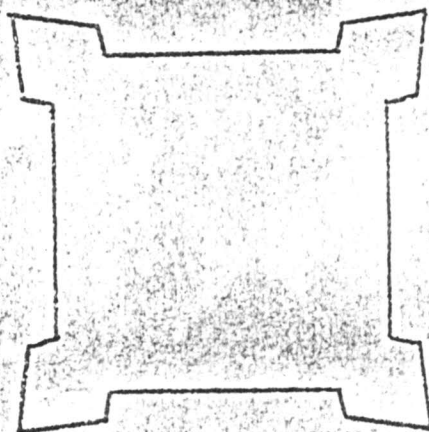


# NEW SEVERN OR NIEU SAVANNE

The Identification of an Early  
Hudson Bay Fur Trade Post



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NEW SEVERN OR NIEU SAVANNE: THE IDENTIFICATION  
OF AN EARLY HUDSON BAY FUR TRADE POST

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines problems inherent in identifying fur trade post archaeological sites dating to the early Hudson Bay trade period (1668-1713). Research focuses on a particular trade post site (G1Iw-1) located near Fort Severn, Ontario. A re-evaluation of the area's early history indicated that New Severn (1685-1690) and Nieu Savanne (1700-1704) were the most probable candidates for the identity of this site.

Archaeological and historical data were used to identify the G1Iw-1 site as the former Hudson's Bay Company post New Severn. Evidence for this conclusion included artifact and settlement analysis of the New Severn site and historical accounts from archival and secondary sources.

The presence of French material culture items within the New Severn assemblage in conjunction with historical evidence suggesting a dependence on French-Canadian fur trade expertise by the neophyte Hudson's Bay Company led to the advancement of a research hypothesis. It states that French and English fur trade posts extant on Hudson Bay between 1668-1713 should be characterized by strongly similar material culture remains.

# CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Hudson Bay History (1668-1713) . . .	2
Previous Research . . . . .	7
Thesis Summary . . . . .	9
2. FORT SEVERN AREA HISTORY (1673-1713) . . .	12
Events Prior to European Settlement .	13
New Severn Post 1685-1690 . . . . .	16
Hiatus in European Residency . . . . .	19
Nieu Savanne 1700-1704 . . . . .	21
Post-1704 Trade . . . . .	27
Summary of Events at Fort Severn between 1673-1713 . . . . .	27
3. SITE DESCRIPTION . . . . .	
Ecological Setting . . . . .	30
Location . . . . .	31
Field Methods . . . . .	33
Stratigraphy . . . . .	38
Settlement Features . . . . .	40
4. ARTIFACT ANALYSIS . . . . .	67
Kitchen Artifact Group . . . . .	77
Architectural Group . . . . .	99
Furniture Artifact Group . . . . .	120
Arms Artifact Group . . . . .	127
Clothing Artifact Group . . . . .	152
Personal Artifact Group . . . . .	161
Smoking Pipe Group . . . . .	167
Activities Group . . . . .	181
Unidentified Artifacts . . . . .	191

	<u>Page</u>
5. INTERPRETATIONS . . . . .	194
Temporal Placement of the GIIW-1 Site . . . . .	194
Identification of the GIIW-1 Site . .	197
New Severn Activities . . . . .	202
Advancement of the Similar Fur Trade Material Culture Hypothesis . .	206
6. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	210
REFERENCES . . . . .	213
APPENDICES: A. New Severn Shipping Invoice 1686 . . . . .	220
B. Faunal Analysis . . . . .	227
C. New Severn Debt List 1689	246
D. New Severn Trade Account 1689 . . . . .	248

## Clothing Artifact Group

These artifacts were used as clothing adornments, garment fasteners, or mending devices. The relative frequency of clothing artifacts within the total collection is small with the group comprising only 1.8% of the assemblage. The frequencies of artifact classes within this group are presented in Table 28.

TABLE 28. Gliw-1 Clothing Artifacts.

Clothing artifact	N	%
Buckles	4	7.0
Thimbles	1	1.8
Buttons	5	8.8
Scissors	0	0.0
Straight pins	0	0.0
Hook and eye fasteners	0	0.0
Bale seals (for cloth)	0	0.0
Textile fragments	3	5.3
Hawk bells	11	19.3
Needles and awls	2	3.5
Glass beads	20	35.1
Brass bangles	11	19.3
Total	57	100.1

variety. This bell (Figure 51e) is incomplete, but portions of both hemispheres remain intact. It resembles the previously described Flushloop bells except it does not have a flanged equatorial joint. This specimen has a diameter of 22 mm.

A final note on sheet brass bells is that they are probably of French origin. Brown (1977:77-79) bases this hypothesis on his examination of assemblages from the Upper Mississippi Valley, Lower Mississippi Valley, and the Great Lakes area. Within the latter two zones, sheet brass bells are the only varieties found; whereas both sheet and cast brass varieties are located in the Lower Mississippi Valley. According to Brown (1977:79), this disparate distribution reflects English trade influences in the Lower Mississippi Valley.

#### Needles and Awls

Three iron off-set awls were recovered from within building 2. Two specimens (Figure 53) were 91 mm long and varied between 2 mm and 5 mm in thickness. The remaining awl was broken, but ranged between 3 mm and 1 mm in thickness.

#### Glass Beads

A single large blue bead and 19 white seed beads were

associated with building 1. The oval, medium blue bead is 13 mm long, 7 mm in diameter, and has a 1 mm diameter central hole. The 19 seed beads had diameters between 2.5 mm and 3.5 mm.

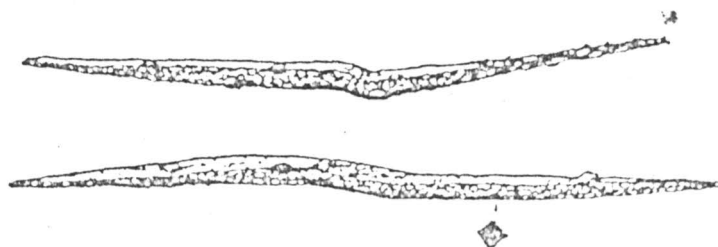


FIG. 53. Gliw-1 off-set awls.

#### Brass bangles

Bangles are cylindrical beads made from rolled sheet brass or copper and like hawk bells were a common trade item. The clayen bangles from the site are between 15 mm to 41 mm long with a mean length of 27 mm. Three brass bangles associated with building 1 still retain leather or twine fragments intact.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has examined one aspect of the often tempestuous period of French/English competition for control of the early Hudson Bay fur trade. The research focuses on the problems of identifying trade post sites dating between 1668-1713, through the examination of a particular archaeological trade post site located near Fort Severn, Ontario. Previous testing (Pollock and MaLeod 1977) indicated that the GIIW-1 site dated to the early period of the Hudson Bay fur trade, while subsequent excavation and analysis by the present author refined the temporal placement of the GIIW-1 site to the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Also, historical research identified New Severn (1685-1690) and Nieu Savanne (1700-1704) as the most probable candidates for the identity of the GIIW-1 site.

Through a combination of historical and archaeological evidence, The GIIW-1 site was identified as the Hudson's Bay Company post New Severn. Factors contributing toward this identification include: 1) the site median occupation date of 1686.336 derived from the clay tobacco pipes; 2) historical references suggesting that New Severn was

fortified and the absence of similar evidence for Nieu Savanne; 3) the similarities between the architectural evidence from GIIw-1 and the description given by Ste. Helene of contemporary Hudson's Bay Company posts on James Bay; 4) New Severn was destroyed by fire and the GIIw-1 site produced evidence that it was burned; 5) the presence of English clay tobacco pipes to the exclusion of Dutch varieties.

A second objective of this thesis was to describe the material culture associated with New Severn. The artifact classification proposed by Stanley South (1977) was adapted to allow use with a late seventeenth century fur trade post assemblage. Hopefully, the use of South's classification will facilitate future inter-site comparisons.

Difficulties encountered while trying to identify the GIIw-1 site based on associated artifacts led to an examination of period fur trade practices. It was determined that the early Hudson's Bay Company was strongly influenced by contemporary French trade procedures, largely as a result of important advisory positions held by Radisson and Groseillers. From this information, the hypothesis of shared material culture has been advanced to account for the presence of French artifacts on the New Severn site. Basically, my hypothesis states that French

and English trade interests operating on Hudson Bay during the early fur trade period (1668-1713) used similar material culture items.

As with most research, this thesis remains incomplete in the sense that questions raised throughout this inquiry have not all been answered and await future research. However, the thesis does contribute towards an increased understanding of a poorly understood period of the Canadian sub-arctic fur trade. At the very least, a Hudson's Bay Company post dating to 1685-1690 has been identified and placed within a re-evaluated early sequence of events at the mouth of the Severn River. Also, the description of the New Severn assemblage adds to our knowledge of late seventeenth century fur trade material culture. Finally, the "shared material culture" hypothesis has been advanced for consideration and refinement.