

THE ORCHID SITE, AREA B, FORT ERIE, ONTARIO

Joseph Granger

Houghton Chapter

Introduction

Excavations were carried out in July, 1964, on the Orchid Site, Ft. Erie, Ontario, in two locations designated Area A and Area B. These excavations were conducted by the State University of New York at Buffalo in cooperation with the National Museum of Canada. Marian E. White of the former institution and William C. Noble of the latter were in charge of excavations while the author was supervisor of the field excavations and concentrated on Area B.

Operations were of a salvage nature with certain uncontrollable factors limiting stringently the time and areas available for careful excavation. Major portions of the site were sampled but emphasis was placed upon the excavation of a large prehistoric ossuary (White, 1966). This ossuary has also been referred to as the Marinacchio Site but both Areas A and B were given the designation Ar Gf-1 and called the Orchid Site by the National Museum of Canada. However, later this same designation was also used for the Surma Site (Emerson and Noble, 1966). Since the ossuary has been reported elsewhere, it will not be covered here.

"Area B" was a test trench which disclosed several burials and rich midden deposits. Attention was focused upon this area by reports that skeletal material had been noted on July 17 in the course of leveling the area preparatory to the laying of crushed stone for a parking lot. The stripped off overburden was removed from the site by truck while the Indian "bone" and "relics" were collected or displaced by the curious onlookers. When other materials were uncovered in the ossuary area, the Fort Erie police were called in and the area cordoned off. It was then that the State University of New York at Buffalo was asked to conduct the subsequent work.

Excavations commenced in Area B on July 23, 1964, when a careful scrutiny of the leveled surface disclosed several concentrations of bone, numerous flint flakes, and other artifacts. In three days of excavation we made an exploratory test trench primarily to delimit burials. Six burials and one refuse pit were excavated.

My sincere appreciation and thanks go to the following people and groups who aided materially in a taxing situation and thus made it both companionable and bearable: Marian E. White, over-all director; William C. Noble, Assistant, National Museum of Canada; Audrey Sublett, director of burial excavation; Frederick Houghton Chapter, New York Archaeological Association; and the citizens of Fort Erie, Ontario who willingly gave their interest and time.

Description and analysis were facilitated by the cooperation of the National Museum of Canada which loaned the materials excavated to State University of New York at Buffalo Archaeology Laboratory. Barbara Butler completed the faunal analysis while Sheila Parker did the analysis of human osteological remains of Area B.

Physiography

The Orchid Site, Area B (Ar Gf 1), is located on Lot 2, Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada, directly adjacent to the west side of Niagara Boulevard on land owned by Anthony C. Marinacchio (Plate 1). It occupies a small sand knoll on the first riverine terrace at the 575-foot elevation. The growth of the urban area had obscured much physiographic detail. James Flake, the bulldozer operator, removed, during leveling, approximately 1.5' to 2.0' of the soil from this knoll-ed terrace, the original surface of which stands approximately 10 ft. above present river level.

The freshly leveled lot between the Marinacchio grocery and the C. L. Young house was covered with crushed stone except for a twelve-foot wide strip on the north side directly adjacent to the Young house. Here the bulldozed surface of the exposed strip consists of black sand mixed with recent and aboriginal cultural and osteological debris. A sample of this black sand was washed in the laboratory where it separated into fine yellow beach sand with a black organic residue. This soil compares with that observed extensively in the areas directly adjacent to the Niagara River and represents an accumulating midden of long duration.

The midden encountered both in Area A and Area B was as an extensive sheet midden, as distinguished from such forms as refuse pits, hillside middens, and constricted or localized

COVER ILLUSTRATION: Salvage Archaeology at a Parking Lot: Orchid Site, Area B.

TABLE 14
Comparison of Body Sherd Exterior-Interior
Surface Treatment by Level

		Level I		Level II		Level III		Grave Goods		TOTALS	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I	Cord marked Exterior Interior	10	(13.3)	34	(45.3)	31	(41.3)	0	(0)	75	(100)
II	Cordmarked Exterior Smooth Interior	4	(6.7)	43	(72.8)	12	(20.3)	0	(0)	59	(100)
III	Cordmarked Exterior Brushed Interior	0	(0)	1	(33.3)	2	(66.6)	0	(0)	3	(100)
IV	Smoothed-Over Cord-Exterior Smoothed Interior	3	(20)	7	(46.6)	5	(33.3)	0	(0)	2	(100)
V	Smooth Exterior Cordmarked Interior	2	(100)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	2	(100)
VI	Smooth Exterior Smooth Interior	1	(16.6)	4	(66.6)	0	(0)	1	(16.6)	6	(100)
	Unidentifiable (one surface removed)	7	(10.7)	32	(49.2)	26	(40)	0	(0)	65	(100)
TOTALS		27	(12)	121	(53.7)	76	(33.7)	1	(.4)	225	(100)

The body sherds as a group do not exhibit the homogeneity of the rim sherds and show some types lacking in the latter. This discrepancy must at present remain unaccounted for and those body sherd type assignments be regarded with caution.

Pipes

One rim sherd of a pipe or small bowl was found in Level II in the vicinity of Feature I. This sherd was 7 mm in thickness and appeared to be tempered much like the rim sherds of Point Peninsula Plain (Plate 14: o). Both interior and exterior portions of the sherd were smooth although the lower portion of the interior did exhibit some fiber or brush striations. The curvature of the sherd suggests that the pipe was of the elbow or obtuse angle variety of Middle or Late Woodland times.

Historic Trade

European Glass (Table 15: 1-5)

A total of 19 glass trade beads were encountered in Burial II and Burial III. The beads found with Burial II are all red in color while those found inset in a gorget presented as grave goods with Individual 2 of Burial III were blue, as were the small seed beads found associated with copper beads (Table 15: 8) directly beneath the shell gorget in the chest region of Individual 2. These beads are dated by using Wray and Schoff's (1953) work on the Seneca sequence in central New York and Pratt's Oneida sequence (1961).

TABLE 15
European Glass Trade Beads

	Type	Number	Mean Diameter	Mean Bore Diameter	Mean Length Where Applicable	Association	Age Wray And Schoff (1953)
Ic11	Red Twisted Tubular Glass	1	6	1.3	9	Burial II	1590-1675 (1650)
Ia1	Red Tubular Glass	2	4	2.5	35	Burial III	1630-1675 (1650)
IVa1	Red-Round Black Center	1	6	1.5	--	Burial II	1590-1675 (1650)
IIa40?	Blue Glass Medium	9	4	0.9	--	Inset in Shell Gorget (2 in situ) Burial III	1615-1675 (1625)
— 11 —	Blue Glass Seed	6	1.5	0.3	--	Directly under shell gorget Burial III	1590-1650 (1625)
	Copper Rolled Seed	16	1	0.3	1.5	Associated with Blue seed beads Burial III	Unknown (1590-1650)
	TOTAL	35					

Copper (Table 15: 6)

Copper beads are very close in diameter, bore, and association with the blue glass seed beads and may be presumed to have come from the same necklace. On the interior of several, traces of the copper wire, .2 mm in thickness, used to string the beads are seen. Sixteen of these small copper beads were found. Their age is unknown but by association with the blue glass seed beads it is suggested as A.D. 1625 or in the range of A.D. 1590-1650. All the above beads are dated by using Wray and Schoff and again guess dated by the figure in parenthesis.

Conclusion

Excavation of Orchid Site Area B revealed several burials and features intrusive into an extensive stratified sheet midden. The situation in Area B differed markedly from that in Area A, which was a large ossuary penetrating the midden soil. Here, individual burials of many cultures occupying different levels in the stratified midden were observed. Where the surrounding midden in Area A had to be largely bypassed in the interest of time, the midden matrix of Area B was a challenging context often defying interpretation, and yielding its information only under careful analysis in the laboratory.

The individual burials found at the site are representative of cultures which had occupied this river bank area from the Late Woodland through the Historic Iroquois period. They prob-