



656.

PORTLAND POINT

CROSSROADS OF
NEW BRUNSWICK HISTORY

*Preliminary
Report of the 1955 Excavation*

—by—
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Chapter IV

FORT LA TOUR — 1631-1645

Charles de Saint-Etienne de La Tour, representative of the "Company of New France" in Acadia, was primarily responsible for expansion of French influence on a solid footing into the St. John River region when he built a new fort at its mouth. This he is said to have called "Fort Saint-Marie" (sic). He envisaged this and his earlier fort in Nova Scotia as giving him a virtual monopoly of all the Acadian fur trade. Some discussion has previously arisen as to the exact date of erection of his establishment at the river mouth. The weight of evidence seems to favour 1630 or 1631.¹ A vessel laden with material to finish the fort arrived from France in August, 1631.¹ Sir William Alexander's Scotch soldiers, after evacuating Port Royal in accordance with a new peace treaty between England and France, touched briefly at the St. John River mouth on September 18th, 1632. They found only a feeble garrison in charge of the then new fort, seized the furs stored in it, and carried away the men.² Then on January 15th, 1635, the "Company of New France" confirmed La Tour's rights to the possession of "Fort Sainte-Marie" already built, and ceded to him a grant ten leagues square around it.³

The fort was progressively strengthened as rivalry between La Tour and D'Aulnay reached a more acute stage. Details of the final struggle in 1645 for the strategic fort were recounted later by Nicholas Denys and some of D'Aulnay's men. Denys' sympathies were with the La Tours and while his account may be somewhat biased, it would seem to be substantially correct. He says:

(The fort) which the late Sieur de La Tour had built . . . was destroyed by D'Aulnay (sic) after he had quite wrongfully made himself master of it, as he had no right to do. This he would have had great trouble in accomplishing had he not been informed of the absence of the said Sieur de La Tour who had taken with him a part of his garrison, and had left only his wife and the remainder of his people as a guard to the fort. She, after having sustained for three days and three nights all the attacks of D'Aulnay, and after having compelled him to withdraw beyond range of her cannon, was in the end obliged to surrender on the fourth day, which was Easter Day, having been betrayed by a Swiss who was then on guard, whilst she was making her men rest, hoping for some respite. The Swiss yielded to bribery by the men of D'Aulnay, and allowed them to mount to the assault, which was again resisted for some time by the Lady Commandant at the head of her men. She only yielded at the last extremity, and under the condition that the said D'Aulnay should give quarter to all. This he did not do, for, having become master of the place, he threw them all into prison, including the Lady Commandant, and later, by advice of his council, hung them with the exception of a single one who had his life spared on condition that he would perform the execution; and the Lady Commandant accompanied them at the gallows, with a cord around her neck as though she had been the greatest villain.⁴

1. A. Couillard Després, *Charles de Saint-Etienne de la Tour, Gouverneur, Lieutenant - Général en Acadie et son Temps 1593-1666*, (Arthabaska: Imprimerie d'Arthabaska, Incorporée, 1930) p. 188.
2. Després, *op. cit.*, p. 202.
3. Dominion Archives, Ottawa, CIID, Vol. I, pt. 2, p. 65.
4. Nicholas Denys, *The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America (Acadia)*, ed. William F. Ganong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1908), pp. 114-6.

closely dated. McGuire describes an almost identical pipe as allegedly of Dutch manufacture and possibly as early as the Elizabethan period.¹⁸ Both this and one from a New Jersey Indian village site at Salisbury¹⁹ have marks impressed in the same position as the Portland Point specimen. A pipe of similar form but of pewter was excavated from a Huron grave at Ste. Marie I.²⁰ Many pipes of the mid 17th Century excavated recently at Saugus, Massachusetts, closely resemble those at Portland Point.²¹

✓ Five glass beads were found on the site but only two can be closely associated with the strata of French material. The others may be of the post La Tour or early English period. One bead, coral red with colourless core (PP279) is identical to those from the post La Tour grave (Fig. 14 1) and to those discussed by Kidd from Ste. Marie I.²² A spherical cobalt blue bead of 5/16" diameter (PP280) has three opaque white lines applied lengthwise on its surface.

MILITARY WEAPONS

This is material either used in the defence of the fort or by D'Aulnay in his attack.

Four cannon balls (PP284-7) lay on the southerly or outer side of the fort's palisade wall and one (PP288) within the bastion pit. They evidently dropped

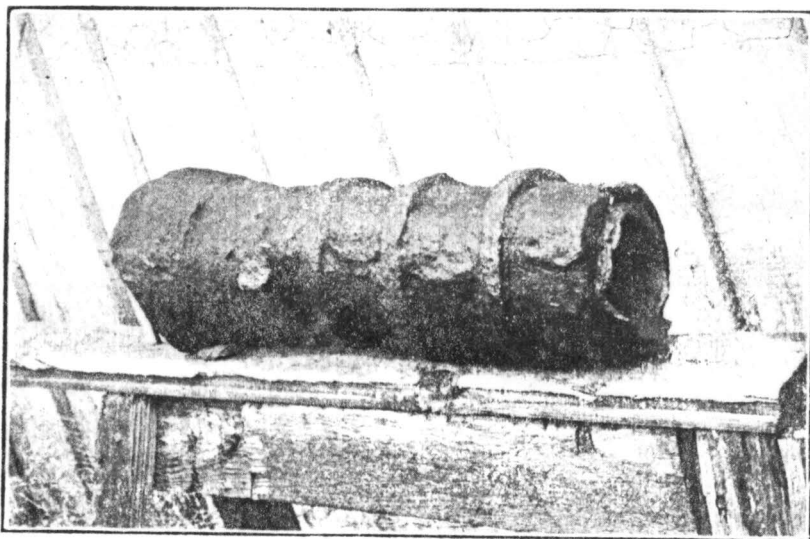


Fig. 11: 17th Century Cannon found on the Fort Site, West Saint John.

18. Joseph D. McGuire, "Pipes and Smoking Customs of the American Aborigines, Based on Material in the U. S. National Museum", *Report of the U. S. National Museum*, Washington, 1897, p. 454 and Fig. 76.
19. Dorothy Cross, *Archaeology of New Jersey*, (Trenton: The Archaeological Society of New Jersey et ux, 1941), p. 61 and Pl. 25 a (3).
20. Jury and Jury, *op. cit.* Pl. XXIV(a).
21. William S. Fowler, "Hammersmith Chronology at Saugus", *Bulletin of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society*, XVI, No. 3, p. 45 and Fig. 13.
22. Kidd, *op. cit.* 1949, p. 142 and Fig. 25G.

Chapter V

INDIAN BURIAL OF THE EUROPEAN PERIOD

An Indian burial uncovered in Squares (C 1) and (C 2) formed a striking contrast to the five "Red Paint" burials. This grave lay 2' within what is tentatively identified as the palisade wall trench of the French fort. Two feet below the present surface was a 2" layer of finely ground beach shale measuring 4' x 2' (Fig. 13). It was the first observable evidence of burial fill. Six inches of black humus beneath this shale contained skeletal material with grave goods of both European and native manufacture. Between this black humus and the black ash stratum described in Chapter III were clay and loam strata.

The skeletal material is in a very fragmentary state. Not a single whole bone was recovered. While the burial is that of an adult, neither the sex, age nor height can be determined. A shot mold and pipes among the grave goods suggest that the deceased was of the male sex. A fragmentary upper jaw with teeth and a cranium section lay at the westerly end of the grave. Another small section of

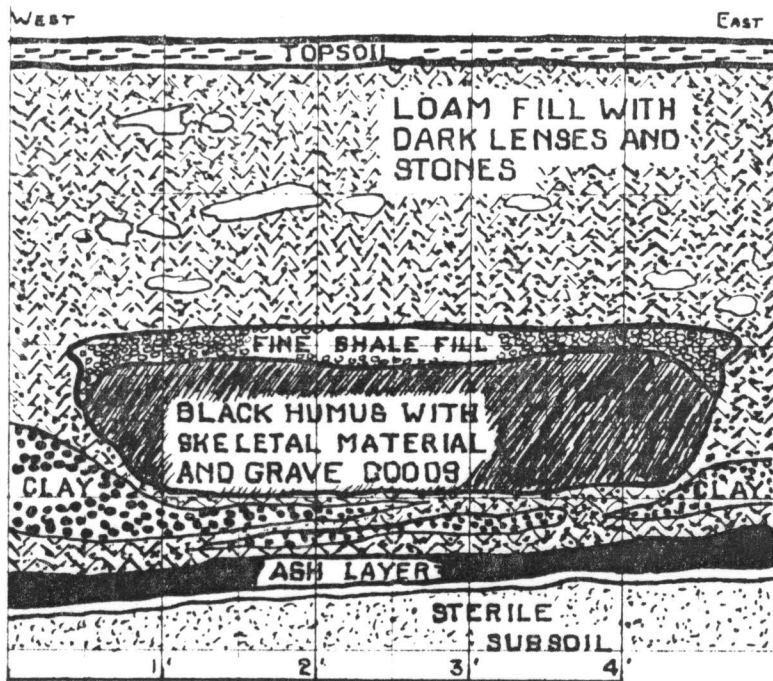


Fig. 13: Indian Burial of the Contact Period.
Profile plan of grave showing stratification.

maxilla lay 9" to the south. Teeth show no evidence of caries and only a moderate degree of wear. Two groups of long bones were placed at the grave's easterly end. Six fragmentary long bones including a nearly complete femur and a section of pelvic girdle lay in a criss-cross fashion. Beside them another group of two tibias were in a bundle, first wrapped in cloth and then in an outer birch bark covering.

at the river mouth. Evidently the Indians brought back one of their dead for burial on the old camp site at the river mouth from which they were temporarily dispossessed during the period when Fort La Tour stood there.

The goods thrown into this grave to accompany the deceased to the next world are of both native and European manufacture (Fig. 14). Wampum, a fragment of twined net bag and three stone tools are of native workmanship. European goods are both decorative and utilitarian. Glass beads, a brass (or copper) chain and an elaborate pipe were ornamental, while a shot mold, knives, gunflint, scissors, twine and other articles are more utilitarian and of the types then rapidly changing native life. A compact mass of grave goods was placed to the north of the skull fragments. A few grave goods were included in the wrapped bundle of long bones, while still others were scattered through the grave's easterly end near the unwrapped bone fragments and without particular arrangement. Description of the individual items forms a catalogue appendix to this chapter (p. 32).

An approximate dating of the grave is possible. From its physical position within the fort palisade, it is most unlikely that the Indians placed it there before the fort's destruction in 1645. The latest possible date is the beginning of the English period shortly after 1760. However Denys contends in an unequivocal state-



Fig. 14: Grave goods from the Contact Burial at Portland Point of ca. 1650.

ment which he repeats as if for emphasis, that the practice of placing great quantities of grave goods with the deceased had been discontinued in Acadia at the time he wrote. He is certainly not strictly correct in this as the writings of Maillard and others prove. While a considerable quantity of goods was buried here, there is nothing like the ostentation found in the earlier Pictou burial (Appendix "A"). The shot mold gives proof that the Indians had the musket at the time of the Portland Point burial. Since articles of native workmanship are still here, and since there are still a considerable quantity of grave goods, it might be conjectured that the grave dates from within a quarter century of Fort La Tour's destruction.

CATALOGUE OF ARTIFACTS FOUND IN THE PORTLAND POINT CONTACT BURIAL

BEADS:

PP2a Spherical glass bead, coral red with colourless core; diam. approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ "; 284 specimens (Fig. 14 l).

PP2b Spherical glass bead, black with 6 applied white longitudinal stripes; diam. approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ "; 38 specimens (Fig. 14k).

PP2c Spherical glass bead, black with 13 applied white longitudinal stripes and white line at each end surrounding core; diam. $\frac{1}{2}$ "; 1 specimen (Fig. 14h).

PP2d White wampum of native manufacture; 23 specimens (Fig. 14j).

The above beads and wampum were strung on two sinew threads with knots at each end. Sections of the original stringing which still remain show no apparent arrangement of the beads.

PP3 Spherical glass bead, black with transversely ribbed surface; diam. ranging from $\frac{3}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ "; 18 specimens (Fig. 14i).

This group of beads were separately strung on sinew with a knot at each end.

COPPER:

PP7 Decorative copper chain of 125 links; each link is composed of a tube formed from 8 turns of coiled wire; clasp is made up of two "Figure 8s", one at each end of the chain; overall L. 17" (Fig. 14d).

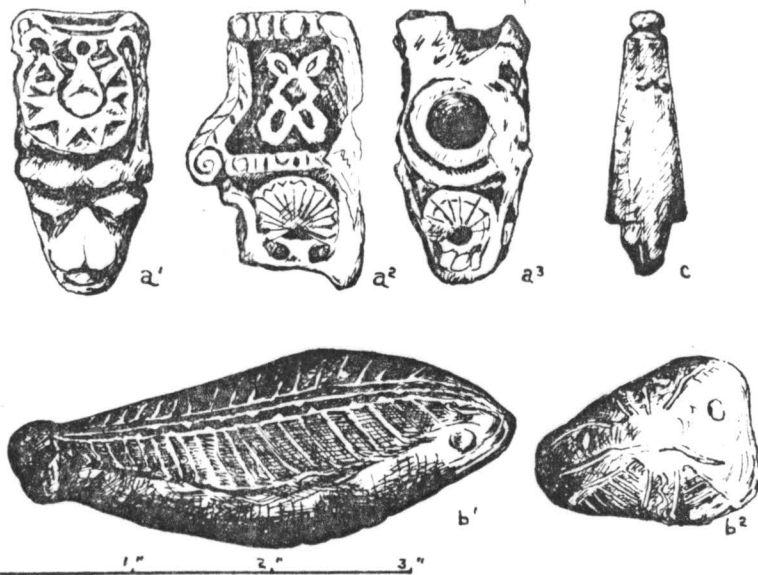


Fig. 15: Decorative Stone Carving from Portland Point.

(a) pipe from contact burial; (b) fish effigy plummet from "Red Paint" burial; (c) miniature plummet.

APPENDIX "A"

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY MICMAC BURIAL AT
PICTOU, N. S.

Rand writing in 1875, said that the Micmacs divided their country into seven distinct groups, each with a separate chieftain and a head chief in Cape Breton. Headquarters of three districts were on the Restigouche, at Memramcook, and at Pictou.¹ A most remarkable "copper kettle" burial of a Pictou tribal member was accidentally discovered by a property owner while digging a drain during October, 1955. Much information was obtained from this regarding trading habits, native crafts and burial customs of the Micmacs which complements admirably the French period findings at Portland Point. The district was well known to Nicholas Denys during the course of his fur trading activities. Moreover various fur trade forts of the second quarter of the 17th century operated in Northern Nova Scotia. That of Captain Daniel, for example, was built at Ste. Annes, Cape Breton, in 1629.

The Pictou burial site is located 25' above high water mark and back 300' from the edge of Pictou Harbour on the upper gentle slope of a southerly bank. It is 3¼ miles from the open waters of Northumberland Strait. The river in front has a good beach, there is excellent fishing, and some patches of bulrushes. No 17th century Indian village site is known in the immediate area although conditions are such that it would be a favoured spot. Methodical excavation of the burial was carried out by K. B. Hopps, the owner, his son Ralph, and by George Crawford of the Pictou school staff. The following description is compiled from many details which they supplied at the close of their work, and from an examination of all material recovered which they kindly placed at the writer's disposal for that purpose.

The burial pit was divided into two sections (Fig. 18). The first formed a complete circle of approximately 6' diameter and was carefully prepared. To the north of this was an irregular and less carefully prepared hole, its edge overlapping that of the well prepared section. Both were dug to a depth of 3' below the present surface.

The floor of Section One was covered with small branches and twigs. LeClercq says in discussing customs of the Micmacs of the Restigouche and Miramichi areas, that the grave "is adorned with branches of firs and sprigs of cedar".² A certain uniformity of customs probably extended throughout the whole Micmac confederacy. Over the boughs a carefully prepared layer of birch bark forming a kind of lining covered the pit's entire bottom and sides to a height of 1'6". Sewing holes were noted along the edges of some sheets. Several were daubed with red ochre in an irregular fashion and others had black patches, either painting or stains from decayed organic matter. LeClercq makes specific mention of bark painted both red and black. Five separate layers of pelts covered the birch bark. The final layer lay with the flesh side of the pelt uppermost, that side being painted red. Three copper kettles were placed with their bottoms upwards on the painted skin. These kettles are intact except for holes from gradual deterioration resulting from burial. Beneath each the excavators found a very black humus layer of about 2" in depth composed of a mass of small roots, fine twigs, hair from pelts and the like.

1. F. W. Hodge, *Handbook of Indians of Canada*, ed. James White, Appendix to the 10th Report of the Geographic Board of Canada, 1913, p. 289.

2. LeClercq, *op. cit.* p. 301.

A number of miscellaneous items of French origin were also found. They include a fragment of light weight twill woven cloth with thick nap and thread count of 50 to the inch. This may have originally been a brownish colour (or red which has oxidized(?)). A recovered piece having 3 hemmed edges with width of $7\frac{3}{4}$ " is possibly a sash or loin cloth (?) end. Father Biard refers to clothing the body before burial. Wallis in his recent study of the Micmacs says, without quoting his source, that

Sometimes instead of sewing the body in a sack, a long sash was placed over the left shoulder, passed under the right arm, and wrapped around that arm at or above the elbow, so that it would not slip down. Thanks to this provision, the deceased will be ready to walk right in when he gets to heaven; for there the old clothes will be removed, and this will serve as a substitute. A sash is put around the waist to cover the loins, and another around the chest.¹³

The cloth certainly seems to be a fragment of grave clothing, but there are insufficient remains to accurately ascribe any particular type to this burial.

One hundred and twelve glass beads of deep blue colour measure $1/16$ " in diameter. These seem to be identical with specimens of both the pre-1649 period and of the late 18th century from Ojibway sites on Georgian Bay.^{14, 15} Wampum beads were also found but not examined by the writer.

A red pottery beaker with a slightly flared rim stood under one kettle (Fig. 19h). It has a green glaze covering the interior and upper portion of the exterior, and contained black material, possibly food. Measurements are: height $3\frac{1}{4}$ ", diam. of rim $2\frac{3}{4}$ ", and diam. of body $2\frac{1}{2}$ ".

The most spectacular of the grave articles made by the Micmacs themselves is a portion of wooden bow 18" long and with diameter $\frac{3}{4}$ " (Fig. 19b). A notch at the end with a drilled hole served for attachment of the bow-string. The bark was removed and the entire surface polished. Concentric rings of knots indicate that this was an evergreen, possibly juniper or hemlock, although Denys states that maple was commonly used. He describes how the surface was polished with an oyster or other shell, and the arrows made of cedar.¹⁶ The smaller end of the bow was found in the grave since the knots decrease in size as they approach the extant end. This is one of the earliest surviving specimens of a Micmac bow.

Three different types of bulrush mats are of almost equal interest (Fig. 21 a, c, e). They are separately studied in Appendix "B".

A bundle of leather could not be opened. Possibly it is a portion of a pair of mocassins. Conversion of skins into leather was one art in which the Micmacs were proficient. Denys tells us that

To dress their skins, these are soaked and stretched in the sun, and are well-heated on the skin side for pulling out the hair. Then they stretch them and pull out the hair with bone instruments made on purpose, somewhat as do those who prepare a skin for conversion into parchment. Then they rub it

13. Wilson D. Wallis and Ruth S. Wallis, *The Micmac Indians of Eastern Canada*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), p. 259.

14. Kidd, *op. cit.* 1949, Fig. 25H.

15. Emerson F. Greenman, *Old Birch Island Cemetery and the Early Historic Trade Route Georgian Bay, Ontario*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1951), Pl. XXVI, P (No. 21788).

16. Denys, *op. cit.* p. 419.