

PALAEOECOLOGY AND ONTARIO PREHISTORY - II

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Editors

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ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE PENETANG PENINSULA

The Penetang Peninsula projects into the southeast corner of Georgian Bay. It is approximately 12 miles long by 13 miles at its greatest width, with fairly uniform physiography including moderately rolling hills and sandy, well-drained soils. Outwash moraines provide considerable quantities of stones of various sizes and types. Both Thunder Bay and the Penetanguishene harbour are shallow, protected inlets, providing facility in docking, which was appreciated by the resident Hurons and the early European immigrants.

Tyyska (1969) demonstrates that the Penetang Peninsula, together with adjacent parts of the mainland, was probably occupied solely by villages belonging to the Bear nation, the most populous of the Huron "clans". If so, it would be relatively culturally isolated and hopefully homogeneous. Wright (1966: 80) after Lalemont (1639: Vol. 16, p. 227) suggests that the Bear nation had resided in Huronia for a considerable time before European arrival. If this is correct, there is an excellent opportunity to observe internal cultural processes with considerable time depth and with a minimal amount of external influence due to diffusion. Conversely, there is the possibility of a particularly precise evaluation of European cultural influences upon the traditional Huron culture.

Survey operations were carried on during the field season of 1969 (Tyyska 1969) with major excavations at the Maurice (BeHa-2) and Robitaille (BeHa-3) sites and testing at Charlebois (BeHa-5), Cedar Point (BeHa-6), Dechambault (BeGx-4) and Farlain Lake (BeGx-5) sites. To supplement these data, additional excavation and testing were done at the Robitaille site (BeHa-3) during the field season of 1970. Studies of the two summers' finds are underway and a preliminary report on the Robitaille excavation follows. The contributions of many scholars in allied disciplines offer the possibility of a uniquely penetrating view of the prehistory of the Penetang Peninsula.

The Robitaille Site: BeHa-3

Introduction

The Robitaille site is located in the southwest sector of Lot 17, Concession XIX, Tiny Township, on land belonging to the E. and A. Robitaille families. Previous excavations by David Ouelette (R.O.M. files), Frank Ridley (1967, 1968), Richard Field (1968) and Allan Tyyska (1969) indicated the site to be a medium sized (circa 2.5 acres) European-contact period Huron village site, pro-

bably with a triple palisade (Tyyska 1969). It is situated on a high spur of land between a swamp to the south and a ravine which drops off sharply to the north and runs eastward to Thunder Bay. (Heidenreich, this report, gives a detailed physiographic description of the site). Thunder Bay, a small, shallow harbour off the southeast corner of Georgian Bay, lies less than two miles from the village, and the ravine forms a natural corridor from the water to the site. The only fresh water source presently near the village is located in the bottom of the ravine, and it is not surprising that the steep slopes between the spring and the village are littered with the remains of many smashed vessels (Heidenreich, pers. comm.). There is some evidence that the present swamp south of the village may have been a small creek before road-building on the Robitaille farm blocked it off. Large stands of old sumac in the heart of the swamp suggest that the site may have at one time extended somewhat farther south.

The Robitaille site is located on a Vasey Series soil, a Grey-Brown Podzolic in profile. It is considered good for farming today, due to its excellent drainage which allows the land to warm up early in the spring and permits early crop sowing. During prolonged dry periods, however, plants suffer from lack of moisture (Hoffman, Wickland and Richards 1962). In our experience, the soil never became sticky; even when thoroughly soaked, it remained crumbly and an hour's wait usually dried it enough to allow the crew to resume digging. BeHa-3 is on outwash moraine, and thus it is quite stony. The stones were used for hearths and for pottery temper; however, raw materials for chipping and grinding were probably being imported. Tree cover in the woodlot now consists mainly of second-growth, especially sugar maples and silver birches, with some oaks, elms and ironwood. Poison ivy was fairly thick in the Midden A region (Figure #11) and prohibited attempts to explore there. Snail studies (Latta this report) and pollen analysis (Heidenreich this report) suggest that the present community is not substantially different from that at the time of occupation.

Excavation was carried out by a crew from the University of Toronto during June and July, 1970. Crew members included Mr. Mel Brown, Mr. Peter Hamalainen, Miss Nancy Jex, Miss Mary MacDonald, and Mrs. Diane Radu. Assisting visitors were Mr. Irv Garten, Miss Judy McLennon and Mr. Ron Latta. Mrs. Radu, Miss Marilyn Walker, Mr. Paul Walty, Mr. Michael Kerwin, Mr. Jeff Levitt, and Mr. William Fox have been of great assistance in laboratory preparations and analysis. Particular thanks are offered to the Robitaille family for permitting us to camp and dig on their land, and to the Canada Council for financial support.

sibly a tin alloy, and shows little rust or stain.

Ornaments: One brass jingle, 40 mm. long, came from Midden C. Near it was a nearly circular brass pendant, 26 mm. in diameter, with a hole drilled through it, off centre, for suspension. The pendant had no decoration.

An animal effigy was found in Midden D. It was neatly cut from a sheet of brass into the outline of an animal standing on its own tail. This motif is popular among the New York Iroquois for elaborate bone combs (White 1961). Laidlaw (1913) reports a number of stone pipes from Ontario carved in this design. I have not seen another example of it in metal.

Fragments: Thirty-three pieces of brass, 11 pieces of copper and 21 bits of unidentifiable iron were recovered. The first two groups probably come from trade kettles and the third from tools or iron pots. All fragments were quite small. Worn-out kettles were evidently not discarded but cut into small pieces for various purposes. About one-fourth of the brass and copper fragments have holes bored through, perhaps for use as pendants or other decorations.

Beads: Thirty-three glass trade beads were found, none of them clustered. Table #25 lists the beads and classifies each, as far as could be ascertained, according to Motykova (1969) and Kidd (1970). The beads are neither as numerous nor as elaborate as might have been expected for a site of this period (Emerson pers. comm.). The common tubular red drawn bead, common at most Huron sites of the late contact period, is missing except for one specimen found in House 1 (Ian Kenyon, pers. comm.). Motykova's type IA, the most common bead at Cahiaque, is represented by only two examples, both in very poor condition. The most numerous bead types at Robitaille were similar to Kidd's IIa25 (six beads) and IVa1 (five beads). According to Kidd's classification system, six beads are of Class I, 14 are of Class II, three are of Class III and 10 are of Class IV. In general, the glass beads are in poor condition, particularly the larger ones, and appear to have been kept until, due to wear or breakage, it became impossible to keep them on a string.

Another group of beads was probably of local origin. Nine beads were made of a reddish slate, similar to catlinite. Of these, five were tubular, one square tubular, one round, one round disc, and one an octagonal disc. The source of this stone is unknown; perhaps it was obtained by trade with neighbouring tribes.

It seems likely that the beads themselves were traded rather than the raw material, since no examples of unworked reddish slate have yet appeared.

Twelve discoidal shell beads and 12 similar bone beads are probably also of local manufacture. One disc was made of mother-of-pearl. It is very fragile and could not have been worn on a string, although it might have been sewed onto a garment.

### Lithics

Stone remains are still being analyzed. The only bifacially worked tools are the 11 projectile points, which are triangular, with straight to concave bases, and which are extremely well made. There was a unifacial, poorly flaked tool which might have been used as a drill, and a few retouched flakes of chert and quartz. Examples of the ground stone industry are two adzes and one additional flaked adze in which only the bit was ground.

### Bone

Bone remains have not yet been studied. However, about six triangular projectile points, three double-pointed needles and two awls were found, as well as a carved bone human face mask, about three inches in length. Dr. Howard Savage has examined some of the bone and reports that there appears to be a large amount of dog bone, while deer bone is comparatively rare. If this ratio holds for the rest of the bone, it would argue against these Hurons obtaining much meat by hunting or by trade; by this period they had reduced to cultigens and fish, supplemented with their domestic dogs.

Very large quantities of fish bone show that the Robitaille people did not lack for protein in their diet. Charred corn, beans and plum pits indicate other main dietary staples. A fair amount of shellfish shell probably represents yet another food source.

### Conclusion

The Robitaille village probably existed entirely within the period of European contact with the Hurons. French trade goods are present in the lowest level of the various middens. It may have been founded as early as 1620. The absence of bead types believed to be extremely late, suggests that the occupation was terminated before 1640. There is nothing to suggest a forcible

Table #25 Tentative Classification of Glass Trade Beads

Artifact No.	Midden	Motykova designation	Kidd designation
1	House 1	IIE	IIbb29
2	A	IK	Ib8
3	House 1	IL	Ic'1
4	House 1	IIIC	IIa31
5	B	IM	IIIC2
6	B	IVC	IVk3
7	B	IIIE/IIE	IIbb29
8	B	IIIH	IVb36
9	B	IB	Ia12
10	B	IIIC	IIa25
11	B	IIIC	IIa...(dk. blue)
12	B	IIIB/IIIC	IIa25
13	C	IIIA	IIb18
14	C	IIIB	IIa25
15	C	-	IIa3
16	C	-	IVk3
17	C	IIIF	IVa2
18	C	IIIF	IVa1
19	C	IIIF	IVa1
20	D	IH	Ib7 ?
21	D	IVA	IIIk...
22	D	IIIF	IVa1
23	D	IIIF	IIbb29 (round)
24	D	IA/IB	Ia13
25	D	IIIF	IVa2
26	G	IIIB	IIa25
27	G	IIIB	IIa25
28	G	IIIB	IIa25
29	G	IIIF	IVa1
30	G	IIIF	IVa1
31	G	-	Ia11
32	G	IC	Ia1
33	G	IIIH	IIb'3
34	G	IA	Ia21