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✓ ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF "FORT CRAILO" DURING SEWER LINE CONSTRUCTION UNDER RIVERSIDE AVENUE IN RENSSELAER, NEW YORK

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Introduction

In its ongoing program of archeological research to define and study significant historical culture patterns in New York State, the Historical Archeology Bureau of the Division for Historic Preservation, New York State Office of Parks and Recreation, has regularly assisted in the review of projects in the State that could adversely affect archeological resources. Whenever prior testing to identify archeological remains is impossible or whenever it becomes impossible for construction to avoid destroying an archeological site of significant interpretive potential, the data must either be salvaged or lost forever.

As part of this review procedure, the Bureau learned in September, 1972, of plans by the Rensselaer County Sewer District #1 to acquire property less than 150 ft. north of Fort Crailo State Historic Site for the erection of a pumping station to collect and transmit wastewater from a proposed Rensselaer Interceptor Sewer line to a treatment facility. In October the Division for Historic Preservation, after considering the location and design of the pumping station, decided that it would not have an unsatisfactory direct impact on Fort Crailo. However, because the area to be disturbed by the sewer line project was located in the vicinity of other colonial archeological sites previously sampled by the Division for Historic Preservation, and close to Fort Crailo, a State-owned historic site reputedly occupied since 1642 and a center of activity east of the Hudson River in the 18th century, the Bureau requested to be notified when construction began in order to monitor the digging because of the likelihood that other related archeological remains existed in deep fill and under road pavement.

The sewer project included construction of the new pumping station on the east bank of the Hudson River adjacent to Riverside Ave. across from Aiken Ave. and northwest of Fort Crailo. The Rensselaer Interceptor Sewer was to consist of a 30 in. pipeline laid in a 20 to 30 ft. deep trench following Riverside Ave., the modern street in the City of Rensselaer that runs north and south along the riverbank past Fort Crailo, curving inland at one point around a modern lumberyard. Archeologists from the Historical Archeology Bureau checked the digging for the pumping station in the fall of 1973 and spring of 1974. No sign of the original riverbank line appeared, and the entire area was discovered to be relatively recent fill. Therefore, one of the purposes for monitoring the digging under the street was to test for and provide additional information on the location of the original east bank line of the Hudson River in front of Fort Crailo and in the construction areas to the northward and southward.

The first few weeks of digging and laying pipe in the block north of Fort Crailo behind the early 19th century Aiken House and westward down Aiken Ave. produced no evidence of significant cultural material. The pipeline then swung down Riverside Ave. and proceeded south to Belmore Pl. after which work was resumed from Aiken Ave. northward up Riverside Ave. (Fig. 1).

During the 1950's Riverside Ave. had been graded to subsoil and widened along its west side removing much cultural material; however, numerous features remained undisturbed under the east portion of the street. The Archeological salvage part of the project, then, consisted of excavation of these features.

13 sherds were delftware fragments. 6 of these had reddish-paste bodies, all with various blue and white designs. 1 large piece with clear glazed exterior and blue design on the interior represented a large plate of the decorative type probably hung on walls of rooms in the 17th century. 7 of the sherds had buff yellow bodies, some with blue decoration and some plain white glazed. 1 rim piece with blue crosshatching was probably from a shallow dish or bowl with a diameter of about 6 in. This, and the largest delft sherd, also decorated in dark blue, were probably parts of dishes copied from Dutch-imported porcelain ("kraak-porselein") decorated with a "Wan Li" type pattern evidently dating circa 1645 to 1650 (*Antiques*, 1971:15; *Antiques*, 1973:11; Scheurleer, 1966: pl. 18; Valenstein, 1970:23; Volker, 1971:23, 59-61, 128, No. 26). Another piece of small delft bowl with flaring lip had blue stripes on the exterior with polychrome yellow, blue, and orange interior (Plate 9).

6 specimens represented common 17th century artifacts. 1 rolled 1 in. brass fragment was cone shaped and was probably a leather thong tip. Leather thongs with brass tips were common generally on European peasant costume and as trade items in America during the 16th and early 17th centuries. Beginning about 1625, however, Dutch paintings began to show fashionable male dress ornamented with fancy ribbons having these metal tips (Halls, 1970:6). 3 thin strips of copper also from this feature had been sheared or clipped. 1 had a piece of iron through its rolled end, probably the rim of a copper kettle. A burned glass bead 1-1/8 in. in length and probably once redwood in color had 3 thin white stripes in its body and a center core of green or black glass. It may originally have been similar to type IIIbbl in Kidd, 1970. An iron Jews harp had a rounded head with broken tongs. Part of a steel reed was still attached (Pl. 8).

28 kaolin pipe fragments were found in Pit #12. Several of the pipe bowl and stem fragments fit together to form some of the bowl, all of the heel, and part of the stem of one pipe. This bulbous type pipe had a flat heel impressed with a flower similar to the Tudor rose, a mark used on Dutch pipes in the 17th century. Another bulbous pipe bowl fragment had rouletting marks around the rim, a decoration common to 17th and 18th century Dutch pipes. One long pipe stem fragment with a bore size of 8/64 in. had alternating pinched sides, a style also found at Fort Orange in 17th century layers. Another pipe stem had 2 impressed fleur-de-lis marks with rouletting and the initials PG in one fleur-de-lis (Pl. 8). This type of pipe stem is evidently common to the middle 17th century and was also found at Fort Orange. 7 of the measurable pipe stems had a bore size of 8/64 in. and three were 7/64 in., both sizes common to 17th century pipe stems.

12 yellow brick fragments and parts of 9 soft red bricks containing admixtures of yellow clay were found with 7 hand-wrought nails. The red bricks might have been locally made by combining local clay which burns red with ground-up yellow European 17th century brick.

14 flint pieces (3 green, 8 black, and 3 gray) included 2 medium-sized cores. 7 of the chips had been utilized. 12 pieces of Indian pottery, some of which fit together, could all have come from vessels, of Iroquoian types. Several thin, hard body sherds of similar color and texture probably represent parts of a single pot. A large incised and notched collar sherd of Cayadutta Incised type (Ritchie 1969:308) was also present (Pl. 10).

2 post holes were found beyond Pit #12 in the east side of the trench. The first had a top diameter of 1 ft., 9 in. and was 1 ft., 7 in. deep. The second had a 9-in.-diameter top and was 1 ft., 5 in. deep. Both were sharply pointed and filled with rich humus. No artifacts were found in either.

Pit #13

59 ft., 5 in. south of New York Telephone Pole 142 (Power Pole No. 150) (Fig. 2) in the east edge of the sewer line trench was a basin-shaped pit filled with stone and gravel, with a blue and tan clay bottom. 2 ft., 10 in. in diameter, the pit contained a sherd of 19th century coarse salt-glazed gray stoneware crock and a curved fragment of red roofing tile probably dating from the 17th or 18th centuries.

Final Discoveries

22 ft. south of New York Telephone Pole 142 (Power Pole No. 150), at the west curb of Riverside Ave., a large disturbance was first discovered, dug to clay and filled with dark brown

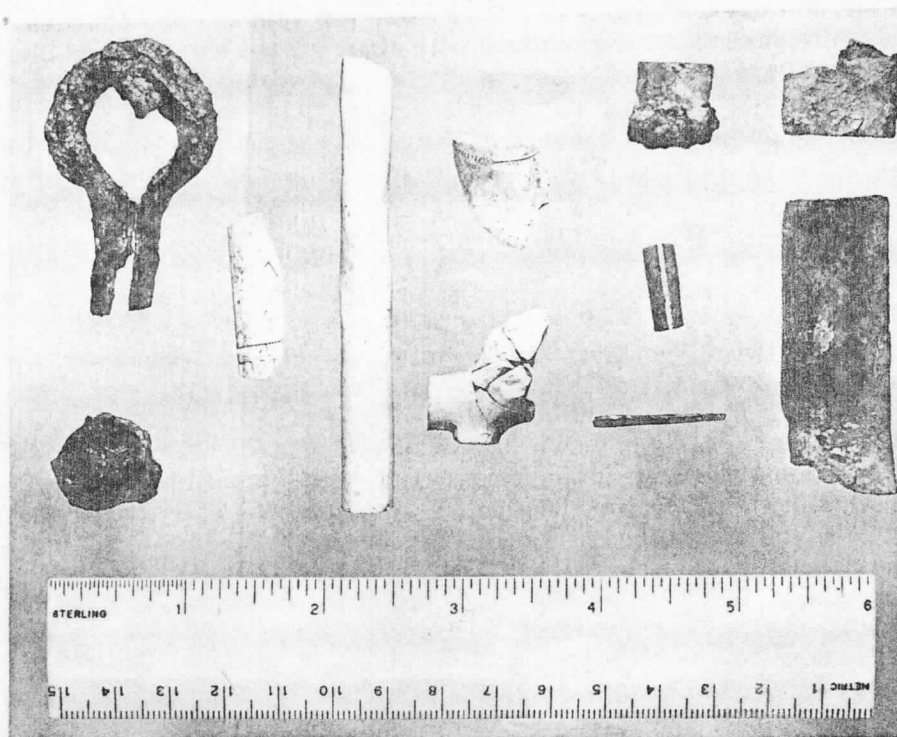


Plate 8. Pit #12, Top to Bottom: Iron Jews harp, raspberry prunt, kaolin pipe stem fragments (one with fleur-de-lis mark and P.G. initials, one with pinched sides, one with rouletting around bowl rim and flat heel with Tudor Rose mark), pieces of copper, glass bead, brass thong tip.

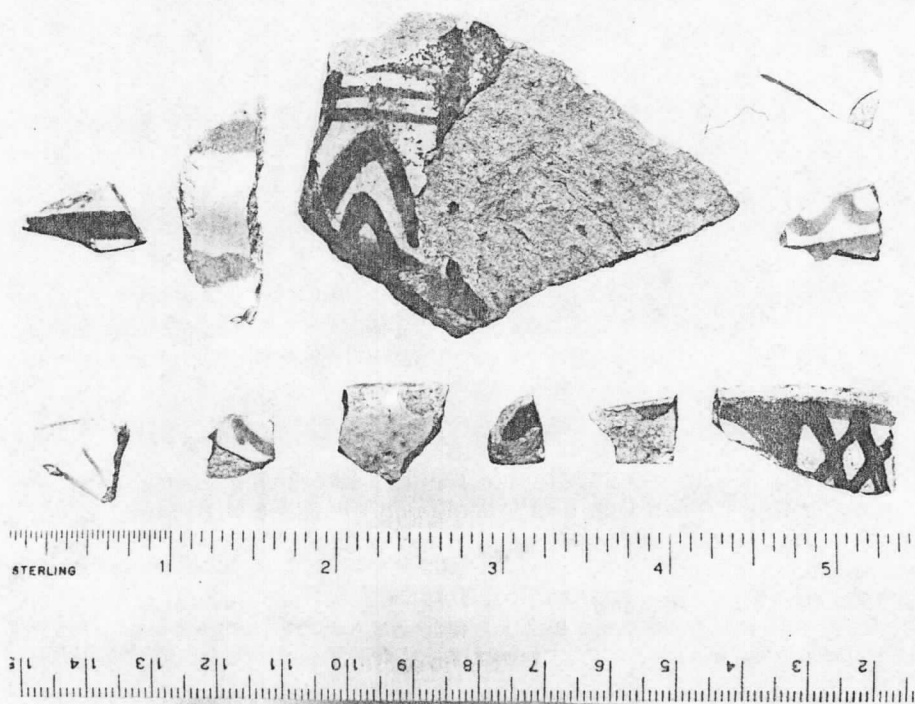


Plate 9. Pit #12: Fragments of delftware, blue and white decorated.