

# To the Point

## Etley

*Jack H. Ray*

The Etley point was named for large, stemmed points found in Illinois and Missouri (Scully 1951:2). Chapman (1975:246) referred to this type as Etley Stemmed.

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### Description

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Etley is a medium (resharpened) to large (unresharpened) stemmed point that ranges in length from 62 to 123 mm with a mean of 84.2 mm. The stem is moderately long (range: 11–18 mm; mean: 14.3 mm). The stem of the archetype of the Etley point is typically viewed as slightly expanding, which gives it an almost corner-notched appearance (Chapman 1975:Figure A-8; Klippel 1969:7, Figure 2); however, approximately one-third of Etley points exhibit squared stems (Bell 1960:Plate 18; Harl 1995:41; Klippel 1969:Figure 4). The base is usually slightly convex or straight, although it may be slightly concave on a small number of specimens. Notches on barbed Etley points are relatively wide (range: 3.6–6.5 mm; mean: 5.1 mm) and U-shaped like those on Smith points (Bell 1960:Plate 18; Ray and Lopinot 2005:Table 9.8; Roper 1978). The stem and basal margins of Etley points generally are not ground.

The blades of Etley points are typically long, broad (unresharpened) to narrow (resharpened), and recurved.

Blade edges are incurvate to excurvate from the shoulders to the distal end. The distal ends of resharpened Etley points are often sharp and needle-like (Fortier 1984:Plate 7a, m–n; Klippel 1969:Figures 2i–j and 4b–c; Ray and Lopinot 2005:179). Pristine or unresharpened Etley points often exhibit long barbs that extend halfway or nearly to the base of the stem (Roper 1978:Plate 7), whereas resharpened specimens exhibit short barbs or no barbs at all. Maximum blade width (range: 31–44 mm; mean: 37.3 mm) is at the end of the barbs on barbed specimens and sometimes near the distal end of barbless specimens. Etley points are typically biconvex in cross section and relatively thick (range: 7.6–11.8 mm; mean: 10 mm). Etley points are among the largest of all Late Archaic point types with exaggerated (nonutilitarian) points ranging up to 270 mm in length (O'Brien and Wood 1998:144; Roper 1978:18–19), whereas unresharpened utilitarian specimens typically are between 100 and 150 mm in length and repeatedly resharpened specimens are 100 mm in length or less. Blade edges are neither serrated nor beveled. The faces of Etley blades typically exhibit broad soft-hammer percussion scars, which are partially truncated along the blade edges by pressure flaking conducted during late-stage manufacture and/or resharpening.

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### Heat Treatment

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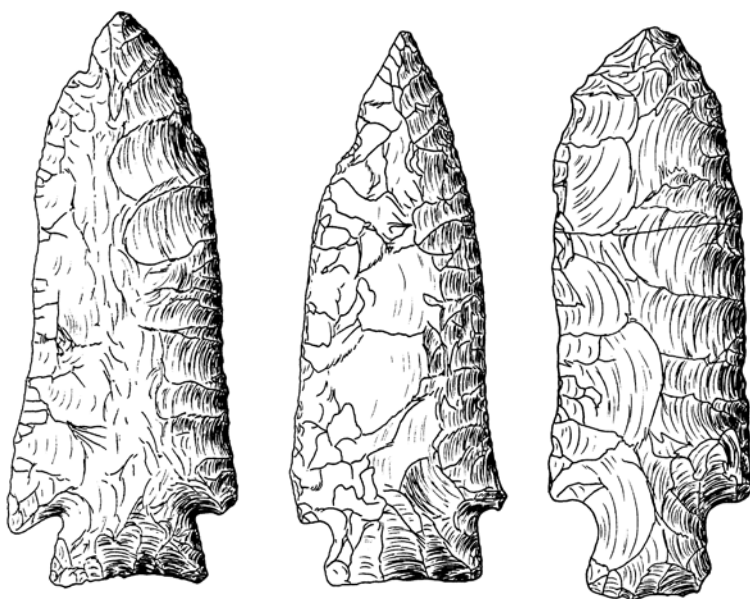
Heat treatment was not an integral part of the reduction technology of Etley knappers. Low incidences of heat treatment among Etley points has been reported from sites across Missouri and western Illinois (Cook 1976:66; Fortier 1984:78; Klippel 1971; Ray 2005:310, 2010:77; Roper 1993:662). Harl (1995:52) reported a slightly higher incidence of heat treatment at the Hayden site, but he also noted that at least part of the percentage of heat-treated artifacts might have been due to unintentional burning.

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### Distribution

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Etley points are most common in eastern Missouri and southwest Illinois, but they also occur in smaller quantities throughout the rest of Missouri. Etley points are present but relatively uncommon south of the Ozarks Divide in southwest Missouri and especially south and west of the state line in northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma (Bell 1960:36).



*Etley points (left to right) from 23CE506, 23GR705, and 23CE426. Illustrations by Del Thompson, drawings to scale.*



*Etley preforms from the Schoettler Road site (23SL178/1105), artifacts and photo courtesy of Richard Martens.*

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## Age

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Etley points associated with the Titterington phase in southwest Illinois and eastern Missouri have been firmly dated between 4150 rcybp and 3900 rcybp (2200–1950 B.C.) (Cook 1976:65; Fortier 1984:Table 44; Harl 1995:46). Most of the radiocarbon ages associated with Etley (and Smith) points at Big Eddy are in agreement with this range; however, one of the youngest radiocarbon ages that was associated with Etley points in Block K suggests that the age range for Etley might extend to approximately 3600 rcybp (1650 B.C.) (Ray and Lopinot 2005:186).

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## Comments

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Barbless and square-stemmed points with recurved blades, which are frequently found on Etley sites, have routinely been classified as “Stone Square Stemmed” in Missouri (Chapman 1975; Harl 1995; Klippel 1969), even though flaking technology, lack of heat treatment, and multiple attributes of the blade (e.g., biconvex cross section, shape, and thickness) are identical to Etley points.

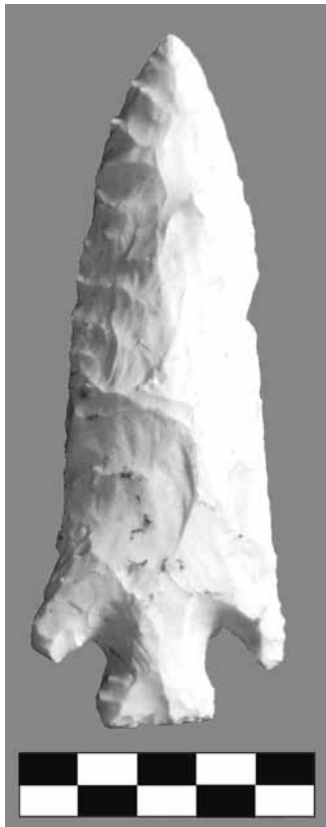
In recent years, several investigators have pointed out similarities and overlapping attributes between Etley points and “Stone Square Stemmed” points

(and by extension resharpened Smith points), making differentiation between them difficult to impossible (Dickson 2002:111; Fortier 1984:80; Justice 1987:149; O’Brien and Wood 1998:131, 144–145; Ray and Lopinot 2005:176–179). These similarities along with homologous assemblages from the Booth site in Missouri (Klippel 1969:7–11) and the Go-Kart North and Airport sites in Illinois suggest that expanding stemmed versus square stemmed and barbed versus unbarbed probably simply reflect a range of variability in haft and blade resharpening within the Etley type. Accordingly, “Stone Square Stemmed” has been dropped as a formal point type by this author. Good evidence that “Stone Square Stemmed” in eastern Missouri is simply a variant of Etley comes from the Hayden site where Harl (1995:41) recovered expanding stemmed and square-stemmed specimens together in several pit features. Square-stemmed (“Stone”) points typically comprise approximately one-third of diagnostic points found on Titterington-phase sites in the greater St. Louis area (Harl 1995; Martens 2008:14).

Etley points that are barbed and have square stems are difficult to differentiate from Smith points (Ray and Lopinot 2005:175–180). In addition to the above barb and stem attributes, the two types are very similar in terms of maximum thickness, biconvex cross sections, large



*Etley points from the Schoettler Road site (23SL178/1105), artifacts and photo courtesy of Richard Martens.*



Etley point from 23SL766, artifact and photo courtesy of Richard Martens.

blades, basal width, stem length, flaking technology, and general lack of heat treatment. The direct association of Etley and Smith points in multiple stratified contexts at Big Eddy (Ray and Lopinot 2005:174–192) and other sites (Lafferty 2010:Figure 5; Ray 2008:56–74, 2010:36–60) suggest that they may be part of the toolkit of a particular culture. On the other hand, the Etley and Smith types may represent separate points made by distinct but related contemporaneous regional Late Archaic groups that had similar reduction technologies (Ray et al. 2009:178).

Most large “Wadlow points” (Justice 1987:143; Perino 1968:98) that occur at Titterington-phase sites along portions of the Missouri, Mississippi, and Illinois rivers are actually late-stage preforms for long spear points such as Etley (and possibly Osceola). Those recovered from burial caches at the Etley site (Perino 1968:98) clearly are preforms. Attributes supportive of preforms include flaking that is entirely percussion and worn edges (Perino 1968:98) that probably represent remnant platform grinding. Chapman’s (1975:251–252) Red Ochre Lanceolate is the same as Wadlow.

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