

THE BEAD FORUM

Newsletter of the Society of Bead Researchers

MICHAEL A. PFEIFFER, Editor

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October 2005

SOCIETY NEWS

SBR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society of Bead Researchers was held during the course of Bead Expo 2005 on Saturday, May 21, at 7:30 p.m., at the Hyatt Regency in the James L. Knight Convention Center, 400 SE Second Ave., Miami, Florida. The meeting was called to order by editor Karklins at 7:30 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The first item of business was the president's report, the full text of which appears in the previous issue of *The Bead Forum*.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

In 2004, the Society of Bead Researchers had a total of 132 members and subscribers. They are broken down as follows:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| North American individual members & subscribers | 93 |
| Overseas individual members & subscribers | 14 |
| Benefactor members | 3 |
| Patron members | 1 |
| Sustaining members | 6 |
| Gratis, Mandatory, & Bead Societies | <u>15</u> |
| TOTAL | 132 |

Total revenue for 2004 was \$8,028.96, while total expenditures were \$3,056.30. As of December 31, 2004, the balances in SBR's accounts were:

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| First State Bank Checking Account | US\$23,518.21 |
| Wells Fargo Money Market Fund | US\$16,363.49 |
| TD Central Trust (Canadian dollar account) | US\$ 2,121.18 [CD\$2,570.87] |
| PayPal Account | <u>US\$ 145.77</u> |
| TOTAL | US\$42,148.65 |

EDITORS' REPORTS

The SBR journal has been delayed for a number of reasons, the principal one: a lack of articles. There are now enough for the next issue which is being edited as time permits. It should be published by the end of the year. The journal editor apologizes for the delay and urges potential authors to contact the editor with possible titles (karlis.karklins@pc.gc.ca).

The Newsletter is more or less on schedule but also needs material such as short articles, announcements of recent publications on bead research, current research reports, symposium and conference announcements, and anything else of potential interest to bead researchers.

NEW BUSINESS

There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Karlis Karklins, editor

OTHER BEAD RELATED NEWS

CURRENT RESEARCH

Oklahoma Archaeological Society Glass Beads

<http://www.ou.edu/cas/archsur/Bryson-Paddock/BPBeads/beads.htm>

Archeological Data Recovery at 44GL360, Gloucester Point, Virginia: Preliminary Results.

By Christopher I. Sperling.

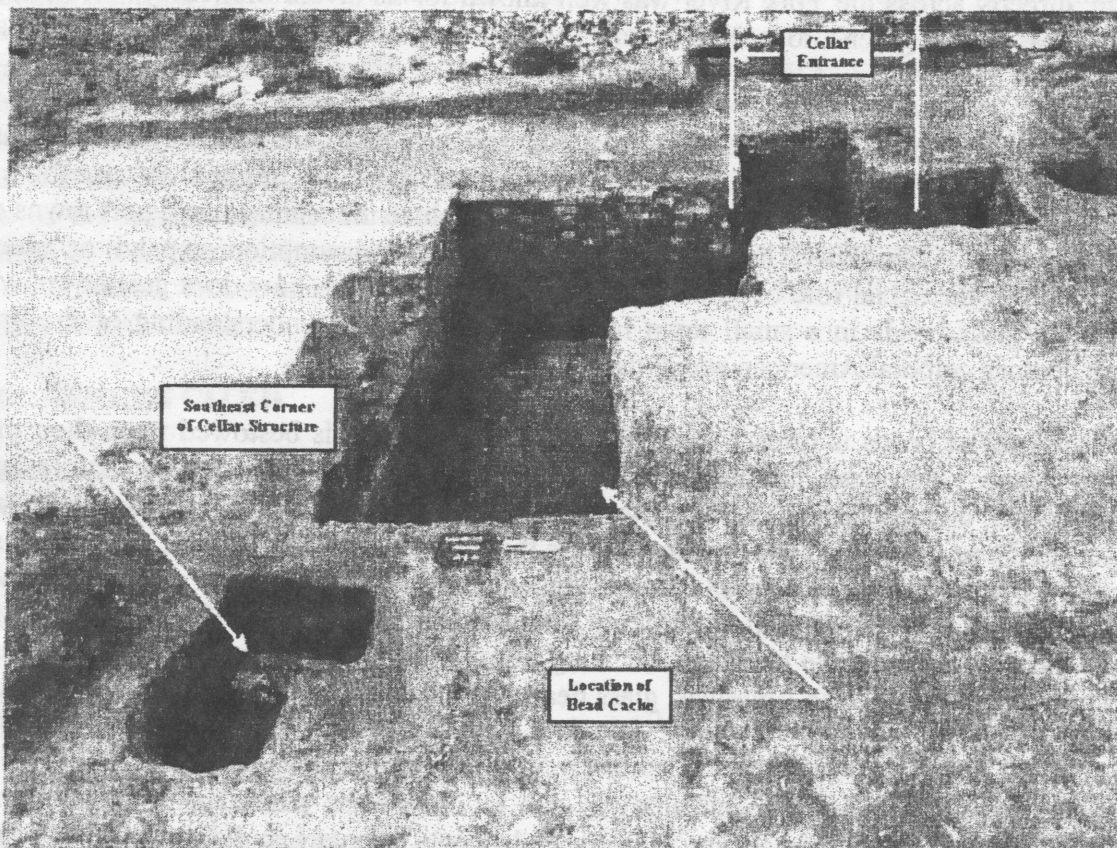
Throughout the winter, spring, and summer of 2005, The Ottery Group conducted an archeological data recovery of Site 44GL360, located within the Gloucester Point Archaeological District, Gloucester Point, Virginia. The archeological district consists of the core of historic Gloucester Town, a small port town that thrived from the late seventeenth century through the mid-nineteenth. Although in the nascent stages of research, interesting questions are already emerging.

Archeological excavation at the site revealed the remains of a brick-lined cellar. Investigations within the cellar yielded exclusively early eighteenth century materials. The artifacts indicate occupation between ca. 1710 and 1740; the lack of refined wares suggests encapsulation prior to ca. 1750 with no later disturbance. Among the artifacts recovered from the cellar was a cache of glass beads. These beads were recovered from one very discrete location, near the base of the cellar, proximal to the southeast corner.

In fine archeological tradition, the bead deposit appeared on the final day of excavation, a mere two hours before all work halted. The smallest mesh available at the time of discovery, 1/8 inch, proved inadequate to recover the small sized beads contained within the feature. Accordingly, the entire deposit, approximately 15 liters, was retained as a soil sample, dry screened through 1/8 inch mesh into a container, then wet screened through window-mesh at the laboratory facility. The sample yielded a total of 503 beads. Although all the artifacts have not yet been processed, curiosity regarding the beads inspired some initial analysis.

Of the 503 total beads, 301 were very small simple blue seed beads, 198 were very small layered red over black core beads, and four were larger layered red over black tubular beads with white stripes. A random sampling of ten blue beads provided an average overall width of 1.662 millimeters (0.0654 inch) and an average overall diameter of 2.607 millimeter (0.1026 inch). A similar sample of the small, single layered red beads yielded an overall width of 1.779 millimeter (0.07 inch) and an average diameter of 2.594 millimeter (0.1021 inch). The average length of the four layered, red tubular beads with white stripes was 9.285 millimeter (0.3656 inch) and a 4.79 millimeter (0.1886 inch) average diameter.

Aside from the technical aspects of the beads themselves, the context of their recovery affords numerous research angles. Of particular interest is the cellar inside of which the beads were found. Architecturally, the cellar possesses an opening along the west wall that measures approximately 1.75 meters (5.75 feet) wide. This width appears to be excessive for a simple doorway but would have been necessary in order to roll casks, hogsheads, and/or kegs for storage. The presence of large



quantities of ceramics, tobacco pipe stems and bowls, bottle glass, window glass, and window came, also recovered within the cellar indicate that the structure functioned as more than a storehouse. The archeological and architectural evidence aroused suspicion that the structure may have been a tavern.

Artifacts recovered from the cellar feature also suggest, or at least do not refute, the tavern hypothesis. Excavations within the cellar recovered coarse earthenwares, pieces of large-sized English brown salt-glazed stonewares, fine white salt-glazed stoneware rouletted coffee/tea wares, large sums of tobacco pipes bowls and stems, two quartered Spanish Reals, and a likely gaming piece. However, it was the seemingly excessive amounts of wine or liquor bottles and bottle glass

fragments that first suggested to archeologists possible use of the structure as a tavern. (Also interesting, if off topic, was that two nearly complete bottles contained almost identical fractures, just below the shoulder, where bottle seals are often placed.) Minimal vessel counts analysis may be able to quantify the field observations regarding the amounts of glass bottles represented relative to other artifacts.

At this stage of research, the minimal scrutiny afforded the historical record provides little additional information. Miles Cary's 1707 plat of Gloucester Town denominates plot owners, but does not depict structures (Cary 1707). A search of the *Virginia Gazette* editions dating from approximately 1735 through approximately 1780, made available online through the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, failed to identify any mentions of a tavern in Gloucester Town; however, the majority of those editions available post date the ca. 1710 through 1740 date range estimated for the cellar feature (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation n.d.). However, historical studies of taverns in Philadelphia and in England during the 18th century found that, "the number of illicit taverns...may have been two-thirds of the number of legal ones" (Thorp 1996: 668). Furthermore, Yorktown, directly across the York River was well known for its tavern life (Riley 1946: 8-26). It is therefore reasonable, given Gloucester Town's role as a small port, that it would possess an active tavern culture.

Of the potential research questions, those currently being considered are primarily social in nature. What might the bead cache reveal about tavern activities and how might that contribute both towards understanding of the role of glass beads in early eighteenth century small port towns of the Virginia tidewater? Secondly, how does this glass bead consumption expand or alter our comprehension of the social role of small port town taverns? Lastly, how does greater knowledge of the role of glass beads in a small town tavern culture promote understanding of the broader eighteenth century colonial American social dynamic?

The social impact of beads is often a topic of research. Glass beads bestowed upon their makers near noble status. European consumers adorned themselves with glass beads that resembled precious minerals, thereby falsely projecting an elevated social status. Not perceived as a trivial act, Italian lawmakers prohibited the production of glass the imitated jewels. The role of beads in social construction is well known in Africa where, eighteenth century European slave traders could purchase a human life for approximately two kilograms of glass beads (Trivellato 1998). In essence, beads relegated people to the lowest rung of colonial society, slave, in order to maintain society's highest classes. In the Americas, glass beads served as tender for European exchange with Natives.

The tavern context complicates social analysis due to cross-class patronage. "Councilors and burgesses, ship captains and merchants, lawyers and clients, planters and frontiersmen could all depend upon finding the other men they wanted to see gathered in one of the taverns" (Carson 1989: 109). In short, colonial North American taverns served a similar role as coffeehouses served in England, a marketplace of goods and knowledge. Therefore, the cellar cache could represent a myriad of social interactions.

For most colonial contexts, beads portend the network trade between Indians and Colonists. However, the occupational period suggested by the cellar assemblage presumably post-dates the existence of organized native cultural entities in the tidewater region. It is therefore possible that the cellar beads never reached their intended destination further west in the Piedmont where cross-cultural trade still thrived. It is likewise possible that the beads represent a remnant native culture extant in burgeoning population centers of the coastal region, perhaps something akin to the later

Métis cultures of the Great Lakes region. Conversely, the beads could reflect purely European behaviors. Perhaps colonists used glass beads monetarily for the gambling that permeated tavern culture. This application would also recognize the inherent value of glass beads as an exchange commodity.

Establishing the commonality of glass beads in temporal, regional, and functional context is of primary importance. A review of assemblages from contemporary sites would determine the frequency of bead recovery on early eighteenth century tavern sites in the coastal mid-Atlantic and indicate the types of beads most commonly encountered in various functional contexts. Next, an examination of probate records, either specific to Gloucester Town or, if not available, those of similar locals, could indicate the prevalence of glass beads in family inventories as well as indicate the social class of bead consumers. Finally, a comparative study of the cellar assemblage, as a whole, with those of other early eighteenth century tavern sites may suggest an archeological signature to better understand social interactions for later investigations.

A comprehensive analysis of the bead cache recovered from 44GL360 could improve our understanding of early colonial small town tidewater society. Archeological investigations of early eighteenth century sites generally focus on either rural complexes or larger urban centers. While both possess cultural similarities with smaller port towns, their respective social structures undoubtedly differ considerably. Political and economic histories of the period often advance the class bias of their sources. Although cultural and social history have provided great insights into the lives of the middle and lower classes, the source base regularly favors larger towns and cities, because of the amount of available information. My desire is that the glass beads recovered from the cellar, fused with comparative archeological and historical data will provide a wider glimpse of life in colonial Virginia.

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For More information, contact Chris Sperling, The Ottery Group, Inc., 2900 Linden Lane, Suite 210, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910. 301-562-1975. chris.sperling@otterygroup.com

New Exhibit: *Beaded Brilliance: Wearable Art from the Columbia River Plateau*

Between February 11 and May 14, 2006, the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum will present an exhibit titled "Beaded Brilliance: Wearable Art from the Columbia River Plateau." The display will include approximately 160 examples of 20th-century American Indian beadwork from the interior Pacific Northwest. It will focus exclusively on the figurative tradition that was common in the region throughout the last century.

Beaded flat bags (single- and double-sided) will comprise about half of the items will be on display. However, a variety of men's vests, women's dresses and dance yokes, horse gear and other personal accessories will be included. Much of this material is coming from private collections in Oregon and Washington.

Programming related to the exhibit will include a March 21 lecture by Mary Dodds Schlick of Mt. Hood, Oregon. Ms. Schlick is best known for her work with Columbia River baskets. However, she was a long-time resident of Columbia River Indian reservation and she has spent considerable time working with regional bead workers. She served as consultant for the Heard Museum's 1993 "Glass Tapestry" exhibit.

A 2006 symposium on glass beads is also being developed, although its date and slate of speakers have not yet been finalized. The program will include presentations on glass bead manufacturing, bead trade systems, American Indian beadwork traditions, West African beadwork, and contemporary art beadwork.

For further information, contact Steve Grafe, Curator of Native American Collections at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. His phone number is (405) 478-2250, ext. 236, and his e-mail address is steve.grafe@nationalcowboymuseum.org. Information will also be forthcoming on the Museum's Web site: www.nationalcowboymuseum.org.

ARTICLE

Marine Shell Ornaments from Cahokia

Mary Beth Trubitt, Arkansas Archeological Survey

Marine shell beads and other ornaments have been made and used around the world as prestige goods, objects to be worn, displayed, gifted, and exchanged with other people (Trubitt 2003). Shells are associated with water, with fertility, life, and health (Claassen 1998). Shell acquired from distant coasts by inland people might symbolize power and prestige in part because of the difficulties involved in its movement. Shell prestige goods tend to circulate rather than being consumed, and may even acquire histories and names as heirlooms. So when and why would valued shell objects be taken out of social circulation and buried in the ground, eventually to disintegrate or, on rare occasion, be uncovered by archaeologists?

At Cahokia, the center of a complex chiefdom in the Mississippi River Valley that flourished between about A.D. 1050-1350, people obtained marine shell from the Gulf of Mexico and formed it into a variety of ornaments: beads in disc, barrel, and cylindrical shapes; pendants; gorgets; and ear ornaments (Baker 1923; Moorehead 2000; Titterington 1938). Shell beads were worn as necklaces, hairlock ornaments, or on beaded blankets or clothing, based on placement in burials (Fowler et al. 1999; Trubitt 1996:Table 3, 5) and depictions on engraved shell found elsewhere in the Mississippian Southeast (Phillips and Brown 1978, 1984).

What kinds of shell were used? Most commonly, small *Marginella* were used for whole-shell beads, while "left-handed" species of large *Busycon* whelks were broken into pieces for shaped beads and pendants. Some 16 genera of marine gastropods and 4 genera of marine bivalves are represented by shell at Cahokia and outlying area (Trubitt 1996:Appendix A). Based on examination of shell artifacts from Cahokia, Etowah, Moundville, and Spiro, Laura Kozuch (1998) found that *Busycon sinistrum* was overwhelmingly the left-handed whelk of choice for Mississippians, which implies sources in the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

Based on finished and unfinished ornaments and associated tools as well as experimental replication, shell working techniques included abrading holes in the shoulders of small *Marginella* shells using a flat sandstone abrader to make the whole-shell beads. *Busycon* shell was cut or broken up with sandstone saws using a score-and-snap technique like that used on bone (Pauketat 1993; Titterington 1938; Trubitt 1996). Whorl fragments could have been used to manufacture disc beads, while the columella itself was often used as a pendant or was cut and shaped into beads. Craftspeople may have heated the shell to make it easier to break away the outer whorl without shattering (Kozuch 2003). Bead blanks were drilled using small chert microdrills hafted onto handles (Yerkes 1983, 1989); similar microdrill bits have been identified as a specialized shell-working tool across the world (Trubitt 2003). Beads would then be shaped and polished using sandstone slabs or grooved abraders.

Residues of shell working – shell scrap, partly-worked ornaments, and drills or saws for manufacturing – are the archaeological indicators of bead production. Chert microdrills (and the microblades and microcores from which they were made) are common in Mississippian period residential contexts across Cahokia and across the American Bottom of the Mississippi River Valley, but become more concentrated at Cahokia after A.D. 1200 (Trubitt 1996, 2000). Shell bead making was household production, but more shell working debris is associated with higher status household units, especially later in the Mississippian sequence (Kelly 1995; Pauketat 1993). The artisans were part of elite households and may have been "elites" themselves.

Finished beads are not typically found in household contexts at Cahokia. Beads and other ornaments of marine shell ended up in burial and mound contexts (Milner 1984), with elite burials at mound centers often containing the finely-made disc or columella beads (Milner 1998) or masses of shell beads (e.g., Fowler et al. 1999; Kozuch 1998). Elsewhere in the Southeast, archaeologists have addressed age and gender associations for shell beads (e.g., Thomas 1996), but the mortuary data for Cahokia is incomplete. There do seem to be some temporal differences, as the masses of shell beads are found more often in earlier phases of the Mississippian sequence at Cahokia while columella pendants, shell cups, and engraved shell tends to be found in post-A.D. 1200 contexts.

In addition to deposition in graves, there are some examples of caches of marine shell and shell beads (Rau 1869; Titterington 1938). In particular, there are several descriptions of quantities of shell from Cahokia's Ramey Field, east of Monks Mound (Kozuch 1998; Mason and Perino

1961; Parmalee 1958; Trubitt 1996). Excavations during the 1960s and 1970s to investigate the east wall of Cahokia's stockade or palisade uncovered concentrations of marine shell in a few specific areas. For example, Barbara Vander Leest (1980:122) refers to one structure excavated during palisade investigations as "Shell House for it was packed with shell debris," and field notes on file at the Illinois State Museum list "numerous burned conch fragments and beads" from two locations excavated in 1966. Following completion of my dissertation on marine shell bead production by households in the Cahokia chiefdom, I analyzed material from several features from this area that included quantities of shell debris. What I found was a complex deposit just outside the fortification that spurred my interest in developments during the later period of this mound center.

Palisade investigations at Cahokia by the Illinois State Museum and Illinois State Museum Society in 1973-74, directed by James P. Anderson, uncovered a large refuse pit feature that was superimposed by a gate for one (or perhaps two) of the palisade constructions (Figure 1). This refuse pit, over 3 meters in diameter, was filled with material – ceramics, stone tools and debris, bone tools, daub, animal bone, charred corn cobs and nutshell, and marine shell. The ceramic vessel fragments from this pit dated the deposit to the Moorehead phase (A.D. 1200-1275), and showed peculiarities when compared with other contemporaneous ceramic assemblages, with high amounts of serving wares, miniature jars, and slipped surfaces (Halperin 1997; Hamlin 2004).

In addition, this refuse pit held an unusual quantity of marine shell, with 271 pieces weighing over 5 kilograms recovered (Table 1). Most are identifiable as *Busycon sinestrum* or left-handed *Busycon*, but some *Strombus* are also present. Only 22 drilled pieces (unfinished or finished beads) were found (Figure 2), and few microdrills or sandstone tools were identified from this pit. Instead most of the shell takes the form of large gastropods with the outer whorls cut away or broken/snapped revealing the columellae (Figures 3 and 4); a minimum of 63 whole or partial shells was counted in the refuse pit. Numerous pieces show cut marks and some show evidence of burning. The partial shells do not have perforations or grooves at the columella ends that would be present on completed pendants.

Most of the shell found in the refuse pit is not in the form of finished ornaments. But if the raw material was valued, why was so much apparently useable shell discarded here? Was it marred or unsuitable for ornament manufacturing, or was there an excess of shell at this time, or was some shell held back from circulation as an offering?

In her recent analysis of Cahokia ceramics, Jenna Hamlin (2004) interprets this pit as containing refuse from a feast. If so, how did shell ornament production or shell bead exchange play into the event? Were some shells being made into cups used in "black drink" rituals (Milanich 1979)? There are some broken columellae in the pit, which would be left after the cups were formed from outer whorls and spires. Another large pit with feasting refuse from Cahokia, dating to the Lohmann phase (A.D. 1050-1100), contained marine shell, most in the form of a necklace of disc beads. Analysis of the pottery, stone tools, minerals, and other artifacts indicate "an active and likely ritualized manipulation of material culture" as part of a communal feast (Pauketat et al. 2002:270). What exactly was done with the shell?

Because marine shell ornaments have continued to be important prestige goods to the present day, ethnohistoric and ethnographic literature from other regions may provide models for when and why shell is placed in the ground (Trubitt 2003). Clearly there is a need to look closer at the depositional contexts of marine shell at Cahokia to understand the uses of shell and its role in Mississippian culture. While I and other researchers have recently analyzed or re-analyzed shell

from a number of excavated contexts at Cahokia, there remain unanalyzed collections from the site with quantities of marine shell. Chronological information, identification of ornament forms and species used, and description of associated materials is critical to understanding the role this valued raw material played in the social and political lives of people in this ancient chiefdom.

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Table 1. Marine shell artifacts from F-821/933/1026 refuse pit, East Palisade, Cahokia.

| | F-821 | F-933 | F-1026 | F-933/820 | Totals |
|---|--------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| <i>B. sinistrum</i> , partial shells | 3 258.1g | 3 305.3g | 0 0g | 0 0g | 6 563.4g |
| LH <i>Busycon</i> , partial shells | 7 499.7g | 40 2174.4g | 2 123.6g | 1 101.4g | 50 2899.1g |
| LH <i>Busycon</i> , fragments | 3 52.4g | 25 547.6g | 0 0b | 3 28.9g | 31 628.9g |
| <i>Strombus</i> , partial shells/fr. | 0 0g | 6 209.0g | 0 0g | 2 16.9 | 8 225.9g |
| Unid. whelk fragments | 19 98.1g | 127 586.8g | 3 10.3g | 4 28.9g | 153 724.1g |
| Unid. gastropod fragment | 0 0g | 1 93.5g | 0 0g | 0 0g | 1 93.5g |
| Drilled whelk shell/disc beads | 0 0g | 19 91.9g | 0 0g | 3 7.6g | 22 99.5g |
| Total marine shell: | 32 908.3g | 221 4008.5g | 5 133.9g | 13 183.7g | 271 5234.4g |

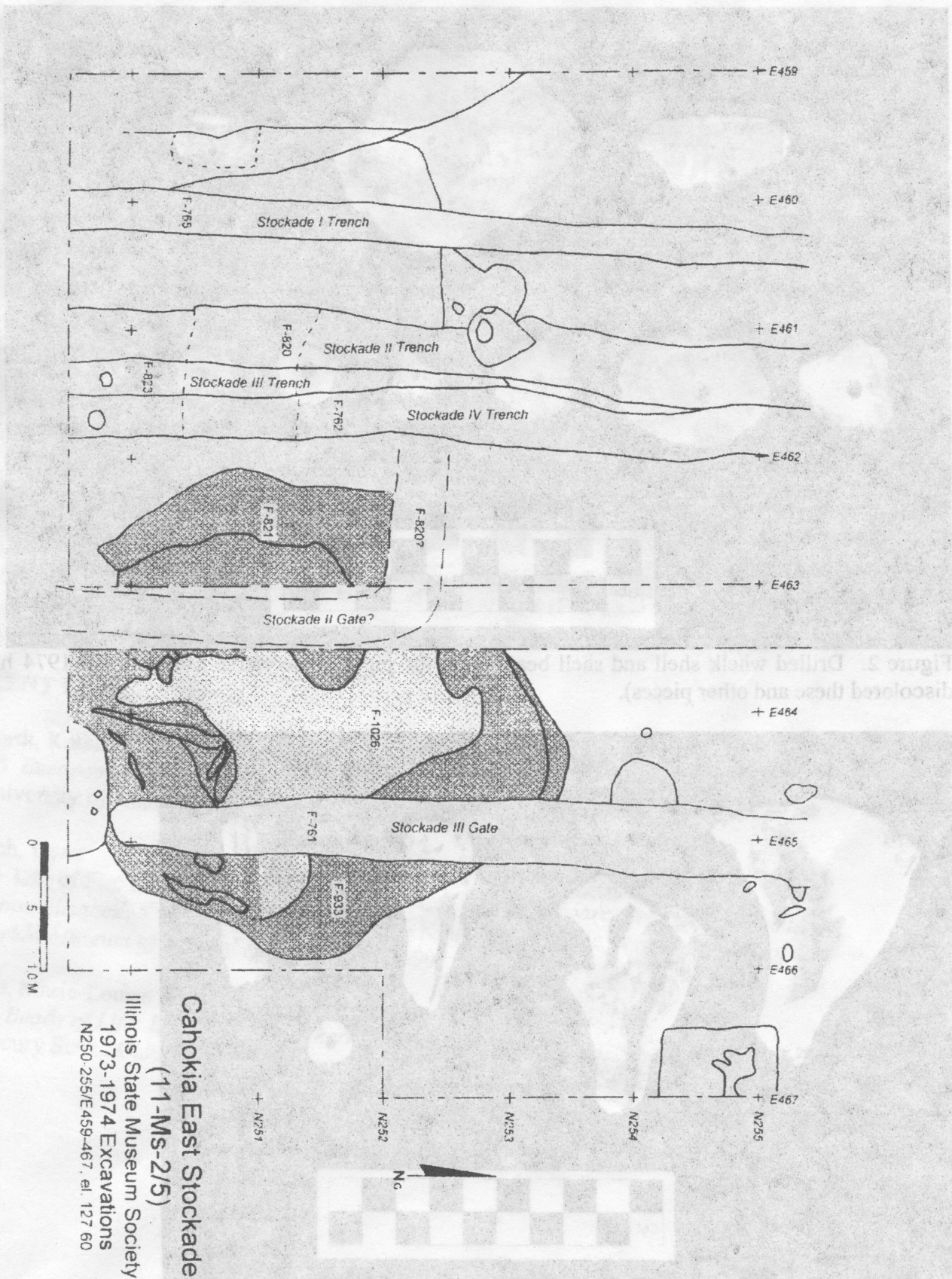


Figure 1. Plan view of the refuse pit, F-821/933/1026 (redrawn by Trubitt from excavation notes on file at Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Collinsville, Illinois).

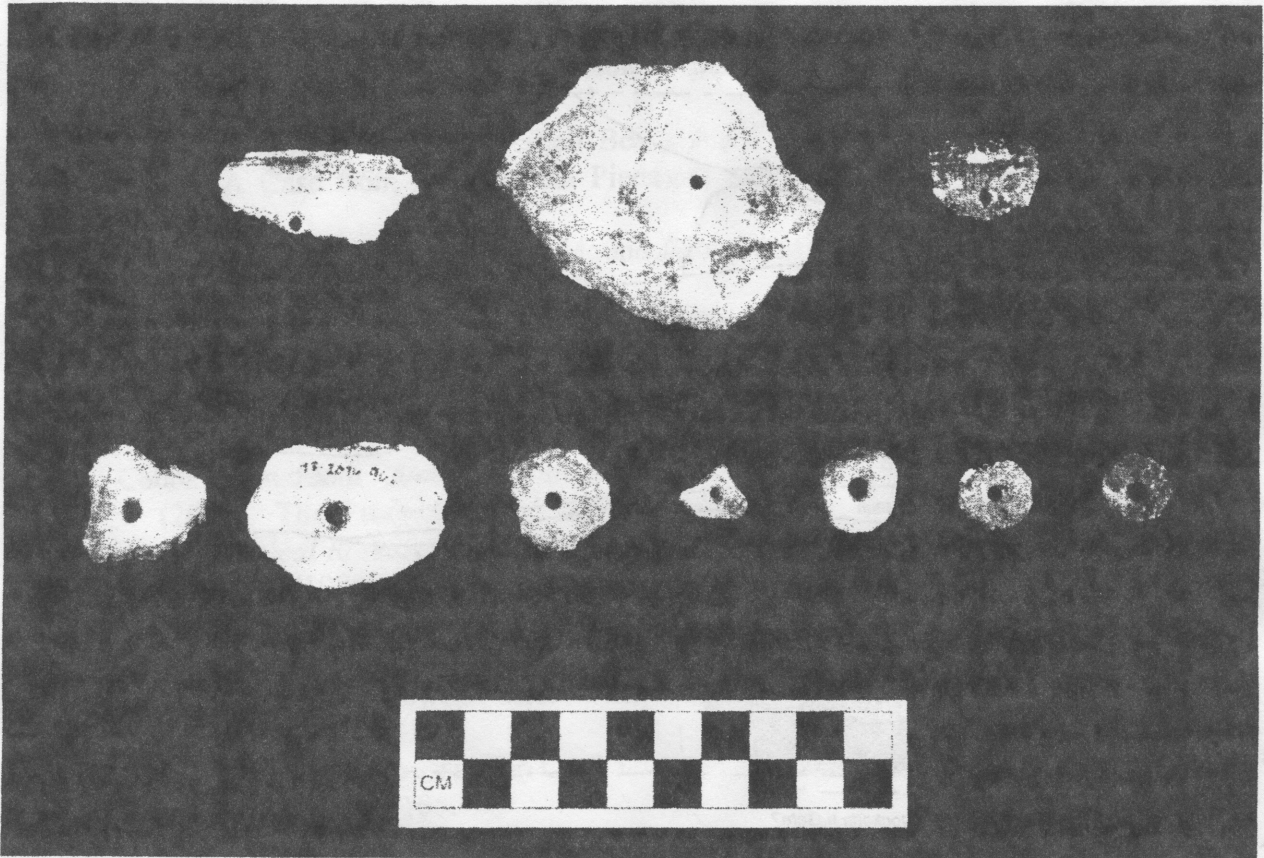


Figure 2. Drilled whelk shell and shell beads from the pit (a preservative used in 1973-1974 has discolored these and other pieces).



Figure 3. *Busycon* shells from the pit (F-933) (all artifacts curated at the Illinois State Museum Research and Collections Center, Springfield, Illinois).



Figure 4. Busycon shells, columellae, and bead from the pit (F-933).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Ehrhardt, Kathleen L.

2005 *European Metal in Native Hands: Rethinking Technological Change, 1640-1683*.
University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Kozuch, Laura

2003 Use of Fire in Shell Bead Manufacture at Cahokia. In *Zooarchaeology: Papers to Honor Elizabeth S. Wing*, edited by F. Wayne King and Charlotte Porter. *Bulletin of the Florida Museum of Natural History* 44(1):81-90.

Labelle, Marie-Louise

2005 *Beads of Life: Eastern and Southern African Beadwork from Canadian Collections*.
Mercury Series Cultural Studies Paper 78, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Quebec.

The Society is a non-profit corporation, founded in 1981 to foster research on beads of all materials and periods, and to expedite the dissemination of the resultant knowledge. Membership is open to all persons involved in the study of beads, as well as those interested in keeping abreast of current trends in bead research. The society published a biannual newsletter, *The Bead Forum*, and an annual journal, *Beads*. The society website is:
<http://sbrwebsite.home.comcast.net/index/index.htm>

Contents of the newsletter include current research news, requests for information, responses to queries, listings of recent publications, conference and symposia announcements, and brief articles on various aspects of bead research. Both historical and pre-historical materials are appropriate. The deadline for submissions to the next *Bead Forum* is 15 March 2006. Electronic submissions should be in Word for Windows 6.0 or later, or RTF (Rich Text Format) with no embedded sub-programs such as "End Notes". References cited should be in *American Antiquity* format.

Send electronic or paper submissions to the *Forum* editor:

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