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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY
OF CANADA

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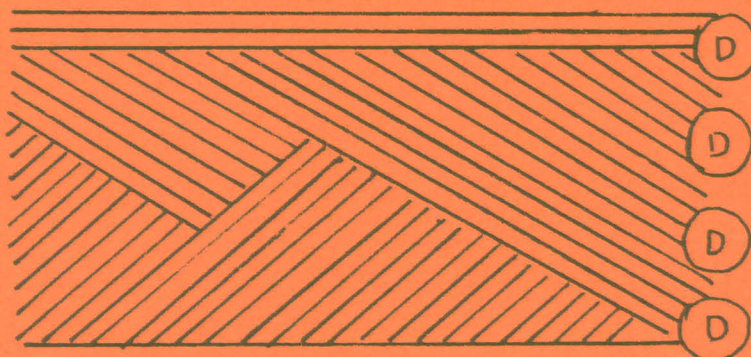
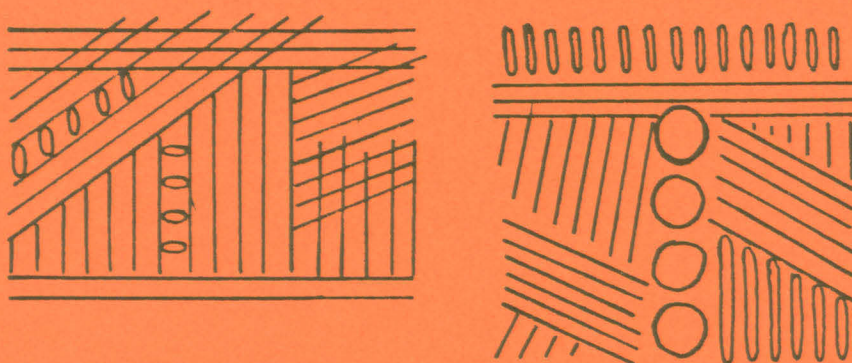
DOSSIER No. 123

THE BECKSTEAD SITE-1977

JAMES F. PENDERGAST

APPENDIX:

FAUNAL ANALYSIS OF THE BECKSTEAD SITE (BfFt-1) A.C. D'ANDREA,
J. PROCOPIO, J.D. ACKERMAN, AND A. CLEMENTS



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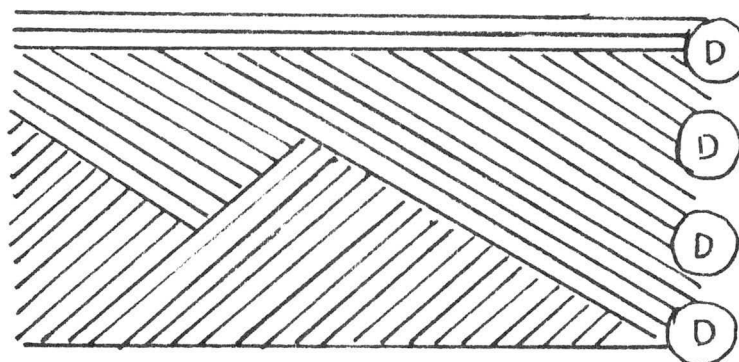
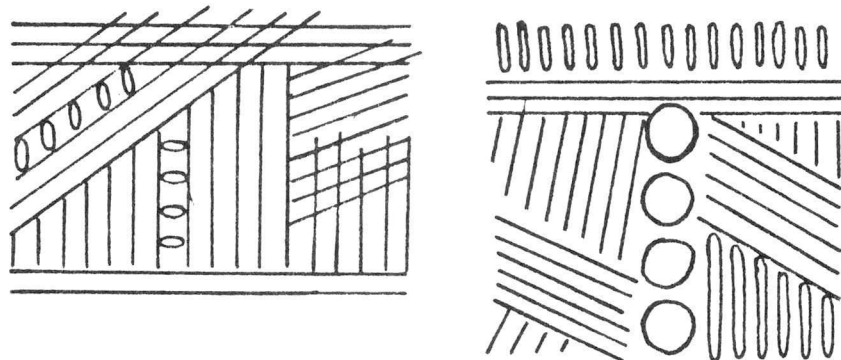
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ABSTRACT

This a detailed account of excavations on the Beckstead St. Lawrence Iroquoian village site which took place in 1977 as a result of the site being threatened by a road-widening project. After quoting from the earliest references to the site by the settlers and an explanation of the excavation plan the author describes and discusses the archaeological features. The embankment, palisade, portions of four longhouses and the open village areas between the longhouses are examined. The orientation and width of the longhouses and the incidence of bunk-lines are compared with other St. Lawrence Iroquoian data. There is a detailed description of the artifacts recovered together with a discussion of their provenience and significance in a St. Lawrence Iroquoian context. The pottery sample is analysed using pottery types on the basis of both rimsherds and vessels. It is also analysed using ceramic attributes also on the basis of both rimsherds and vessels. The results of these analyses are compared. The 1977 pottery sample is compared with that recovered in 1962 and both are compared to the samples from the Salem and Grays Creek sites. Ceramics and pipes are used to compare the facets of village life which took place in the longhouses and the village open areas. An attempt is made to ascertain the sequence in which the longhouses were constructed on the basis of the wall post-mold patterns. Human burials are described in detail regarding their location and orientation which is compared with other St. Lawrence Iroquoian data.

RESUME

L'auteur présente un compte rendu circonstancié des fouilles pratiquées au site du village iroquoien de Beckstead, dans la vallée du Saint-Laurent. Celles-ci eurent lieu en 1977 parce que les travaux d'élargissement d'une route menaçaient l'existence du site. Après avoir cité les plus anciennes références faites par les colons et expliqué le plan des fouilles, l'auteur décrit et étudie les structures archéologiques.

Il examine le remblai, la palissade, les vestiges de quatre longues-maisons et les espaces libres entre elles. Il compare l'orientation et la largeur des longues-maisons et la démarcation entre les dortoirs avec celles d'autres villages iroquoiens de la vallée du Saint-Laurent. Il décrit en détail les objets retrouvés et étudie leur provenance et leur signification dans le contexte des vestiges des Iroquoien du Saint-Laurent. Il analyse l'échantillon de poterie en incorporent les tessons de bord et les vases dans des types. Il utilise aussi les caractères calculés en fonction des tessons et des vases. L'échantillon de poterie mis au jour en 1977 est comparé avec celui retrouvé en 1962, et les deux avec ceux des sites de Salem et de Grays Creek. Les tessons et les pipes en céramique servent à dégager les activités du village qui avaient lieu dans les longues-maisons et les espaces libres. Se basant sur les traces de pieux, l'auteur s'efforce de déterminer l'ordre chronologique de construction des longues-maisons. Il décrit en détail les sépultures humaines suivant leur emplacement et leur orientation et les compare avec celles d'autres villages iroquoiens de la vallée du Saint-Laurent.

Les personnes désireuses de recevoir en français de plus amples renseignements sur cette publication sont priées d'adresser leurs demandes à:

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Section 1 - Introduction

Location

The archaeological remains of the prehistoric St-Lawrence Iroquoian village on the Beckstead farm is located on lots 30 and 31, Concession 5, Williamsburg Township in Dundas County, Ontario. More precisely it is located in the area of map reference 813793, Canadian Topographic Map series, scale 1:50,000, Morrisburg Sheet, 31B/14, East Half. The greater part of the site lies in the area bounded on the west by Highway 31, on the south by the Fifth Concession road, on the east by the natural course of the Fritz Markle creek and on the north by the Beckstead farm buildings. It may also extend to the west of Highway 31 for a short distance if that portion of the site was not destroyed by the construction of the road.

The terrain in the vicinity of the site is an almost dead level glacial clay till plain which has been modified by marine action of the Champlain Sea (Owen 1951; Richard 1970-75). The site is located on a large area of marine deposits composed of silt and sand which include some freshwater deposits. Soil in the area is classified as Osgoode Loam, a medium texture lacustrine soil characterized by poor drainage and a neutral pH at the surface (Matthews and Richards, 1952). The feature on which the village is located is a small sandy knoll which does not rise more than five feet above the surrounding plain. This knoll, which is not more than 300 metres in diameter, is probably a detached portion of a larger but similar sandy deposit which lies some 1,500 metres to the northeast of the site.

To the west and south of the site some 3-400 metres distant are small swamps which form the headwaters of small creeks whose watercourses have been made into drainage ditches. Fritz Markle creek, which rises in a swamp to the south, once flowed past the site in a northwestward direction forming the northern and eastern limits of the village before it flowed into Hess Creek which in turn flowed north to join the South Nation River near where it is crossed by Highway 31 at Cass Bridge. At

present Fritz Markle creek has been relocated and becomes the McMartin Drain which flows past the site 2-300 metres to the east and north of the village.

Early References

The earliest record of the site appears in Croil's 'Dundas' published in 1861. Under the heading "The Mound of Williamsburg" he recounts how he learned from "a clergyman (who was) an old resident of the county" that:

"When the first settlers took possession of the front part of lots numbers thirty and thirty-one in the fifth concession of Williamsburg, they discovered there in the dense forest the remains of one of the tumuli, which abound in the Peninsula of Canada, but here are seldom met with. The wall of the circumvallation of this mound was found on the southern bank of the eastern branch of Fritz Marklie (sic) creek on said lots. ...near the bridge at the so called unfinished mill in that locality".

"The enclosure covered an area of three or four acres of land, the wall was about eighteen inches high, in the form of a semi-circle obviously marked out the spot chosen for a camp".

"The settlers found trees growing on this wall of earth, whose ages must have been about two hundred years or more. In ploughing the ground inside the wall several skulls, some pieces of coarse earthenware, a quantity of decayed parched maize were found. Altogether there must have been six skulls, the bones of the cranium appeared to the settlers to have been twice as thick as that belonging to Europeans. They were surmised to have been Indian skulls and were interred upon some less frequented spot on lot thirty-one."

"Within this enclosure frequently has the absorbing love of money been evidenced in eager nocturnal searches for imagined hidden treasures, but we are not aware that the diggers have had their cupidity gratified in any instance. In 1830 the mound was still distinctly visible, but since 1833 when that part of these lots was permanently put under cultivation, almost every vestige of this ancient camp has vanished from the sight of the passing travellers. No doubt if a proper search were undertaken perhaps even at this day, other skulls and relics of the older time might here be found."

In the "Annual Archaeological Report and Canadian Institute" for the 1891 Session under the title "Williamsburgh" (sic) David Boyle reported upon his visit to the site (p. 13). The following is a precis of that reference published in 1892:

In the township of Williamsburgh (sic) a few miles from Morrisburg there was still to be seen a portion of what had once been a very extensive earthworks. To Boyle's knowledge at that time it was the most easterly circular embankment in Ontario. One of the oldest residents in that part of the country remembered seeing the embankment first in 1816. It was then about three feet above the surrounding level and it enclosed an area of about five acres. Although his father and uncle had told him that there were five 'pottery ovens' within the enclosure he believed this to refer to the fact that quantities of pottery could be found in certain locations rather than to mean that there were structures which could be called 'ovens'.

Many stone and bone implements had been collected from the site but nothing indicative of a European nature had been found. Human remains had been exhumed which invariably belonged to isolated graves containing one body or to single graves arranged in rows. Boyle remarks that no ossuaries or communal graves have been found in the neighbourhood. At the time of Boyle's visit all that remained of the earthworks was a few feet of bank lying partly outside and partly inside the fence on the west side of the road that runs from Morrisburg to Williamsburgh (sic) separating lots 30 and 31. It was so inconspicuous that except for those who knew of its presence none would know of its presence and significance. Having cut a section through the earthwork the evidence was conclusive that the earth had been thrown up artificially. Fragments of pottery were found in the cut to a depth as low as three feet.

In the "Archaeological Report 1894-95" published in 1896 under the title "Ontario Earthworks" (p. 33) Boyle mentions that the line of an old embankment north of Morrisburg was traceable a few years earlier.

In 1905 Smyth J. Carter published "The Story of Dundas" in which he paraphrases much of the information contained in Croil's earlier work. However, he provides the following additional data which suggests more recent activity on the site:

"Since then however the site year after year has continued to become less conspicuous.... So common has become the discovery of human skulls and other

bones and peculiarly fashioned pipes... As recently as two or three years ago skeletons were unearthed... The lower extremities were bent backward and upward so that the feet touched at or near the shoulders. The upper extremities were bent upward in circular form the fingers pointing towards the chest. The teeth are all in place and sound the enamel being apparently untarnished. There was found a soft stone of irregular form somewhat flattened and its broadest part would measure three or four feet. Several dips and undulations appear on the surface of this stone."

In the "Annual Archaeological Report 1907" published in 1908 Boyle remarks (p. 17) that "In 1894 examinations were made of an earth-work a short distance north of Morrisburg in Dundas county..." without further elaboration. This reference to 1894 seems to be an error. Boyle first visited the site in 1891 as reported in the Annual Archaeological Report for that session published in 1892 as noted above. In the Annual Archaeological Report 1907 (p. 37) he explains that he visited the site during the summer of 1907 and that "The village situated here had been examined once before...". The detailed nature of this visit in 1891 suggests that it is that visit to which he makes reference in 1907. Possibly by 1907, when the 1894 date first appears, he had confused events in 1891 and 1894. However the possibility remains that Boyle did in fact visit the site in 1894 although events in 1907 do not support his having done so.

Apparently under pressure from local dignitaries to grant the site greater recognition, Boyle provides the following additional information in the Annual Archaeological Report 1907 published in 1908 (p. 37):

"Mr Brown, the local public school inspector, seemed to have had a notion that on the occasion in question (1891) we had failed to make as thorough an examination as was desirable, and for the purpose of settling all doubts the second examination was made, but although new ground was broken in several places we did not succeed in adding to our stock of information, further than to show that the burial area was somewhat more extensive than we at first supposed. No relics of any value were found, although evidences of aboriginal occupation were numerous in the form of ashes, fragmentary bones and broken pottery. Mr Brown has since learned that the proper place to examine is some rods from the spot we dug into the second time."

In 1914 in a letter to the Geological Survey of Canada, a precursor of the National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada, the same Mr. Brown stated that Boyle had remarked that the pottery on the site was the lightest in colour he had seen. Brown also observed that "the bodies had been placed in their graves in a sitting position one before another" and that "a corner foundation stone of a barn shows marks such as are made by sharpening tools". He concluded his letter with the comment, "The site hardly merits further investigation". W.J. Wintenberg of the National Museums of Canada visited the site that same year but it being under sod and crop he reports finding no artifacts. Wintenberg (1936) does not include the site in his list of sites in eastern Ontario which he believes to be similar to Roebuck.

1962 Project

I commenced looking for the site in 1948 in a casual way but because of discrepancies in the description provided by Croil and the changes in the terrain as a result of the relocation of Fritz Markle Creek when it was made into a drainage ditch, I was unsuccessful until 1953. In that year my young son Denton found a few small potsherds in the kitchen garden in front of the Beckstead house. In 1962 arrangements were made to conduct a small scale excavation on the site with financial support from the National Museum of Canada. The results of that work when three small midden areas were excavated are set out in National Museum of Canada Bulletin 208, "Three Prehistoric Iroquois Components in Eastern Ontario" (pp. 63-76).

1977 Project

In May 1977 it became apparent the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communications planned to widen the Highway 31 right-of-way in the vicinity of Williamsburg. As planned this work would have destroyed a strip of the site approximately 4.5 metres wide adjacent to the existing right-of-way on the east side of the Highway. Although the site was not on Federal Crown Land, the National Museum of Man, National Museums of Canada, approached the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation with a proposal to salvage the area threatened. The Museum's

interest in continuing its investigation of the site and its readiness to react quickly with a field party to salvage the portion of the site threatened led readily to an arrangement with the Ontario Heritage Foundation to issue an excavation permit expeditiously.

On Monday, July 18th, field work began which was to continue almost daily for 33 days until Friday, August 19th. Assistance was provided by the Archaeological Survey of Canada and members of the Ontario Archaeological Society, Ottawa Chapter, participated. University students who had been assigned to the National Museum of Man, Archaeological Survey of Canada, under the 1977 Federal Summer Job Corps programme were rotated through the field party to provide them with field experience.

This paper is further to a brief preliminary report published in the Ottawa Archaeologist in 1977 and will serve to report in detail upon the area five metres wide and 145 metres long excavated in 1977. It will also provide an opportunity to compare and contrast the data obtained in 1977 with that derived from the midden-oriented excavations conducted in 1966 (Pendergast, *ibid.*).

Section 2 - Excavations

Work in the threatened area commenced sufficiently far south of the known occupation area to ensure it would be outside the embankment described in the earliest descriptions of the site (*op.cit.*). By proceeding north in a trench the full width of the area threatened it was planned to encounter the embankment on the south side of the site, delineate the southern limits of the site and detect cultural activity outside the embankment on the south, if indeed it were present.

Knowledge of the site arising from the excavations in 1962, coupled with the need to complete the work in the short period available before the highway construction began led to a decision to strip the plough zone from the excavation area using a grader. Not more than fifty metres had been graded before it was stopped for fear that the deep ruts being cut by the grader would damage the deposits we hoped to find undisturbed below the plough zone. Thereafter, the cultivated soil, often over 45 cms deep, was removed laboriously using wheelbarrows - so much for mechanical

archaeology.

Having established datum pickets at the southern end of the work, the area to be excavated was laid out in eighteen 25-foot squares on a magnetic north-south axis and numbered from south to north. Later these were changed to eight metre squares. As it turned out parts of seventeen squares were excavated.

When the plough zone had been removed the undisturbed surface was 'shovel-shined' in thin layers, usually less than or 20 mm at a time, to reveal the cultural features as dark stains in the light-coloured subsoil. The location of these features were recorded by triangulation using two adjacent square markers as datum points. Post mold diameters and the depth they extended into the sub-soil were recorded when they had been verified by being cross-sectioned. Archaeological features, including graves, were excavated by trowelling. Many soil samples were taken from the archaeological features and grave fill. These have been subjected to floatation procedures and are reported upon at Part 2 .

The locations of human remains were also plotted by triangulation and exposed by trowelling and brushing. Skeletal material, together with large amounts of grave fill, was removed and placed in large plastic bags which were boxed and returned to the Archaeological Survey of Canada for examination at a later date. This has not been possible. The human remains were returned to the Akwesasne Iroquois band at St Regis for re-burial before the material could be examined in detail. The data available on the human remains excavated are set out at Section 8.

The artifacts too were located by triangulation and recorded. They are described in Section 7.

The European deposits encountered in Squares 7, 8, 9 and 16 and the blue glass bead recovered in Square 4 are discussed in Section 7.

Village Areas

Excavation revealed a number of distinct village areas which, for convenience, have been designated as follows:

Area 'A' - The south ditch which is part of the
embankment feature; located in Square 3;

- Area 'B' - The open village area between the south ditch and House 1; located in portions of Squares 3 and 4;
- Area 'C' - House 1; located in Squares 4 and 5;
- Area 'D' - The small area between House 1 and House 2; located in Square 5;
- Area 'E' - House 2; located in a portion of Square 5 and Square 6;
- Area 'F' - The large area between House 2 and House 3; located in a portion of Square 6 and Squares 7, 8, 9 and a portion of Square 10;
- Area 'G' - House 3; located in portions of Squares 10 and 11;
- Area 'H' - The small area between House 3 and House 4; located in Square 11;
- Area 'J' - House 4; located in portions of Squares 11 and 12;
- Area 'K' - The large open village area between House 4 and the north ditch; located in Squares 13, 14, 15, 16 and a portion of Square 17;
- Area 'L' - The north ditch with part of the embankment feature; located in Square 17.

Other small areas were excavated beyond the major excavation to investigate provenience problems:

- Area 'M' - The east ditch which is part of the embankment feature;
- Area 'N' - A small test trench excavated a short distance east of the main excavation on the lawn;
- Area 'O' - A small test trench excavated a short distance east of the main excavation in the kitchen garden area;
- Area 'P' - A small test trench excavated to confirm the limits of the 1962 excavation.

The location of these areas is set out at Figure 1.

The total inventory of archaeological features by village areas, together with a general indication of their contents, is set out at Table 1.

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