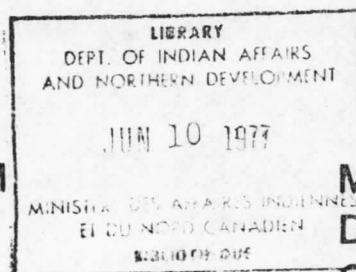


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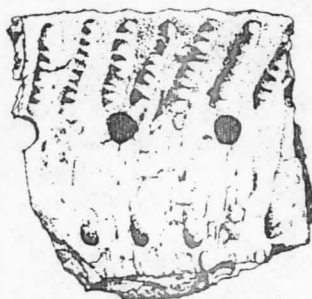
✓ THE POTATO ISLAND SITE, DISTRICT OF KENORA,
ONTARIO

POLLY KOEZUR AND J. V. WRIGHT

pp. iii-v, 1-51

ALBANY RIVER SURVEY, PATRICIA DISTRICT, ONTARIO

K.C.A. DAWSON



Abstract

The Potato Island site (ElKc-1) is located near the headwaters of the English, Berens and Albany River systems in the District of Kenora, Northern Ontario. Virtually the entire archaeological sequence of the region is present with Shield Archaic, Laurel and Terminal Woodland occupations being represented. Unfortunately, the cultural deposits had suffered considerable disturbance and, therefore, only two levels could be isolated - the Shield Archaic and Terminal Woodland. The faunal analysis from the Terminal Woodland deposits suggest that the site was seasonally occupied from spring to early summer. A number of pottery vessels clearly represent the transition of Laurel ceramics into Blackduck ceramics and it is suggested that the transition took place between A.D. 600 and A.D. 800. Selkirk materials were also well represented in the Terminal Woodland deposits which also contained European trade materials. The entire occupation is regarded as the product of Algonkian-speaking peoples who historically are the Ojibwa and Cree.

Résumé

Le site de l'île Potato (ElKc-1) se trouve à proximité de la source des rivières English, Berens et Albany, dans le district de Kenora (Nord de l'Ontario). On y retrouve des vestiges qui témoignent d'occupations représentant toute la séquence archéologique de la région, notamment de la tradition de l'Archaïque du Bouclier, de Laurel et du Sylvicole tardif. Malheureusement, le gisement a été considérablement bouleversé et c'est pourquoi seuls deux niveaux ont pu être discernés, soit l'Archaïque du Bouclier et le Sylvicole tardif. L'analyse faunistique de la couche du Sylvicole tardif révèle une occupation saisonnière du site du printemps jusqu'au début de l'été. Plusieurs poteries indiquent clairement la transition entre la céramique de Laurel et celle de Blackduck qui a eu lieu, semble-t-il aux environs de 600 et 800 av. J.-C. Un assez grand nombre d'objets de type Selkirk ont en outre été trouvés dans la couche du Sylvicole tardif à côté d'objets d'échange d'origine européenne. Toute cette occupation est considérée comme l'oeuvre de peuples algonquinoïdes, soit, d'après les faits historiques, les Sautaux et les Cris.

1,200 years the faunal analysis has been restricted to species identification and some general comments. The faunal analysis was done by myself and then either corroborated or corrected by Miss Frances Stewart, Archaeofaunal Researcher with the Archaeological Survey of Canada. Miss Stewart also took on the task of identifying many of the more difficult specimens.

Identified mammals (Banfield:1974) are as follows: moose (*Alces alces*); deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*); caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*); hare (*Lepus americanus*); beaver (*Castor canadensis*); muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*); porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*); bear (*Ursus americanus*); lynx (*Lynx lynx*); mink (*Mustela vison*); wolf or dog (*Canis sp.?*); red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*); and wolverine ? (*Gulo gulo*). Of the smaller mammals, hare and beaver were the most common and in both of these groups juvenile animals dominated. Deer was more common than caribou and at least two juveniles were present. A number of species were represented by one to two identifiable fragments - bear (metatarsal and phalange); canis (canine root); mink (mandible); lynx (ulna and canine); red fox (two skull fragments); and wolverine (pelvic fragment). The last identified specimen is questionable since comparative material was lacking in the collections. The fragment in question, however, most closely resembled the equivalent portion of a fisher but was considerably larger. Very few of the identifiable mammals bones exhibited any exposure to fire.

Identified birds are as follows: common loon (*Gavia immer*); duck (*Anatidae ?*); great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*); ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*); and golden or bald eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos* or *Haliaeetus leucocya halus*). Loons and ducks dominated the collection and the ruffed grouse and great blue heron were represented by only two bones each and the eagle by a single toe bone. The identifiable bird bones exhibit no evidence of exposure to fire and many of the loon and duck bones exhibited little or no evidence of breakage suggesting that the carcasses had been boiled and then consumed.

Identified fish remains (Scott and Crossman:1973) consist of pickerel (*Stizostedion vitreum*) and northern pike (*Esox lucius*) with the former being the most abundant. The identifiable fragments exhibit no evidence of direct contact with fire.

Comment

Despite the approximate 1,200 year time span apparently represented by the faunal remains and the disturbed nature of the cultural deposits it is possible to suggest that the site was occupied seasonally during the summer months. This is suggested by the presence of both aquatic birds and the juvenile mammals.

EUROPEAN OBJECTS

Abundant 20th century and late 19th century European objects were recovered from the site and these have not been analyzed. The bulk of these late items occurred at depths of three inches or less except for six items, such as a wire nail and a 303 cartridge, that occurred at greater depths and are obviously intrusive. Numerous small white, blue, and orange seed beads also were found in the upper three inches and the

bulk of these items are regarded as being quite late. Only the European materials from below the three inch level or objects from the higher levels that can be identified as being earlier than the late 19th century are included in the analysis.

Brass kettle fragments (14):

Cut-up portions of brass kettle are regarded as being early since the very act of utilizing worn-out kettles suggests a scarcity of metal and a relatively limited access to trade goods. Recognizable fragments consist of a handle attachment (Plate IV, fig. 17) and three lip fragments. Two triangular cut pieces (Plate IV, fig. 18) were present and use-polish along one or more edges occurred in four instances suggesting that these small fragments had subsequently functioned as a form of knife. The brass fragments are uniformly .5 mm. in thickness.

Beads (3):

Excluded from the analysis are the following: white seed beads (96); blue seed beads (38); pink seed beads (3); orange seed beads (2); red seed beads with a black core (2); black seed bead (1); red seed bead (1); red tubular beads (2); white tubular bead (1); and a 5-sided tubular black bead (1); blue tubular bead (1); and a large 6 mm. by 7 mm. blue ovate bead.

The two blue seed beads and single white seed bead from below the three inch level very likely do not have any greater temporal significance than the beads from the upper three inches.

Iron arrowheads (2):

One stemmed specimen and an asymmetrical triangular specimen with unbevelled edges (Plate IV, figs. 19 and 20) are represented.

Gunflints (2):

Both gunflints are of the English variety and one is complete (Plate IV, fig. 21) whereas the other is represented by an edge fragment.

Brass tinkler (1):

The tinkler has been made from a strip of brass kettle (Plate IV, fig. 22).

Silver pendant (1):

The triangular silver pendant with suspension hole (Plate IV, fig. 23) is .02 mm. in thickness.