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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE SITE OF THE LONGLAC HISTORIC TRADING POST THUNDER BAY DISTRICT, ONTARIO

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to present the evidence from an archaeological excavation of the historic longlac trading post site, carried out in 1964.

Longlac was evidently an early French trading post, built at the north end of Long Lake, and the predecessor of a North West Company post and of a later Hudson's Bay Company post at that place. It received but brief mention in contemporary literature.

Although Long Lake was an important area in the westward expansion of the fur trade, no detailed critical history of it has been written. For this reason, the historical facts have been sketched here in order to provide some background to the fur trading activities in the area between Lake Superior and James Bay along the Albany River route, and hence to an understanding of the archaeological record. No claim is made, however, to a critical evaluation of these facts.

The report describes the site and the artifacts, and summarizes the archaeological field work. Since the artifacts relate apparently to three traditions at the site, they are of inestimable importance, and since it was not easy to arrange those of European origin, a functional classification was made, following closely that used in the River Basin Surveys. (Woolworth and Wood, 1960).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical records, (Thwaites, 1901; Crouse, 1930), suggest that the area was well known to the French from the middle of the seventeenth century. Creuxius's map of 1660, (Thwaites,

1901, Vol. LVIV, p.243) indicates a canoe route from Lake Nipigon (Alimibeg) to the Albany River and thence to James Bay. Two routes are suggested (Voorhis, 1930:7) a northerly one via the Ogoki and Albany Rivers and a southerly one via the Kenogami and Albany Rivers. (Fig. 1). The Kenogami River, formerly known as the English River, drains Long Lake to the north. In 1684 the French built two posts on Lake Nipigon and the same year Daniel Greysolon Sieur de Lhut advised the Governor of New France that he would build a post on the Albany River the following year. These actions were taken to offset the loss of furs to the Hudson's Bay Company, (Innis, 1956).

After the French capture of the English posts on the bay in 1686, control of the fur trade stabilized, except in the area north of Long Lake for the Hudson's Bay Company retained the post at the mouth of the Albany River. Intensive rivalry was renewed following the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht which saw the bay posts returned to the Hudson's Bay Company. The latter, in 1720, built a post 100 miles up the Albany, Henley House, in an endeavour to capture the trade going south. Meanwhile the French, under La Verendrye, headquartered on Lake Nipigon, continued to maintain a few outposts to the north in the Nipigon Country (Voorhis: 1930) while vigorously expanding trade westward. These activities continued to about 1753.

With the fall of New France to the British in 1763 and the subsequent surge of new traders out of Montreal, there is once again a struggle for control of the area's fur trade. The Hudson's Bay Company diaries for the period 1775 to 1781 record correspondence urging the Master of Henley House to get into the inland country and head off the poachers, (Switzer, 1964). The struggle intensified with the formation of the North West Company in 1783. By 1814 the Hudson's Bay Company established a post at Long Lake, one furlong south of an existing North West Company post. (Switzer, 1964). It is suggested that the latter post was built prior to 1800 on the site of an old French post (Bell, 1870).

The North West Company's operations continued until the 1821 union with the Hudson's Bay Company, after which date their buildings probably continued to be used as a local encampment. This location may also have been that used by Father Dominique du Ranquet who reached Longlac in 1864. (Cadieux, 1961). The post is shown on a series of maps published in 1823, (Voorhis, 1930), and a description is provided by Donald McIntosh in 1827. (Nute, 1948).

The Hudson's Bay Company continued to operate a post at the site until after construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway line north of Long Lake. Portions of the site were cleared and cultivated and cattle were brought in (Ontario 1893; Macfie, 1963). On the east side of the lake the railway town of Longlac was attracting new traders. Revillon Frere established a post in 1906

and others followed (Switzer, 1964). The Hudson's Bay Company moved to the ton of Long lac in 1921.

It is suggested that a French post situated at the source of the Kenogami River would have been initially associated with the portage route from Lake Nipigon and later with the portage route via the Pic River to Lake Superior. While there is no definite indication of a post at the mouth of the Pic River until about 1790 (Nute, 1948, Gall, 1967) there is evidence of an Indian settlement with trade goods which are closer typologically to the year 1700 than 1800 (Quimby, 1901; Wright, 1963, 1966).

The movement of independent French traders up the Pic River to Long Lake which borders the line of the legitimate traders, would be a logical development. They would be off the main route thus avoiding detection and at the same time they would be situated between the English on the bay and the legitimate French traders on the west. Thus they would be in a position to intercept furs going in either direction.

It would appear that occupation of the site took place some time prior to 1763 with continuous use from about 1790 to 1921. Occupation could be divided into three periods: the Early Period 1740(2) to 1789; the Middle Period 1790 to 1820; and the Late Period 1821 to 1921. During the Early Period the French dominated the trade. This shifted after 1763 to the traders out of Montreal. About 1790 or the beginning of the Middle Period the North West Company dominated the trade. This continued until 1815 by which time it was shared with the Hudson's Bay Company. In Late Period, trade was dominated by the Hudson's Bay Company until 1906 after which it shared with Revillon Frere and others.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site (Plate 1) is located at the north end of Long Lake on the west side on the property of Verdun Gauthier, in the District of Thunder Bay, Ontario. The property was surveyed in 1884 by Jos. Cozrus, Provincial Land Surveyor, (Fig. 2), and registered in the district of Algoma as the Hudson Bay Company Reserve, 22.7 acres. Long Lake lies about forty miles north of Lake Superior, immediately beyond the height of land which marks the arctic divide. About two miles northeast of the site, the Kenogami River leads north to the Albany River and James Bay. Opposite the site on the east shore, the Making Ground River leads south to the Pic River, and Lake Superior.

The site was first brought to the writer's attention in 1963 by Keith Denis of the Thunder Bay Historical Society. In the fall of that year, a cursory examination of the site was made. Low hummocks and depressions were evident towards the southerly end and building remains were found at the edge of a clay terrace

TABLE 1

DATA ON MATERIAL RECOVERED

TRADE GOODS AND HUNTING ACTIVITIES

Beads	
small seed beads	228
medium beads	10
Sub-total	238
Gun Accessories	
flints	100
cartridge cases	46
lead shot	22
musket balls	12
shot gun cases	10
bullets	4
gun worms	2
shot flask top	1
percussion caps (box)	1
melted lead fragments	
Sub-total	198
Gun Parts	
barrels	9
trigger guards	4
lock plates	3
frizzens	3
butt plates	3
side plates	2
miscellaneous	11
Sub-total	35
Fish hooks	10
Animal traps	5
Half-axes	3
Leadbale seals	3
Bangles	2
Harpoons	2
Sub-total	25
Total	496

CONCLUSIONS

In the summer of 1964 the author directed an exploratory excavation and collection of materials from the old fur trade post at Longlac. This eighteenth century post was believed to have been first used by the French as early as the fifth decade of the century. Late in the century it was taken over by the North West Company and by the third decade of the Nineteenth century the Hudson's Bay Company took over. The primary purpose of the work was to recover material and evidence concerning the early occupancy of the site.

Archaeological evidence clearly marks the location of the Hudson's Bay Company establishment and a building one furlong south which may have been associated with the North West Company. Evidence of an early French post was not uncovered although axes and gun parts recovered support its presence.

Because of the number of specimens and the variety of materials, cleaning and conservation of specimens was a major under-taking. Inadequate recovery as a result of erosion and limited excavation undertaken precluded a good workable sequence. This combined with the fact that historical sites in the area have not received archaeological attention also precluded a comparative analysis. Nevertheless, based on broad comparisons with material from the Upper Great Lakes the results do indicate a sequence in time corresponding with the presumed occupational periods.

Axes (Plate 6) recovered clearly show a sequence reflecting the changing periods of occupation. Early hand forged wrought iron half axes which predate the North West Company are believed to be from the early French period. Welded seam, bit axes with a notch at the pole are considered to be from the North West Company period. Axes with crescentic impressions on the blade face and blades extended parallel from the pole are considered to be from the late Hudson's Bay Company period.

Beads, all of which were recovered in or associated with the cellar pit are post 1710. They occur in a variety of sizes and colours and appear to be from the late period of a type used primarily for clothing decoration. Blue, the most common colour, is characteristic of western trading posts, (Woolworth and Wood, 1960).

Buttons (Plate 7) recovered reflect a sequence in time characteristic of the site, (Olsen, 1963). These include spun-hack buttons in use from about 1760 onwards, plain-back brass button used between 1785 and 1800, triple gilt buttons of the period 1812-1820 and bone buttons common in the period 1750-1830. Two piece buttons and other types which came into use after 1830 are also present.

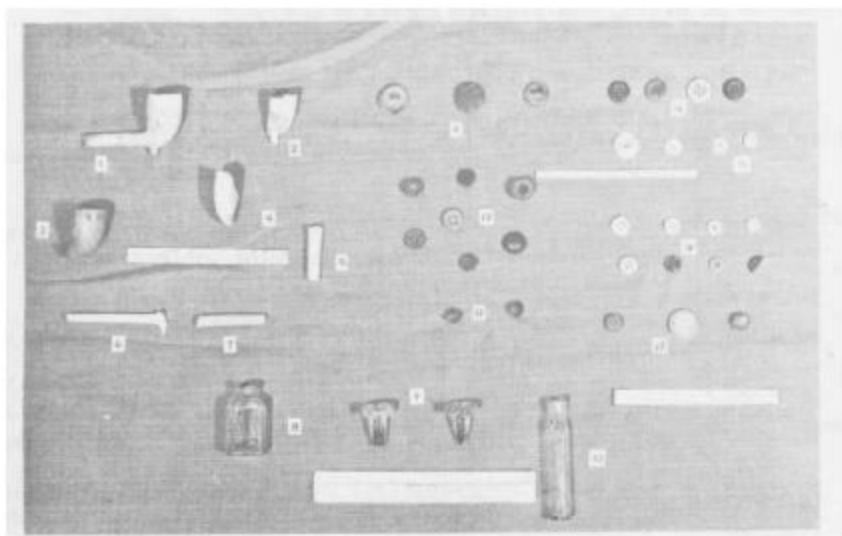


PLATE 7

PIPES, BUTTONS AND GLASS

1 and 3. heavy large upright pipe TD bowls, 2. fluted bowl, 4. small thin TD bowl, 5. stem with mould imparted chain-like impression, 6. plain stem with TD on spur, 7. stem with encircling mould imparted ridges, 8. patent medicine bottle, 9. glass bottle stoppers, 10. vegetable compound bottle, 11. plain stamped buttons, 12. stamped metal buttons, 13. two-piece stamped buttons, 14. bone buttons, 15. shell buttons, 16. porcelain buttons, 17. decorated buttons.

TABLE 2

COLOUR FREQUENCY OF BEADS

Colour	Medium	Small	f	%
Blue	6	117	123	51.7
Green	0	38	38	16.0
Red	0	37	37	15.5
White	4	24	28	11.8
Yellow	0	12	12	5.0
Total	10	228	238	100.0

GUN ACCESSORIES (198). Recoveries include British type gun flints, cartridges and shot. None of the items appear to pertain to the early period of occupation.

GUN FLINTS (100). All appear to be of a type from the post 1750 period, but since design has remained unchanged since then, they cannot otherwise be dated. They are typical British rectangular dead black or dark grey in colour. Fourteen show evidence of burning and 15 were fragments only. Of the 85 analizable flints they are roughly categorized as musket size, rifle size, and pistol size.

TABLE 3

DATA ON GUNFLINTS (PLATE 6, NOS. 1 TO 3)

Musket size:	Range in mm	Mean
Length	29.6 - 38.3	32.9
Width	21.3 - 29.9	25.7
Thickness	4.8 - 11.4	6.8
Length	7.0 - 20.5	13.1
Number in Sample		62
Rifle size:		
Length	26.5 - 31.9	29.5
Width	21.3 - 27.8	24.1
Thickness	5.7 - 12.5	8.0
Length	8.0 - 16.9	12.8
Number in Sample		15
Pistol size:		
Length	19.2 - 26.4	23.2
Width	18.4 - 22.3	20.0

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