

ONONDAGA IROQUOIS PREHISTORY

A Study in Settlement Archaeology

JAMES A. TUCK



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two acres (Parker 1922:644), situated on a triangular rise of land which slopes sharply toward Limestone Creek on the west and drops away more gradually on the remaining sides. Today the site is covered with a thick meadow which permits almost no surface collecting. The hillside dumps remain, especially on the wooded west bank, but they have been so intensively dug over that nothing save discarded animal bone remains.

Parker (1922:644) mentioned European but no French material from the site, and Beauchamp (1902b) illustrated triangular brass points, an iron awl, and an iron spearpoint from the site. Native materials were also rather abundant at this site, though all that remains are the few sherds described by MacNeish, and these have, by now, probably also disappeared. The sherds consisted of about 70 percent collared vessels with horizontal lines above opposed or oblique lines, about 20 percent lacking these horizontal lines. Also present are small percentages of Ontario horizontal, Lawson incised, Roebuck low collar, Thurston horizontal, and, surprisingly, Chance incised pottery types (MacNeish 1952:58). This sample is somewhat suspect, both because of its small size and because the presence of Chance phase sherds casts some doubt on its identification as belonging to the Pompey Center site. Nevertheless, the sample does serve to indicate that there was still a fair percentage of native goods being used at the time of occupation of this site. Parker (1922:644) mentioned that no "council wampum" was present but that shell beads had been found there.

Dates of occupation have been suggested above (around 1640) based upon material remains described by Beauchamp, Parker, and MacNeish. The geographical position of the Pompey Center site north of earlier sites and in line with a general pattern of south to north village removals agrees with these previous estimates of a mid-seventeenth-century occupation.

THE CARLEY SITE

In a previous description of the Carley site (Tuck n.d.:338) the village was described as being located "on a long loaf of land" some distance from the cemetery which apparently pertains to this component. Since that writing the site location has been discussed with Robert Hill, and the collection which he made there some years ago has been studied. Hill reports that the village site is located not on the hill where it was previously thought to have been but in a fairly level field at the junction

of Brown's Gulf Road and Hennaberry Road. This puts the town at precisely the same spot as the graves mentioned by Parker (1922:642), and Hill's investigations disclosed that the burials seemed to be located immediately outside what must have been the village limits. The village itself Hill reports, covers a considerable expanse of ground, but the precise area is incalculable as the site is cut by the two roads mentioned above. The village area is marked by soil that is not very heavily stained, suggesting but a brief occupation. Within this stained soil numerous trade beads were found, including blue melon beads with black and white stripes, many thin tubular beads, and several chert arrow-points.

From the burials, most of which were dug over years before Hill's excavations took place, were recovered a number of artifacts typical of the protohistoric Onondaga. These include primarily trade beads which were apparently overlooked by earlier collectors. The varieties recovered consist of a few star beads, melon beads of two-color combinations—blue with black and white stripes and red with white, blue, and white stripes—many red and white tubular beads, faceted yellow beads and a similar form colored green, and seed beads in great profusion, both green and white with blue and red stripes. Other material recovered from the burials includes tubular beads made from the columella of a whelk or conch shell, a probable beaver effigy in marine shell, conical and triangular brass arrowpoints, several pieces of lead shot which appear to be between .50 and .60 caliber, and four complete smoking pipes, all of native manufacture, of the following varieties: two rimless trumpet pipes, one square-bowl trumpet pipe, and an animal-effigy pipe, somewhat damaged, which makes identification of the species depicted uncertain. ✓

Chronology is not precisely indicated by the material remains but they do serve to indicate an occupation in the mid-seventeenth century—a conclusion which is supported by the location of the site in a general south to north series of village removals. For the precise community affiliations and chronology of the Carley site, see pp. 203, 217.

THE INDIAN HILL SITE

This site is generally regarded as the first Onondaga site to be visited by Europeans, with the possible exception of Champlain's raid on some ethereal Onondaga or Oneida village in 1615. The best description of the site is provided by Wentworth Greenhalgh, who visited two Onondaga

fied canines of both bear and other smaller carnivores are also present.

Shell beads and pendants were apparently very popular at this time. Shell was worked extensively, doubtless with the aid of European tools, into a variety of forms including white and purple wampum, small, two-holed crescents, and imitation claws or canine teeth—all forms characteristic of the Dann and Marsh sites, Seneca villages of the 1650–75 period (Wray and Schoff 1953:58).

Items of European manufacture comprise the bulk of the material recovered from the Indian Hill site. Except for objects which might indicate the time and duration of occupation of the site, they will be described only briefly.

No brass kettles from this site are in the Syracuse University collection, but they are in evidence in the form of pieces of flattened brass cut from them and are further suggested by the presence of numerous small brass patches, drilled for riveting, which are very often found on intact brass kettles recovered from Iroquois graves.

Many bowl and stem fragments of white kaolin pipes have been picked up at the Indian Hill site, several of which have a small bowl, somewhat constricted near the mouth, which is typical of the mid-seventeenth century. The only identifiable marks are of the “EB” variety which, while not especially diagnostic, are mentioned by Wray and Schoff (1953:58) as being common on the Dann and Marsh sites. Two examples are illustrated on Plate 40, Nos. 2 and 3.

Twelve triangular brass points, copies of these formerly made of stone (see Plate 40, nos. 6 and 7), and a single conical point of the same material (Plate 40 no. 4) comprise the projectile point sample from Indian Hill. This site seems to represent the last use of stone points in central New York as none to my knowledge were found in the graves excavated at the next-occupied Jamesville Pen or Weston sites.

Cutting and perforating tools are common on most historic Iroquois sites, and the Indian Hill site is no exception. Knives include seven specimens, five of which are too fragmentary to identify. The two remaining specimens are good examples of a “sheepsfoot” knife and a short crooked knife (Plate 40, no. 10). Four awls are in the Syracuse University collection from this site, two of which (one round and one square) are of brass and two of iron. Both iron specimens are square in cross section, and one has a tang which is offset at the middle (Plate 40, no. 8). A large, square, flat-headed nail may also have served as a perforating tool. Finally, the remains of a small pair of iron scissors were also found at the Indian Hill site.

One interesting spatulate weaving tool fragment was found here, a copy in brass of earlier bone forms known from the Barnes site, the Kelso site, and many other prehistoric Iroquois sites. This tool is flat in cross section and sharply pointed at one end with the other end broken but bearing evidence of a perforation (Plate 40, no. 9).

That the Iroquois or someone living at the Indian Hill site were familiar with firearms is indicated by the numerous unused lead balls ranging in diameter from 1.0 cm. to 1.6 cm., a small ball of about #0 buck-shot size, the brass ferrule from the forearm of a musket, and a possible decorative sideplate (opposite the lock) from an early pistol.

Two barbed iron fishhooks, one complete, were also found at Indian Hill. The intact specimen has the top of the shaft flattened, rather than eyed, for attaching the line.

Tubular rolled brass beads and conical bangles are in fair abundance from this site. Both forms, however, are quite common throughout much of the historic period and are not especially diagnostic of any short time span.

Glass beads from the Indian Hill site are very numerous, and those in the Syracuse University collection are typical of the mid- to late-seventeenth century. Most common are tubular varieties, in red or occasionally blue or black, and round red beads about the size of a pea. These round red beads are the most common variety from this site in Hill's collection. Less common are older polychrome forms and occasional variations in color of more recent forms. These forms are all common on mid- and late-seventeenth-century Seneca sites (Wray and Schoff 1953).

Jesuit influence on the "material culture" of these people is not as strongly represented in this small sample as might be expected, but there is a small ring showing what seems to be a man kneeling before a crucifix, and a medal with a male holding a child on one side and the bust of another male on the reverse. Unfortunately, the legends on both sides are indecipherable.

Other trade goods from this site include a small brass hinge, ornately wrought, a small brass object which resembles some sort of seal, a large iron key, and an iron ring of unknown function about 2.5 cm. in diameter.

Gordon DeAngelo has called my attention to the following items which indicate something about the date of occupation of the Indian Hill site, all from Beauchamp's (1902b) *Metallic Ornaments of the New York Indians*: a 1656 French laird, once perforated; another 1656

French laird, twice perforated; and a 1640 French coin, which DeAngelo identified as a double tournois, and which Beauchamp inferred also came from Indian Hill.

Chronology

All material remains and the position of the Indian Hill site in the south to north movement of Onondaga villages during the late seventeenth century point to an occupation during the latter half of that century. Clearly the site was abandoned in 1682 in favor of the Pen site village somewhat northwest of Indian Hill. Father Lamberville has left us with a description of this process (*JR* 62:55-57). Lamberville also mentioned that this village was occupied for nineteen years before this resettlement, a statement which is not in accordance with the generally accepted concept that Indian Hill was the scene of the first French visit to Onondaga, since LeMoyne's visit took place in the mid-1650s or about eight years before Indian Hill was occupied. It seems likely, therefore, that one of the villages immediately preceding in time that at Indian Hill was in fact the scene of these historical events.

THE INDIAN CASTLE SITE

This small site occupies the edge of a steep ravine on the opposite side of Limestone Creek from the Indian Hill site and about one mile south of it. Greenhalgh's reference to the site, "a small village . . . consisting of about 24 houses," was quoted at length at the beginning of the description of the Indian Hill site.

Settlement Data

Both the scatter of refuse over the field today and Greenhalgh's description agree in indicating a small site. To the east the ravine provides an excellent measure of defense, while the western part of the site must have been palisaded to provide any protection, though no evidence, historical or archaeological, suggests the presence of any such structure.

The twenty-four houses referred to by Greenhalgh suggest that small bark-covered cabins had replaced the longhouse at this site as well as Indian Hill.

Burials

Several burials were excavated in the 1950s by Robert Hill of Rochester, New York, who kindly allowed me to study the material recovered

at that time and supplied the data presented below. The graves were located immediately outside what must have been the limits of the village on a low rise, a practice in keeping with that described for the Carley and Indian Hill sites. Although most of the graves Hill excavated had been anciently looted (one as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, as indicated by the presence of an 1824 U.S. large cent in the refilled grave), many objects of significance were recovered. The burials were apparently extended as indicated by the dimensions of the grave fossae and were equipped with the material described below.

Artifacts

Joshua Clark (1849) described beads, gun barrels, bullets, knives, a brass kettle, and other "trinkets" found at this site, in addition to such atypical and presumably misrepresented material as axes, gouges, arrowheads, pestles, and hatchets of stone—all of which may either be misidentified as to source or, less likely, may represent an earlier occupation at Indian Castle. Fortunately, Hill's excavations, described briefly above, produced the material described here, all of which refers to an occupation in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Glass beads, in order of descending frequency, include tubular red, tubular blue, tubular black and white, tubular black, tubular twisted red, tubular twisted blue, round red with a clear center, round blue, and tubular white. Several shell crescents with two perforations, the head of a duck or swan in shell, several sizes of wampum with large and small perforations, both white and purple; a large rectangular strip of marine shell; many *marginitella* shell beads; and a beautiful owl-effigy pipe with inset brass eyes, one of which is now missing, complete the inventory of artifacts gleaned by Hill from the dug-over graves. ✓

Chronology

Historical data, location, and most material remains combine to indicate an occupation coeval with that at Indian Hill. One bit of contradictory evidence was mentioned by Clark, however, in the presence of a medal of William, Prince of Orange, which he dated at 1689, but which has long since disappeared. One other interesting note concerning the chronology of this site was also provided by Clark. In 1815 a tree cut from the village area was found to have a large chain embedded near its heart which was covered by 178 annual rings. This is taken to indicate an occupation around 1637, and is probably the first use of dendrochronology in New York State.

knives, and a late seventeenth-century flintlock musket all present a picture of a people clearly dependent upon European trade for most of their material possessions.

Artifacts

Trade beads constitute the major category of artifacts recovered from this site, and the excellent cataloging of Doxtator's collection allowed a nearly complete summarization of the varieties present. They are listed on Table 18. Other material retained by Doxtator includes catlinite beads in various forms, tubular shell beads, shell crescents and runtees,

TABLE 18. TRADE BEAD VARIETIES FROM THE WESTON SITE

Variety	Frequency	Percentage
round red, pea-size	624	44
round black, pea-size	520	37
seed beads, blue with a few white, blue, black	130	9
tubular red	107	8
other	41	2
	1,422	100

discoidal shell beads, triangular brass arrowpoints, several Jesuit rings, a gun spall a large kaolin pipe bowl of European manufacture, and fragments of six native-made pipe bowls: a ring bowl, two bird effigies, a bear effigy, and a human-face effigy.

Chronology

All of the material described above suggests a chronological placement in the late seventeenth century, probably coeval with the larger Pen site. Unfortunately, no firm basis for comparison is yet available, and this conclusion is based upon only an impression gained from a brief inspection of a small portion of the Pen site material.

THE POST-1700 ONONDAGA

The location of the eighteenth-century settlements of the Onondaga from the beginning of that century until the reservation period which began in 1795 is somewhat confusing and may never be completely re-