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THE FRANK BAY SITE, LAKE NIPISSING, ONTARIO

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LAKE NIPISSING is situated 230 miles north of Lake Ontario and roughly 140 miles within the igneous rock territory. Some 30 by 8 miles in size, it is drained westerly by the French River into Lake Huron. Frank Bay, enclosing an area of one half square mile, is situated on the south shore at the entrance to the French River.

Historically the area was occupied by an Algonkian group called "Nipisinieries" or "Nipissings" by the 17th century Jesuits; Galinee's map of 1665 depicts a bay on the south shore of Lake Nipissing at the head of the French River: "In a bay at this place the Nipissings usually locate their village" (Coyne, 1903).

The site* described here, probably the one figured by Galinee, is a level tract of about one half acre constructed by wave deposition of coarse sand upon a low area at the bottom of the bay. The height of the site surface above

the present summer water level is nearly 7 feet, the tract having been under construction when the lake stood at a higher level. Wave and minor wind action had continued to build up the land during aboriginal occupation; the oldest archaeological stratum was farthest from the beach; those above inclined parallel to the present surface, each deepening toward the lake.

For brief periods between 1950-1953 I excavated here, opening a single trench perpendicular to the beach that bisected the site. Although this trench involved but a fraction of the total site, and future excavations are planned, the importance of the station warrants publication at this time.

A layer of blackened sand covers the site to a depth of about 6 inches and contains articles of both native and European manufacture. Below this, in sand and ashes, lay scattered pottery-bearing strata, probably the remains of small, temporary camps which at no single period occupied more than a fraction of the full area (Fig. 15). Beneath these strata were the remains of a preceramic culture called here the "Mattawan" complex, after a nearby river and town. A total of 8 strata

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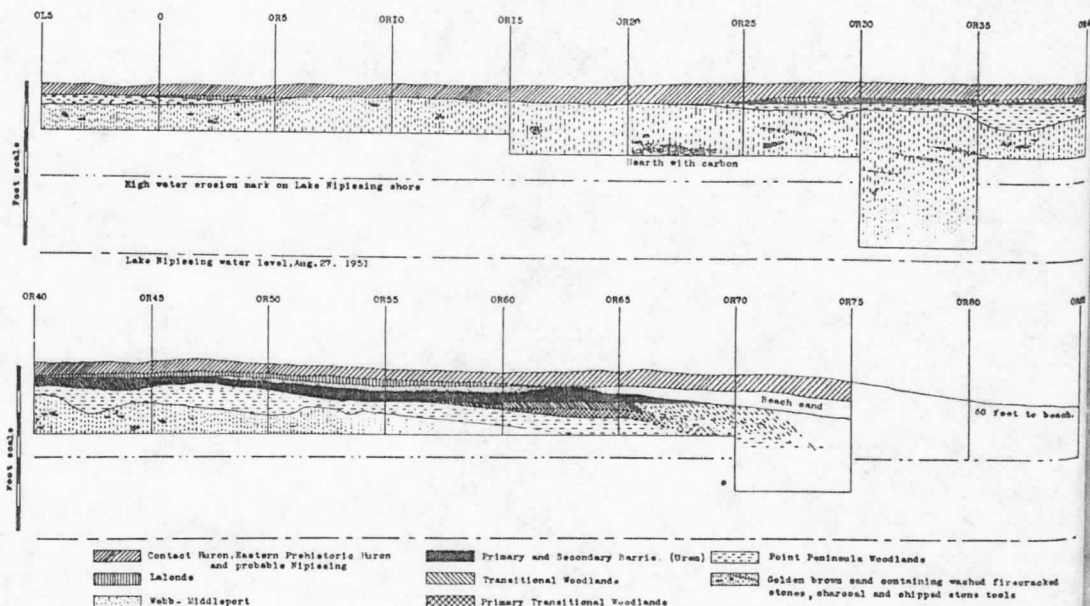


FIG. 15.

Island, about a mile from the Frank Bay site, S. Barley surface picked Lalonde type specimens, including high collar pottery and a trumpet pipe.

CONTACT STRATUM

In the topmost 6 inches or so were European goods in association with native artifacts. Both the condition and position of these specimens suggested the effects of plowing and/or a log dump, evidence of both being present. Artifacts were relatively scarce.

Most of the pottery is from thin, hard, short necked, globular vessels (Fig. 25, z), with simple, oblique incising applied to short, flared collars (Fig. 25, o, s). The flat top variety of Contact Huron style castellation appears, but not in the large percentage relative to plain rimsherds found on historical sites in Huronia (Fig. 25, q). Several examples of decorated body vessels, with simple hachured triangles extending downwards in a single row from the shoulder angle, parallel those of the late Huron (Fig. 25, x; compare with Ridley, 1952, trait 31, Fig. 66, 16, 13c). One sherd has an obliquely incised rim with notches at the base of the collar in typical Contact Huron style (Fig. 25, p).

Two wares differed from these distinctive late Huron types. There was a minor quantity of sherds from thicker, longer necked vessels with obliquely incised rims, one sherd has the flattened, unnotched castellation found on eastern Iroquoian prehistoric sites (Fig. 25, w). There were also sherds with narrow collars decorated with what first appeared to be oblique incising (Fig. 25, t, u), but on closer inspection turned out to have been executed by pressing a bar into the soft clay.

In addition the following specimens were recovered:

(1) several fluted, decorated pipestems, as well as round stems with bulbous tips, both characteristic Contact Huron types (Fig. 25, i).

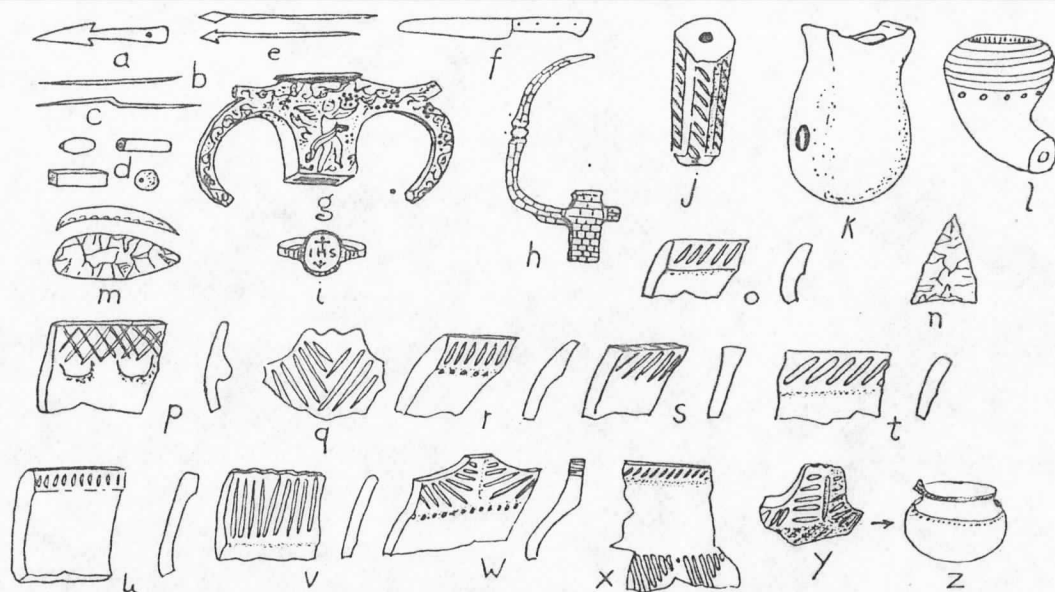


Fig. 25.

- (2) vasiform stemless stone pipe (Fig. 25, k).
- (3) fragment of a Huron acorn pipe bowl (Fig. 25, l).
- (4) owl effigy pipe.
- (5) many small triangular quartzite, chert, and chalcidony points of traditional Iroquoian pattern (Fig. 25, n).
- (6) innumerable small polished opaque pebbles from 3 to 4 cm. in diameter, possibly rattle pebbles.

The European trade material equates with materials found on mission sites in Huronia, except the beads, which are predominantly white, and of football shape (Fig. 25, d). There were also iron and bronze sword and dagger guards (Fig. 25, g h), iron fish spears, fish-

hooks, bayonet fragments, knives and awls, 3 brass finger rings, 2 with the letters I. H. S. (Fig. 25, i); a kettle fragment with the large rivets of the handle bracket; and kettle scraps cut for re-use, including some made into bangles.

Three badly decomposed dog burials were uncovered.

There is both a published record (Globe, 1886) and oral tradition of the existence of a bone deposit or ossuary in this vicinity, possibly just inland from the site, but the nature of the deposit and possible connections it may have had with either this or another stratum here, remains unknown.

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