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Roebuck Prehistoric Village Site,
Grenville County, Ontario

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ROEBUCK PREHISTORIC VILLAGE SITE, GRENVILLE COUNTY, ONTARIO

INTRODUCTION

The Roebuck site, a prehistoric, palisaded village site of Iroquoian culture, is located on the north half of lots 2 and 3, con. VI, Augusta tp., Grenville co., Ontario, about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile northeast of the village of Roebuck (from which it is named), 8 miles north of St. Lawrence river at Prescott, and about 40 miles south of Ottawa. An intensive exploration of the site was made by the author, under the general direction of Harlan I. Smith, from June 17 to October 28, 1912, and from April 24 to May 20, 1915.

Although known at least since 1845, and subject for many years, like many other sites in Ontario, to considerable desultory digging and surface searching by local collectors, the Roebuck site had never been systematically explored. Much of the material found at the site had been lost and some of it scattered without any specific data as to the particular site or locality from which it came.

The collection secured from the site by the writer is large enough to give us an idea of the culture of the inhabitants, one hundred and sixty-seven boxes of specimens, including human skeletons from eighty-three graves, being secured. In this paper an attempt is made to characterize the culture so as to form a measure with which to compare the results from other Iroquoian sites in eastern Canada, and to enable us to distinguish material found in nearby sites of other cultures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Messrs. James Kelso and Nathaniel White kindly gave permission for the explorations on their respective properties, and we are especially grateful to the latter for presenting a number of specimens and lending others; also to Mr. William McKinley for presenting a pipe found on his property about one-quarter mile west of the site. The late Dr. M. O. Malte, of the Botanical Division, National Museum of Canada, identified one of the plant remains; Chief Justice F. R. Latchford, of Toronto, identified most of the clam shells; Earl A. Reid, of the Division of Fishes, U.S. National Museum, the fish remains; Dr. Alexander Wetmore, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, the bird remains; and Dr. Gerrit S. Miller, of the Division of Mammals, and Dr. J. W. Gidley, of the Division of Fossil Mammals, both of the U.S. National Museum, identified the mammalian remains. The author wishes to record here also his appreciation of Mr. Smith's advice and assistance in the preparation of parts of this monograph and the maps.

The accompanying illustrations of the artifacts are from photographs and from drawings by the author. Two text figures are the work of

ARTICLES OF ADORNMENT

The articles of personal adornment consist of beads and pendants. Possibly, as among the Hurons,¹ the braids of hair were decorated with ornaments. Some of the finely polished bone objects described as awls may have been hairpins,² but the only awl found in a position that would suggest its use for this purpose, lay near the occiput of the skull of a woman in grave 40; this, however, was probably accidentally introduced into the grave, as all the graves in this part of the site were covered with refuse containing similar bone awls. No evidence of the use of nose ornaments was discovered;³ but the fact that the ears of some of the human face masks on earthenware pipes (Plate XVI, figures 16, 18, and 20) are pierced with holes, suggests that the practice of piercing the ears for the attachment of ornaments was common among the Indians; Father du Peron mentions the custom as existing among the Hurons.

Beads

The beads are made of stone, shell, bone, teeth, earthenware, potsherds, and pieces of broken pipe stems. A faceted, blue glass bead, found in the muck surrounding one of the springs at the site, is unlike any of the glass beads from seventeenth century Iroquoian sites in Ontario and New York, and was, therefore, probably dropped quite recently.⁴

Discoidal Stone Beads. Ninety-one beads, of which more than half are in Mr. White's collection, are made of stone; seventy-seven being made of soapstone of various colours, seven of limestone, four of sandstone, and three of slate. One of the beads is almost spherical (Cat. No. VIII-F-9181) and the rest are flat, discoidal forms (Plate XV, figure 5), but none is uniformly circular. The diameter of the beads varies from $\frac{5}{16}$ inch to $1\frac{1}{16}$ inches, but the majority are about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch; and they are from $\frac{1}{16}$ inch to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. Most of the holes, very few of which are exactly in the centre, are biconcave and are from $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in diameter. The only decorated bead had grooves around part of its periphery (Cat. No. VIII-F-10082). Most of the soapstone beads are highly polished.

The manufacture of these discoidal stone beads is illustrated by twenty-seven specimens (ten of them being in the White collection) which include: two partly worked pieces of soapstone and two of slate; seventeen roughly circular disks that are probably unfinished, the flat sides of three retaining the striae resulting from the rubbing process; and three with the hole commenced on one face, and six others showing the beginnings of holes on both faces. Judging from the appearance of some of the specimens, the final polishing was not attempted until after the hole was drilled. The periphery of the beads was smoothed and finished off either straight or round by rubbing, probably on some of the flat pieces of rock considered as whetstones.

¹Father du Peron, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

²Mills (2: 48) suggests that large, double-pointed bone and antler awls, found directly below some of the human skulls in the Gartner mound in Ohio, were hairpins.

³The Jesuit missionaries do not seem to have noticed this custom among the Hurons or Neutrals; Champlain (III, p. 116) says the Cheveux Relevés, Algonkian neighbours of the Hurons, pierced their noses for ornaments.

⁴A string of smaller beads of this type, some of which are of the same colour, was found in a grave of what was probably a Wyandot Indian, near Amherstburg, Ont.; they are Cat. No. VIII-F-2362, Nat. Mus., Canada.

Four more or less spheroidal nodules and a flattened, oval earthenware nodule, about the same size and shape as some of the beads described above, but lacking the hole, are either abortive attempts to make beads or were intended for some other purpose.

Modelled earthenware beads have been found at sites of the same culture in Ontario and New York (Skinner, 4:149) and at other Iroquoian sites elsewhere in Ontario and New York (Beauchamp, 2, Figures 236 to 238).

Beads Made of Teeth. Only one of the beads is made of a tooth (Cat. No. VIII-F-12350). It is a polished canine of a dog with the longitudinal neural cavity exposed by grinding off both ends of the tooth. Beads of this kind are rarely found at other Iroquoian sites.

Beads Made of Broken Pipe Stems. Two beads were made from short sections of the broken stems of earthenware pipes by smoothing the broken ends. Similar beads have been found at Onondaga sites in Jefferson county, New York (Skinner, 4:149, and Parker, 6:337), and at early Huron sites in Victoria county, Ontario.

Cylindrical Bone Beads. Forty-three beads were made from short sections of hollow bones (See Plate XV, figure 11). Most of them are well preserved and many still retain considerable polish; a few are fragmentary. Thirty-six are made of bird bones, sixteen being from ulnæ, most of which retain the row of elevated muscular attachments characteristic of this bone; eight are from humeri; three from radii; and three from tibio-tarsi, one of them retaining the fibular ridge of the bone; six others are derived from unidentified bird bones. Mammal bones furnished material for only a few beads, two being derived from femora, two from humeri, and another from an unidentified bone. Most of the beads have the ends unevenly severed; but even some of those with uneven ends are polished and evidently were finished, the ends apparently having become rounded by wear. The inner edge of a few specimens is worn from the friction of the cord on which they were strung. The shortest bead is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and the longest is $2\frac{5}{16}$ inches long; the diameter varies with the kind of bone used, one made from a bird's radius being $\frac{3}{16}$ inch, whereas that of one apparently made from the humerus of the Canada goose is $\frac{5}{8}$ inch.

None of the beads shows incised or other kind of decoration, although it is possible that the scoring around the middle of the specimen illustrated was intended to be ornamental; no beads, also, show that colouring matter had been applied to them, as on a bead from a Huron site in Victoria county (Boyle, 11, Figure 30).

Bone beads were as abundant here as at Neutral sites in southwestern Ontario.

The manufacture of these bone beads can be illustrated by some of the specimens found, twenty-three of them being derived from bird bones, eight from those of mammals, and two from human fibulæ and one from a human radius; there are also many unworked bones. A few bones have the extremities merely broken off, others had them removed by scoring and breaking. The severed ends were afterwards smoothed by rubbing,