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The Archaeology of the Tocks Island Area

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The Historic Period

The Indians of the Upper Delaware Valley must have been aware of the presence of European colonists long before the first white man set foot in the Valley. In August 1663, for example the Minisink Indians appealed to Oratamy, sachem of the Hackensacks, to request the Dutch to supply "a small piece of ordnance to use in their fort against the Sinnakas and protect their corn" (Brodhead 1853-87: Vol 13 p. 290; Philhower 1953:6). In 1688 the Shawnee, Paxinos, by then a sachem of the Minisinks, sent forty men to join the Mohawks against the French (Ruttenber 1872: 68,69). The possibilities of trade, curiosity, or other motives would probably have caused at least some of the Minisink Indians to hear about, or go east to see for themselves, the curiously appareled and ethnically different intruders.

Perhaps the first white man to visit the Minisink area of the Upper Delaware Valley was Arnout Vielle, a French fur trader who was fluent in one or more Iroquoian languages. Reference to this individual is carried in Captain Arent Schuyler's Journal of 1694 (O'Callaghan and Fernow 1856-1877, Vol. 4:98,99). Schuyler, who may have been in the Minisink region as early as 1692 (Trelease 1960:325), had been sent to Maggaghkamieck (present day Port Jervis) by Governor Benjamin Fletcher of the Province of New York. His mission in early February 1694 was to insure the friendship and neutrality of the Minisink and Shawnee Indians and to dissuade them from assisting the Indian allies of the French in their attacks against the English and Dutch settlers (Mc Tiernan n.d. Chap. 4:1-4; Leslie 1973:215).

The Schuyler and Minisink Patents opened the Upper Delaware Valley to settlement. By 1701, the white population of the Minisink area had grown sufficiently to establish it as a voting precinct. The area of chief concern to us, namely the Pahaquarra sector extending from the Delaware Water Gap to the Wallpack Bend, was acquired and settled somewhat later. Access to the Pahaquarra region from the south or southeast must have been very hazardous. John Reading Jr., a surveyor for the Province of New Jersey, journeyed from near Somerville, New Jersey to Mahackamack (the former Indian town of Maggaghkamieck on the Neversink River near present day Port Jervis) where he was to join commissioners sent from New York and Pennsylvania for the purpose of jointly surveying and determining a boundary between their respective provinces. Under date of June 23, 1719, Reading made the following comments in his journal (Reading 1915:94-95).

...we set forward along the said path [Tokhokonetkong - probably the Paulins Kill] another considerable brance of Delaware... after which we set forward along the said path for Pahuckqualong [the Shawnee name for the Pahaquarra area just north of the Delaware Water Gap] on the lower side of which lies a very stupendious [sic] high hill difficult to be crossed, unless at some certain places where runs of water facilitates the passage... but the descention proved more steep and dangerous for ourselves and horses, scarce being able to keep our feet...

(June 24, 1719) ...[we] steared our course through low lands of Pahucqualong near to the River side, on the farther side of which are several small towns of the Shawnenoc [Shawnee] Indians... We directed our course up the River side but with very great difficulty for after we had left the aforesaid low lands the hills bound very near the River and made it almost unpassable. Some times we were forced into the River, and sometimes on the side of shelving rocks which seem'd to threaten a dislocation or a fracture of our bones...

The earliest white settler in the region just above the Delaware Water Gap seems to have been a French Huguenot named Nicholas Depuy. An indenture dated September 18, 1727 places him in what is now Shawnee-on-Delaware in Monroe County, Pennsylvania, "on three thousand acres more or less" and "including all the islands to the said tract of land belonging to the heirs of Sir William Pen..." (PA. MAG of Hist. and Biog. Vol 22:504). This colonial settlement was just down-river and less than five miles from the Harry's Farm site. To what extent, if any, the aborigines of this site interacted with the white foreigners is not known.

Early colonial habitation on the New Jersey side of the Pahaquarra Area above the Delaware

Water Gap was discouraged by the fact that the Kittatinny Mountains practically rise out of the river and provide little level land. Except for certain areas in Worthington State Park, the Harry's Farm site is the first extensive level floodplain suitable for farm or pasture (see Fig. 1).

The frequently cited tale - that the early Dutch had mined copper at the Pahaquarra Copper Mines, and that they had supposedly constructed a 104 mile long "Mine Road" over which to haul the ore to Esopus (now Kingston, N.Y.) - is seriously doubted by scholars today (Mc Tier-nan n.d.; Leslie 1973:229-244). There is, consequently, no reason to look for Indian-white man contact in this direction. Extensive excavations which I conducted in 1971-72 at the Pahaquarra site immediately below the locus of the Pahaquarra Copper Mines yielded absolutely no evidence of European trade items, or remains of an early colonial settlement such as one would expect from a mining community, had it existed.

No extensive amounts of European trade goods, such as have been recovered from Susquehannock or Mohawk and Seneca sites, have been recovered from any sites in the Upper Delaware Valley, but glass, brass, iron, shell and certain ceramic trade items are thinly scattered on many sites throughout the areas. The Harry's Farm site yielded a scattering of such items indicative of a moderate and occasional contact. Perishable goods such as stroud coats, shirts, stockings or beer and rum would not have survived, although they may have figured prominently in the trade for Indian furs and other commodities.

European Trade Items

Glass Beads (Fig. 88a, g).

Seven glass beads, all different, were recovered from the pits or plow zone in and around house pattern No. 3. Four of the beads are elongated ovals measuring from 12.7 to 15.3 mm in length and 6 to 6.7 mm in diameter. Two are more or less circular and measure 7.1 mm in length and 8.5 in diameter. One large wire-wound bead (Fig. 88g) is split in half; the remnant suggests a round bead 17 mm long and 15 mm in diameter. Two beads (Fig. 88c, e) are made from plain opaque white glass; two (Fig. 88a, b) are opaque white with lateral stripes of blue-green-blue and olive-blue-red respectively. One elliptical bead (Fig. 88d) is made of a transparent, deep blue glass. Fig. 88f, is clear, crystal glass with white stripes. The largest bead (Fig. 88g) now badly decomposed is made from semi opaque, bluish white glass.

Glass beads such as these were stock trade items distributed by the traders and explorers of many nations. Most of these glass beads were manufactured in Venice, Italy. The few beads that we have excavated from the Harry's Farm site have little diagnostic value, and it cannot be ascertained whether they were acquired through contact with white men in the Valley, or whether they were brought in as a result of trade carried out farther east or down river.

Glass Scrapers (Fig. 88h, i).

Two fragments of bottle glass, with one or more edges chipped and beveled in the manner of a scraper, were found in locus K. "Black glass" spirit bottles were found in two Indian refuse pits on the Miller Field site (see Kraft, in Kinsey et al: 1972: Fig. 12, p. 50), and there too some bottle fragments were employed as knives or scrapers. One of the glass scrapers from the Harry's Farm site (Fig. 88i) has a concave scraping edge and may have been employed as an arrow shaft scraper.

Gun Flints (Fig. 88j-l)

Three gun flints were found in the pits and plow zone surrounding house pattern No. 3 (see Fig. 52). Two are made from honey-colored flint like that from Le Grand Pressigne, France; the third (Fig. 88l) is a light, mottled grayish flint similar to that from Denmark. Two of the gun flints (j and l) were made from blades, the median ridge of which still traverses the length of one face on each gun flint; the other gun flint (k) may have originated from a blade, but bifacial flak-

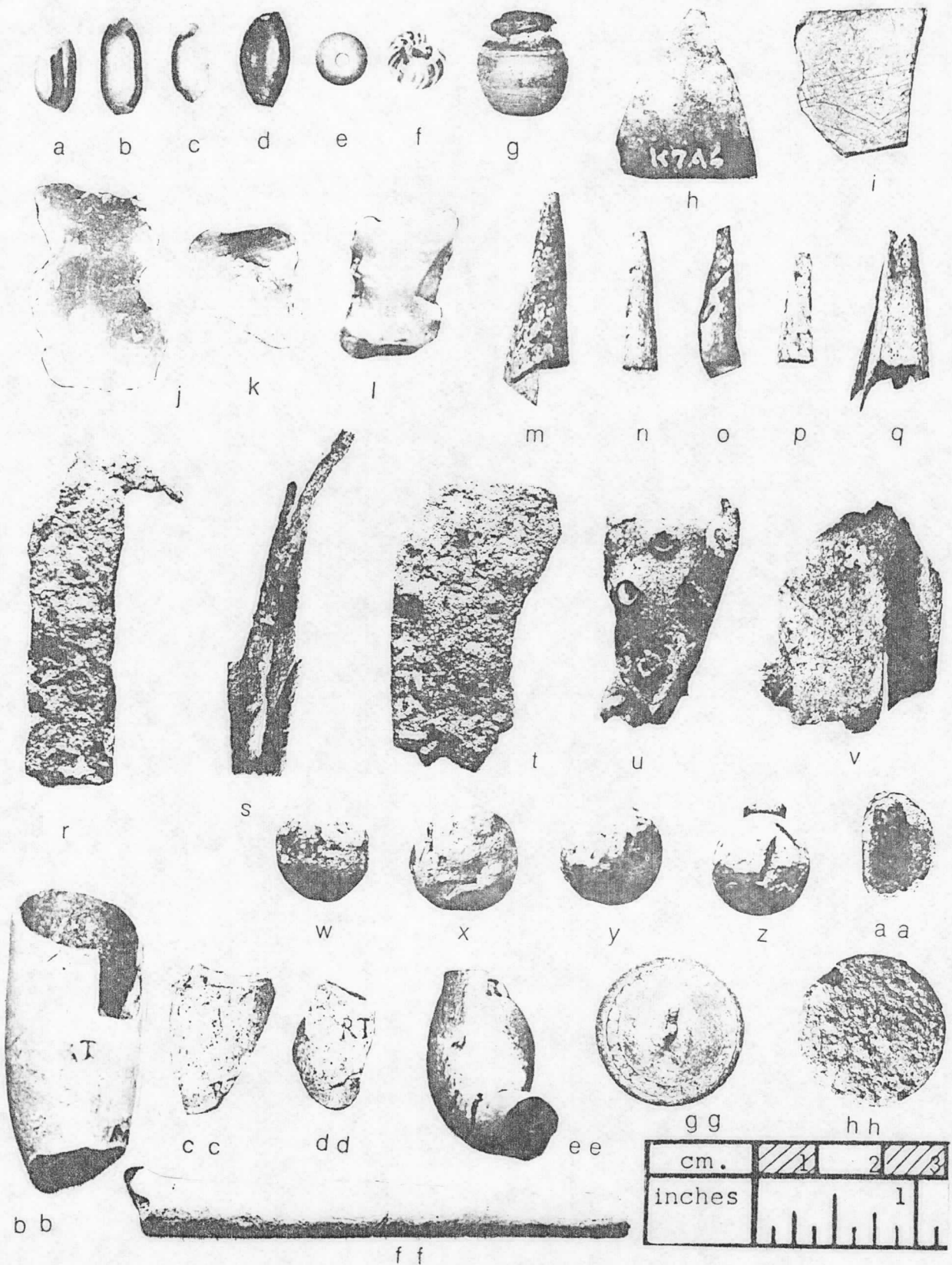


Fig. 88. Historic trade items found in Late Minisink culture associations. a-g, glass beads (a, white with blue stripes; b, white with olive, green and red stripes; c,e,g, opaque white; d, dark blue; f, clear glass with white stripes); h, c, green glass scrapers; j-l, gun flints made from honey colored flint (from Le Grand Pressigny, France ?); m-q, brass bangles; r, possible remnant of an iron strike-a-light; s, brass fragment; t, possible remnant of an iron knife; u,v, brass scraps; w-aa, muskett balls of lead (z still has the casting sprue attached, and aa has been cut in half); bb-ff, fragments of Robert Tippet clay pipes; g, brass button; hh, iron disk.