I'm sure you've heard someone say “if these walls could talk.” I can't help thinking the same thing every time I pick up an arrowhead or artifact. Finding an arrowhead can be rewarding and thought provoking. Garrett and Allegany Counties and the entire eastern part of the United States are rich in ancient tools/artifacts. Projectile points found in this region are made from a variety of stones — flint, chert, quartz, and jasper. They vary in age from just a couple of hundred years to nine thousand years. Holding that nine thousand year old arrowhead, you might wonder was this used to kill an enemy or the evening's meal.

If you are going to hunt for arrowheads and stone tools, here are a few suggestions that may help:

Where can I hunt?
- Hunt mainly along river bottoms and near streams and plowed fields after a rain.

Do I need permission?
- Always get the landowner's permission.
- Close gates going to and from. Leave things the way you found them.
- Be careful not to trample seedlings or crops. State and Federal lands are restricted from hunting artifacts.

Can I keep what I find?
- Yes, but if you think you have something unusual or unique, you should contact the State Archaeology Historic Preservation Office to be sure about your discovery. The site you found your artifacts may not have been recorded.

What about bones and graves?
- Never dig bones or grave sites. If you stumble onto an unmarked grave, you should report it to the authorities. Generally speaking, hunting arrowheads does not require any digging but rather a lot of walking.

What are stone tools?
- There are many types of stone tools in fields that you could easily overlook. Before you go hunting you should get a basic field guide and familiarize yourself with what to look for. Bring back everything you think may be an arrowhead, artifact, or stone tool. Wash it and try to identify the type you've found by shape and configuration.

There are many good fields in this entire area of Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Virginia. If you are going out hunting arrowheads for the first time, try to go with someone knowledgeable on the subject. There are local clubs you may want to contact. On page 7 is a list of clubs, organizations and reference books that may help in your search. Enjoy this wonderful pastime, respect the ancients, and when you do find something, try to imagine the story it may have to tell... listen closely.
Archaeological Societies, Clubs, Universities, and Other Sources of Information

Western Maryland Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Maryland — Cumberland, MD 21502 (4th Friday each month at LaVale Library, 7:30 pm)

West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey, P.O. Box 879, Morgantown, WV 26507

The Archaeological Society of Virginia, 562 Rosmore Road, Richmond, VA 23225

Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Institute, 4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560

Archaeological Archives, Inc., 1964-B Negley Ave., Morgantown, WV 26505

Reference Books


The Amateur Archaeologist’s Handbook by Maurice Robbins and Mary B. Irving — New York

Paleo Points: An Illustrated Chronology of Projectile Points by George Bradford (order from American Indian Books, 533 Summit, Webster Groves, MO 63119)


A West Virginia Archaeologist’s Discoveries

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