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PAPER No.25

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THE McCLUSKEY SITE

K.C.A. DAWSON



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OTTAWA 1974

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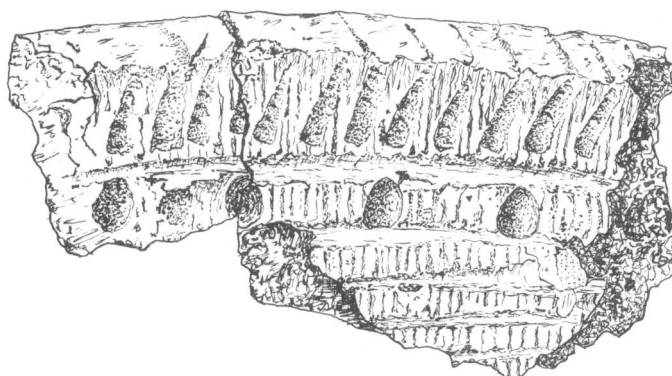
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The McCluskey Site

Abstract

The McCluskey site was occupied seasonally for about 2000 years by Algonkian peoples who exploited the rich local aquatic and faunal resources. Ceramics, lithics and other recoveries are described and analyzed. This suggests a sparse Initial Woodland period occupation represented by the Laurel Culture (c.a., 100 B.C. - A.D. 600) followed by a Terminal Woodland period occupation represented by the Algonkian Culture (c.a., A.D. 500 - A.D. 1600). The Initial period is characterized by Laurel ceramics while the Terminal period is characterized by Blackduck ceramics. Overlapping both periods are transitional ceramics. While the site is considered to be a Blackduck tradition site of the Western Area Algonkian Culture, ceramics evidence clearly indicates intimate Eastern Area and Northern Area Algonkian cultural interaction over a long time span.

Le gisement McCluskey

Résumé

Le gisement McCluskey fut occupé de façon saisonnière durant une période d'à peu près 2000 ans par des Algonquinoïdes qui exploitaient les riches ressources aquatiques et fauniques de la région. On décrit et analyse entre autres la céramique et les vestiges lithiques qui ont été recueillis. Cette étude suggère une occupation de la région par des gens de la culture de Laurel au Sylvicole Initial (environ 100 av. JC-600 après JC) suivie d'une occupation par des gens de culture algonquinoïde au Sylvicole Tardif (environ 500-1600 après JC). La céramique de Laurel caractérise la période du Sylvicole Initial et la céramique de Blackduck caractérise la période du Sylvicole Tardif. Les poteries reliées aux deux périodes constituent la céramique de transition. D'une part, on considère que le gisement se rattache à la tradition de Blackduck représentant l'aire occidentale des cultures algonquinoïdes. D'autre part, le témoignage de la céramique suggère l'existence d'une interaction culturelle étroite entre les cultures algonquinoïdes des aires occidentale, orientale et septentrionale durant un important laps de temps.

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DESCRIPTION OF FIELD WORK

INTRODUCTION

The McCluskey site, designated DbJm-2 (Borden: 1952) is located 40 miles southwest of the city of Thunder Bay, on the north shore of Whitefish Lake, (Figure 1). Pottery recoveries were first recorded from the area in 1882 (Winchell: 1911, 444), but it was not until 1960 that evidence of a site became known. George Edwards, an old prospector, told of seeing pottery and other artifacts exposed when a pressure hose was turned on a small mound near the Ranger Station on the north shore in the early 1920's. Peter Noonan of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests (now the Ministry of Natural Resources) examined the location in 1960 and recovered pottery and human bone from a low, linear hummock located near the lake shore. These incidents were reported to the Royal Ontario Museum by George and Ian Macgillivray, concerned residents of Thunder Bay.

In 1961 Dr. W.A. Kenyon of the Royal Ontario Museum examined the site and in 1962 arranged for the initial excavation by the author. The property owner, George McCluskey, after whom the site is named, permitted exploratory work to be undertaken that spring. This work suggested a Blackduck focus occupation (Wilford: 1941, 1955; MacNeish: 1958) of slightly less than two acres. Surface collections were made in subsequent years until 1964 then, with the support of a salvage grant from the National Museum of Man, further excavations were undertaken coincident with the expansion of the owner's fishing camp.

While this report deals only with one site, the time depth and extensive spatial distribution of Blackduck focus sites in Northern Ontario, clearly indicates the perpetuation of a common archaeological material

culture without major discontinuities (Dawson, Field Reports, National Museum of Man, 1964 to 1971), thus warranting the use of the tradition concept. Further, Blackduck ceramics have been recorded from the Quebec border to Saskatchewan and south into Minnesota and Wisconsin (Wright: 1968c; Hlady: 1970; Wilford: 1955; McPherron: 1967). The site itself is considered to be an Ontario Western Area, Algonkian culture site of the Terminal Woodland period (Wright: 1972, 64-91).

EXCAVATION

The site, located on a small terrace some eight feet above the lake, faces southeast. It is concentrated along the shore extending from a small creek on the northeast and thinning out rapidly about 300 feet to the southwest. A short distance from the terrace the land begins to rise, at first gently and then abruptly to the 1,500 foot contour. In contrast to the surrounding area, there is no forest cover on the site nor did excavations suggest recent growth. Absence of forest cover often marks late prehistoric sites in the region. The clearing has seen extensive use by settlers since the turn of the century. It is now partly covered by buildings and cut through by roadways and garden plots.

Whitefish Lake, located in the Canadian biotic province has a surrounding forest cover of black spruce, tamarack, cedar, fir, white pine, white birch, and alders characteristic of a Lake Forest sub-climate (Patzger: 1946, 213-250). It is located on an interior portage route to the west. The lake is about six miles long and two miles wide and lies in an east-west trough, 1,328 feet above sea level. It is fed by small creeks and drains south to Lake Superior. In its shallow, muddy waters, fish and aquatic plants, including wild rice abound.

The site was first surveyed and laid out in a five-foot grid pattern

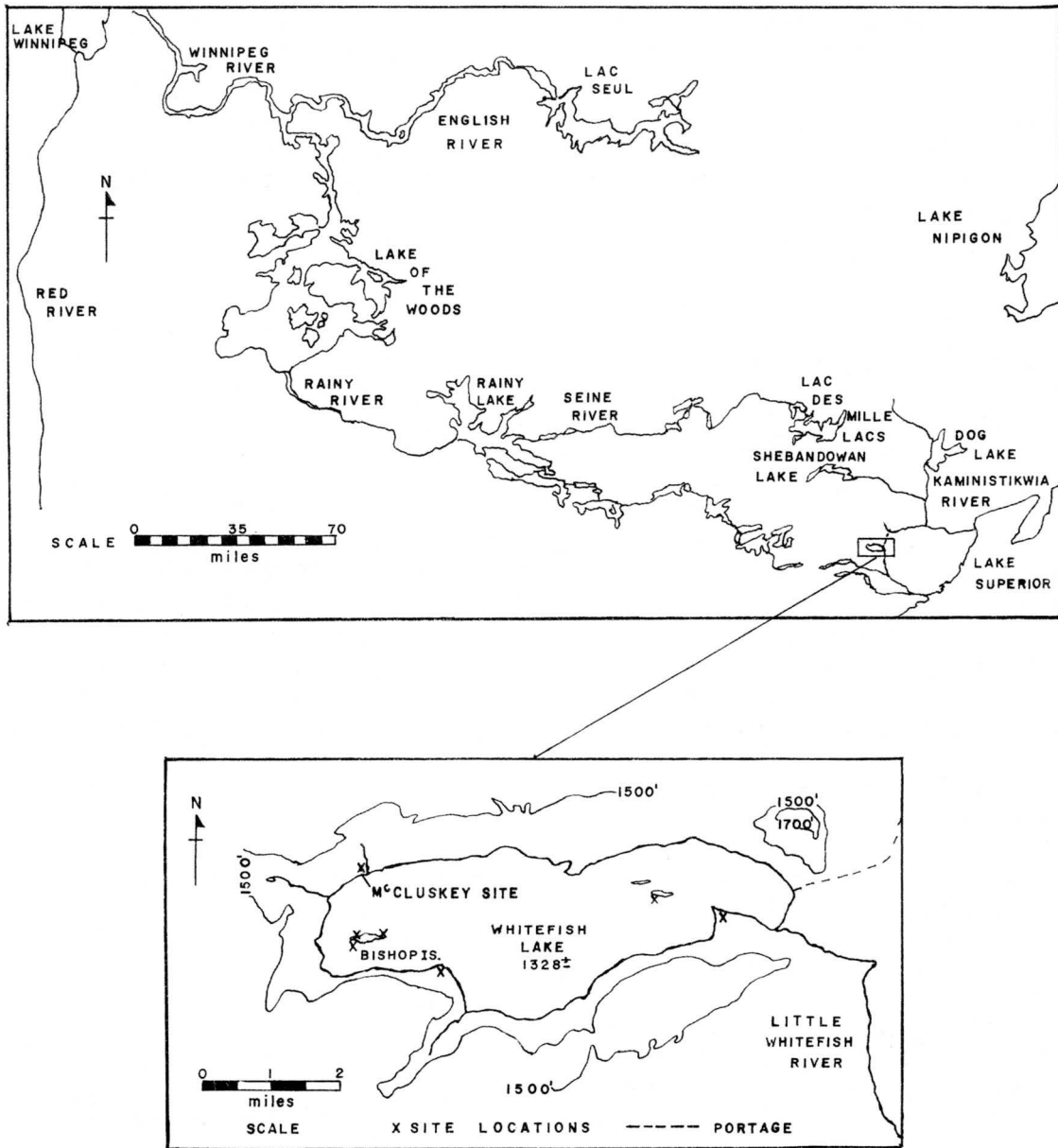


FIGURE 1 MAP OF BOUNDARY WATERS AREA OF NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AND WHITEFISH LAKE SHOWING SITE LOCATIONS.

for control. Twelve five-foot squares were opened in 1961 and four five-foot squares were opened in 1964. In addition, surface collections were made from the side banks, roadways and garden areas. Recoveries were also made from test pits, opened to establish the perimeters of the site and from building construction excavations. Excavations were concentrated in the disturbed ploughed garden area, the area around the linear mound - the latter is now largely covered by a building - and along the side hill edges of the site. The presence of buildings and use of other areas by the camp owner accounts for the erratic excavation. This is shown in Figure 2. Initially arbitrary six-inch levels were maintained. Apart from the recovery of two earlier Laurel Tradition rim sherds (Wright: 1967), from the disturbed ploughed area it appeared during excavation that there was little significant change in artifact content and variety with depth. Thus during subsequent salvage recoveries the site was excavated as a single component.

The only evidence of stratigraphy occurred at the northwest edge of the linear mound associated with a cluster of pottery. It was represented by four visually separated zones, first a two-inch sod zone devoid of cultural refuse, second a seven-inch cultural refuse humus zone, third an eight-inch multi-lensed cultural zone, and fourth a stained sub-soil zone. The lensing consisted of brown-grey soil overlaying three black ashy layers. The ash layers occurred at 9, 13 and 17 inches. They were about one inch thick, generally continuous and regular, appearing to extend under the mound and to disappear in the ploughed area. The lensing was suggestive of water deposition. In the fourth zone, which lay directly beneath the cultural stratum at a depth of 17 to 18 inches, staining or leaching from the cultural deposit and red discolouration

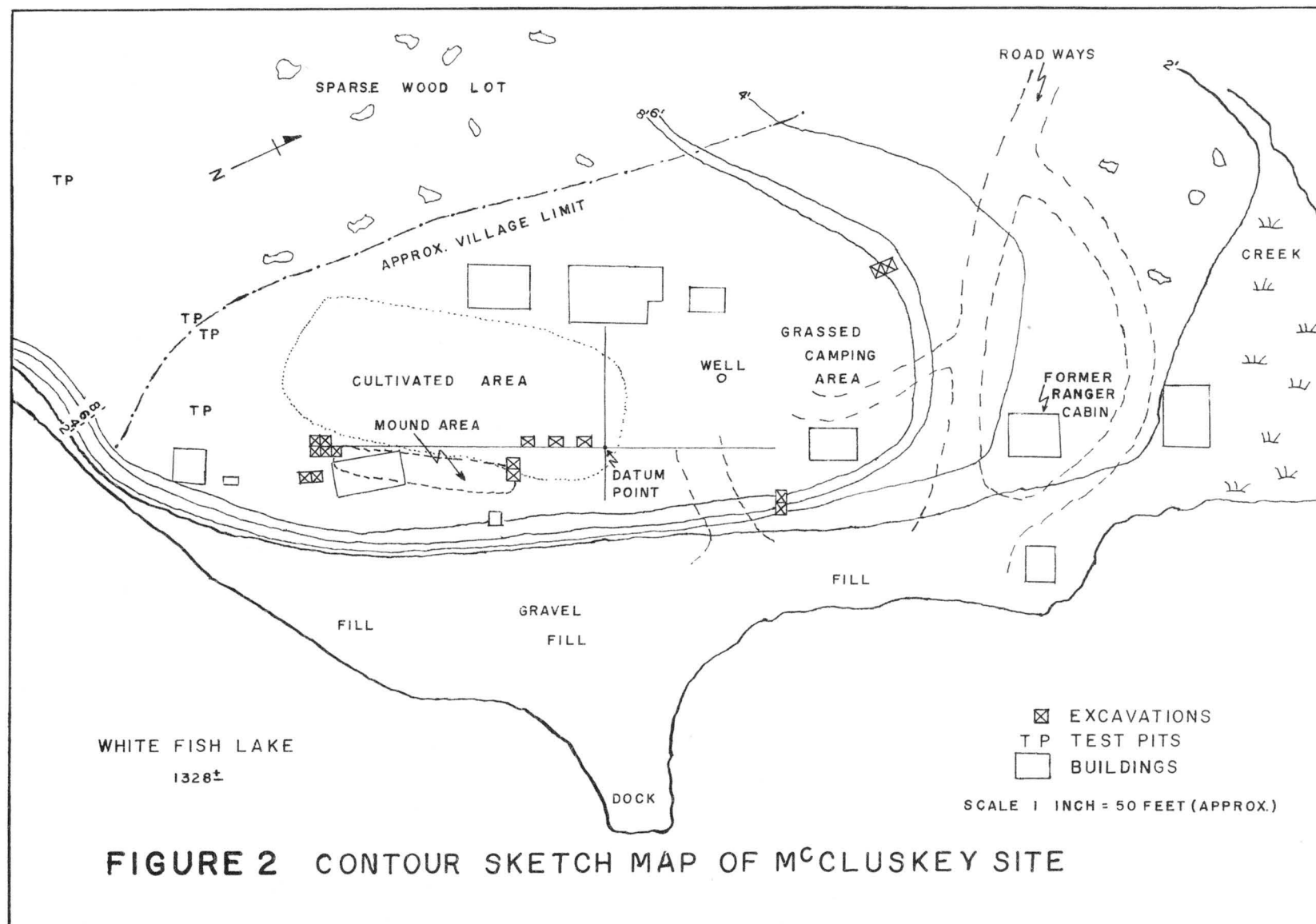
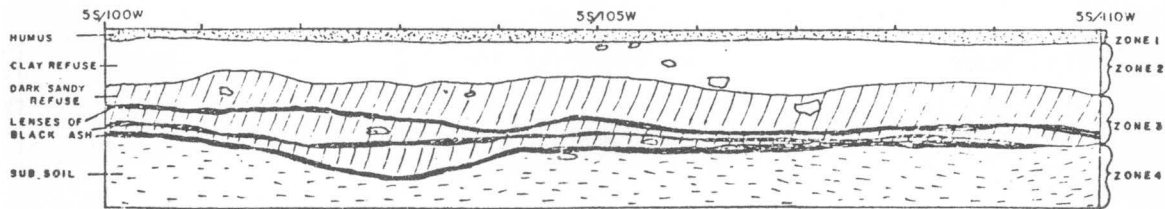


FIGURE 2 CONTOUR SKETCH MAP OF M^CCLUSKEY SITE

suggestive of fire oxidation was evident. This was the sub-soil level (Figure 3).



SCALE 1 FOOT

FIGURE 3 WALL PROFILE SHOWING STRATIFICATION

Artifact production tended to be relatively uniform from the ploughed garden area, features produce a higher quantity. Apart from small fragments, bone recoveries were sparse. Charcoal concentrations suitable for radiocarbon dating were not generally present. Two small samples were obtained. One was obtained from carbon incrustations on vessel rims. No date has, as yet, been received. The other was from a charcoal lense from Level II below the pottery cluster or cache located at the west end of the linear mound. This was originally erroneously reported as above the cache. A date of 40 B.C. $\pm$ 90 B.C. (Gak-1282), (Wilmeth: 1969, 106) was obtained. The date appears to relate to the earlier Laurel tradition. Table 1 shows the artifacts frequencies by Class.

Table 1 Classes of Artifacts*

Pottery	5958	88.9
Lithics	453	6.7
Faunal remains	254	3.8
Worked bone	13	.2
Human bone	11	.2
Copper	<u>10</u>	<u>.2</u>
	6699	100.0%
	=====	=====

* Exclusive of intrusive Material

FEATURES

Apart from the mound, features are few, consisting of a pottery concentration with two small hearth-like features and a roasting pit. Other post mold-like features initially recorded in the field, on cross-sectioning, contained only recent materials and were considered to be intrusive. Plough marks were also recorded in the garden area at depths between 11 and 14 inches.

MOUND

This low linear mound has been partially destroyed by ploughing and building construction. It is located about ten feet back of the shore bank and appears to have extended about fifty-five feet in an east west direction. It may have been about ten feet wide and one foot high. In addition to human bone recoveries recorded from the feature, peripheral excavation

adjacent to the mound uncovered fragments of a number of small mortuary vessels as well as fragments of human bone. Stratigraphy suggests that the mound was built on top of the original surface. A slight depression on the north side is suggestive of construction from top soils taken from the adjacent habitation area. Because of the presence of fruit trees and a building it was not possible to excavate what remains of the mound.

ROASTING PIT

One large pit was uncovered at the east end of the mound. At the base of Level I (0"-6") a heavy concentration of small fire fractured rock was evident. At Level II (6"-12"), an elliptical pattern to these rocks extending in a southwest direction became clear. It measured six feet by two and a half feet. The centre was burned red clay with concentrations of charcoal flecks. At Level III (12"-18") the rock concentration narrows, the sides sloping gently to a maximum depth of 18 inches. Discolouration and a few stone fragments extending down to 21 inches into Level IV (18"-24").

Ceramics recoveries while sparse were concentrated around the periphery of the pit. These included most of the small vessel forms recovered. Within the pit, apart from a few sherds, recoveries were limited to detritus in Level II and two rough bifacial chopper-like tools and a scraper from Level III manufactured from a local siliceous material called taconite.

POTTERY CACHE

The feature was comprised of many crushed pottery vessels accounting for more than 27% of the Blackduck ceramic recoveries but only two rims from other Woodland ceramics. Level I consisted of sod to humus over a layer of clay, below this there were a series of clay refuse layers lensed with black ash. The pottery was roughly concentrated between the second and third lense at the bottom of Level II and the top of Level III. It was spread over an area 25 inches by 35 inches. Surrounding the cache were lithics, dominantly scrapers but including bifaces, projectile points, an abrader, a hammerstone and detritus down to Level III.

The cache was located at the west end of the tumuli mound. It was outlined with fire fractured rocks which in alignment form and size were similar to the roasting pit feature. These stones were concentrated in Level II and terminated midway through Level III. At Level III two circular groupings of fire fractured rocks occurred at the side of the feature. They were roughly 14 inches in diameter and contained a thick lensing of black ash, but no cultural refuse. The feature terminated in burned red clay at the top of Level IV. The red discolouration extended down to Level V. A few Blackduck and Laurel Blackduck transitional pottery sherds were recovered from Levels IV and V.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF CERAMICS

INTRODUCTION

While a number of ceramic traditions are present in the area, the dominant one in the Terminal Woodland period is the Blackduck Tradition. Most of the ceramics recovered fall within the attributes characteristic of this tradition as described for northern Minnesota and southeastern Manitoba (Wilford: 1941, 1955; MacNeish: 1958).

The analysis was started by simply sorting the 5,958 sherds into rim sherds and body sherds. These groupings, 536 rims or 8.9% of the samples and 5,422 body sherds, were then separately examined for specific attributes.

RIM SHERDS

The main attributes used in segregating the rim sherds were the decorative motifs. Within the categories established other attributes of the sherds and metrical data were also considered. A large number of rim sherds are damaged and hence could not be analyzed for a number of attributes regarded as essential in the rim sherd analysis. These totalled 122 or 24.2% of the rim sherds and they have been considered separately under destroyed rims. In addition 120 or 22.4% of the rims were extremely small fragments which could not be analyzed. Rim sherds whose attributes fall outside of the range of attributes characteristic of Blackduck ceramics and very small vessel rims are considered apart from the Blackduck rims. These total 17 or 3.2% and 40 or 7.5% of the sample respectively. Tabulation of the rim recoveries are given in Table 2.

BLACKDUCK RIMS

Typical Blackduck rim sherds are characterized by a break

Table 2 Rim Sherd Tabulation

Rims	No. of Vessels	Rim f	%
Analyzable rims			
Blackduck	182	237	
Other Woodland	8	10	
Laurel Transitional	4	5	
Laurel	2	2	
	<u>196</u>	<u>254</u>	47.4
Destroyed rims		122	24.2
Sherdlets (rim fragments)		120	22.4
Mortuary vessels	31	40	7.5
Totals	227	536	100.00

which occurs approximately one inch below the lip along a line of encircling punctates or a horizontal row of cord-wrapped object impressions. A small number of these rim sherds were split vertically, reflecting a tendency toward laminar splitting which stands in contrast to Blackduck ceramics in Minnesota (Evans: 1961a, 34).

Estimation of vessel form and shape, based on sections of partially restored rims, suggests two distinct sizes of globular utilitarian vessels, medium and large. Evans has noted a similar range of vessel sizes for Blackduck type ware in Minnesota (1961a, 39). Based on caked carbon material adhering to the interior of a number of rims, both the large and medium vessels were used for cooking. Approximately 42 or 23% of the samples were estimated to be medium size Blackduck vessels. This was based on lip thickness which showed a range of 5.1mm. to 8.1mm. with

- No. 16 "Faunal Remains from the Nodwell Site (BcHi-3) and from Four Other Sites in Bruce County, Ontario" by Frances L. Stewart. 149 p., 7 figures. \$2.00

A study of five sites from Bruce County, Ontario revealed changes in the use of the fauna through time. Emphasis was given to the animal remains from the Nodwell Site (BcHi-3) and to the methods of faunal analysis.

- No. 17 "Les schèmes d'établissement à la fin de la pré-histoire et au début de la période historique: le sud du Québec" par Roger J.M. Marois. 433 p., 37 figures, 88 tables. \$5.25

Distribution géographique par bande, voisinage et par langue des Amérindiens du 17e siècle au sud du Québec; rapprochements entre les schèmes d'établissement de la période historique et ceux de la préhistoire.

- No. 18 "Archaeological Collections from Norutak Lake on the Kobuk-Alatna River Portage, Northwestern Alaska" by Donald W. Clark. 67 p., 2 figures, 4 tables, 9 plates. \$1.25

Material from small-scale excavations near the Eskimo-Indian interface relates to several periods of Eskimo prehistory but shows also interior or non-Eskimo influence.

- No. 19 "Crowsnest Pass Archaeological Project 1972 Salvage Excavations and Survey Paper No. 1 Preliminary Report" by B.O.K. Reeves. 67 p., 6 figures, 5 tables, 9 plates. \$1.50

The monograph constitutes a progress report on an extensive examination of occupations dating back some 8,000 years along the eastern shores of Crowsnest Lake in southwestern Alberta.

- No. 20 "Contributions to the Later Prehistory of Kodiak Island, Alaska" by Donald W. Clark and Frederick A. Milan. 183 p., 17 figures, 8 tables, 30 plates. \$2.50

Minor excavations and surface collections are described. This report focusses on material of the second millenium A.D. and the concurrent question of local variation.

- No. 21 "Archaeological Survey of Canada: Annual Revue 1973" edited by George F. MacDonald. 51 p., on request.

- No. 22 "The Nodwell Site" by J.V. Wright. 335 p., 51 tables, 21 figures, 9 charts, 22 plates. \$4.00

The Nodwell Site is a mid 14th century ancestral Huron-Petun village site that was almost completely excavated in 1971 by a joint National Museum of Man and Royal Ontario Museum expedition.

- No. 23 "The Belly River: Prehistoric Population Dynamics in a Northwestern Plains Transitional Zone" by J. Michael Quigg. 165 p., 26 photographs. \$2.00

This report summarizes the archaeological salvage investigations undertaken along the Belly River in southwestern Alberta. In the course of the project numerous archaeological sites were located eroding into the river, and some of the more important localities were excavated.

- No. 24 "Crowsnest Pass Archaeological Project 1973 Salvage Excavations and Survey Paper No. 2 Preliminary Report" by B.O.K. Reeves. 95 p., 6 plates, 8 photographs. \$1.25

This report constitutes a statement on the progress of archaeological salvage operations at a number of important archaeological sites situated in the vicinity of Crowsnest Lake in southwestern Alberta. These sites, endangered by highway construction, have provided important information about the 8000 year occupation history of this region.

- No. 25 "The McCluskey Site" by K.C.A. Dawson. 16 p., 5 figures, 20 tables, 4 plates. \$2.00

A detailed description of a Blackduck tradition site which also contained Laurel tradition and transitional materials. The major occupation is assigned to the Western Area Algonkian culture of northwestern Ontario.