

PINELLAS POINT: A POSSIBLE SITE OF CONTINUOUS INDIAN HABITATION

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ABSTRACT

A report of a midden beach on the southern coastal tip of Pinellas County. The analysis was made on the surface collections of six individuals who have been collecting sherds, projectile points, and other artifacts of Indian manufacture from a badly eroded shell midden which has been, and is presently being, washed by wave and tidal action. This site is of particular archaeological interest since representative artifacts from practically all the Gulf coast cultural periods have been recovered there.

The Pinellas Point Site (Willey 1949: 335) is readily accessible and locatable since it lies within the city limits of St. Petersburg. The midden can best be reached by following 10th Street South, another synonym for the site, till it terminates at the midden beach itself. Roughly, the area between 14th Street South and 7th Street comprises the Pinellas Point Site (Fig.1). The actual site, however, is strictly limited to the seashore.

The physical features of Pinellas Point are typical of many of the middens that are located along the coastline of southern Pinellas County. The site is backed by a low lying flatland on which forests of long leaf pine (*P. palustris*) occur. This pine forest which extends back behind the midden for approximately 100 yards, terminates abruptly because of a housing development.

The length of the midden was measured and found to extend for some 750 yards. The width of the midden varied from place to place, depending on the portion to be measured. On the western end of the site the midden was approximately 25 yards wide. This is the widest part of the midden as it gradually diminishes in an easterly direction, tapering down to a few feet of water-worn shell in its eastern-most extreme. Until a few years ago there was a shell mound located directly in the middle of the beach strip (Fig. 1). This mound was unfortunately bulldozed flat in order for a house to be built in the elevated area. Though no excavations were made in this mound, the author personally recovered three projectile points that can be directly attri-

buted to it. Since all portions of the midden have been severely tumbled and disturbed by water action, no portion of the midden was suitable for stratigraphic tests. Thus, the investigation of the site has been limited to surface collecting.

In analyzing the artifacts from Pinellas Point, the collections of Mark Brooks, Frank Bushnell, Phil Jordan, Richard McDonnell, and the author were utilized to classify and categorize by typology the various sherds and projectile points found at this site.

A problem immediately encountered in the analysis of the pottery was the extreme scarcity of decorated sherds. In all, eight decorated types were found, and usually a type was not represented by more than two or three specimens. Though pottery sherds are common at the Pinellas Point Site, 95% of them are a dark, sand-tempered, residual ware that is very indefinite as to time and type in this area. This pottery closely fits the description of Glades Plain, Thick Sand Tempered Plain, and Sand Tempered Plain cited by William H. Sears from the Bayshore Homes Site, also located in St. Petersburg (Sears 1960: 4-7). Similar to the Glades ware at the Bayshore Homes Site, the sherds from Pinellas Point have a thickness range of 3/8 to 3/4 inch, and also run from reddish-brown through gray and black in color.

With the advent of Bullen's (1968) projectile point guide, an attempt was made to classify the stone projectile points of this site by types and to supplement the pottery evidence in order to better reconstruct the cultural sequence of this site.

In total, 285 representations of projectile points were counted and from these 125 were reasonably classifiable by type. The realm of unclassifiable consisted not only of whole points but also tips, stems, bases, and any other portion that would indicate a projectile point was intended. The 160 remaining unclassifiable projectile points were not figured in the percentages, but should be noted as a testimony to the large use of projectile points by the inhabitants of this site. Of the 285 specimens examined, none were made of any foreign stone materials (such as quartzite) and all seem to be made of typical Tampa Bay silicified coral or limestone chert.

HISTORICAL CONTACT

Four artifacts, an ovoid blue glass bead, a gunflint, olive jar sherds, and a clay pipe stem comprise the evidence of direct or indirect (trade) European contact on Pinellas Point (Fig. 6 a-c). Of these specimens, probably only the blue trade bead could safely be considered a possession of the Indians. Sometime in the 1700's or before, Indians in the Tampa Bay area were using firearms as a major hunting device. Celi of the Royal Spanish fleet, in 1757, twice encountered Indians who were using firearms, but he fails to tell what type (Ware 1968: 42). The gunflint from Pinellas Point, though probably belonging to a settler or fisherman, may also have been Indian. It is, however, chipped of a flint not indigenous to Florida. Since Spanish fishing haciendas were located in coastal southern Pinellas County quite frequently up into the 1800's, the presence of olive jar and clay pipe stems would seem natural. It should be remembered that while these items were of an European or North American origin, they could have been used by both settler and Indian.

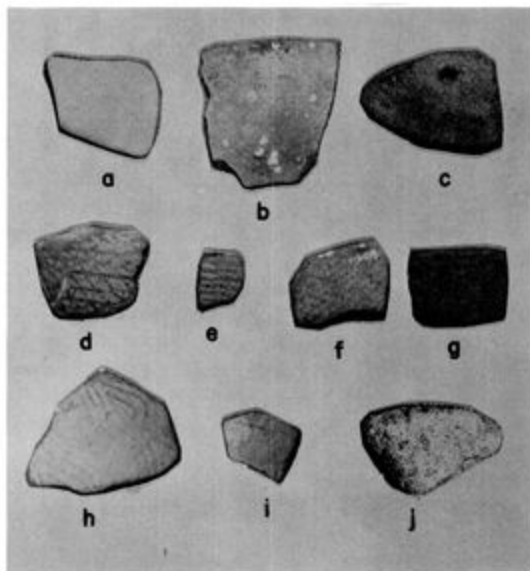


Fig. 4. Decorated sherds. a, olive jar; b, St. Johns Check Stamped; c, drilled sand-tempered plain; d, Deptford Linear (unique); e, Cord marked; f, indistinct stamp; g, Perico Linear; h, Swift Creek Complicated Stamp, early variety; i, St. Johns Incised (?); j, steatite sherd.

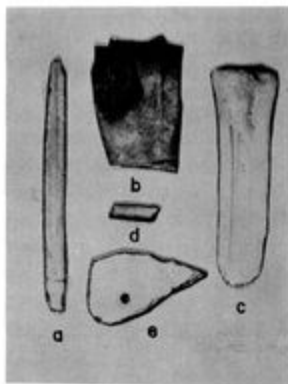


Fig. 5. Bonework and raw materials. a, peg-top pin; b-c, cut deer bone; d, bonehead; e, drilled bone gorget.

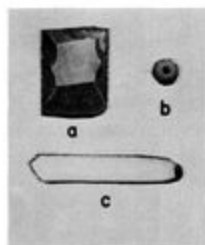


Fig. 6 European contact artifacts. a, blue gunflint; b, blue glass bead; c, clay pipe stem.

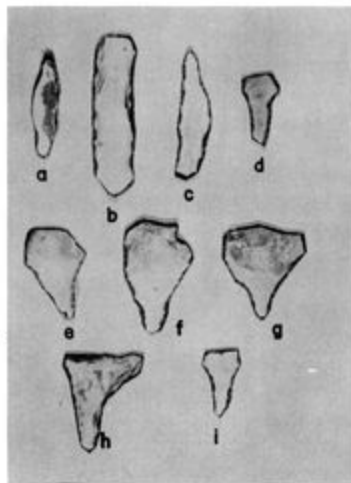


Fig. 7. Microliths from Pinellas Point. a-d, plain, slender liths; e-g, expanding base; h-i, T based.