

PATRICIA L. GALL

(Accepted April 26th, 1967)

The Excavation of Fort Pic, Ontario

INTRODUCTION

The Fort Pic Site is located in the District of Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada, on the west bank of the mouth of the Pic River (Fig. 1). The area has been under continued archaeological investigation since an initial excavation by Griffin and Quimby in 1957 (Quimby, 1961:83), including a joint archaeological expedition of the University of Toronto and the National Museum of Canada in 1960 (Emerson, n.d.). These previous investigators were primarily concerned with the Indian cultural manifestations. An expedition in 1964 was supported by a grant from the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of the Province of Ontario and was primarily concerned with the historic occupation, mainly involving the "New firm" or Hudson Bay Company Post. This post was the last of a series of occupations of the site by various traders and fur companies.

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

The west bank of the mouth of the Pic River consists of large, rolling sand dunes within a triangular area bounded by Lake Superior to the west, the Pic River to the south and by a sharp rock face to the north-west. North of the rock face the terrain consists of low rock outcrops, spruce forests, and muskeg.

The Fort at the Mouth of the Pic River served to draw furs from the drainage systems of the Pic and Black Rivers. The Pic River is easily navigable by canoe to connect with the Hudson Bay drainage. The headwaters of the Pic lie close to those of the Oswagan River, a tributary of the Albany (Fig. 1). Fort Pic was thus located at the end of a major canoe route between the Great Lakes and Hudson Bay, the other end of which lay Fort Albany on James Bay.

HISTORY OF THE FORT

The area of the site of Fort Pic appears to have been occupied sporadically over a long period of time and at least three different levels of Indian occupation are known (Emerson, n.d.). These represent samples from Late Middle Woodland to historic materials. Some of the pottery demonstrates a cultural relationship to the west "The stratified Pic River site produced prehistoric Blackduck/Manitoba foci ceramics in the second and third strata. A radio carbon reading from the third stratum gave a date of 1000 ± 80 B.P. (GSC-855)" (Wright, 1963:5).

Quimby and Griffin were concerned with the identification of the Indian material as to period and its relation to an historically known Indian group. Although exact identification of the group is not possible, it is likely that the Indians in the area of the fort were Northern Ojibwa (Chippewa) (Quimby, 1961:89).

three of which are worked, were also found. One flint fragment appears to be for a small flintlock and is $1/2$ " x $1/4$ " x $1/2$ " in dimensions and of English manufacture. The other flints are scrapers, probably of Indian origin.

HARDWARE

Some items used in the construction and latching of doors were found. A section of a door hinge $1\frac{1}{2}$ " x $2\frac{1}{2}$ " x $1/4$ " with two 2" nails in place and the eye section of a hook and eye latch were located (Pl. 7-19). The eye consists of an iron loop set in the centre of an oval plate. The plate has a maximum diameter of 2" and a single wire drawn square nail was in place. A small metal eye-bracket was found (Pl. 7-15). A facing for a keyhole $1\frac{1}{2}$ " x $1\frac{1}{4}$ " was also located (Pl. 7-13).

A total of 209 nails were collected. Four distinct types of nails are present (Fontana and Greenleaf, 1963:54). The earliest type was the hand forged nail, of which 57 were headless and bent into a right angle. The second type was represented by 20 wrought-iron nails with square heads and thin shanks. The first type dates to before 1890, while the second predominated from 1890 to the early 1900's. Five plate nails of a type used in the first decade of the 19th century and a sample of 83 wire-drawn nails, much as were used between 1825 and 1855, were found.

Two types of chinking was reported. The first consists of 5 fragments of mortar which were obtained from House 2. The second consists of 12 fragments of cement which appear to have been used in House 1. The cement forms a triangle with concave surfaces on two sides. Occasionally a nail hole occurs, suggesting that spikes were left sticking out of the wood to hold the chinking in place. The third and outer flat surface of the chinking shows signs of whitewash.

CLOTHING AND ORNAMENT

These items include the metal section from a lady's garter fastener (Pl. 7-4), and a lead button back, 1" in diameter, on which a round shank occurs. A second glass button, $1/2$ " in diameter, has four holes and is white with a black rim.

Two metal beads, probably of Indian manufacture, were located. The first is a conical bead $3/4$ " in length, tapering from $1/8$ " to $1/2$ ". The second and larger bead is cylindrical, $1\frac{1}{4}$ " in length, and has a diameter of $1/4$ ". These were manufactured from trade copper.

The glass trade beads recovered comprise 26 specimens of 5 different types. The first type, represented by 4 specimens, is a large round bead with a diameter of $3/8$ ". This type occurs in both black and yellow. The second type, represented by 15 beads, is small and cylindrical, with a diameter and length of $1/8$ " and occurs in both yellow and white. The third type, represented by 3 beads, is a small round bead with a diameter of $1/4$ " and also colored in yellow and white. The fourth type comprises 4 red cylindrical beads with a diameter of $1/4$ ". As these beads were collected from the surface, they cannot be assigned to any given period or structure within the fort and are of the same type of "seed" bead as that still sold in Hudson Bay posts today.