Multiple Warp Sandals

By Unknown

These sandals, featured in the Oregon Historical Society's exhibit "Oregon My Oregon," belonged to people living in the northern Great Basin up to 9,200 years ago. They are in the style called Multiple Warp, a reference to the complex weaving construction still apparent in the preserved sandals discovered by archaeologists in the 1930s. Other styles include the Spiral Weft and the Fort Rock styles.

The Fort Rock-style sandals--the oldest style found so far--were discovered in 1938 when archaeologist Luther S. Cressman and a team of University of Oregon students uncovered seventy-five sagebrush sandals at Fort Rock Cave in Lake County, Oregon. Through radio-carbon dating and extensive research, Cressman determined that the sandals were more than 9,000 years old. In further excavations of the Fort Rock area during the 1960s, Cressman and University of Oregon graduate student Stephen Bedwell found evidence of tools and campfire remains from as far back as 11,000 to 13,000 years ago. These archeological discoveries were important evidence in efforts to establish how long people have inhabited Oregon’s Great Basin. The Fort Rock sandals were covered in volcanic ash from the eruption of Mt. Mazama, 7000 years ago, an event that may have contributed to a climate change that made the Fort Rock area more arid. In June 1963, at the Fort Rock excavation site, Cressman read the celebratory dedication that designated Fort Rock Cave as a National Historic Landmark. In 1998, Gordon W. Wanek, a businessman from the LaPine/Bend area who owned the land around Fort Rock, donated his claim to The Archaeological Conservancy. Luther Cressman died in 1994 at the age of 96.


