

THE SPRINGVIEW SITE: A POSSIBLE LATE-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY MASCOUTEN VILLAGE

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In 1983 and 1984 archaeological survey was conducted on a previously unreported village site in Green Lake County, Wisconsin. Recovered artifacts indicate that the village dates to the early Historic time period. The similarity of the site's location and topographical situation to descriptions in documents of that era suggests that it may be the large Mascouten village visited by early explorers and missionaries during the seventeenth century, but since lost to the archaeological record. Should this site prove to be the Mascouten village, it has the tremendous potential to yield data on the brief and poorly represented period of European contact in the region, as well as to establish basic facts concerning the background and material culture of the Mascoutens and allied groups.

INTRODUCTION

On June 6, 1983 and June 1, 1984 archaeological surveys were undertaken on an unreported village site, now listed in the Wisconsin Archaeological Codification File as the Springview Site (47-GI-132), in Green Lake County, Wisconsin (Fig. 1). On both occasions uncontrolled surface collections were taken from the area of a broad, high, cultivated rise approximately 2.3 miles (3.7 km) south of the Fox River. The initial surface collection of 1983 was made by a State Historical Society crew while surveying a right-of-way expansion project on CTH "F" for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (Rusch and Penman 1984:12-13). At that time an advanced soybean crop prevented extending the survey much beyond the margins of the fields; therefore, the areal extent of what was then thought to be two separate campsites was not known. However, it was determined that no undisturbed site context was present in the planned right-of-way strips and construction was allowed to proceed without further testing. The author, accompanied by a volunteer, returned to the site in 1984 shortly after the spring planting to conduct a more widespread surface collection. Then an area of approximately 60 acres was surveyed without successfully discovering the limits of the site in any direction. Since it was immediately apparent that this was a massive village site, and one that had suffered greatly from the ravages of soil erosion, it was deemed best to halt the uncontrolled surface collection in favor of returning at a later date to do a controlled survey.

The following is an analysis of the artifacts thus far collected from the Springview site, as well as a brief discussion of historical evidence suggesting that this is the large Mascouten village which appears in the accounts of a number of explorers and missionaries active in the area immediately following historic contact.

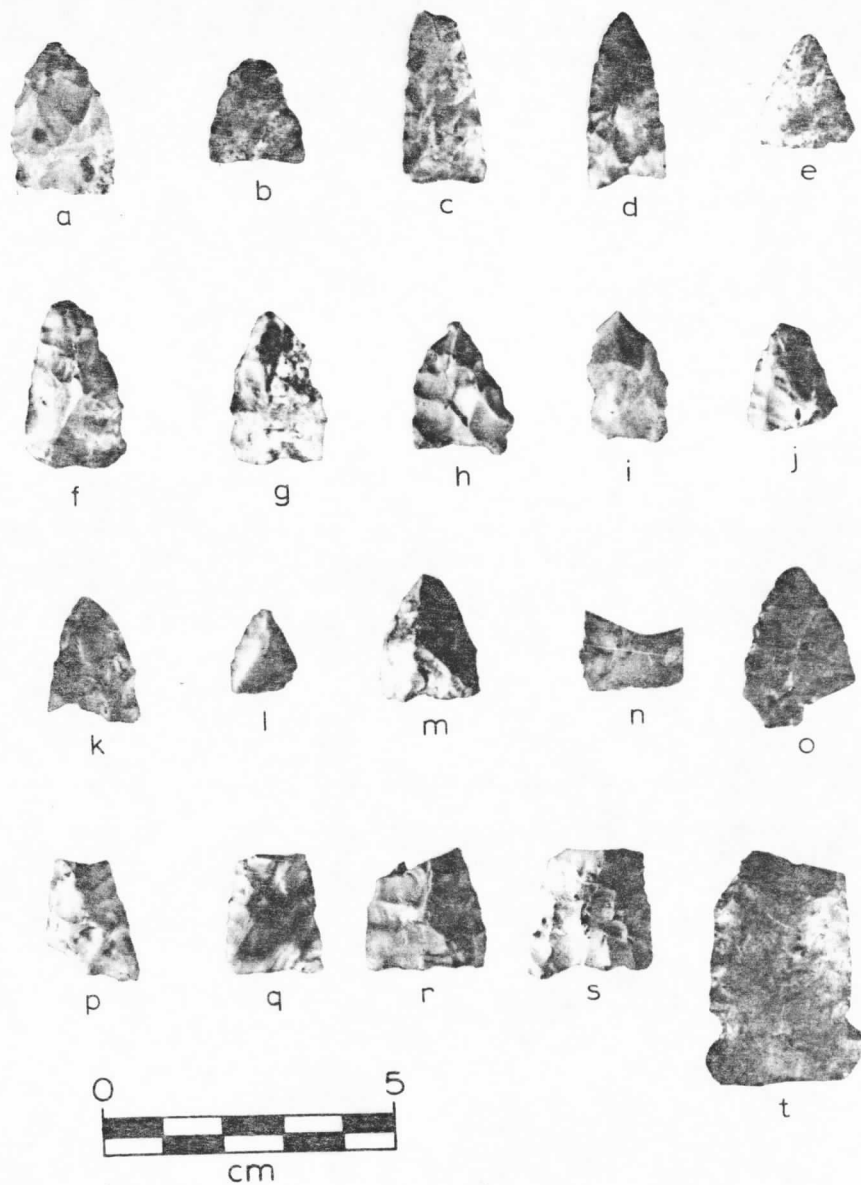


FIGURE 2: Projectile points from the Springview site.

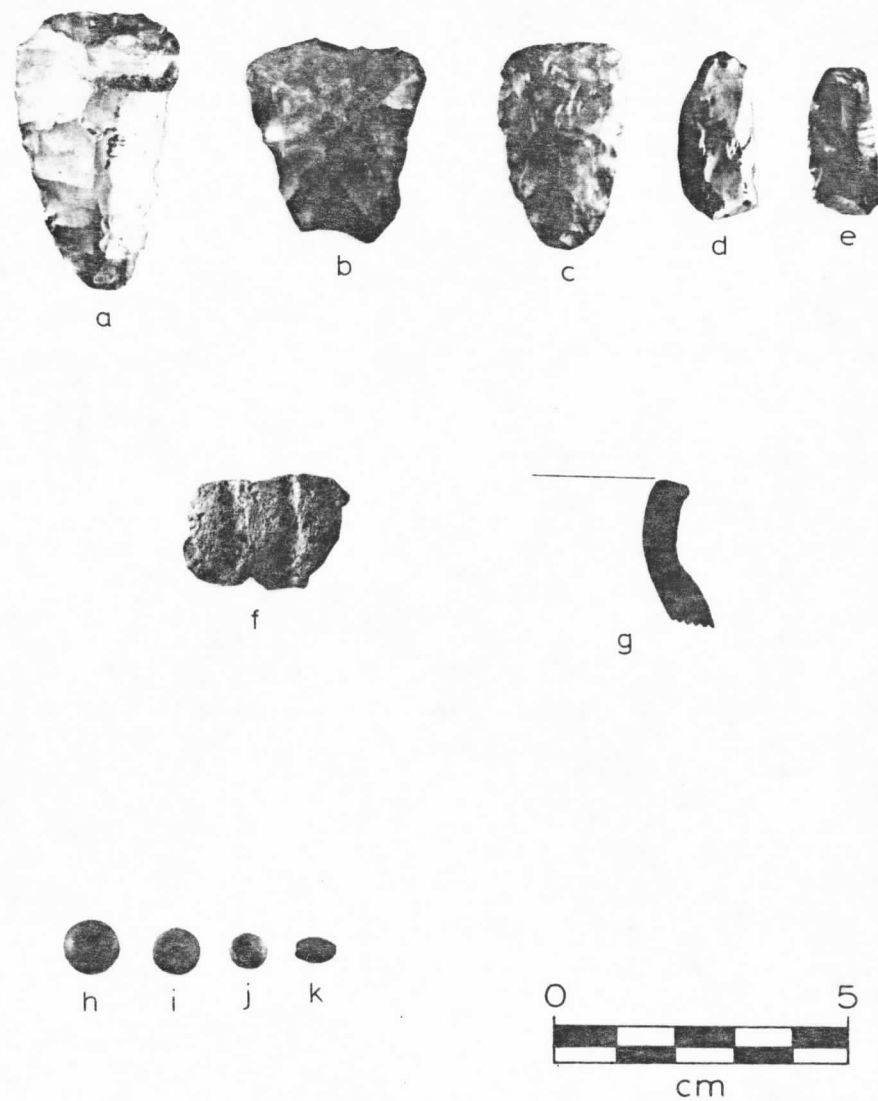


FIGURE 3: Endscrapers, pottery, and beads from the Springview site.

Two sherds are grit tempered. One is a smoothed over cordmarked bodysherd which measures 0.53 cm thick. The other is non-smoothed and plain, and measures 0.72 cm thick. Perhaps most interesting are three shell tempered, cordmarked bodysherds which measure 0.45 cm, 0.55 cm, and 0.72 cm thick. Wittry (1959b:211–213) recovered shell tempered, cordmarked ware from the Durst Rockshelter (47-Sk-2) in Sauk County, Wisconsin. Named Baraboo Cordmarked, Wittry attributes it to the Middle Woodland period on the basis of both its stratigraphic position within the site and its affinities, exclusive of tempering, to other Middle Woodland ware. Though small, the specimens from the Springview site show no similarity to Baraboo Cordmarked. Their thin profiles are more suggestive of a Late Woodland affiliation. To date no complete pot, or even reasonably large sherds, of thin, shell tempered, cordmarked pottery have been found and named in eastern Wisconsin. The possible direct antecedent to the Springview site pottery may, however, be represented by shell tempered, cordmarked ware from the western Lake Erie area. The pottery occurs in the Sandusky tradition Indian Hills phase which has been identified as the protohistoric Mascouten tribe (Stothers 1981:52; Stothers and Graves 1983:116, 121, 123). Ceramics of the Indian Hills phase are largely shell tempered and have finely cordmarked bodies. Decoration is frequently executed by dentate stamping, although trailing and incising are also employed (Stothers and Pratt 1980:11).

Beads

Four glass trade beads (Fig. 3h–k) were found at the site. All are of simple cut tube construction, tumbled to round off the edges, and are described here according to Kidd and Kidd's (1970:46–89) classification system. The specimen in Figure 3h is a large (0.70 cm long by 0.91 cm thick) round, opaque, Robin's Egg Blue bead of type IIa40. Specimen 3i fits the same description, but measures 0.67 cm long by 0.78 cm thick. Specimen 3j is a large, circular, opaque bead of the same color, which measures 0.40 cm long by 0.61 cm thick, and is classed as type IIa41. Specimen 3k is type IIa38, a medium, oval, opaque Aqua Blue bead which measures 0.65 cm long by 0.48 cm thick. Karklins (1971:7) has translated Kidd and Kidd's color names into equivalent Munsell color values whereby Robin's Egg Blue may be described as Munsell 5B6/6 and Aqua Blue as Munsell 2.5B7/4.

Good (1972:117) believes that both the round beads (3h–i) and the oval bead (3k) were in circulation during the fur trade from 1670–1760. This would seem to be a conservative estimate, however, since several of the sites on which they are present range both earlier and later. Good's estimate is based on the overlap of occupation dates at these sites. Thus, it appears that these beads span a major portion of the fur trade, possibly from contact (ca. 1632 in the upper Midwest) to the 1800s.

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Debate has been waged in the past over the identity of the Mascouten Indians, some ethnographers classifying them as Shawnee (Carr 1901), Sauk (Wa-

kefield 1966), or a division of the Potawatomi (Skinner 1924:7–15). Though a review of the various arguments would be tedious and not strictly germane to the topic of this report, some reference seems useful since anyone researching the Mascouten will undoubtedly encounter several viewpoints. The confusion stems from two factors. First, immediately before contact the Mascouten were known to French chroniclers through Indian intermediaries. This second-hand knowledge led to the grouping of allied or geographically close tribes under a single name, as well as the misinterpretation of some names. Second, the Mascoutens as a distinct cultural entity did not survive much past the early nineteenth century, a time when European settlement was just getting underway west of the Great Lakes. Thus, ethnographic documentation concerning the Mascouten is limited to fleeting accounts in the journals of missionaries, traders, and explorers.

It appears that the Mascouten were an autonomous central Algonquian tribe linguistically related to but not a division of the Potawatomi (Michelson 1934:226–233; Baerreis et al. 1974:119). At the time of historic contact (ca. 1632) they were located in the lower peninsula of Michigan (Goddard 1978:668). Iroquois attacks prompted the Mascouten, as well as the Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo, to move west of Lake Michigan around 1650. There the Mascoutens settled for the time being in east-central Wisconsin. Early on, if not immediately, they established a stockaded village near the lower Fox River as a defense against the Iroquois who occasionally ventured into the area to conduct raids (Thwaites 1896–1901 55:201). The Mascoutens, along with their seemingly constant companions the Kickapoos, remained there in the occasional company of Miamis, Foxes, Weas, and possibly others until at least 1680, the date of the last known account of a visit by a European, Father Hennepin (Shea 1880:256–259). Goddard (1972:127) describes the split of the Mascouten into two groups at just about that time, one aligned with the Miamis who moved to the southern end of Lake Michigan, and the other aligned with the Kickapoos who ventured west of the Mississippi River into Iowa. Thus, the village was probably occupied around 1650 to 1680. By around 1825 the Mascouten disappeared from the historic record and had most likely become assimilated with the Kickapoo (Goddard 1972:127; Baerreis et al. 1974:299).

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Ironically, although the Springview site was discovered by the author quite by accident, subsequent research has revealed that the locality was once before considered by scholars as the site of the Mascouten village. In two articles published in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin *Collections* shortly after the turn of the century, the precise location of the Springview site was defended as the lost village. John J. Wood, Jr. (1907) described the village's situation on a high "plateau," known then as Democrat Prairie, with a commanding view of the countryside including Rush Lake, Green Lake, and the Fox River. Following this description is an article by Rev. Arthur Edward Jones, S.J. (1907) which adds data concerning Jesuit and other documents that discuss the Mascouten village's location.

Speculation concerning the location of the village, and historic events there,

Questions are often raised concerning the authenticity of various early journals. The problem is quite an extensive study in itself. In the case of the Mascouten village Marquette's journal has come under scrutiny. Hamilton (1970) has done research into the questionable authorship of the narrative, exploring the possibilities that Dablon or Jolliet actually wrote it or that Dablon at least edited it. The problem is rather academic as concerns the identification of the village. Whether Marquette, Jolliet, or Dablon wrote the account there is no reason to doubt the author had visited the village or was copying an informed source. Furthermore, the sort of embellishments that the Jesuits are suspected of adding to their letters dealt more with the perilous nature of their explorations and the zealous response of the natives to Christianity than with the distance of a village from the river bank or the kind of view it enjoyed. That accounts of the village are numerous and none present conflicting information seems sufficient evidence that the data are accurate. If any problem of interpretation does stem from this alleged miscredit of source it is one of questionable dates rather than descriptions. A copied manuscript would date later than the actual visit.

Map sources were also consulted in the effort to relocate the village (Table 5). The scale of these maps is large; that is, they cover a wide geographic area and therefore do not render point locations in much detail. The most that can be determined from them concerning the Mascouten village is that it was located on the upper Fox River roughly midway between Lake Winnebago and the Fox-Wisconsin River portage. At least the maps are all consistent on this. The earliest map is attributed to Dablon and Allouez and dates to 1671 (Tucker 1942:Plate I). Seven of the maps date later than the proposed abandonment of the village in the early 1680's, one dating as late as 1777 (Jefferys 1974). The explanation for this discrepancy seems to be that the map makers utilized data from earlier explorers and maps. Examination of the maps shows obvious copying evidenced by the repeat of mistakes found on earlier maps. Most of the maps, however, are consistent with the proposed date of occupation.

DISCUSSION

Some additional evidence for the identity of the Springview site comes from aerial photographs. In a vertical air photo taken in 1936 (stereo pair on file, Green Lake County File, Museum, State Historical Society of Wisconsin) an apparent stockade can be traced as a light line bordered by darker soil for a distance of approximately 2500 feet. The traceable portion forms a semicircle across the known site area; cultural material is present on both sides of the wall. During survey no surface stains indicating the stockade or other features were evident.

An active spring is also present on the site. Although the property owners did not know the volume of discharge, it appears that water gushes steadily from a pipe that drains the area. The semicircle of the possible stockade if projected to a full circle would encompass the spring.

Artifactual evidence is scant at this point, but definitely consistent with the early Historic time period of 1610-1670 (Quimby 1966:7). It is unfortunate that

the beads do not serve as more precise horizon markers, but neither do they exclude the early Historic period. Their major significance is that they occur together with Indian-made ceramics and lithics in the same apparent assemblage, an assemblage that predates the massive infusion of European goods that began to replace aboriginal ones by the middle Historic period (1670-1760). Admittedly, the temporal association of these items is not beyond question at this point, being the products of an uncontrolled surface collection. However, circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that the artifacts were deposited during a single occupation of the site. That the beads merely represent isolated finds, or a later historic occupation superimposed on an earlier, perhaps Mississippian, site seems unlikely since they were spread over 40 acres of the site area and since much of the pottery is clearly not Mississippian or local Late Woodland. If the site represents a later occupation than that proposed, one would expect to find a greater variety and quantity of European goods.

The Bell site historic Fox village (Wittry 1963:1-57), located less than 20 miles from Springview, was occupied from 1680 to 1730, immediately following the proposed Mascouten village occupation of ca. 1650 to 1680. At Bell a considerable variety of European goods was found along with Indian ceramics and lithics. For contrast Wittry cites a reference made by Nicholas Perrot (Blair 1911:50) upon his visit to an earlier Fox village on the Wolf River (Fig. 1) in 1668 that few European goods were in use. If the major assimilation of trade goods by the Fox took place after 1668, then it will be interesting to compare the degree of assimilation by the Mascouten, Miami, and Kickapoo. The spatial and temporal situation of Springview gives it the unique potential to yield data along this line.

Almost too obvious to mention is the additional potential of the Springview site to unmask the Mascouten, as well as more clearly distinguish the Miami and Kickapoo. Little is known of the material culture of these groups at historic contact.

A final note about the condition of the site. The precise limits of Springview have not been defined. However, the 60 acres collected from thus far are all under cultivation and soil erosion is severe. Nearly two feet of soil is gone from the crest of the hill. Certainly with it is gone much of the site content. Springview will not bear much more collecting from the higher areas without losing forever the limited artifactual data that it has to offer. Soon a controlled surface collection will be made which will provide a larger artifact sample and data on the site's internal structure.

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