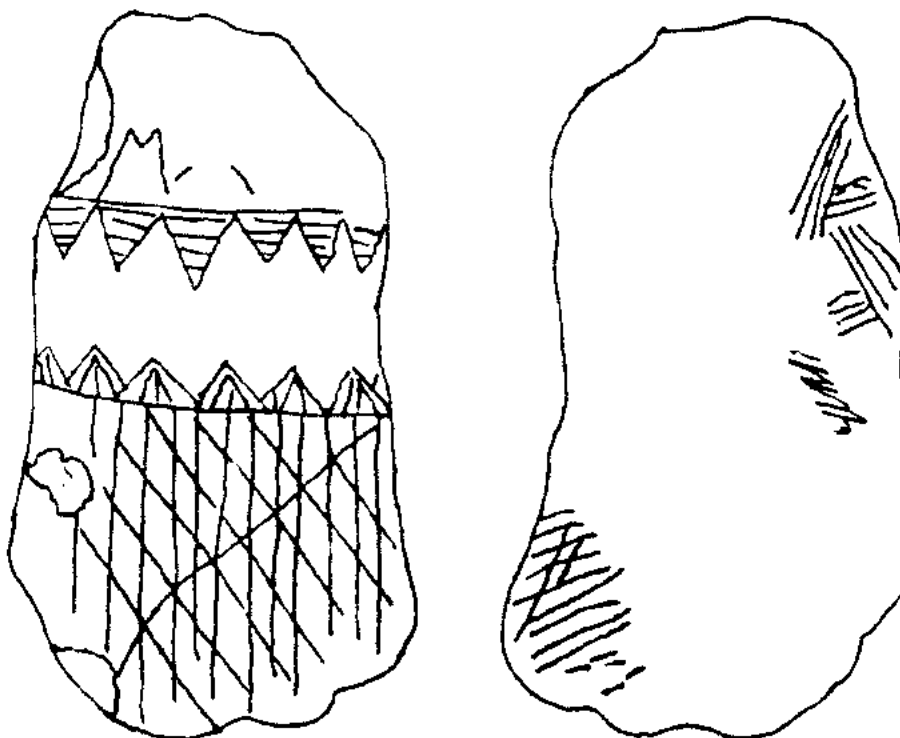


Figure 9b. Cedar Valley Site (front and reverse).

Other stones in the Cedar Valley Collection.

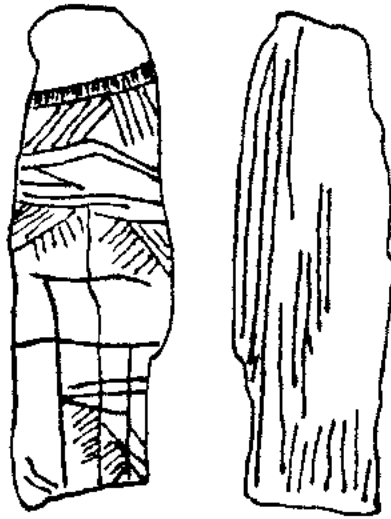
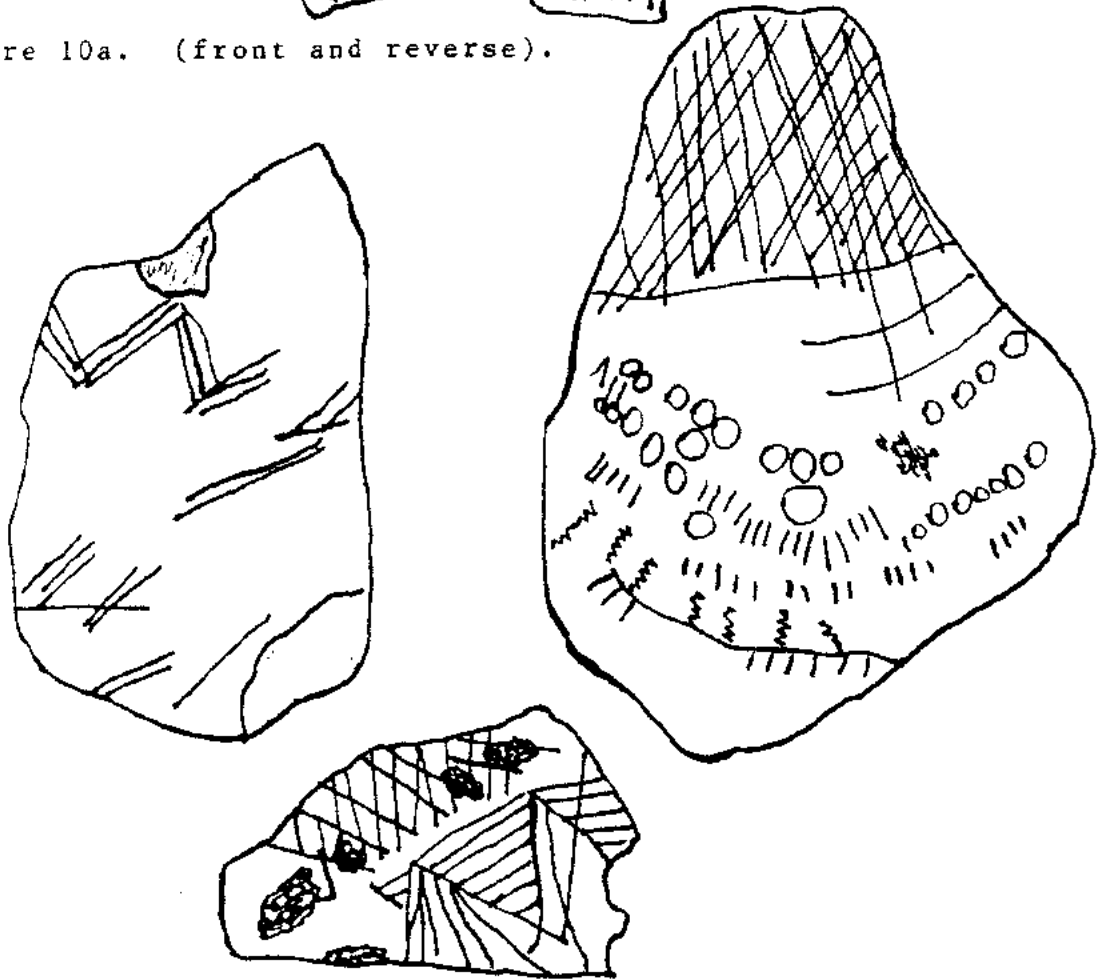


Figure 10a. (front and reverse).



Figures 10b, c, d.

Other stones in the Cedar Valley Collection.

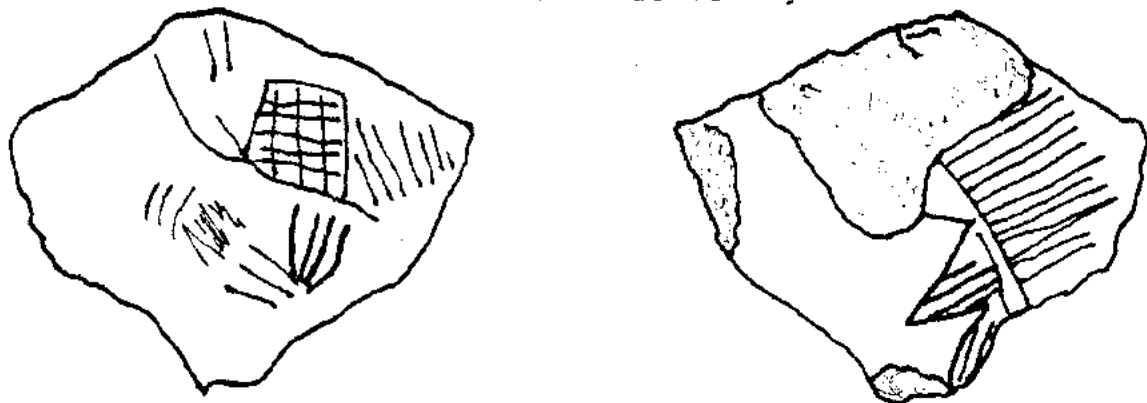
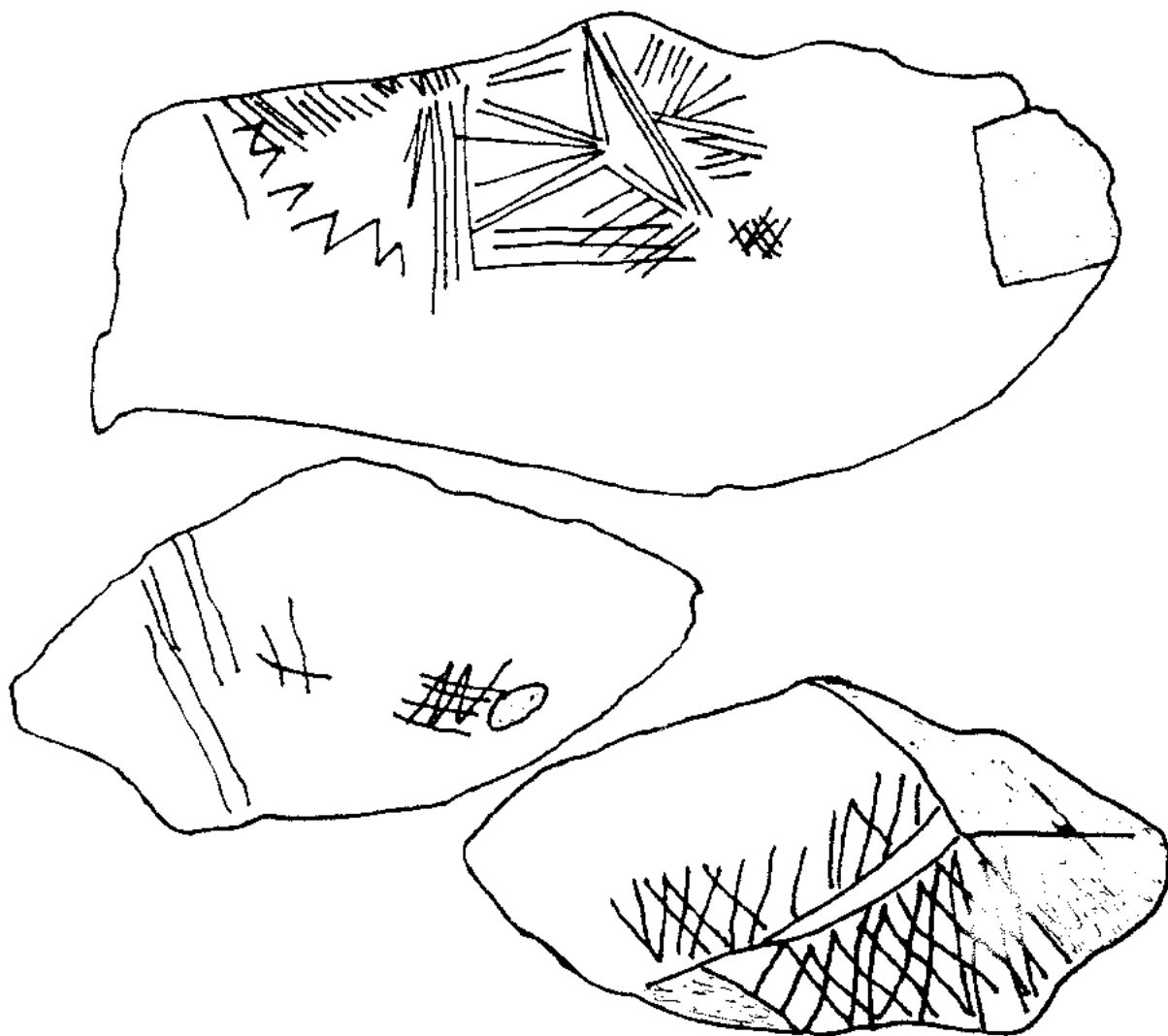
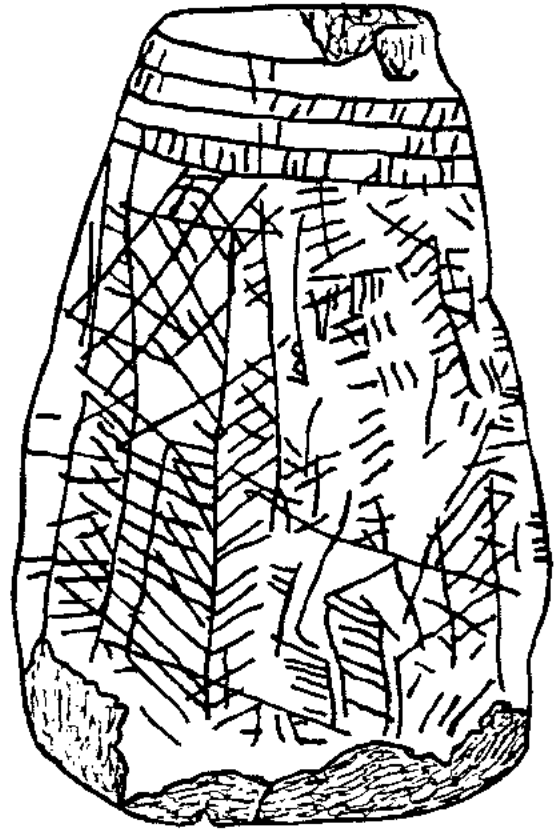
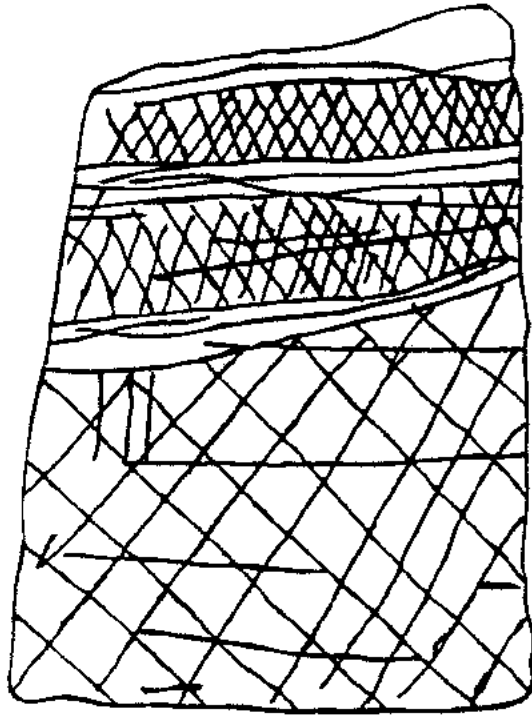


Figure 10e. (front and reverse).

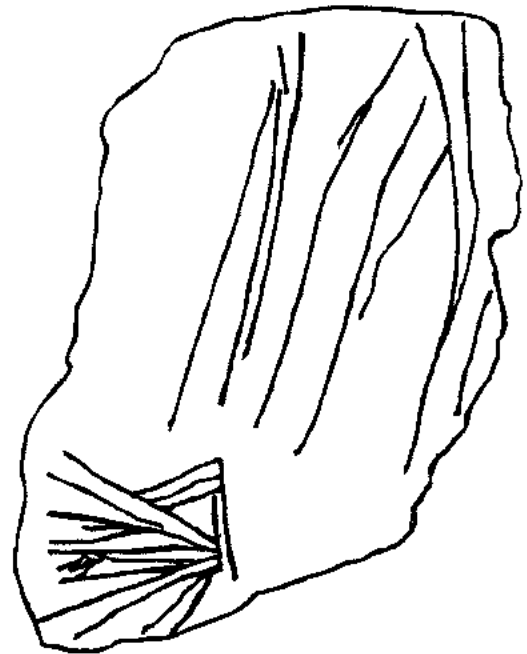
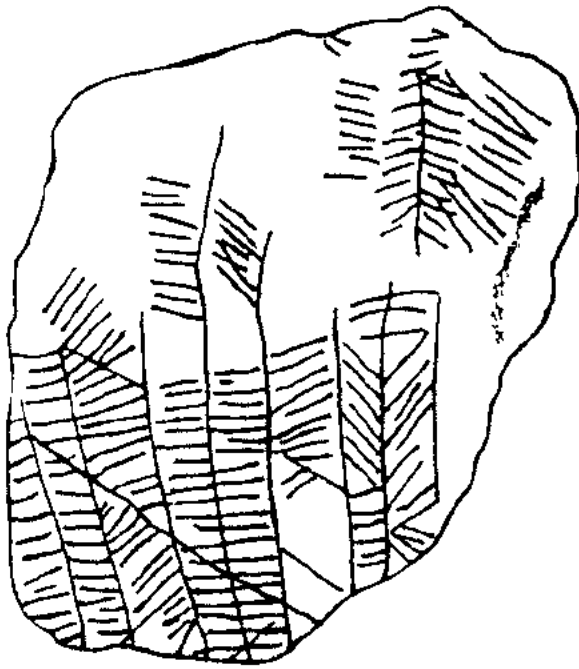


Figures 10f, g. (front and reverse).

Other stones in the Cedar Valley Collection.



Figures 10h, i.



Figures 10j, k.