

RESEARCHES AND TRANSACTIONS  
OF  
THE NEW YORK STATE ARCHEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

LEWIS H. MORGAN CHAPTER  
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

A Contact  
Period Seneca Site

SITUATED AT FACTORY HOLLOW,  
ONTARIO COUNTY, N. Y.

BY

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WITH A MAP BY WALTER H. CASSEBEER AND  
REPORT OF A FIELD SURVEY BY H. C. FOLLETT

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**Iron Implements.** Articles of iron or steel from the site include a few knives, evidently once having bone handles, iron axes of the usual trade type, known as the Ghent ax, chisel edges and other undetermined specimens. Several iron awls have been found, none of them in handles.

✓ **Articles of Glass.** These include European beads. At Factory Hollow only a few types of European beads have been found, indicating only the beginning of trade with the whites. In all sites of a later period beads are abundant and of a score or more types. The beads in our possession from this site are mostly round blue beads about one fifth inch in diameter. There are a few small blue and white beads and a still smaller number of red beads striped red and white. The State Museum has ten varieties of beads from the site, all from the Dewey collection.

**Preserved Cloth.** Where blanket cloth or clothing fabric has been in contact with brass or copper the leaching out of the copper salts saturates the fabric and preserves it from decay. In the graves of this site several pieces of red woolen cloth of coarse weave have been found, still retaining the original red dye. It appears to be a type of trade cloth known for several centuries as Dobson, after an English manufacturer.

#### Relation of Factory Hollow Site to Others in the Region.

**Seneca Village Sites in General.** From the testimony of early travelers, missionaries and explorers, the Seneca tribe was a populous one, occupying a considerable range of territory, and living in at least four large villages and several smaller ones. If we take the number of four principal towns as the correct number in the time of Greenhalgh for example, we may assume that each of these village localities at a previous time had other localities. We know that it was the custom of the Seneca and cognate tribes to move their towns to other sites at periodic times. The duration of an occupied site probably depended upon several factors. A site was habitable so long as there was a good water supply, a plentiful wood supply, a fertile agricultural area, and easy communication with other villages. There may have been also thaumaturgical reasons for moving villages. It may be that the evil spirits

of witches, the ghosts of enemies, the unrequited spirits of slain warriors or the wraiths of animals, haunted the village, bringing sickness and ill luck. One might endure cold and hunger, but who can withstand the unseen powers of the air! The dream of a sorcerer, the whim of an old woman of the cult of the rulers of the tribal destiny may have ordered the movement of the village to a new location. Life is a tragedy, the red forest dwellers well understood. The old village with its heaps of decaying refuse, its tainted water, its graves and its tick-infested bark lodges, must be abandoned. Its muddy and rutted area was slimy with the filth of a decade. It was haggard and withered like a leaf burnt by August sun and bitten by October frost. It must fall in ruin. The neighboring village had heard the ghostly voices warning. Already their new cabins were smiling upon a grassy plot. The time has come for us to go.

The survey had been made and with many a sacrificial prayer, the burning of tobacco incense, the wail of regret, the chanting of invocation, the new site is announced. The time is at hand when we go!

It is springtime and the year is new. We shall bestir ourselves like the birds and build new nests! With songs of joy, the furniture, pelts, utensils, ceremonial paraphernalia are moved and placed under guard. The men are busy cutting poles, timbers and stakes for the new houses. Bark is peeled in great sheets that smell of the fragrance of the elm. Boys and men strip off shreds of elm bark, butternut and basswood, using the inner bark. These shreds are soaked and twisted into ropes and cords for tying the sheet bark on the new houses. Everyone is busy, for the life of the red men is one of continuous toil. Great barn-like frames are erected and the slabs of bark laid over them. Soon there is a new village and there is great rejoicing. At the Strawberry thanksgiving, a village festival is held to which all neighboring villagers are invited. The winter's store of corn, transported from the old granaries, affords meal for bread; the warriors have provided a ton of meat. It is a time of thanksgiving.

Then there is a wail. A long somber looking burden is taken out on a bark litter. In a spot chosen for the purpose

The refuse had apparently been dumped over the edge of the bank and washed down, lodging wherever there was a depression arresting it, as evidenced by the triangular shape of the pits on completion. In one of these pits we found quantities of pot sherds (identical with those of the Richmond Mills site), buried in the ashes and on the bottom, directly over this and in contact with the heavy overlaid rim pattern of the later date, which is the predominating type found here. Over this deposit and nearer the surface were pieces of brass kettles. As the ashes were mingled together and free from surface or any foreign matter there can not be a mistake in the identification which we were particular in observing. This deposit was three feet deep in the center. Among the artifacts unearthed is a bone fishhook, the only one known to have been found on this site.

A few years ago a great slide of earth took place on the west slope near the north fence line, exposing large quantities of animal bones. The slide was of such dimensions that it aroused considerable interest, and it was visited by a number of people who curiously pronounced the bones as human. As a result stories are prevalent that skeletons were washed down the bank "by the hundreds". This refuse lodged in various places, but is so merged with the clay that it has been rendered almost impossible to obtain any specimens by any degree of reasonable labor. However, a few articles have been extracted from some of the more exposed places.

Testing on the eastern slope and opposite the village site did not disclose any refuse, but a small deposit was located on the north-east corner, in a hollow between two small knolls. This accumulation is evidently the result of wash and very few articles were obtained in it. Test holes sunk on the escarpment of the ridge extending along the northern side of the village site disclosed refuse which in some spots is two feet deep. It evidently has been dug over, and no attempt by us was made to excavate here.

A deep pit of virgin refuse was opened in a hollow between two knolls on the narrow neck of land to the north of the village and the section which separates the village from the burial site. This pit is three feet deep in the center, is conical,

gradually tapering up to the surface, and is about fifteen feet in diameter, being nearly round.

The articles obtained were few in number considering the amount of the debris taken out. It was almost solid ashes and a very interesting midden. Our refuse work ceased with the completion of this pit.

The burying ground, which is located but a few rods to the north of here, has from surface appearance received considerable devastation. It is a crime that the records of the work on such an important site have not been preserved. The only information obtainable is that most of the graves were opened a number of years ago by a Mr. Marvin Peck, of West Bloomfield, who sold his collection to the State, but unfortunately most of it was destroyed by fire in the Capitol at Albany in 1911.

Local residents say about one hundred and fifty graves were opened, an estimate I think too high by at least fifty.

Those who have seen some of the exhumations claim that great quantities of artifacts were taken out, among which were stone implements, clay jars, pipes and numerous European articles, as heads, brass articles and iron axes.

In a grave opened by a Mr. Hinman, a nearby resident, the skeleton was said to have been covered with a fur robe containing a bear's skull, covered with a layer of red cedar sticks. Beneath the robe was a brass kettle, inverted, covering three clay pots. Near the body was a clay pipe with a bear effigy, the head of which, being hollow, contained a small pebble, which would rattle when the pipe was shaken. With another skeleton were found two bone dolls one of which is in the collection of Mr. Dewey.

I would judge that not more than fifty to seventy burials had been exhumed. A few test pits were sunk in between and on the extreme outside of spots where graves had been opened, but without success. Without doubt a trench across the top of the knoll would prove successful in the location of several graves. Work in this respect was not carried on owing to permission not having been obtained from the property owner.

Burials apparently extend down a portion at least of the west side of the knoll, and there may be an extensive burial site in the vicinity not yet disturbed.

The soil on the knoll is gravelly loam, on the lower ground the tenacious red clay and of such a hard nature that it is difficult to make an impression in it with a shovel except in wet weather.

It is said the graves on this site are unusually deep, as is evidenced by the examining of one opened that had been previously dug. It had a depth of four and one-half feet and then the bottom had not been reached. Three or four graves were unearthed in a gravel pit near the north-east corner of the village site a few years ago. No records are obtainable of the articles, if any.

A small burial site was discovered in 1916 on the edge of the east bank at the extreme southern end of the village site. Previous to this five skeletons had been removed, and as near as I am able to ascertain each grave contained articles, among which are a clay pipe, two or three bone arrow points, some triangular arrow points (flint), a few glass and wampum beads, and fragments of brass kettles. These burials had been opened the previous year and were located on a knoll which projects to the east from the narrow neck of land as shown in the map. Trenches were laid out across the top in the shape of a cross without result. In addition to this test holes were sunk in several places, determining to our satisfaction that no other burials existed on this knoll.

Crossing the hollow to the south testing was commenced in a series of holes two feet apart. This was fifty feet from where the skeletons just described were located. Charcoal was discovered in a hole close to the edge of the bank and on the slope which extends from the center of the field to the escarpment of the bank on the east side of the site. This charcoal was located so close to the edge that we did not at first entertain much hopes of its being the evidence of a burial underneath, a sign that seldom fails. A skeleton was located here at a depth of only eighteen inches, three others on the same level and only a few feet apart. One of the skeletons was that of a young adult and in a good state of preservation with the exception of the skull which had been crushed evidently by the weight of the earth. The other three were older adults and the bones were nearly all decomposed. One grave contained a stone about ten inches in diameter which had

been placed on top of the body when buried, as it was found resting on the bones of the skeleton. All were buried in the flexed position and had charcoal over them. One grave had been lined on the bottom with bark; two graves had considerable red paint strewn through the earth. These two did not contain any articles, but traces of iron rust indicated a knife or some other small implement. The other two contained remnants of two brass kettles, fifty-five round blue glass beads, one hundred twenty-five of the old type wampum beads, two triangular points (flint), three small flat and thin stones with rounded ends, called "whet stones" and undoubtedly used as such, a small clay pot broken and badly decomposed which was resting on the bark and contained small animal bones, which represented the food. Placed on top of this mass were four small chunks of anthracite coal, four badly decomposed bears teeth, three pieces of worked flint, and two squash seeds. The soil here is a tenacious red clay and the location being on low ground is very soggy, which may account for the bad condition of most of the articles. Further test holes did not discover any more burials, so trenching in all directions was resorted to in hopes of discovering others on top of the knoll. I was certain that this knoll had been extensively used, not only from its location but from the fact that the burials just described had been located so low down. We were unable, however, to discover another particle of evidence and concluded that we had excavated the entire number in this vicinity.

A trench was started at or near the bottom of the hill below where the graves were opened and charcoal in large quantities located about half way up the bank. This deposit was about two feet wide and eighteen inches deep, but did not contain any animal bones or other evidence to connect it with the former inhabitants of the site.

A single burial was discovered in the north-west corner of this field and very close to the village site, while excavations were being carried on for a drain a number of years ago. No others being exposed there probably are no more located there.

The village site at the present time being under sod, it is impossible to give it a thorough testing or observation, from the surface. When under cultivation a long time ago it is said a