

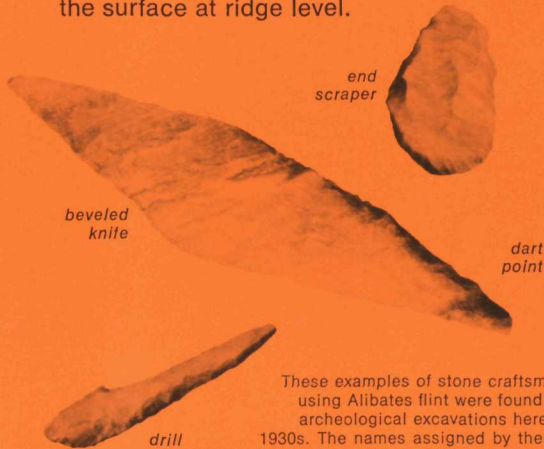
alibates

flint quarries

Most signs of North America's earliest people have disappeared forever. The simple questions about the foods they ate, the homes they lived in, and the languages they spoke are still unanswered. In most cases their own remains have vanished, too. Often the only traces of human existence thousands of years ago are the tools and weapons these early people fashioned from stone.

Of all the different kinds of stone used in making tools, one of the most distinctive is Alibates flint. Normally flint has one characteristic shade, but Alibates flint has a multitude of bright colors in endless variations and patterns.

Archeologists find tools made of Alibates flint in many places in the Great Plains and the Southwest. The stone comes from a relatively small section of the Texas Panhandle, 26 square kilometers (10 square miles) around Lake Meredith on the Canadian River. The flint, in a layer up to 1.8 meters (6 feet) thick, usually lies just below the surface at ridge level.



These examples of stone craftsmanship using Alibates flint were found during archeological excavations here in the 1930s. The names assigned by the archeologists simply refer to the shape and function of each tool.

Photos of artifacts courtesy of Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas

Using nothing more elaborate than a fine antler tip, a present-day flint chipper puts the finishing touches on a sharp point before attaching it to a shaft. A leather pad protects his hands from being cut as he applies pressure on the very edge, "pushing" off one sharp chip at a time.



To get unweathered flint out of the ground, man had to dig by hand or with sticks. Around these shallow quarry pits you can see chunks and pieces of flint, the waste materials or tailings of the quarrying operations.

Alibates flint is a hard rock that has a sharp edge when shaped properly. Early toolmakers were able to chip and flake it into an astonishing variety of everyday tools of survival. Archeologists have found knives, hammers, chisels, drills, axes, awls, fishhooks, buttons, hoes, scrapers and gravers, as well as dart points or arrowheads—all made out of Alibates flint.

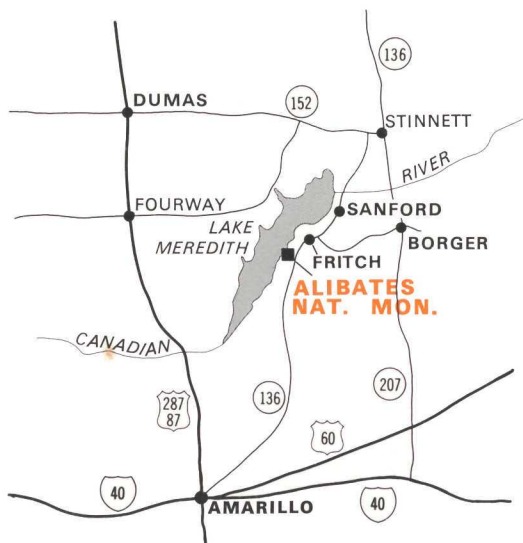
Most evidence of the 12,000 years of almost continuous use of Alibates flint comes not from these quarry pits, but from archeological excavations elsewhere. From 10,000 B.C. to possibly as late as the 1870s, Alibates flint was distributed widely over the High Plains. Most people who used it were nomads—hunters who followed game trails and never built permanent homes.

For a relatively short period, from about A.D. 1200 to 1450, however, some people settled permanently near the quarries. They were farmers, but they also quarried flint and bartered it for such items as pottery, seashells, pipestone, and obsidian. These people are referred to by archeologists as the Panhandle Pueblo Culture because they were Plains Village Indians whose houses show the influence of pueblo style houses in the Southwest.

about your visit

The monument is undeveloped but you may visit the quarry pits on guided walking tours with a park ranger. Tours leave at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. daily from Memorial Day to Labor Day from the Bates Canyon information station at Lake Meredith. To reach Bates Canyon, take Alibates Road from Texas 136, 9.6 kilometers (6 miles) south of Fritch. Follow Alibates Road for 8 kilometers (5 miles). Off-season tours can be arranged by writing Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, P.O. Box 1438, Fritch, Texas, 79036 or by calling 806-857-3151.

The Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, on the campus of West Texas State University, has several exhibits of archeological material from this region and a model of what a Panhandle Pueblo structure might have looked like. The museum is in Canyon, Texas, 26 kilometers (16 miles) south of Amarillo.



Please be mindful of your safety. Be careful when walking over loose rocks along the trails. Remember that all natural and archeological resources are protected by Federal law and the collection, removal, defacement or destruction of such irreplaceable features is strictly prohibited. Entry to Alibates National Monument is by ranger-guided tours only.

administration

Alibates Flint Quarries and Texas Panhandle Pueblo Culture National Monument was authorized by Congress in 1965. The park is administered as a part of Lake Meredith National Recreation Area by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is P.O. Box 1438, Fritch, TX, 79036, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

**National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

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