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THE
EXCAVATION
OF
STE MARIE I
LIBRARY
NATIONAL MUSEUM

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I. Introduction

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE tragic story of Ste Marie I is well known in Canadian history. Begun by the Jesuits in the year 1639 as a centre for their activities among the Huron Indians, the mission lasted but a brief decade; in 1649 it was abandoned and burned by the Jesuits themselves. The reason, of course, was the destruction and dispersion of the Hurons in that year by attacks of unprecedented fury unleashed against them by the Five Nations Iroquois. With the Hurons gone, the Jesuits had no alternative but to depart from the land. The entire story is brilliantly told by Francis Parkman in *The Jesuits in North America*.

The choice of Ste Marie and of the Huron country as a centre for missionary activity was no accident. For nearly thirty years previous to the founding of Ste Marie, Huronia had been visited and close contacts had been established there by French fur traders, explorers, and missionaries. In the early years of French settlement on the St. Lawrence, fleets of Huron canoes had come to Quebec, first perhaps from curiosity to see the white man, then to engage in trade. Soon they came with regularity and in increasing numbers. Thus before a white man visited Huronia, the Huron Indians were doubtless well acquainted with the benefits of European trade goods, and knew the appearance of the strangers from across the great water. Champlain, in 1615, visited the land of the Hurons, and almost on the same day the Recollet priest, Joseph Le Caron, arrived from Quebec by a slightly different route; there is, indeed, some uncertainty about which can claim priority. Champlain remained the better part of a year with the Hurons, even travelling with them to visit the Petuns, a kindred tribe which lived twenty or thirty miles to the west, and accompanying them on a raiding expedition against the Five Nations. The Recollets stayed on in the country after Champlain's departure and established missions among the Hurons; these they continued to administer until 1626. In that year, they turned

(d) Bone

About ten thousand fragments of bone were scattered over the site, with especially large concentrations in the area of the Residence, particularly in the fill north of the foundation wall, on and near the hearths, east of the northwest bastion, and in the Indian hearths. Exclusive of a few hundred specimens of modern origin, such as beef bones, and the skeletons of small animals, chiefly rodents, most of the material bore evidence of having been refuse from meals. Much of it had been boiled; some of it was partially burned, especially that found on the hearth. By far the greater number of specimens consisted of small fragments of large bones and the bones of small birds, fish, and mammals. There were also a good many large bones, particularly the leg bones of birds and a few mammal bones.

From what has already been said, it is apparent that mammals, birds, and fish were used for food, with mammals and birds seemingly predominant. Fish bones were not, however, uncommon. The identification of species is being carried out by the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology. It is hoped to publish a brief separate report on the bones when the work of identification is complete. It is probable that while the majority of the bones are of wild, indigenous species, domesticated animals may also be represented.

Bones found in Indian hearths and closely associated with Indian artifacts, as well as bones which were obviously deposited after the burning of the site, for example, those found on the threshold of the southwest bastion door, were refuse discarded by the Hurons. It is presumed that most of the remainder had been used by the French occupants of the site.

Few artifacts of bone came to light. Of European origin were the rosary beads and the peculiar copper-sheathed bone object described on page 130.

(e) Beads

A moderate-sized collection of beads—some ninety-three counting both complete and fragmentary specimens—comprised a wide variety of types. The bone beads, of which there were eleven specimens, exclusive of five still in position in a fragmentary rosary, were presumably for ritual purposes; the remainder, of



31.65 K'.4

A



33.64 K'.6

B



32.63 M'.5

C



36.65 M'.3

D



35.65 J'.5

E



34.65 N'.10

F



37.66 R'.1

G



36.66 R'.2

H



38.63 K'.1

J



33.71 Q'.2

K



39.66 Z'.4

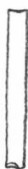
L



39.66 Z'.2

1.1

M



N



O



P

FIG. 25. European bone and glass beads, shown in profile and end views. Scale: about 2:3.

glass, were so like the usual trade bead that we may safely assume that they were imported for the same purpose.

Bone beads (Fig. 25). The bone beads were frequently very well preserved and still retained a high lustre (Fig. 25, C-F). Several were of a deep black, though most were a rich, natural straw-colour, and a few were grayish from lying in ash or from calcination. Ten of them were globular, with the ends slightly flattened, and measured from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter. A unique, barrel-shaped bead is shown in Fig. 25K.

Glass Beads. Of sixty-five glass beads, forty-five were red and the rest blue. The blue beads were mostly globular, though two were oblong, almost elliptical, and one was tubular. Two shades of blue, a light and a dark, were used in making these beads, with the dark much preferred. All blue beads, unlike red ones, have weathered, to some extent. A beautiful blue bead, $1 \frac{5}{16}$ inches long, had six spiral grooves. The usual dimensions for the round beads were $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{5}{16}$ inches in diameter and $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length.

The red beads were either round or tubular and the latter might be round or square in section. The two classes were nearly equal numerically. In measurement, the round beads ranged from $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Apparently none of the tubular beads was complete, for their ends nearly always looked unfinished. Those which were round in section were much the more numerous, the ratio being about 3 to 1. Lengths varied from $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inches and diameters from $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Of the five tubular beads with square sections, three were twisted spirally, though not one of the round-sectioned specimens was so formed. Lengths varied from $\frac{3}{8}$ to $2 \frac{1}{8}$ inches.

The round red beads varied in colour. Usually they were a solid, rather dull, coral red throughout, but slightly less than half of them had a core of colourless glass. Casual inspection left one with the impression that the core was black, but a closer scrutiny showed that this was due to the masking effect of the outer layer of red (Fig. 25, A, B, G-J, L, M).

(f) *Articles of Religious Use*

There can be little doubt that when the surviving missionaries finally left Ste Marie I, they took with them those articles of

DISTRIBUTION PLAN 1. Distribution of beads and Indian sherds in the compound area.