

The Excavation

of

STURGEON FORT (FhN1-1)

by

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With a Historical Introduction

by

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The smaller fragment was 1 3/4 inches wide and all teeth were of the same size. It also had a piece of thin bone glued to its top edge.

Both combs had been machine made, as is attested by minute circular striations on both faces.

#### PIPE MOUTHPIECE

Number of specimens - 1. A double cone-shaped bone object, decorated with crudely and unevenly incised lines around its circumference, was uncovered in Level 1. At each end a hole had been partially drilled, the deepest reaching 3/8 inches into the narrowest end. (Plate XXI, a-G). The specimen attained a length of 1 1/2 inches and a maximum diameter of 5/8 inches.

This object may have been used as a mouthpiece for a clay pipe, as shown in Figure 38.

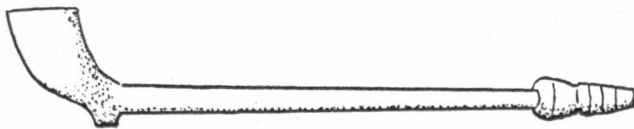


Figure 38. Pipe mouthpiece

#### Objects of Glass

##### BEADS

Number of specimens - 2,340

Glass beads formed one of the main articles of the fur-trade.

Very popular among the Indians for clothing, etc., they

naturally were a valuable trade item. For example, eighteen different kinds of beads are listed in the Standard of Trade of York Fort for 1775-1776.<sup>12</sup> Beads were carried into the wilderness by the barrel-full, the weight often reaching hundreds of pounds.

At the site, 2,340 glass beads of 80 different varieties were found. For our present discussion, they may be grouped by color and opaqueness-translucency.

Table 5

% of Beads by Color and Translucency - Opaqueness

	Type Nos.	Quantity	%	
Blue, translucent	1-5	117	5.0	32.8
" , opaque	6-19	651	27.8	
Green, translucent	20	68	2.9	6.8
" , opaque	21-23	91	3.9	
Black, opaque	24-35	49	2.0	5.7
Yellow, translucent	47	4	.17	
" , opaque	36-46	132	5.6	
Colorless, translucent	48	2	.09	.19
Red, translucent	49-50	14	.06	
" , opaque	51-52	3	.13	
Purple, opaque	53	47	2.0	49.2
White, opaque	54-71	1,152	49.2	
Large decorated, opaque	73-80	8	.35	
		<u>2,338</u>		
Bone beads		<u>2</u>		
		<u>2,340</u>		

Opaque beads comprise 91% of the total, and opaque white beads alone form nearly one-half of the sample. Following white, blue was the most populous color, followed in turn by greens and yellows. One supposes that the fur-traders may have followed the color preferences of the Indians fairly closely, and brought beads accordingly.

<sup>12</sup>Cumberland House Journals and Inland Journal, 1st Series, p.358.

In order to visualize any stylistic trends in the beads, a frequency distribution is given in Table 6 for the beads of known provenance.

Table 6

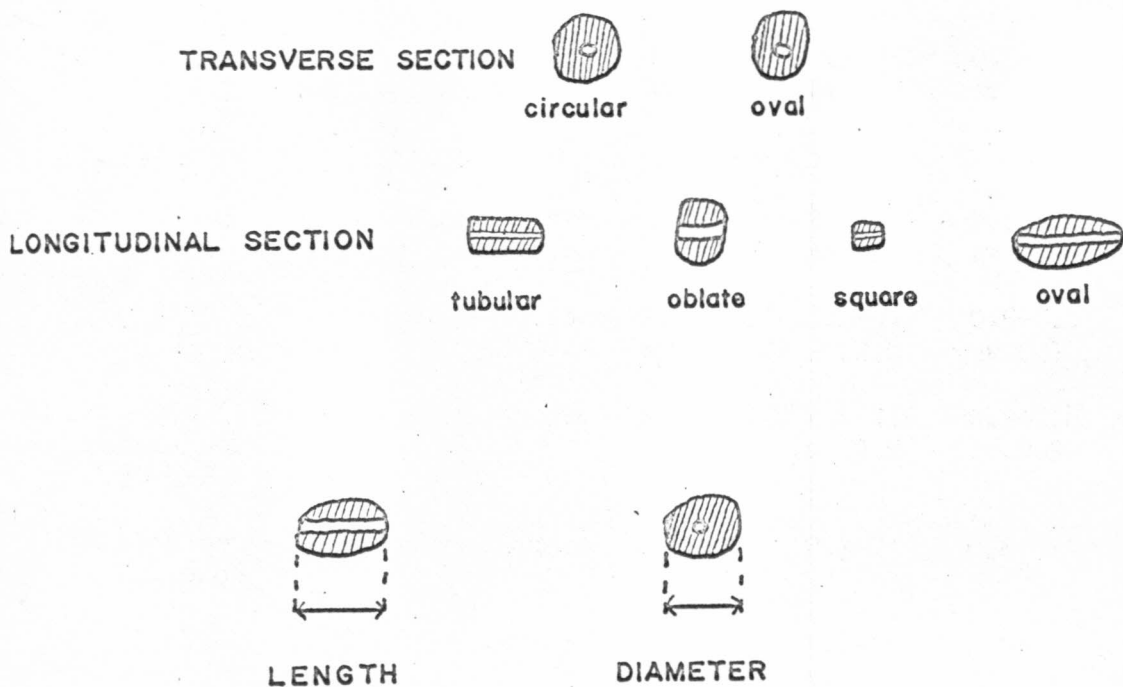
Frequency Distribution of Beads

	Levels						<u>Totals</u>
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	
Blue, traslucent	3	8	18	34	33	2	798
" , opaque	18	67	90	112	60	15	362
Green, traslucent	4	6	14	17	17	2	60
" , opaque	3	12	13	20	13	3	64
Black, opaque	-	4	7	16	10	4	41
Yellow, traslucent	-	-	-	1	2	1	4
" , opaque	5	9	13	28	35	5	95
Colorless, traslucent	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Red, traslucent	-	2	3	6	-	1	12
" , opaque	-	1	-	1	1	-	3
Purple, opaque	1	-	16	11	5	1	34
White, opaque	37	107	205	159	106	24	638
Decorated, opaque	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>
	72	217	379	407	282	59	1,416

Since the features found at Sturgeon Fort extended from almost ground level to about 1.2 feet below the surface, and, in the case of Feature 9 as much as 4.2 feet, the levels do not always represent a strict sequence. The greatest number of beads occur in Levels 3 and 4, and there is a dropoff in either direction away from this. The greatest discontinuity in numbers is in Levels 1 and 6. This frequency distribution tends to show that more beads were brought in some years than others.

Also, within each bead category there are fluctuations from level to level, perhaps indicating style changes over the four year occupation of Sturgeon Fort. That styles played a role in the

Indian trade may be indicated by the large variety of beads found. One out of every thirty beads<sup>13</sup> was of a differing color, shape, and/or decoration. The majority were plain (i.e., non decorated) seed and tubular beads, with only eight larger decorated ones being found. Since all of the beads are datable to before 1781 and within a four year period (1776-1780), and are therefore valuable means of dating other historic archaeological sites, a detailed description is given in Table 7 of the eighty varieties found at Sturgeon Fort. (Plate I). Terms used in the description of the beads are as follows:



<sup>13</sup>If one subtracts the 1,152 opaque white beads from this, the figure is changed from one out of thirty to one out of sixteen.



Table 7

<u>Description of Beads</u> *						
	<u>T.S.</u>	<u>L.S.</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Diameter</u>	<u>Hole Diameter</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
<u>Blue, translucent</u>						
1) dark blue (5PB 3/10)	circular	tubular	3.0-5.7 av.4.5	2.2-4.9 av.3.3	0.7-2.0 av.1.1	76
2) "	circular	tubular	2.8-4.3 av.3.5	2.1-3.0 av.2.5	0.5-1.3 av.1.0	17
3) " slightly iridescent	circular	oblate	2.9	4.0	1.0	1
4) " iridescent	circular	oblate	2.3-2.5 av.2.4	3.2-3.3 av.3.2	0.8-1.2 av.1.0	2
5) "	circular	oblate to square	1.8-2.9 av.2.2	2.3-3.2 av.2.8	0.5-1.3 av.0.8	21
<u>Blue, opaque</u>						
6) strong blue (5PB 5/11)	circular	oblate to square	1.9-3.8 av.2.6	2.4-3.5 av.2.9	0.6-1.4 av.0.9	303
7) "	circular	oblate to square	1.6-2.0 av.1.8	2.4-2.9 av.2.6	0.5-0.8 av.0.7	7
8) moderate greenish-blue (2.5B 5/7)	circular	square	1.9-3.0 av.2.5	2.4-3.5 av.2.9	0.9-1.4 av.0.9	288
9) light blue (2.5PB 6/8)	circular	square	1.9	2.3	0.6	
10) light blue (5PB 6/8)	circular	square	1.0-1.6 av.1.3	1.6-1.8 av.1.7	0.4	9

\*In this table, the following abbreviations are used: T.S.- transverse section, L.S.- longitudinal section. In the measurements, the two extremes are first given (i.e., minimum and maximum measurements for length, diameter, and hole diameter), followed by the average. All measurements are in millimeters. The color notation used is from the following: Nickerson Color Fan, (Munsell Color Co., Inc. 1957). The reader is advised to refer to Plate I of this report as he reads the above description of beads.

Table 7 - Continued

	<u>T.S.</u>	<u>L.S.</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Diameter</u>	<u>Hole Diameter</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
11) light greenish blue (5B 8/4)	circular	oval	8.3	4.4	1.5	1
12) pale blue (2.5PB 8/5)	circular	oblate to square	2.0-2.7 av.2.2	2.8	0.9	4
13) light blue (5PB 7/7)	circular	square	1.9	2.2	0.4	1
14) pale blue (2.5PB 8/5)	circular	square	1.9-2.8 av.2.3	2.5-3.3 av.2.6	0.8-1.3 av.0.9	20
15) light blue (5PB 6/8)	circular	square	2.4	2.3	0.5	1
16) light blue (5PB 7/7)	oval	tubular	3.6-4.3 av.4.0	3.1-3.4 av.3.2	0.8-1.1 av.0.9	4
17) light blue (5PB 6/8)	circular	tubular	4.8-5.3 av.5.0	3.3-3.9 av.3.6	0.9-1.5 av.1.2	7
18) pale blue (2.5PB 8/5)	oval	tubular	5.7-6.4 av.6.0	3.7-4.6 av.4.1	0.8-1.6 av.1.1	4
19) light blue (5PB 7/7)	oval	tubular	11.7	3.8	1.7	1
<u>Green, translucent</u>						
20) strong green (5G 4/7)	circular to oval	oblate to square	2.6-5.0- av.3.8	2.1-3.2 av.2.4	0.6-1.0 av.0.8	68
<u>Green, opaque</u>						
21) brilliant green (5G 6/8)	circular	oblate	1.5-2.5 av.1.9	2.0-3.0 av.2.6	0.5-1.6 av.1.1	55
22) strong green (5G 5/8)	oval	tubular	2.6-4.3 av.3.8	2.1-2.7 av.2.4	0.6-1.0 av.0.8	33
23) yellow-green (2.5G 5/9)	circular	tubular	3.5-4.0 av.3.7	2.5-2.7 av.2.6	1.0-1.2 av.1.1	2
<u>Black, opaque</u>						
24) iridescent	oval	tubular	5.0	3.0	1.2	1
25) "	oval	oval	7.9	5.0	2.2	1
26) -	circular	oval	7.5-8.7 av.8.1	4.0-5.0 av.4.5	1.3-1.8 av.1.6	9

Table 7 - Continued

	<u>T.S.</u>	<u>L.S.</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Diameter</u>	<u>Hole Diameter</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
27) iridescent	circular	oval	10.1	5.4	1.7	1
28) "	circular	pear-shaped	8.0	4.9	2.0	1
29) "	circular	oval	5.8-7.0 av.6.6	3.4-4.0 av.3.6	1.3-1.8 av.1.5	10
30) -	oval	oval	3.6-4.9 av.4.2	3.8-4.1 av.3.9	1.4-1.6 av.1.5	2
31) iridescent	oval	square	3.8	3.8	1.4	1
32) -	oval	square	2.5-3.0 av.2.8	3.0-3.4 av.3.2	1.6-1.9 av.1.7	3
33) -	circular	oblate	1.9	2.7	0.9	1
34) -	oval	tubular	4.3-5.8 av.4.9	2.9-3.3 av.3.2	1.0-1.3 av.1.1	6
35) -	oval	tubular	2.5-4.2 av.3.9	2.4-2.8 av.2.5	0.6-1.3 av.0.9	14
<u>Yellow, opaque</u>						
36) orange yellow (10YR 6/8)	circular	tubular	3.5-4.8 av.4.3	2.4-3.2 av.3.1	0.5-1.1 av.0.8	28
37) orange yellow (7.5YR 6/9)	circular	square	2.6	2.8	1.2	1
38) orange yellow (10YR 6/8)	oval	square	2.2	2.7	1.0	2
39) "	circular	oblate	2.0-2.5 av.2.2	2.2-3.0 av.2.7	0.9-1.5 av.1.2	27
40) deep yellow (2.5Y 6/8)	circular	square	2.5-3.3 av.2.7	2.5-3.4 av.3.0	0.6-1.2 av.0.8	10
41) strong yellow (5Y 7/10)	circular	oblate to oval to square	1.5	1.8-2.2 av.2.0	0.3-0.9 av.0.5	4
42) "	oval	square	2.8-3.5 av.3.0	2.9-3.5 av.3.1	0.7-1.1 av.0.9	5
43) "	circular to oval	square	2.3-3.2 av.2.7	2.5-2.8 av.2.7	0.8-1.4 av.0.9	25



Table 7 - Continued

	<u>T.S.</u>	<u>L.S.</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Diameter</u>	<u>Hole Diameter</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
44) strong yellow (5Y 7/10)	oval	oblate	1.8-2.0 av.1.9	1.9-3.0- av.2.3	0.5-1.0 av.0.8	18
45) "	circular to oval	oblate	1.2-1.8 av.1.5	2.0-2.6 av.2.3	0.5-0.9 av.0.7	11
46) "	circular	tubular	3.4	2.0	0.5	1
<u>Yellow, translucent</u>						
47) deep yellow (2.5Y 6/8)	circular to oval	oblate to square	1.8-2.7 av.2.2	2.5-2.8 av.2.6	0.8	4
<u>Clear, translucent</u>						
48) colorless	oval	square	2.9	3.3	0.7	2
<u>Red, translucent</u>						
49) purplish red (10RP 3/10)	circular	oval	7.1-7.8 av.7.4	4.0-4.4 av.4.1	1.7-2.5 av.2.1	10
50) "	circular	oval	5.2-5.8 av.5.5	2.9-3.2 av.3.1	1.6-1.9 av.1.7	4
<u>Red, opaque</u>						
51) purplish red (10RP 3/10) with black translucent core	circular	oblate	2.3	2.7	0.7	2
52) dark red (5R 3/7)	circular	oblate	2.0	4.0	1.2	1
53) reddish purple (2.5RP 4/10)	circular	square	1.3-1.6 av.1.4	1.6-2.2 av.1.8	0.4-0.7 av.0.5	47
<u>White, opaque</u>						
54) strong red (5R 4/12) stripes run longitudinally on a white opaque background.	circular	oblate	2.2	3.2	0.9	2
55) brilliant green (5G 6/8) stripes run longitudinally on a white opaque background.	circular	oblate	1.9	2.5	0.5	1

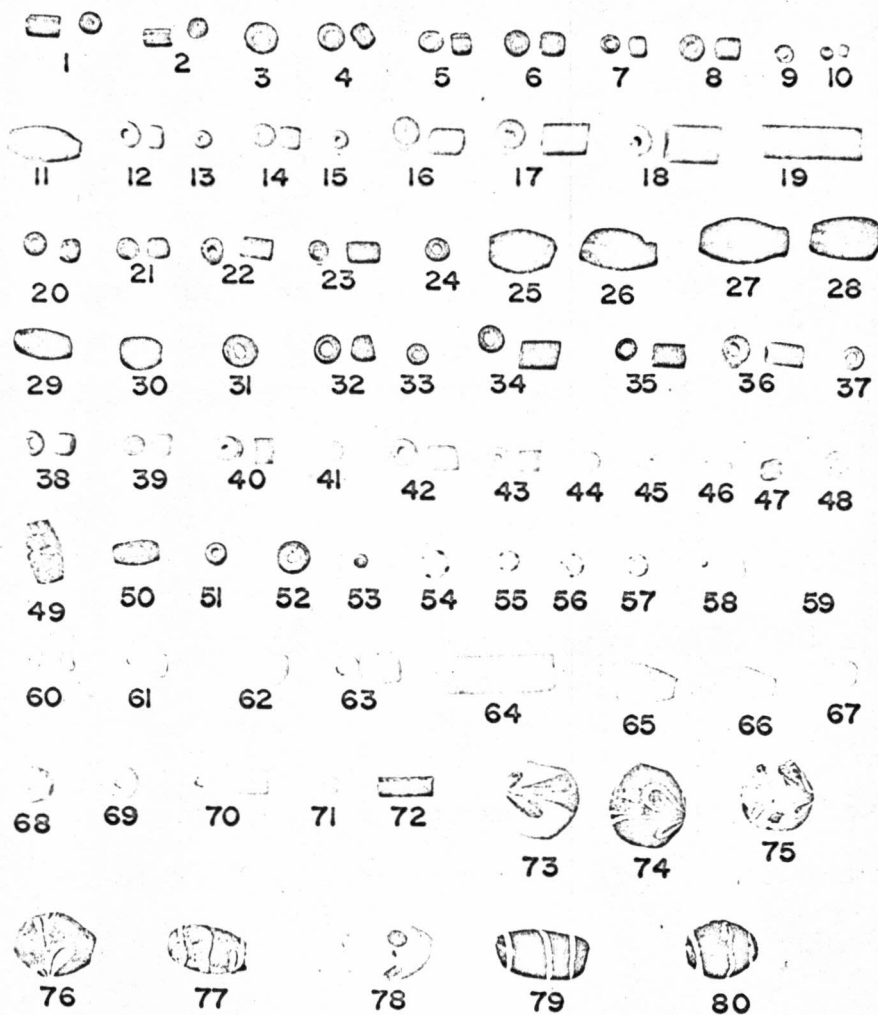
Table 7 - Continued

	<u>T.S.</u>	<u>L.S.</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Diameter</u>	<u>Hole Diameter</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
56) 4 alternating opaque dark green (5G 3/4) and yellowish brown (7.5YR 5/7) stripes run longitudinally on white opaque background.	circular	oblate	1.5	2.8	0.8	1
57) 4 alternating opaque red (2.5R 5/12) and green (5G 5/8) stripes run longitudinally on a white opaque background.	circular	oblate	1.9	2.6	0.8	2
58) white, opaque	circular to oval	oblate to square	1.7-2.1 av.1.9	2.1-2.7 av.2.4	0.3-0.9 av.0.5	49
59) "	oval	tubular	3.4-5.0 av.3.8	2.0-2.4 av.2.3	0.3-0.6 av.0.5	13
60) "	oval	square	2.7-4.0 av.3.2	2.4-2.9 av.2.7	0.4-0.8 av.0.6	18
61) "	circular to square	oblate	1.6-3.1 av.2.4	2.5-3.7 av.3.0	0.4-1.3 av.0.7	743
62) "	circular	oblate	2.1-3.4 av.2.9	2.9-3.9 av.3.6	0.8-1.2 av.1.0	126
63) "	oval	tubular	3.4-5.7 av.4.7	2.9-3.8 av.3.2	0.7-1.4 av.1.0	71
64) " dull white core	circular	tubular	12.6	4.4	1.4	1
65) "	circular	oval	7.4-9.5 av.8.7	4.4-4.9 av.4.6	1.5-1.8 av.1.7	6
66) "	circular	oval	6.3-7.3 av.6.9	3.8-4.1 av.3.9	1.3-1.5 av.1.4	5
67) "	circular	oval	5.7	3.6	1.4	2
68) "	circular	circular	4.2	4.2	1.5	1
<u>White, opaque and pearly (iridescent)</u>						
69) dull white core	circular	square	3.3-4.5 av.3.9	3.9-4.4 av.4.1	0.8-1.4 av.1.1	7
70) -	circular	square to tubular	3.4-4.5 av.4.0	2.9-3.4 av.3.0	0.8-1.4 av.0.9	6

Table 7 - Continued

	<u>T.S.</u>	<u>L.S.</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Diameter</u>	<u>Hole Diameter</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
71) dull white core	circular	square	2.0-3.3	2.7-3.7	0.4-0.9	99
72) Bone beads	oval	tubular	6.2	2.2	0.4	2
<u>Decorated beads</u>						
73) strong orange yellow (10YR 7/10), opaque.	circular	circular	8.6	8.9	2.0	1
Decorated with dark blue (5PB 3/10) alternating loops.						
74) opaque white alternating loops run around diameter on iridescent background (dark blue base).	circular	circular	9.4	9.0	2.5	1
75) opaque white alternating loops run around diameter on iridescent background (dark purplish red base - 10RP 3/10). Loops are raised above bead surface.	circular	circular	8.0	8.4	2.5	1
76) "	circular	oval	9.0	7.4	2.4	1
77) opaque white circles around eyes, and one opaque yellow ochre colored wavy circle in middle, on slightly iridescent deep purplish red (10RP 3/10) opaque base.	circular	oval	9.0	5.8	2.4	1
78) one dark bluish green (2.5BG 3/5) dot and one red (2.5R 5/12) dot on white opaque background.	circular	oval	11.4	6.9	1.8	1
79) opaque white circles near eyes and one brilliant yellow (2.5Y 9/9) circle in middle, on black opaque background.	circular	oval	10.7	5.7	1.9	1
80) opaque brilliant yellow (2.5Y 9/9) circles near eye and one white opaque circle in middle, on black opaque background.	circular	circular	8.3	6.8	2.2	1

## PLATE I



## Glass bead types

Nos. 1-19	Blues
20-23	Greens
24-35	Black
36-47	Yellows
48	Clear
49-53	Reds
54-71	White
72	Bone
73-80	Decorated

## CHAPTER VI

### Summary and Conclusions

Sturgeon Fort was the first fur-trading post on the North Saskatchewan River, and consequently the westernmost penetration of the Canadian Northwest at that time. Historical records say that it was occupied from 1776 to 1780 by a group of independent traders who had organized themselves into a pool. Peter Pond, its most famous inhabitant, was the first man to venture into the Athabasca country, and his discoveries provided the base for the later explorations of Alexander Mackenzie.

During the summer of 1962, Sturgeon Fort was partially excavated. A total of eleven features were found, including brick and mortar areas, cache pits, and a cellar. Unfortunately, due chiefly to the large amount of river erosion which had washed away most of the site, the excavation of Sturgeon Fort did not reveal as much about the fort structure as had been hoped. The paucity of the remains, together with the lack of any definite brick structures, stone or wooden foundations, and/or soil stains or postmolds, prohibited any exact definition of the features' original functions. However, the nature of the remains, being mostly brick and mortar, with some wooden planking, suggest that at least three houses had been in the vicinity, each of which had a cellar and/or pit associated with it. No evidences for a stockade could be definitely discerned.

The excavations yielded valuable information on the fauna and flora utilized by the fur-traders, and also about the manufactured



items brought into the wilderness by these men. Artifacts were found scattered throughout the site. Articles of European manufacture were in the majority, although Indian artifacts were also found.

Further remains of Sturgeon Fort certainly do not extend to the north or east of the excavated area, but may reach to the west. However, if this is the case, it seems likely that the majority have also been obliterated by river erosion.