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## Abstract

In 1971, The National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, excavated a site on Old Fort Point at the west end of Lake Athabaska, Alberta, initially believed to be Fort Chipewyan I. Subsequent research suggests that the site may have been the temporary 1817-18 location of Fort Wedderburn, a Hudson's Bay Company post operating on the lake from 1815 to 1821.

The site consisted of 12 pits and the well-preserved foundation of a single four-room structure measuring 24.7 ft. by 39 ft. Enough of the building's components remained so that many of the construction techniques could be determined. Each room had a wooden floor and a clay-cemented stone fireplace. No cellars were encountered.

Most of the 271 recovered artifacts were household and personal items; however, tools, hardware and items concerned with subsistence, defence and transportation were also encountered. The artifacts which could be dated bracket the period from about 1810 to 1815.

Submitted for publication 1975, by Karlis Karklins, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, Ottawa.

## Preface

In 1968, the National Historic Parks and Sites Branch initiated the Western Fur Trade Research Program in accordance with recommendations by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to interpret this major theme of national historical importance and general interest. The fur trade occupies a prominent niche in Canadian history since it was the nation's primary industry and the base upon which the country's economy was built. It also served as the impetus for the original exploration and settlement of the interior of Canada.

As a first step in the project, Terence Smythe, then National Historic Parks and Sites Branch staff historian, prepared a report, "Thematic Study of the Fur Trade in the Canadian West, 1670-1870," which presented a detailed discussion of the fur trade posts located in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba (Smythe 1968). In 1969, a general reconnaissance of the areas discussed in the report was undertaken by Smythe and James V. Chism, former staff archaeologist, to determine the location of fur trade sites, their state of preservation, the technical feasibility of on-site research, the logistical problems of maintaining research parties in the areas under investigation and the status of local interest and research (Smythe and Chism 1969: 1).

One of the areas visited was the west end of Lake Athabasca where several sites were sought, including Fort Chipewyan I, a late 18th-century North West Company post located on a peninsula called Old Fort Point on the south shore. A brief survey of the north shore of the peninsula resulted in the discovery of two sites (Smythe and Chism 1969: 94). Although neither seemed large enough to be Fort Chipewyan I, there was the possibility that portions of the sites had eroded away and that excavation would reveal more features. Thus, as an archaeological follow-up to the survey work, the two sites were investigated during the summer of 1971 by five university students under the direction of the author.

Test excavation of the smallest site revealed an approximately 22-ft.-square building which contained artifacts dating to the third quarter of the 19th century. On the other hand, the few diagnostic artifacts (buttons, gunflints, etc.) that were uncovered in the initial trenches at the other, much larger site were in keeping with what would be expected at a late 18th-century fur trade post. It therefore seemed that a structural portion of Fort Chipewyan I, possibly the main house, had been located and archaeological work proceeded in earnest.

Only after the site had been almost completely excavated did doubts arise concerning its identity. While the size and floor plan of the structure were compatible with that of a trading post's main

The non-military buttons can be dated according to the method of manufacture (dates provided by DiAnn Herst 1973: pers. com.). The tombac buttons appear to date to the last quarter of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century. The stamped brass buttons were probably made during the 1790–1840 period. The bone specimen can be attributed to the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The pewter button is of a type that was worn by the enlisted men of the 37th Regiment from an unspecified date until 1830 (Parkyn 1956: 190). How this button came to be at Old Fort Point is uncertain since the regiment was never in western Canada (Stewart 1962: 187). Their activity was concentrated in the eastern portion of the country, although a small party did accompany Selkirk to the Red River in 1816 (Stewart 1962: 187). Since it is unlikely that a member of the regiment ever visited the site, the only other possible explanation is that the button was a souvenir brought to the site by one of the residents, or was on a "war-surplus" uniform used by one of the inhabitants.

### Glass Beads

Eighty-one glass beads representing ten types were found. These are classified using the system developed by Kenneth and Martha Kidd (1970), and their identifying code precedes the detailed description of each bead type. Bead types in the collection that do not appear in the Kidd lists are marked by an asterisk (\*) since they do not, as yet, have type numbers. Although the Kidds use "clear" in lieu of "transparent," the latter term is used herein since it is felt to be more descriptive.

### Drawn Beads

These were made by heating and agitating very short sections of glass tubing in a large metal drum or pan until their broken ends became rounded.

Ila12. Circular; small; translucent, oyster white (b; N 9/10); 15 specimens (Fig. 21a).

	<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
Range	2.3–3	1.8–2.6
Average	2.7	2.1

Ila14. Circular; very small and small; opaque, white (a; N 10/0); 8 specimens (Fig. 21 b).

	<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
Range	1.5–2.5	1.2–1.7
Average	2.3	1.5

Ila59. Circular; small; transparent, rose wine (8 1e; 10RP 4/6); 3 specimens (Fig. 21 c). The beads appear black unless held up to a light.

	<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
Range	2.1–2.9	1.2–1.6
Average	2.4	1.4

Ila\*. Circular; very small and small; transparent, bright blue (16 1c; 5B 5/7); 43 specimens (Fig. 21d). The glass contains numerous tiny bubbles.

	<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
Range	1.6–3.1	1.2–2.5
Average	2.7	2

### Wound Beads

These were produced by winding a thin filament of molten glass repeatedly around a rotating metal mandrel until the desired size and shape were achieved.

Wlb\*. Round; large; transparent, sunlight yellow (1-1/2 ga; 5Y 8/8); 1 specimen (Fig. 21 e). Several round bubbles are in the glass.

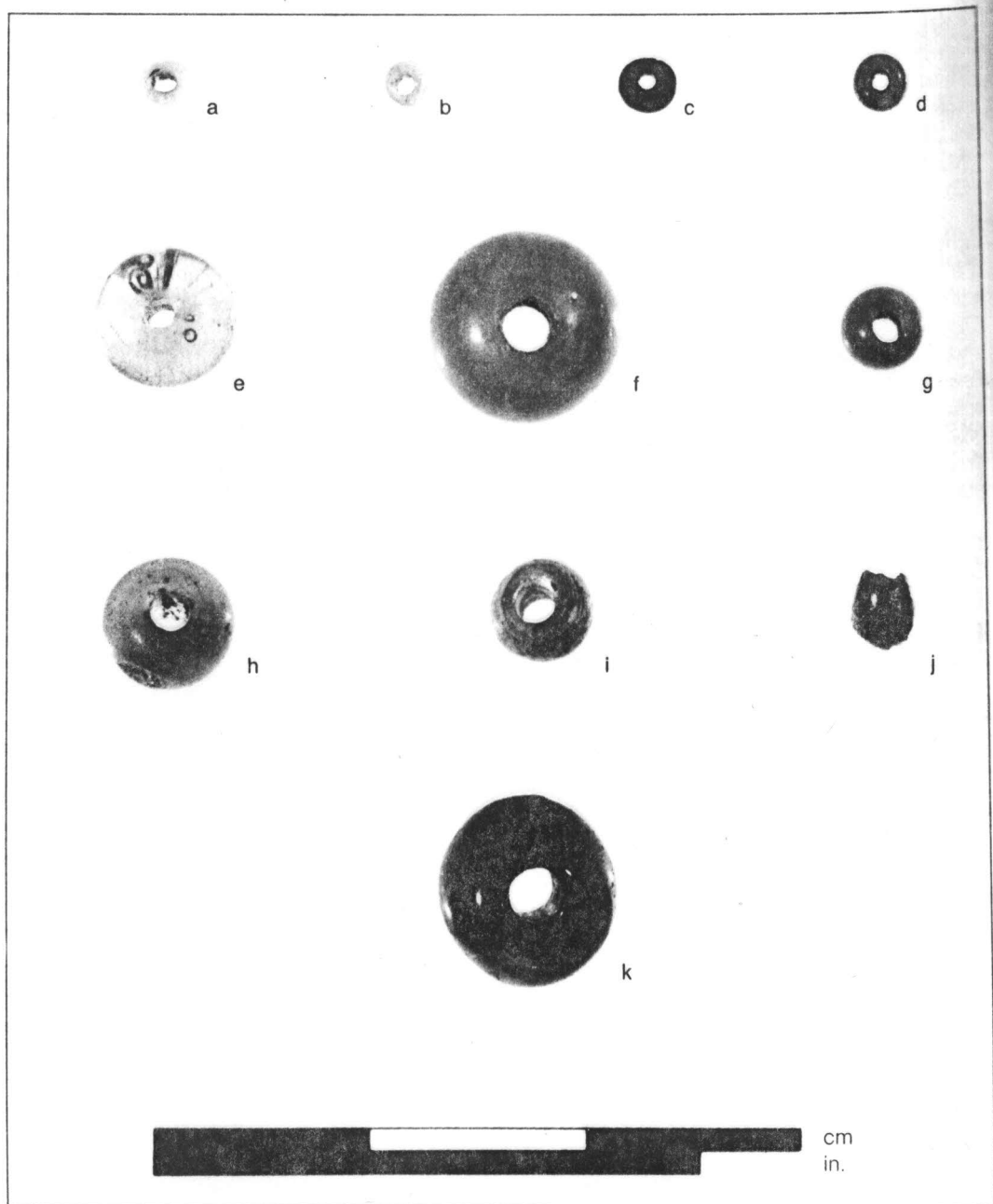
	<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
	6.9	4.6

Wlb\*. Round; medium and large; translucent, horizon blue (15 ic; 10B 6/6); 7 specimens (Fig. 21 f–g). The glass is swirled and contains several bubbles.

	<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
Range	4.2–9.5	3.5–8.2
Average	8.2	7.1

21 Glass beads. *a*, circular, translucent, oyster white; *b*, circular, opaque, white; *c*, circular, transparent, rose wine; *d*, circular, transparent, bright blue; *e*, round, transparent, sunlight yellow; *f-g*, round, translucent, horizon

blue; *h*, round, transparent, bright blue; *i*, round, transparent, turquoise; *j*, oval, opaque, dark palm green; *k*, round, decorated.



Wlb\*. Round; large; transparent, bright blue (16 1c; 5B 5/7); 1 specimen (Fig. 21 h). The glass contains bubbles.

<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
6.3	5.3

Wlb\*. Round; medium; transparent, turquoise (17 pa; 10BG 5/7); 1 specimen (Fig. 21 i). Several bubbles are in the glass. Swirl marks are visible on the surface.

<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
5.1	5

Wlc\*. Oval; small; opaque, dark palm green (23 ni; 10GY 4/4); 1 fragmentary specimen (Fig. 21 j).

<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
3.2	3.7 (existing)

Wlllb\*. Round; large; transparent, coral (6 1c; 7.5R 5/10) body decorated with an opaque, white (a; n 10/0) floral-like wreath which encircles the equator; 1 specimen (Fig. 21 k). Numerous bubbles are in the glass.

<i>Diameter</i> (mm)	<i>Length</i> (mm)
9	6.7

Circular beads, those commonly used in embroidery, are represented by 69 specimens. Using Conn's (1972: 7) size groups, 2 of these are of "seed bead" size (1 mm to 2 mm in diameter), 64 are of "intermediate" size (2 mm to 3 mm in diameter), and 3 are of "pony bead" size (3 mm to 5 mm in diameter).

Necklace beads (those which are large or very large in size) are rare, being represented by nine specimens only. The small- and medium-sized wound beads could have been used either for necklaces or embroidery.

The majority of the beads are not diagnostic of any specific time period and cannot be used to establish or corroborate dates for the site. The circular embroidery beads are useless for dating purposes because of their extremely long temporal range. The remaining beads are more distinctive, but a chronological sequence has only been worked out for one of the types. The decorated bead (Wlllb\*) is assigned to the Late Historic Period (1760-1820 or slightly later) by Quimby (1966: 88). However, while the earliest date is probably relatively accurate, that this type continued to be manufactured and traded until at least the

1860s is suggested by the presence of similar specimens at Fort Berthold II, North Dakota, which was in operation from 1862 to 1886 (Smith 1972: 150).

### **Brooch**

This item consists of a faceted, rectanguloid glass "stone" with an ornamented, gilded brass band encircling its perimeter (Fig. 22). The object is 22.5 mm long, 19 mm wide and 6.8 mm thick. The glass is transparent and very light green (5G 8/6).

The face of the "stone" has a large, elongated- octagonal central table facet bordered by 4 diamond-shaped and 16 triangular crown side facets. The four crown corner facets are pentagonal. The back has eight rectangular pavilion side facets, four pentagonal pavilion corner facets and a low pyramidal apex.

The band is decorated with a pressed design consisting of two parallel rows of crenelations along the base, above which is a series of connected diamond-shaped outlines with a dot in the centre of each. A short crenelated spine is located at the juncture of adjacent diamond elements along the upper edge of the band. The spaces between the various design elements are filled with parallel, horizontal ridges. A circular catch open on one side is soldered to one end of the brooch. The pin is missing but a small area of solder at the other end indicates where it was attached.

### **Silver Ring**

A ring consisting of a plain silver band with an oval cross-section is represented by four fragments. The band is 2.1 mm wide and 0.5 mm thick.

### **Bottle Glass**

The remains of three different bottles were encountered. Strangely enough, the remains consisted entirely of body and shoulder fragments. Since no necks or bases were recovered, only a description of the body styles is possible.

An angular, olive green (10Y) bottle with concave chamfered corners is represented by five body fragments with one or two flat faces adjacent to a fluted face, two flat body fragments and four curved shoulder fragments. The fragments suggest that the bottle was either square or rectangular in cross-section, and had concave chamfered corners about 14 mm wide. The body fragments have an "orange peel" surface indicating that the bottle was blown in a mold.

An angular, clear lead glass bottle with slightly rounded corners is represented by eight flat and angular, slightly heat-warped body fragments which indicate that it was either square or rectangular in cross-section.