

# THE MICHIGAN ARCHAEOLOGIST

VOL. 21 NO. 2

## A LATE 17th CENTURY BURIAL FROM ST. IGNACE, MICHIGAN

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In May of 1974, a utility trench was excavated parallel to Marquette Street between the Soo Line Railroad tracks in St. Ignace, Michigan. This trench disturbed several Early Historic period features, including one burial, at a depth of approximately seven feet below the surface. The area where these were uncovered is approximately 100 feet to the north of the Marquette Mission Site (Stone 1972, Fitting n.d.a.) and just outside of the boundaries of the Marquette Mission National Historic Site. This was an area which had been tested as a part of the St. Ignace Survey of 1972 (Fitting and Fisher n.d.) where it was designated as SIS-19. The test pit for the season was two feet deep with the upper 18 inches containing a mixture of late 19th and 20th century historic debris. The bottom six inches of the test pit consisted of sterile yellow sand and it was assumed to be sterile beach sand so the unit was abandoned.

The May 1974 excavations were observed by Alicia Mackin who took photographs of them indicating a buried soil horizon located variously between five and seven feet below the surface. It would appear that the 1972 test pit, which was placed in this area because of it being one of the possible locations for the French Fort De Baude, had not gone deep enough to encounter the original land surface.

Ms. Mackin, working with the backhoe operator, Mr. John Stone from Orr City, Texas, was able to salvage some cultural material. Some additional cultural material, primarily several round shell pendants, was no longer available to us when George Davis and I had the opportunity to study the collection in July of 1974.

No attempt was made to remove the undisturbed portions of the burial in the trench wall since it is the desire of Indian people in the St. Ignace area that the remains of their ancestors be left

undisturbed except for salvage situations where they would otherwise be destroyed by construction. The human remains, which were later reburied in the general area, represented one individual. There was an incomplete eruption of the permanent dentition, the sutures on the skull fragments were not closed, and there was no epiphysial closure for the few long bone fragments, indicating that this was a young individual. There were copper salts on fragments of the skull and one vertebrae suggesting that more copper had once been present than was included with the collection which we studied.

The collection of grave goods which we examined contained 42 items including six European trade items, 18 artifacts of catlinite, and 18 artifacts of shell. The trade goods included a glass bead, a fragment of a hawk bell or bell button, and four brass kettle scrapers. The trade bead (Figure 2) was a clear glass barrel bead .9 cm long and .9 cm in diameter with a hole 2. cm in diameter. It had a pitted surface but appeared to be of cane manufacture. The 1966 Lasanen site burial collections contained no beads similar to this although clear glass seed beads were present (Stone 1971). However, a large number (28) of similar large clear glass beads were recovered from the Gros Cap Cemetery (Nern and Cleland 1974:33).

The hawk bell or bell button base (Figure 1) was made of brass and was 1.8 cm in diameter with a welded eye. Only the eye portion was present making identification as either a bell or button difficult. Hawk bells are made in four sections (Nern and Cleland 1974:17) and this may be only the eye and upper body section. Again, similar artifacts were present at the Lasanen and Gros Cap cemeteries.

Kettle scraps of brass (Figure 1) are found at village sites as well as in the cemetery areas (Fitting n.d.a., Fitting, editor, 1974) so are not temporally diagnostic.

The catlinite artifacts were a most interesting group, consisting entirely of beads. There was one complete tubular catlinite bead found in two pieces. It was 8 cm long, square in cross section measuring .7 cm to a side. It has been drilled twice. The first attempt at drilling had not been straight and the drill surfaced at the mid-point of the bead. This is the point where it broke. A second hole was better aligned and went through the entire bead. There were 13 end fragments of square catlinite tube beads, ranging from 1.7 to 5.9 cm in length, and three medial fragments, ranging from .9 to 2.4 cm. The key thing about these beads is that none of the sections belong to the same beads. They must have been broken at some point and only part of the beads placed with the burial.

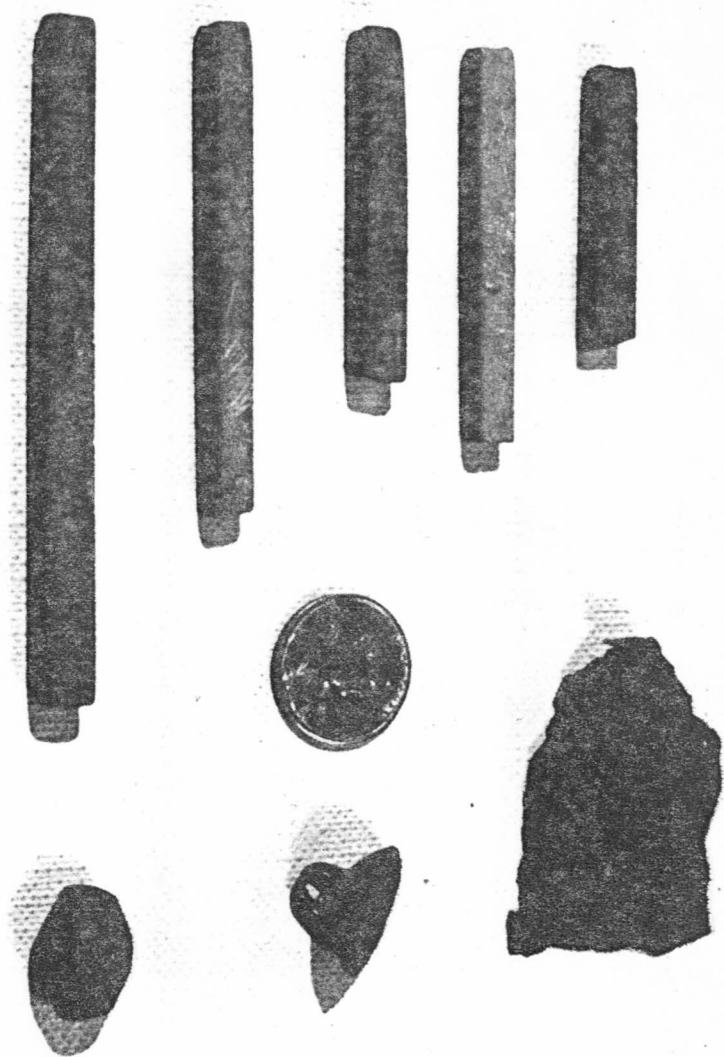


FIG. 1. Artifacts of Catlinite and Copper.

The remaining catlinite bead is a barrel bead (Figure 1) 1.6 cm long and 1.0 cm in diameter with a hole .4 cm in diameter. Catlinite beads have also been found in the Lasanen and Gros Cap cemeteries and at the Marquette Mission site.

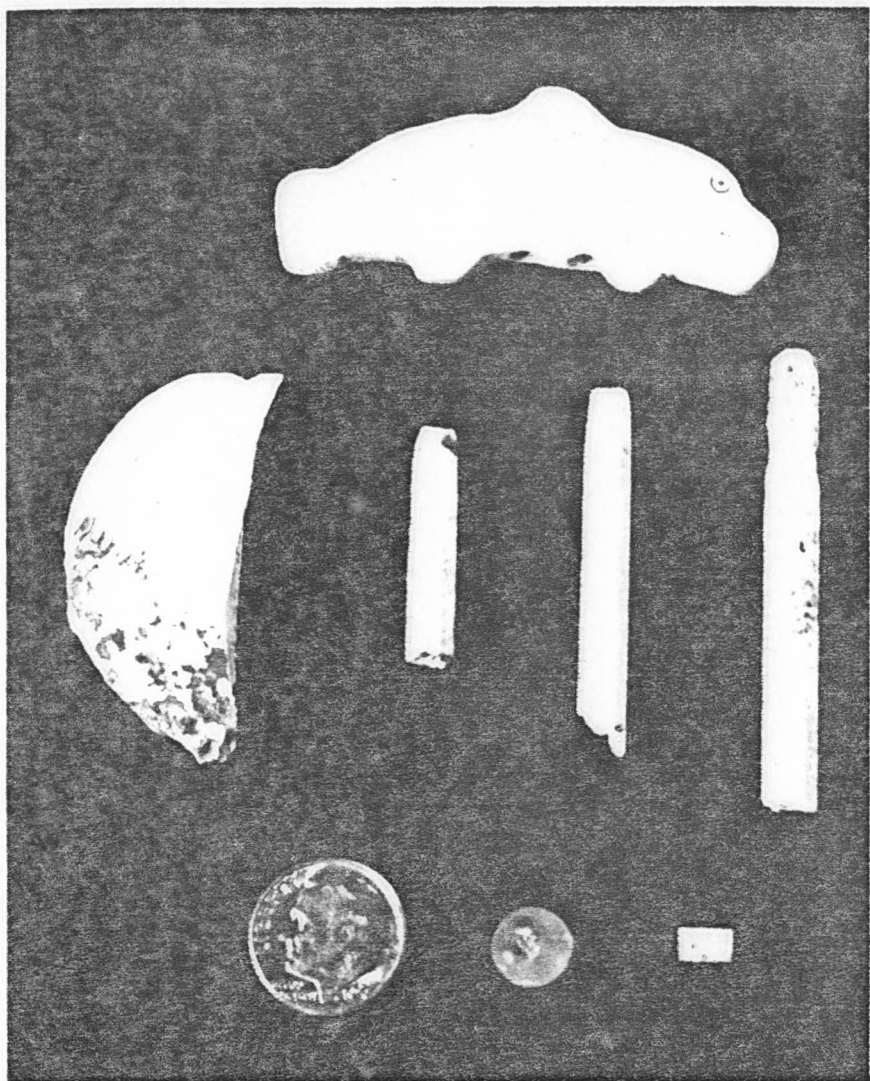


FIG. 2. Shell Pendants, Shell Beads, Clear Glass Bead and Shell Wampum.

The shell artifacts included three end fragments and 12 medial fragments of round columella shell beads (Figure 2). These ranged from 2.7 to 5.9 cm in length and from .5 to .8 cm in diameter. They had a uniform bore diameter of .2 cm. Like the catlinite tube beads, all had been broken and none of the segments fitted together, suggesting that they had been broken before being placed

with the burial and that only part of each bead had been placed with the burial.

One shell wampum bead was found as well. It was white wampum .6 cm long, .4 cm in diameter and had an interior bore of .2 cm.

One fragmentary and one complete shell pendant were recovered. The fragmentary shell pendant, or runtee, was originally circular (Figure 2), at least 4.4 cm in diameter and .5 cm thick. It had at least one hole drilled from top to bottom and had been broken along the hole. The complete shell pendant was a fish effigy (Figure 2) with scratched designs on the side including a circular eye. It was double drilled with two holes originating on either side of the top fin drilled at a slope to nearly converge near the bottom fin. It was 6.0 cm long, 2.4 cm wide at the maximum and .45 cm thick.

Two very similar shell effigies, including one with identical fin placement, were recovered from Pit R at the Lasanen site (Buckmaster and Canouts 1971:36, 39). Two fish effigies were also found in shell at the Gros Cap Cemetery (Nern and Cleland 1974:29, 30) which have been identified as exotic salt water species. It is interesting, and perhaps significant, that these fish pendants are made of shell while mammal pendants at both Gros Cap and Lasanen are made of catlinite.

The Lasanen specimen which has been identified by Nern and Cleland (1974:30) as a porpoise is the specimen with species identification most similar to the one with this burial. It too has an eye, made with a circle and a dot in the Marquette Street burial and two circles with the Gros Cap burial, and both have four sets of decorations. On the Marquette Street pendant, this consists of four sets of parallel lines.

The artifact similarities with Gros Cap and Lasanen are sufficient to suggest that this burial dates to the late 17th century. This would also agree with its position only several hundred feet from the Marquette Mission which was used from 1671 to 1705 and the Tionontate Village which was occupied from 1671 to 1701. A recent analysis of the acculturation process of this time period has further suggested that the masses of burials with rich trade goods in St. Ignace may be primarily restricted to an even narrower period in the mid-1690s (Fitting n.d.b.).

In addition to the burial, the deep utility trench on Marquette Street also revealed an area where the stubs of palisade posts were included in the buried humus. No one knows the precise location of Fort De Baude and the only map which has a stylized drawing of its location (see Stone 1972, figure 4 for a copy of the anonymous 1717 map), was prepared nearly 20 years after the

Fort was abandoned and places it in an unlikely location in terms of the geology of St. Ignace. Placing the fort in the large open area to the south and west of the mission would have made tactical sense however. The utility trench excavations of 1974 may have been destructive of some resources but they have certainly opened a whole new area of St. Ignace for our investigations; providing that we can get under the five to seven feet of overburden by the railroad tracks.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Alicia Mackin of St. Ignace for her continued enthusiasm and attention to St. Ignace history. In this situation, as in many in the past, she has preserved information that would otherwise have been lost. It would also like to thank George Davis for his help in studying the collection and in taking the photographs which appear with this article.

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