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"THE MACMURCHY SITE: A PETUN SITE IN
GREY COUNTY, ONTARIO

Copied from the original MSS in possession
of Mrs W.D. Bell

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and eleven beads were rolled from pieces of sheet brass or copper into tubular form. Two fragments of what seem to be rolled sheet brass awls were also found; a type which is common at Graham-Rogers and other historic sites. Three rings were made of short narrow pieces, bent into a circle. The rest of the brass and copper was in form of jagged cut and broken fragments of kettles. No bails, or bail holders were found, which suggests that the sheet metal ware was already in pieces when obtained, not as entire kettles.

Trade Goods of Glass

Only two glass beads are known to have come from this site, one from the excavated sample, the other in the MacMurchy family collection. Both of these are cylindrical, one half by three-sixteenths inches of white glass. The white "seed beads", common at Graham-Rogers and Marquette, of early contact times, and the multi-coloured "candy beads" of Ossossane, of Jesuit times, were conspicuously absent. 13x5mm

Chronological data derived from the Trade Goods

The total absence of the familiar trade hatchet, and the apparent absence of entire brass or copper kettles suggests a date in very early contact times for MacMurchy II, since all other known historic sites bear evidence of at least a few of these goods. Hatchets may not have entered North America at this time, and the fragmentary nature of the brass and copper suggests that it was obtained, not as kettles from the French, but as small pieces of already cut-up kettles purchased through Huron middle-men; before any French traders ever appeared in Petun territory. It seems that only where they were plentiful were brass kettles allowed to remain as such, otherwise they were cut to pieces for re-manufacture into other goods.

1. Kidd, 1953.

Trade beads are surprisingly scarce, much more so than at Warminster and Graham-Rogers, which were previously considered the earliest known contact sites. The type of bead is also significant. It is obvious that the striped, multi-coloured "candy" variety must be of Jesuit age, therefore dating in the 1640's, since they are found at Ossossane, and Fort St. Marie¹, sites well identified as Jesuit mission stations. This type of bead does not appear at Warminster or Graham-Rogers, only the "seed bead", shaped like a grain of wheat, being found. Historic Huron sites cannot perforce be later than 1649, therefore, "seed bead" sites must be earlier than those bearing Jesuit age beads and Jesuit relics. MacMurchy II, while historic, does not even contain "seed beads", having instead a white cylindrical variety which is a minor type at Graham-Rogers and Warminster. The conclusion that MacMurchy II is older than Warminster or Graham-Rogers seems inescapable. Lest it should be argued that the Hurons did not allow "late-model" trade goods to pass out of their territory, selling the Petuns only obsolete left-overs, it would be well to point out that later sites do occur in Petun country, on which surface collections of the multi-coloured, and red cylindrical beads, of known Jesuit age, have been made. Hence, when these goods came to North America, Petuns, as well as Hurons bought them. Jesuit relics do not occur at MacMurchy II, but Mr. J.A. Blair found a Jesuit medal, evidently part of a priest's regalia, on a site some ten miles to the southward of MacMurchy II.

The types of beads, lack of Jesuit relics and iron hatchets argue for an early date for MacMurchy II, probably no later than the 1615 period, and most likely earlier, when the Hurons were trading with the French at Quebec, but before Champlain had made his 1615
 1. Kidd, 1949.

way to the Huron homeland. By 1615 hatchets were available as trade goods, since Warminster, probably the "Cahigue"¹ visited by Champlain, does contain a few. The Graham-Rogers site, demonstrated by its trade beads to be of the same age, also contains a few iron hatchets. Later sites, of the Jesuit period contain scores of them; or did before being looted.

The presence of trade goods at MacInturby II probably explains the increase in the number of beaver killed, and the manufacture of hide scapars; both many times more numerous than in prehistoric MacInturby I.

FOOD REMAINS

Remains of food were prolific in the middens, including bones of animals and carbonized vegetal material. The latter was almost wholly the remains of agricultural produce, while the former, except perhaps for dog bones, represented wild animals killed for food.

Agricultural produce.

Carbonized corn cobs and kernels, almost perfectly preserved, were the most numerous remains of food crops. Cobs are very small when compared to modern corn, one fragment from MacInturby I being two inches long, and was evidently about three inches long when whole; while three whole cobs from MacInturby II measured only one and three quarters. Other fragments suggest that around four inches must have been the absolute maximum length, with the average being two or even less. The present day "Golden Bantam" variety, one of our oldest and smallest, usually bears seven or eight inch cobs, given fertile soil, fertilizer, and reasonably adequate rainfall and cultivation. It is interesting, however, to note that this old variety, perhaps the least developed from the Indian strains, will produce tiny three

L. McIlvraith, 1947.