

ECHO THE FIREKEEPER: A NINETEENTH CENTURY IROQUOIS SITE

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This paper is about an Iroquois chief and his family who, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, lived in a house near the Grand River, on what today is Lot 56, River Range, Onondaga Twp. This man was known variously as Thomas Hill, Thomas Echo, Thomas Echo Hill, Skanawati, or sometimes -- Echo the Firekeeper.

THE SIX NATIONS ON THE GRAND RIVER

Before discussing Thomas Hill and the site where he lived (Figure 1; AgHa-26 in Figure 3), it is first necessary to provide a sketch of the economic, political and religious structure of Six Nations society in the nineteenth century (see Weaver 1978), particularly that of the Onondaga, Seneca and Tuscarora, the principal Nations associated with Hill and his family.

Settlement Patterns

Three main periods of settlement patterns can be defined for the Grand River Iroquois: the village period (1784-1814); dispersed farm period (1814-1847); modern reserve period (1847-present). While the 1814 date separating the first two periods is rather arbitrarily defined, the year 1847 marked a great change in their settlement mode.

Village Period (1784-1814). Early accounts of the Grand River Iroquois suggest that village settlements, even if rather loose agglomerations of houses, were the dominant settlement form during the early years on the river. In Augustus Jones' 1791-2 survey of the Grand River he identified the locations of Seneca, Onondaga, Delaware, Cayuga, Oneida and Mohawk villages, which were all located near the banks of the river. Unfortunately, with the exception of Mohawk Village, there appears to be no adequate pictorial or cartographic representation of any of these early villages. Mohawk Village itself, with an Anglican chapel as a centrepiece, hardly can be considered as typical. The size and configuration of the other villages can only be guessed.

Dispersed Farm Period (1814-1847). After the end of the 1812-14 war there are a number of references to the decline of the principal villages, including Mohawk Village. In the case of Mohawk Village, specific explanations given for its slow abandonment were the increasing scarcity of fire wood in its vicinity and the disruptions created by the war of 1812 (Kenyon and Ferris 1984). Another factor seems to have been changes in Six Nations farming practices. As involvement in the European-centred market economy increased, Native farms expanded in size, and with the further adoption of European cultivation techniques, a more dispersed settlement pattern became desirable. As villages declined, Native farmers spread along the Grand River, some even establishing homesteads on the back creeks. Nonetheless, most settlement was still

focused on the major waterways. By the 1840's a report on Six Nations affairs noted that "(at Mohawk Village) all the Indian Inhabitants...with the exception of 4 or 5 families, have sold their improvements....The Upper Cayuga Village is now deserted by the Indians. The Onondaga Settlements...can scarcely be called Villages" (Johnston 1964:306).

The Modern Reserve Period (1847-present). By the 1840's most of the vast Grand River tract which had been granted to the Six Nations in 1784 had been sold, with little more than one township (Tuscarora) remaining. By 1847 most of the white squatters had been removed from Tuscarora township and David Thorburn, the Superintendent, began assigning 100 acre tracts to each Six Nation family. The resulting settlement pattern very much resembled that of any white-occupied township, with homesteads evenly spaced along the concession roads. The allotments were not made at random, and members of a given tribe or tribal segment tended to settle together: the Mohawks, Oneida and Upper Cayuga in the western part of the reserve; the Seneca, Onondaga, and Tuscarora in the central part; and, the Lower Cayuga, Delaware and more Seneca and Onondaga in the east. This pattern has remained fairly constant until the present day with the only major change being the rise of small central places, notably the village of Ohsweken in the centre of the reserve, which, by the end of the 19th century, contained not only the Six Nations Council House, but also a Baptist Church and a general store.

Political Structure

In addition to the Six Nations proper -- the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca and Tuscarora -- there were other groups that although not formally integrated into the Iroquois traditional political structure, nonetheless settled and even intermarried with the Six Nations. These other groups included a fairly large contingent of the Algonquian-speaking Delaware, a small number of Nanticoke, who were an Iroquoian people originally from Maryland, and, perhaps the most curious group of all, the Tutelo, a Souian-speaking people from the American Southeast.

Most of the Nations, however, were further divided into "parties" or factions, apparently based on differences in geographical origins or groupings centred on traditional or charismatic leaders. For example, the Onondaga were split into two parties, a larger one under the leadership of Henry Clear Sky, and a smaller one under Bearfoot (Table 1). Similarly, the Seneca, who totalled about 100 individuals, were almost evenly divided into groups led by Nikarondasa and Kanetaga, both veterans of the war of 1812. Even the Nanticokes, who numbered only about 50, had an "Old" and "Young" group, the former living in association with the Lower Cayuga and the Delaware and the latter with the Tuscarora.

ARTIFACT INVENTORY

The following is an analysis of artifacts collected from the surface of what has been called the Johnson Creek #2 site or AgHa-26, but will be referred to below as the Thomas Hill site. The site is located in the west central portion of the Thomas Hill clearing as shown on the 1843 map (Figure 3). Thomas Hill's house was situated at the end of an east-west trending ridge, overlooking Johnson Creek, which is immediately to the west of the site. The Hill site has obviously been cultivated for many years, thus the artifacts, particularly those of ceramic and glass, are highly fragmentary, sometimes rendering precise identification difficult.

Note that all artifact photographs are reproduced at actual size.

Beads

Glass Bead. There is a single glass bead. This is a round, turquoise coloured, wire-wound bead (Kidd and Kidd, 1970: Type W1b11), which measures 6.8mm in length and 8.3mm in width. Necklace sized wire-wound beads are common finds on both European and Native mid-19th century sites in the Grand River (T. Kenyon 1981a, 1981b).

Shell Wampum. Two wampum beads have symmetrical round cross-sections indicating that they were likely machine-made. The two specimens measure 4.8 by 2.4mm and 7.7 by 3.8mm (length by width). Although this wampum may have been from belts or condolence strings, they could have also derived from a "loose stock" of beads. In 1850 Schoolcraft (1852:72) apparently collected such an unstrung group of beads from Catherine John, Joseph Brant's daughter. Schoolcraft reported (1852:74) that in 1850 wampum was "...now very scarce and difficult to procure."

Bottle Glass

The 45 bottle glass sherds can be assigned to generalized colour categories as given in Table 5.

Table 5
Bottle Glass Sherd Colour

Colour	n
"Black" (Dark Olive)	25
Dark Brown	1
Dark Blue	1
Light Green	1
Dark Green	2
Aqua-tint	15

Few of these sherds possess diagnostic attributes other than their colour, those that do are further described below using the terminology of Jones and Sullivan (1985).

Dark Green. There is a fragmentary ovoid base with a pontil mark.

Aqua-tinted. There are four bottle bases, all with pontil marks. Three specimens are from phial-like bottles, with circular bases which measure in diameter 22, 23 and 24mm. The last base is has a "rectan-

gular with flat chamfers" shaped base and measures 35 by 54mm. All of these specimens were presumably medicine bottles.

Buttons

Bone. Three 4-holed bone buttons (Figure 6:1) have the following diameters: 13.2, 16.0 and 16.8mm.

Shell. There are two "pearl" (i.e. shell) buttons, both have cut designs, one specimen measuring 12.3mm in diameter (Figure 6:2) and the other 9.9mm (Figure 6:3).

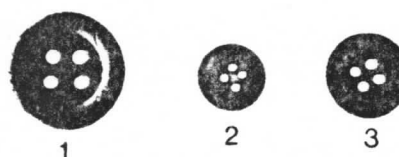


Figure 6. Buttons. 1, bone; 2 & 3, shell.

Coins and Tokens

There are 4 halfpenny-sized tokens (type numbers and names are those of Haxby and Willey 1984).

Tiffen Tokens. Tiffen tokens have a wreathed head on the obverse and a Britannia-like figure on the reverse. Although the marked date is "1812", in fact, Tiffen tokens were not introduced until 1832, supposedly by a Montreal merchant named Tiffen. After their introduction they were widely copied, and the two brass specimens (variety 121a) from the Thomas Hill site would appear to be such imitations. One of the specimens has a centrally positioned hole, presumably used for stringing "loose change" together.

"Bust and Harp" Token. As the name suggests this type has a crudely modeled head on one face and a harp on the other. The stamped date is 1820, but the true date of introduction is thought to be 1825. The specimen (variety 112) from Thomas Hill is of brass, a later variety of this token which Haxby and Willey date to ca.1837.

Bank of Montreal Token. This one sous copper token (variety 128) was issued in 1835-37.

Crockery

Red Earthenware. There are 17 sherds of red earthenware that derive from crocks, although the specimens are too fragmentary to permit the identification of specific vessel forms. Another sherd is from a thin-walled red earthenware vessel (possibly a teapot) that has a black glaze. The last specimen is a red earthenware sherd having a white exterior slip decorated with a purple "Sunderland" glaze.

Grey Salt-Glaze Stoneware. There are 8 sherds with grey salt-glaze exteriors and brown "Albany" slip interiors. All are likely from crocks although no specific vessel forms can be determined.

Brown Salt-Glaze Stoneware. There are 16 sherds with brown salt-glaze exteriors. Three vessel forms are present: there are rims from 2 different blacking bottles; the rims from 2 or 3 fruit jars with an impressed "rouletted" design on the shoulder; and lastly some body sherds from a panelled bottle-shaped

"wealth" or purchasing power as such. Sites with low percentages of expensive ware and high plate/saucer ratios tend to be the downriver ones -- Cook, Styers and Hill. The high plate/saucer ratio on downriver sites may owe to a different reason than high ratios seen on the "wealthier" European sites. For the Native sites this high ratio probably is a product of comparatively low amounts of teaware, in contrast to the "wealthier" European sites where a high plate/saucer ratio represents a superfluity of plates. In short, for the "downriver" Six Nations drinking tea may still not have been an integral part of their dining practices as it seems to have been for Mohawks at the "upriver" end.

Despite the relatively high social and economic standing of Thomas Hill, it is apparent from a study of his tableware that his dining behaviour departed from the European and Mohawk norm, and in this respect he more closely resembled the non-Christian, and less acculturated, Cayuga.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has given an historical and archaeological sketch of an Onondaga chief who lived in the first half of the 19th century. We have inquired into his ancestry, traced out his descendants, visited his neighbours, rummaged through his refuse heap, inventoried his household goods and, finally, sat down to table with Thomas Echo Hill -- the Firekeeper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very much indebted to our friend Dr. David Faux for the advice and information he has provided so generously over the past few years. Thanks to Jay Nuttall (Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communications) whose data on the Middleport site and its vicinity was of great help. Louise Dallaire (Canadian Ethnology Service) not only provided access to the Goldenweiser fieldnotes but also served as a reassuring reminder that not all of Ottawa is bound in red tape. Patricia Birkett (Public Archives of Canada) was kind enough to search through the Claus Papers for the 1826 land surrender, when, owing to lack of time, it was not possible to do so personally. Rory Cory was patient enough to produce the artifact photographs. Tom Hill (director-curator of the Woodland Indian Museum and a great great grandson of Thomas Echo Hill) provided some memories of his family's history. Lastly, thanks to the one and only Christine Dodd who so expertly proof read this paper.

APPENDIX COMPARATIVE CERAMIC DATA

This appendix gives in tabular form the ceramic data used the vessel form comparisons, together with some explanatory notes. In addition, summary statistics are provided, including the regression coefficients used in Figure 14. The European and Six Nation sites are listed separately in the tables below.

The data are derived from a minimum vessel count for the sites (the procedures and problems with this analysis are outlined in Kenyon and Kenyon 1982). For each site three numbers are given:

N: The total number of plates, cups and saucers
EXP: The percentage of expensive varieties of wares as calculated with N as a divisor (hence this does not include bowls or vessel forms other than plates, cups or saucers.)
P/S: The plate/saucer ratio, that is, the number of plates divided by the number of saucers.

"Expensive" and "Inexpensive" categories of ceramics are defined as follows:

Expensive: Porcelain
White Granite or Ironstone
Printed
Flowing Colours

Inexpensive: Painted earthenware
Sponged (including "Stamped")
Edged
C.C. or Plain Earthenware

The European Sites

The European sites are scattered through the southern counties of Southwestern Ontario, with sites 1 to 8 below being located in the lower Grand River tract (see Figure 1). All 20 sites have mean occupation dates between 1830 and 1865. Sources of data are as follows: sites 1-14, Kenyon and Kenyon 1982; sites 15-19 Ferris and Kenyon 1983; site 20, Kenyon, Ferris, Dodd & Lennox 1984. Names given to sites are either the name of one of the original 19th century occupants (e.g. Christopher Beer, John Young Jr.) or else a 19th century locale (e.g. Glen Airn Mill, Antrim Village). The few exceptions to this have concocted names, which are enclosed in quotation marks. The only non-house site is the G.T.R. Camp, which represents a ca.1858 encampment of railway workers, and serves as a working class comparative sample.

SITE	N	EXP	P/S
(1) John Croker	106	28.3	.57
(2) Anthony's Mills	90	30.0	1.14
(3) Pat. MacDonald	71	56.3	1.52
(4) John Young Jr.	133	46.6	1.46
(5) Glen Airn Mill	284	36.3	.89
(6) "Indian Line"	37	43.2	.63
(7) George Thomas	166	81.3	1.36
(8) W. Westbrook	39	33.3	1.00
(9) "Komoka 2"	54	63.0	1.05
(10) Antrim Village	29	44.8	1.38
(11) Farrell	72	8.3	.96
(12) G.T.R. Camp (AhHk-83)	44	15.9	1.06
(13) Ferguson	47	27.7	1.36
(14) Ketchum	62	58.1	1.55
(15) Nicholls	45	24.4	1.29
(16) Duncan Campbell	55	47.3	1.80
(17) Christopher Beer	65	75.4	2.17
(18) Jacob Beer	43	53.5	1.23
(19) "Crinan Creek"	146	52.7	1.08
(20) Terry Lynch	59	52.5	.78
Mean		43.9	1.21
Standard Deviation		18.7	.39
Sample Size			20
Correlation Coefficient (r)			.4707
Regression Slope (b)			.0097
Regression Constant (a)			.7865