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## CONTENTS

- ✓ The Matthews Site (20 CL 61), Clinton County,  
Michigan. Charles E. Cleland . . . . . 175
- Radiocarbon Date from a Michigan Satchell-Type  
Site. Donald B. Simons . . . . . 209
- Notes on Ceramic Technology from the Welser  
Site, Kent Co., Ontario. Leonard Kroon . . . . . 215
- Salvaging Biological Remains from Archaeological  
Sites. Richard L. Ford . . . . . 223

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Details of costume and adornment for the individuals interred at the Matthews Site.

# THE MATTHEWS SITE (20 CL 61)

## CLINTON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Charles E. Cleland  
Michigan State University

### INTRODUCTION

The Matthews Site (20 CL 61) is located near the border of Clinton and Gratiot Counties, 2 miles east of Maple Rapids, Michigan; NE $\frac{1}{4}$  NE $\frac{1}{4}$  sec. 3, Essex Township, Clinton County (Fig. 1). Confined to a small knoll  $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile south of the Maple River, the site was found during the spring of 1966 when Clyde Anderson of St. Johns, Michigan, began exploring this area in search of an early nineteenth-century Indian village which was noted in several accounts of the early history of the Maple River Valley. The burials were located with a metal detector and subsequently were excavated by Mr. Anderson. The author visited the site late in the summer of 1966 after the burials had been exposed and the grave goods removed. Skeletal material was left *in situ* and was later re-buried. Artifacts associated with the burials were lent to The Michigan State University Museum and are now in the possession of Mr. Anderson. The excellent notes, photographs, and drawings prepared by Mr. Anderson at the time of excavation are the basis for this study. The area covered by this site, that is the knoll on which the interments were made, is very small; that there are no other burials in this immediate area may be assumed.

Four burials were excavated by Mr. Anderson, three adults and one child. All were extended burials with heads oriented due west (Fig. 1). Field notes indicate that the graves were extremely shallow, and skeletal material was encountered less than 6 inches beneath the ground surface. Some surface erosion of the burial knoll very likely had taken place since the Matthews farm was cleared in the early part of the last century.

Although sex and age of the individuals buried at the Matthews Site have not been confirmed by a physical anthropologist, Mr. Anderson reports that Burials 1 and 2 were adult males, Burial 3 was an adult female, and Burial 4 was a child.

### BURIAL DESCRIPTIONS

#### *Burial 1*

Figures 2-7

This adult male was buried in a supine position with the legs slightly flexed at both the hips and knees; the forearms were crossed

*Burial 2*

*Strike-a-lite and flint* (Fig. 8-5; Fig. 9a): This strike-a-lite is nearly identical to that recovered from Burial 1; it is oval with a width of 37 mm. The blade flint included with the strike-a-lite is made from a blue-black translucent flint with white clouds.

*Arm bands* (Fig. 8-6 and 7; Fig. 11): Two identical German silver C-shaped bracelets were recovered from the wrist areas of Burial 2. Each is 36 mm wide and decorated with machine-made pressed and cut grooves. Both ends of these bands have a pair of holes through which a cord could be passed to tie them in place. In this case they seem to have been fastened to the cuffs of a coat or jacket.

*Kaolin pipe* (Fig. 8-8; Fig. 9k): This pipe is decorated with alternating wide and narrow fluting at the base of the bowl; the fluting extends to the stem where it is terminated by a pair of vertical lines. The fluting does not extend to the upper rim of the bowl where the mold line is concealed by flattening with a series of hash marks. Although the pipe stem is broken, smoke clouds at the broken end indicate that the pipe continued to be used after breaking occurred. Decorative fluting on kaolin pipes probably first appears in the late eighteenth century and continued through the first half of the nineteenth century.

*Pouch* (Fig. 8-9; Fig. 9f-g): A pouch closed by a knotted leather thong was recovered from the area of the right hand. The pouch contained three lead swan shot, seven gun tacks, and four gun flints. The tacks are made of brass with convex heads 8.5 mm in diameter and 12 mm shanks. The heads and the shanks were cast separately and later were brazed together.

Three of the gunflints are of the blade type made on blue-black and grey flint of European origin. These flints are heavily battered and were surely used as fire flints. The fourth flint is also heavily used but is a crescent-shaped flake of Upper Mercer flint which outcrops in extreme northwestern Ohio.

*Sheath Knife* (Fig. 8-10; Fig. 9h): A leather sheath joined by large brass rivets was found at the lower thigh of Burial 2. Although corroded, the knife has a blade which is at least 140 mm in length and 23 mm wide. The handle is an additional 76 mm long and 15 mm thick; it is constructed of two pieces of half-round bone joined through the shank by three iron rivets.

*Iron Axe* (Fig. 8-11; Fig. 9j): A single-bitted axe was also placed near the right thigh. The axe head has a total length of 127 mm; the blade width is 72 mm at the bit and 51 mm at the poll. Construction techniques are obscured by corrosion, but this seems to be a hand-forged camp axe of typical American design.

*Pine planks* (Fig. 8-12): Burial 2 was interred in a coffin made of pine planks. Because of the advanced deterioration of the wood, no evidence of cutting could be observed.

*Iron nails* (Fig. 8-13; Fig. 9i): The coffin in which this individual was interred was fastened with machine cut, iron nails. These nails are 67 mm long with a maximum width of 5.5 mm. Machines for cutting nails from sheet iron were invented in 1790 and were refined very rapidly, so that nails similar in every respect to modern cut nails were made by 1830. The evolution of nail types during this formative period has been documented by Nelson (1963). Nails from Burial 2 exhibit crude machine made heads and are cut so that shearing marks occur on opposite sides of the same face. Nails with this characteristic were made between 1820 and 1830. Since the iron fibers of these nails run parallel to the shank, these nails should date from the late 1820s.

*Silver brooches* (Fig. 8-14; Fig. 9b): Both brooches are cut from Sheffield plate. The first is decorated with punched holes forming three staggered rows; an outer row is lens shaped, while the inner row is triangular, and these are separated by a row of diamond-shaped holes. The second brooch is small, with an approximate diameter of 54 mm. This fragmentary brooch must have been quite handsome. The outer edge is scalloped and decorated with a row of egg-shaped holes; the interior portions bear a series of engraved scalloped lines bordering a row of long oval holes. Neither gorget bears a touchmark.

*Ear bob* (Fig. 8-15; Fig. 9d): A badly corroded, pewter ear bob was recovered from the right mastoid region of Burial 2. This decorative ornament is probably incomplete but consists of a circular element, 13 mm in diameter, with a plano-convex cross section and an expanding stem, 13 mm in length. The manner of attachment is not known.

*Seed beads* (Fig. 8-16): White, opaque seed beads were used to decorate the moccasins and garters of this individual. The doughnut-shaped seed beads have an average length of 1.3 mm and an average width of 2.0 mm. These beads are similar to Kidd and Kidd's (1970) Type 11a13.

### *Burial 3*

#### Figures 12-13

Burial 3 was apparently that of a female. Mr. Anderson reports that a few neo-natal or fetal bones were recovered with the burial. Buried in a supine position with the hands brought together at the pelvis, this individual was wrapped in a blanket and interred in a pine coffin fastened with nails.

Contributed grave goods include a copper pail containing a brass spoon placed on the right thigh, an oval strike-a-lite, a flint, and a sheath knife placed to the left of the pelvis. Residue in the pail suggests that it originally contained vegetable foodstuffs.

Items of apparel and adornment include white seed beads from the area of the feet and two necklaces. One necklace is composed of four strands of green cut-glass beads and the other of several strands of silver ribbon brooches. The latter appear in three sizes, but there is no indication that they were attached in a graded series.

### Artifacts from Burial 3

*Plain circular brooches* (Fig. 12-1; Fig. 13a): These brooches are convex disks of German silver with a central, circular opening. A hinged pin crosses the opening on the convex face. The brooch is held in place by affixing a portion of cloth through the central opening and passing the pin through the cloth. Tension on the cloth held the brooch in position. The individual represented by Burial 3 also wore three strands of circular brooches at her neck; apparently these were attached to ribbons. Three sizes were recovered: 1) 48 brooches which were 21 mm in diameter, 2) 40 brooches with a diameter of 16 mm, and 3) 2 brooches which were only 12 mm in diameter. Plain silver brooches are perhaps the most common silver ornaments of the Late Historic period.

*Glass beads* (Fig. 12-2; Fig. 13b): In addition to the brooches, this individual also wore four strands of glass beads consisting of 280 beads strung with basswood fiber. These beads are very crudely made from clear green glass and show considerable variation in size with a length range of 5-8 mm and a mean length of 6.5 mm. This variation is because these beads were made by breaking segments from a tube, a fact made apparent by the unfinished ends of the beads. There is, therefore, much less variation in bead width (7-8 mm), with an average of 7.5 mm. The surfaces of these beads show irregular facets, apparently the result of grinding them on a wheel. Generally six flat surfaces were ground on the surfaces of the bead. Next the resulting ridges were partially removed by grinding small, oblique facets which extended one third the length of the bead from each end. Each bead therefore has approximately 18 facets. These beads resemble Kidd and Kidd's (1970) type 1f3.

Quimby (1966:88) states that cut-glass beads of any color are diagnostic of the Late Historic period (1760-1820).

*Strike-a-lite and flint* (Fig. 12-3; Fig. 13c): This strike-a-lite is the small oval variety; 62.5 mm in length and 34 mm in width, it is cut from an iron plate, 4 mm thick. The accompanying flint is a honey or blond translucent flint of the spall-blade type.

*Sheath knife* (Fig. 12-4): Although the blade of this knife is extremely fragmentary, its handle remains intact. The length, width, and handle configuration is identical to that of the sheath knife described from Burial 2; undoubtedly these knives are identical in every respect.



*Copper pail and spoon* (Fig. 12-5; Fig. 13d-e): A small, well-made, covered copper vessel containing a brass spoon and some desiccated vegetable fiber was recovered from the right side of Burial 3.

The pail is round measuring 120 mm in diameter and 100 mm deep. Made of sheet copper 1 mm thick, the vessel is constructed by bending a single sheet of copper to form the sides. These ends are fastened by a flange joint and are soldered. The bottom is a circular piece likewise attached at the edges by a exterior flange joint. The lid is a circular piece of copper to which a 14 mm rim has been soldered to fit tightly into the mouth of the vessel. The entire interior surface of the vessel and lid has been coated with a zinc or tin wash. The bail and lid ring were both made of iron.

The spoon, which was slightly bent in order to fit into the pail, is made of brass and bears the touchmark *R. Wallace*. Spoons of this form were popular in the early nineteenth century and are known as fiddle spoons. They are characterized by a deep, narrow, pointed bed, stem flanges on the neck, and a widening of the handle which resembles the neck of a fiddle, while the distal portion of the handle has a slight droop (Avery 1968:357). Although styles were set by silversmiths, Noël Hume (1970:180) notes that the same styles were religiously followed (with some minor time lag) by makers of brass, latten, and pewter cutlery. Certainly this spoon dates between 1800 and 1830 but probably within the later part of this period. Information on the *R. Wallace* who made this spoon has not yet come to light. Perhaps it was made by Robert Wallace, a craftsman in the employ of Charles Yale at Walling fort, Connecticut, between approximately 1815 and 1836 (Lathrop 1926:36).

*Iron nails* (Fig. 12-6): These are machine-cut nails identical to those found with Burial 2.

*Seed beads* (Fig. 12-7): A few seed beads were recovered from the area of the feet of Burial 3; these were probably used to decorate moccasins. The majority are white, opaque beads slightly smaller than a modern No. 4 bead; these beads are referable to Kidd and Kidd's (1970) type 11a13. Also included in this assemblage were a few light blue and rose amber seed beads; these resemble Kidd and Kidd's (1970) types 11a36 and 11a61 respectively.

#### *Burial 4*

Figures 14-15

This burial was not well preserved and details concerning its positioning are unclear. Presumably the burial was a child of 4 to 6 years of age who was interred in a supine position. Burial was made in a wooden coffin. Contributed items include only a rectangular strike-a-lite without a flint, placed to the left of the pelvis.

A large, perforated hair brooch was recovered from the left side of the skull in the area of the ear. Many strands of black seed beads were worn at the neck as a choker. Three large, spun-glass beads apparently formed the center piece of this necklace. Also worn about the neck, but extending downward to the chest, was a blue cut-glass bauble and a necklace made from seven perforated thimbles.

#### Artifacts from Burial 4

*Ear bob* (Fig. 14-1; Fig. 15d): This ear bob is made of cast pewter and is similar to the one recovered from Burial 2. In form it is plano-convex in cross section and shaped like a tear drop. The stem, which is broken, is attached to the wide end of the body. The body is 20 mm long and has a maximum width of 12.5 mm. Decorated with raised lines, two lines parallel the margin of the body, repeating the tear-shaped form; another line forms a Y shape at the center of the body.

*Glass bauble* (Fig. 14-2; Fig. 15e): This individual wore a glass bauble, made of gem-cut, cobalt blue, translucent glass. The bauble is constructed of two pieces: one is tear-drop shaped and the other is round. Both were set with a narrow border of copper. Several small pieces of tanned hide attached to the setting fragments indicate suspension by this means.

*Iron nails* (Fig. 14-3): The machine-cut nails associated with the burial are identical to those found with Burials 2 and 3.

*Silver brooch* (Fig. 14-4; Fig. 15g): A silver brooch was apparently affixed to either the hair or some element of costume at the left temporal region of the skull. This brooch is identical in size and shape to the one described from Burial 1 (Fig. 2-1).

*Bead choker* (Fig. 14-5; Fig. 15a-b): This child wore a bead choker composed of about a dozen tightly drawn strands of very dark blue seed beads. These are perhaps referable to Kidd and Kidd's (1970) type 11a48. In addition one of these strands included three convex (or spheroidal) opaque white beads with tan to dirty pink patina. Quimby (1966:88) lists these beads as characteristic of the Late Historic period (1760-1820).

*Thimbles* (Fig. 14-6; Fig. 15f): A necklace made of seven brass thimbles was worn on the center of the chest of Burial 4. The necklace consists of a central, large thimble, 13.5 mm in diameter at the base and 16 mm in height, and three smaller thimbles placed to each side which are 12 mm in greatest diameter and 15 mm in height. The decoration of all specimens is identical; small, closely spaced circular impressions cover the top and upper two thirds of the surface. These are applied in a tight spiral which terminates at the center of the top surface. The bottom third is smooth except for two horizontal rows of very fine, square impressions. The top of each thimble has been



pierced with an awl from the interior so that they could be suspended. The thimbles bear no touchmarks. Presumably the small size, although not outside the range of thimbles from Fort Michilimackinac (Stone 1970:611), indicates that these were made to be used by children.

*Strike-a-lite* (Fig. 14-7; Fig. 15c): Unlike the oval strike-a-lites of the other burials at the Matthews Site, this is an example of the C-shaped variety. The broken edges of this fragmentary specimen indicate that it was placed in the burial in this condition. This strike-a-lite was not accompanied by a flint, as in the other cases. No meaningful measurements can be presented except the width of the bar, which is 14.5 mm.

### BURIAL ASSOCIATIONS

Consideration of the kinds and quantities of artifacts occurring with the Matthews Site burials is necessarily difficult, since we are dealing with a sample of only four individuals and since we lack positive data on the sex and age of these individuals. Assuming Mr. Anderson was correct in his assemments of sex and age, and there is no reason to assume otherwise, we can make a few general statements concerning the associated grave goods.

Clearly we can distinguish two classes of burial goods: those which are associated with adornment and were part of the costume worn by the deceased, and those burial goods which were contributed to the grave.

In the latter category we see the strong tendency for the inclusion of utilitarian items. All graves included strike-a-lites, and all but the child's grave included fire flints. Both a male and a female were interred with metal containers, spoons, and knives. No class of contributed grave goods was found exclusively in the female's or child's grave. The reverse is not true, since the grave of one male contained gun parts, an axe, and a pipe. The first two items may be associated with male occupations, but the pipe was likely the personal property of the deceased. Based on this very small sample, one may suggest that strike-a-lites and fire flints were regarded as a minimal and necessary contributed grave good; that containers, spoons, and knives were non-sex linked contributed items, perhaps considered useful for *post mortem* maintenance; and that the gun parts and pipe may have been indicative of male occupations and pursuits.

A great deal of sexual dichotomy is suggested by articles of personal adornment. Graves which were probably those of males contained the majority of trade silver. Although the use of silver is not restricted to males, the two male graves contained all the silver except the hair wheel in the child's grave and the ribbon brooches in the female's grave. Ear bobs and seed beads were recovered from the graves of both a male and a female, but necklaces and necklace

beads are associated with the female and child. The sexual dichotomy in the use of trade silver when compared to other items of adornment, such as bead necklaces, appears to be very strong and is probably a reflection of higher male status. Quimby (1966:89), discussing the decline in abundance and varieties of necklace beads after the introduction of trade silver, remarks that beads are "relegated to a secondary position or practically superseded by various kinds of silver ornaments." Although silver seems to have replaced beads as articles of adornment for males, females by virtue of their "lower" status still had to be "satisfied" with a few pieces of silver and a great many necklace beads! The artifacts used in personal ornamentation, the types of fabrics recovered with the burials, and clothing types described in the list of trade goods used during the 1820s were used to reconstruct details of adornment for the individuals buried at the Matthews Site. This reconstruction is shown in the Frontispiece.

#### DATING THE MATTHEWS SITE BURIALS

Dating the Matthews Site can be accomplished with a fairly high degree of accuracy. First, this site quite clearly belongs in the Late Historic Period (1760 or later); the trade silver, kaolin pipe, gun parts, cut glass beads and baubles, metal ware, and most other burial goods are highly typical of that era. The site can, however, be dated more tightly. These burials could not have been made before 1790 because they contain machine-cut nails, and this process was invented in that year. Although Pierre Jean Desnoyers, the silversmith who made one of the gorgets, may have been working earlier, Quimby (1966) lists 1818 as a date when he was known to have been producing silver for the Indian trade. If such is the case, the Matthews Site could not pre-date 1818. There is additional evidence that this is the case. Fiddle spoons, for example, were very popular between 1820 and 1830, and the iron nails from the site seem to be of a kind made between 1820 and 1830. Other dated materials include the gun parts which probably were manufactured between 1800 and 1810, and the pieces of trade silver are signed by Cruickshank and Huguët who worked until 1809 and 1817 respectively.

In summary, we know that the Matthews Site must date later than 1790 and almost positively after 1818. With a little less evidence but a great deal of confidence, we can say that the site dates between 1820 and 1830. Finally, on the basis of style trends, these burials seem to have been made in the latter half of that decade. The identical orientation of graves and the close similarity of trade goods recovered from the burials suggest contemporaneous interment.

## THE MATTHEWS SITE AND THE FUR TRADE

Most work with Historic Period Indian sites in Michigan as well as in the Great Lakes region in general has been done on Early and Middle Historic Period sites, that is, sites dating prior to 1760. Because the Matthews Site represents one of the very few Late Historic sites and is in fact even late within this period, it may be profitable to briefly review the state of the Indian trade in Michigan and particularly north-central lower Michigan at that time.

The years between the close of the War of 1812 in 1816 and the mid 1830s was a period which saw both the zenith and final descent of the fur trade in the Great Lakes area. In the decades prior to the war the arena of fur trade was one of intense conflict. The British-owned Mackinaw Company was in fierce competition with John Jacob Astor's American Fur Company; both were in competition with independent traders and the trading factories established by the United States government. At the close of the War of 1812, however, the trade fell entirely into American hands. With unbridled wealth and political power, Astor rapidly built a fur conglomerate which stretched from the Canadian border to the Gulf and from the Great Lakes to the Pacific northwest; his clerks and agents established posts in, or at least visited, every part of the Michigan wilderness. Here the agents of the American Fur Company met and clashed with the independent traders who worked principally out of Detroit on licenses from the American government. Johnson (1919:127) observes that the policy of the American Fur Company was to crush this opposition at whatever cost. Those private traders who could not be bought or intimidated were often persuaded by harsher means. The government trading policy eventually shared the same fate as the private traders. In 1795, trading houses and trading districts were established by the government to provide Indians with goods and to make these goods available at a fair price. Bonded agents, appointed by the President, issued licenses to traders who were, in theory, pledged to deal fairly with the Indians. Sale or barter in liquor, for example, was expressly forbidden. Mismanagement of the agents, political maneuvering of Astor and other large independent traders, and use of inferior quality trade goods led to the collapse of the government trading factories in 1822. After this date the lucrative fur trade was a virtual monopoly of the American Fur Company in many areas of the United States. With long experience in the business, a knowledge of the country and the goods desired by Indian hunters, and a superb logistic network, Astor and his lieutenants Ramsay Crooks and Robert Stuart set out to strip the Great Lakes wilderness of its fur-bearing animals.

American Fur Company posts were established throughout central Michigan. Madame La Framboise and later Rix Robinson supervised several posts on the Grand, Kalamazoo, Flat, and Muskegon Rivers.

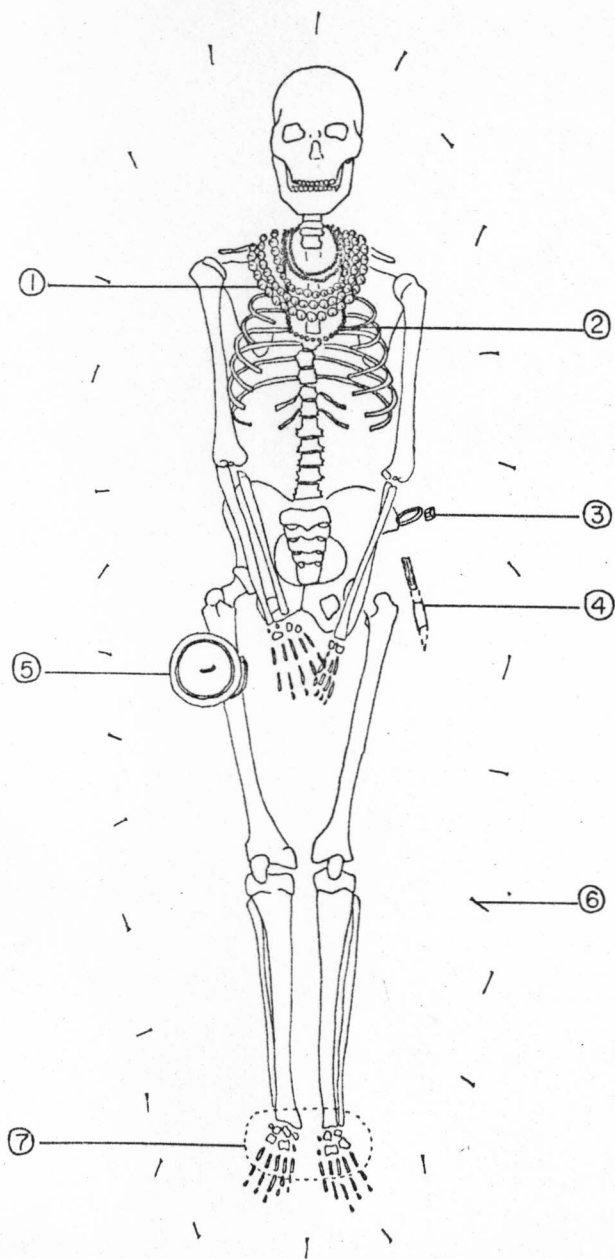


Figure 12. Burial 3 at the Matthews Site.

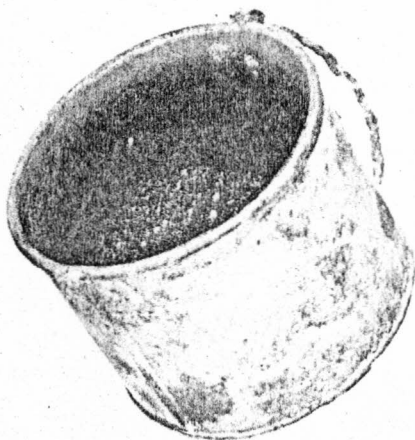
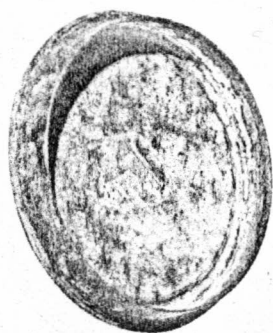
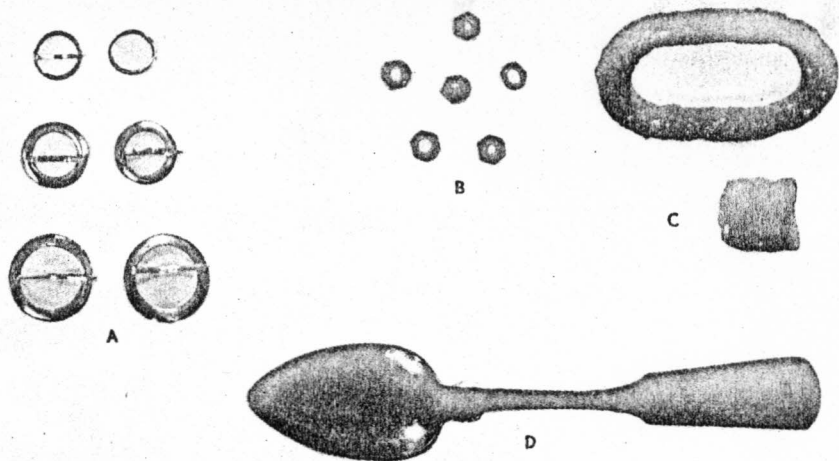


Figure 13. Selected artifacts from Burial 3.

- a. plain silver brooches
- b. beads
- c. strike-a-lite and flint

- d. brass spoon
- e. copper pail

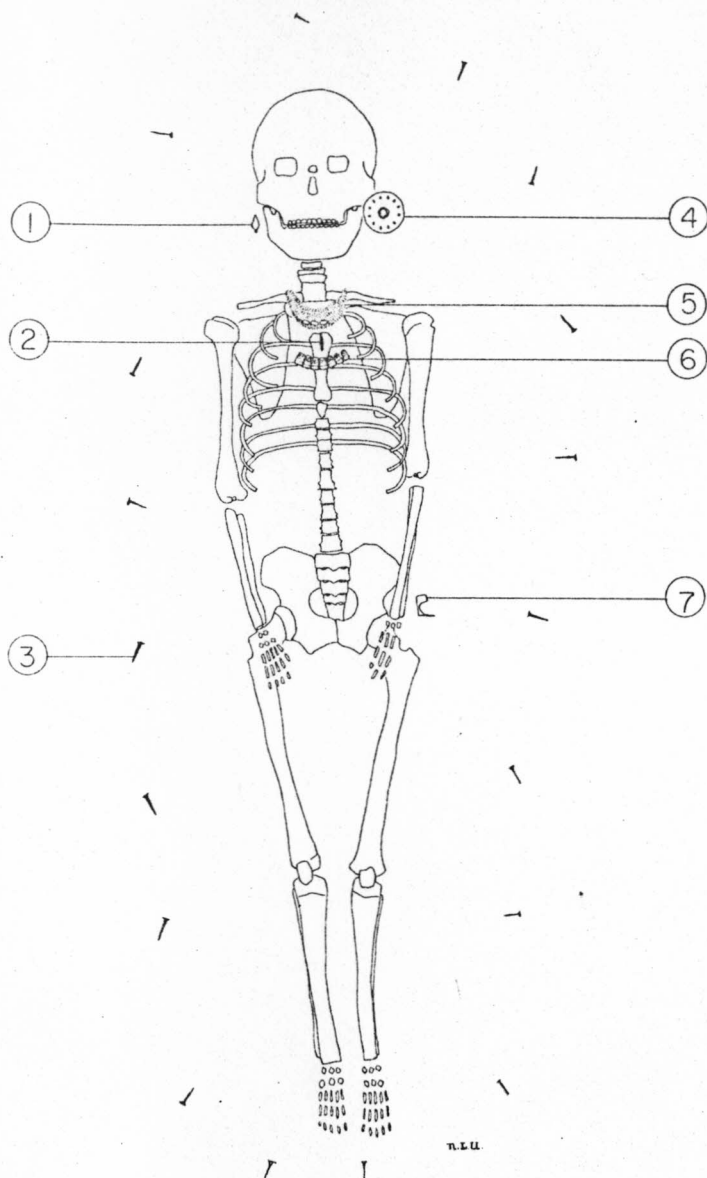


Figure 14. Burial 4 at the Matthews Site; the child is approximately 3 feet tall.



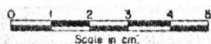
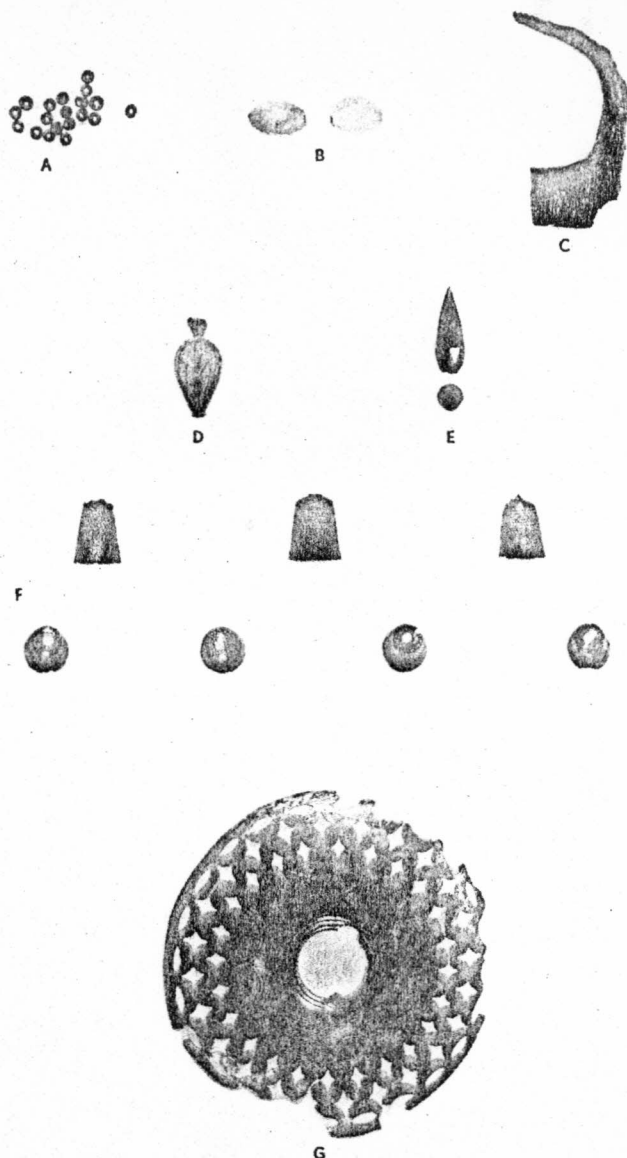


Figure 15. Selected artifacts from Burial 4.

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| a. seed beads    | e. glass bauble  |
| b. spun beads    | f. thimbles      |
| c. strike-a-lite | g. silver brooch |
| d. ear bob       |                  |