

JAN 12 1962

Archaeology  
of the  
**NEUTRAL  
INDIANS**



Frank Ridley

PY812  
R54

1961

ETOBICOKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Port Credit

Ont. LIBRARY

NATIONAL MUSEUM  
OF CANADA

there.

"I believe that those who formerly ascribed such an extent to this nation, and assigned it so many tribes, understood by the term 'Neutral Nation', all the other nations that are south and southeast of our Huron—which indeed are very numerous and only confusedly known.

"Our Huron call the Neutral nation, 'Attiwandaronk', which is to say, 'People of a slightly different language'. Those of the Neutral nations, reciprocally, for the same reasons, call our Huron Atti-wandaronk. We have reason to believe, that not long ago, they all made but one people, both Huron and Iroquois, and those of the Neutral nation, and that they came of one family, or from a few old stocks which formerly landed on the coasts of these regions.

"Those tribes which are Neutral between the Huron and the Iroquois, have cruel wars with other western nations, and especially with the Atsistachronons, or Fire Nation—from which they took last year a hundred persons: and this year having returned there for war with an army of two thousand men, they again brought away more than a hundred and seventy, toward whom they conduct themselves with the same cruelty as the Huron do to their enemies. However they practise the further cruelty of burning the women prisoners of war as well as the men, which is not done by the Huron, who either give their lives or content themselves with knocking them down in the heat of the moment, and bearing off with some portion of their bodies.<sup>2</sup>

"The food and clothing of this nation does not differ greatly from those of our Huron; they have Indian corn, beans and squashes in equal plenty. The fishing likewise seems equal as regards the abundance of fish. The people of the Neutral nation greatly excel in hunting stage, cows, wild cats, wolves, black beasts, beaver and other animals. They have multitudes of wild Turkeys which go in flocks through the woods and fields.

"No more fruits are found than those of the Huron country, unless it be chesnuts, of which they have plenty.

"They cover the bare flesh with a skin, like all savages; but with less modesty than the Huron as to breech cloth, which many do not use at all: others use it but generally in such a way that with great difficulty is that concealed which should not be seen. The women are however, ordinarily covered, at least from the waist as far as the knees; they seem more dissolute and shameless in their licentious acts than are our Huron.

2. Barbarity is recorded quite late in the ancient land of the Neutral. At Ancaster in 1814, fifteen persons were sentenced by His Honor Chief Justice Scott, as follows for acting in favor of the republican government of the United States:

"That you, [named individually] be taken to the place from whence you came, and from thence, you are to be drawn on hurdles to the place of execution, where you are to be hanged by the neck, but not until you are dead, for you must be cut down, while you are alive, and your entrails taken out and burned before your faces. Your heads then to be cut off, and your bodies divided into four quarters, and your heads and quarters to be at the kings disposal. And may God have mercy on your soul" (Talman, 1946).

This sentence was consummated on the heights of Burlington.

## THE STEELE BURIALS AND OSSUARIES OF THE WALKER SITE

An abridgement of an illustrated manuscript by Mr. and Mrs. John Steele as a report on their investigations

Our discovery of a human tooth at a ground hog hole on the Walker site led us to test the spot for a possible excavation. The removal of a few spades of earth showed conclusively that we were upon an extensive ossuary. Further digging soon indicated previous disturbance, but nevertheless we continued work, thinking that careful search and sifting might reveal a part previously missed. We uncovered patches of the original floor plus beads and triangular points.

Working outwards we found this pit had been lined with both beaver and bear skins, with a strong scaffolding inside. This, it seemed, had collapsed forward before filling in the pit. Enough of this material was found around the bottom of the pit to show this rather conclusively; the end of the timber rested in the extreme corner, with the other end broken and slanting upward and inward. Remains and traces of fur adhered to the outer surface of the timbers. The wood appeared to be of cedar, with the bark removed and an attempt at squaring or trimming. Under one of these sections, embedded in sandy muck that was the ossuary floor, we found an ivory colored owl effigy pipe [Pl. 5, c], and similarly under another timber section we recovered minute blue embroidery beads. In the northwest corner we found a metal rattle composed of two concave disks joined at the edges, with some object inside to produce the rattle. In the center of the pit was a flared pottery pipe overlooked by the first excavators.

In addition to the above, many beads were recovered, ranging from small copper beads on the original twisted strands, trade beads of bluish-green spun glass in square and round sections, catlinite in various shapes and sizes, including two of truncated pyramid form. Two beads of runtee type, and many specimens of ordinary wampum. This ossuary was originally about twelve feet square and five feet deep in the center, the floor rising to the edges. Skeletal remains were closely interwoven throughout the ossuary, making impossible any estimate of the number of individuals of the original burial.

On excavating this ossuary we came upon a crusty or ashy material in one corner, into which we cut down ten inches to the plane of the ossuary floor. The profile section of this gray material was a low cone shape, as if it had been poured into a hole in a liquid condition. Upon striking the sliced-off portion that extended into the dug ossuary, it gave a hollow or drum sound.

We now found that we were upon a second separate ossuary; after penetrating this ashy material to a depth of fifteen inches below the floor of our first ossuary, we came upon three skulls placed in a triangular pattern. A small brass kettle lay upside down in a central position between the skulls. This kettle had evidently been filled with food and covered with skin, part of which still adhered to the side of the kettle. On the kettle, below the rim, were two parallel lines of decoration in a phosphor-

ence blue, which quickly faded to dark lines after a few days exposure to the air. The food placed inside the kettle had been wrapped in grass. Under the kettle were two effigy pipes [Pl. 5, a, j] of a soft, ivory-colored stone similar to many found in the vicinity of the head of Lake Ontario. Another pipe of similar material, with a miniature effigy [Pl. 5, b], was recovered from earth that unfortunately caved in at this time. Under these artifacts were vertebrae and ribs, and on one side closely packed arm and thigh bones. Another complete skull and fragments of others were interspersed throughout the region of vertebrae and ribs.

In this group burial were 134 white cylindrical trade beads, a large bone tube, eight triangular arrow heads, some soiled copper wire of finger ring size, and 25 long cylindrical trade beads.

The width of this burial at the ends was 20 inches, widened to 24 inches in the middle. The floor of the burial was 7 feet from the surface, and the deposit of bones some 12 inches deep. Thigh bones gave a count of 11 adults and 4 children in this burial.

From this pair of excavated burial pits we worked to the west, where at five feet from the surface a skull was found. Widening from this find we discovered thigh and arm bones on the same level. Distributed in the sand in the area of this burial were many articles. These are: fragments of two different clay pots, part of a brass kettle, a large handled knife, a medium size iron knife, and an iron wedge and awl. At two places in this apparently single burial were found iron axes, each on a skin, and each having a number of bone tubes neatly piled upon it. One group of tubes numbered 48, the other 33. The tubes were engraved with various designs. Two designs expanded to a flat pattern are illustrated at the top of Plate 6. Enough fragments of turtle shell rattles were found to permit two reconstructions [Pl. 5, r, s]. Whole and fragmentary bone combs, plus the odd comb effigy, were obtained, plus two bone spoons, all associated with the burial.

Only part of a brass kettle, mentioned above, occurred in this single burial. This enigma was resolved when the wall fell in, revealing the profile of another ossuary farther in the westerly direction we were working; the construction of this ossuary, a later one, may have cut off part of the brass kettle.

This next ossuary, the fourth on our program, showed signs of disturbance very early. It is our opinion that the original Indian constructors of this third unit burial were responsible for slicing off a section of the brass kettle in unit two. Later excavators would assuredly have pursued such a discovery, and not been content to leave the other half of the kettle. We did find certain parts of the ossuary floor undisturbed, and in one of these places were seven triangular points in a group. The following are some of the most interesting artifacts recovered by sifting through this dug out ossuary: large runtee type bead, bone comb, shell gorget, metal ring, and broken parts of a clay pipe. In addition there were many flat shell wampum, six twisted conch shell beads and twelve small copper beads.

# Daniels Site Ossuary - Ancaster Twp.

The material was divided between the Butters and Cleland collections: two brass vessels; many red, white and blue cylindrical glass beads; three clay pots (a Neutral Shoulder Bowl, a Neutral Incised and a Neutral Plain: Pl. 7, d, a, b); two vasiform pipes (Pl. 7, e, f); one large two-hole gorget of conch shell (Pl. 7, c); a complete conch shell, rectanguloid red catlinite beads; disk beads of shell; one acorn pipe; one ringed stem trumpet pipe; an effigy pipe; and some bone tubes.

*David Butter Site:* Lot 33, Concession 5, Ancaster Township.

A site of about three acres in area, situated on the lower reaches of the creek that served the Daniels site. Two miles separates the sites. J. B. Morton conducted me to the site.

The site area is a ridge of fine silty clay, bordered on three sides by a loop of the stream and a wet-ground depression. The soil is of a consistency that would be greasy in wet weather. On my one visit, the site was in turf, and seemed to have been so for a long time. Where the irregular surface was broken, dark soil containing charcoal and bone fragments could be seen. The place does not have the appearance of heavy occupation as do the other sites of this study. -

The picture of occupation is confused: overlapping this site, and distributed on the far side of the low ground, are prehistoric deposits of the Lalonde-Middleport pattern. European trade material is well represented in collections, and the non-pottery items of the Cleland collection parallel the trait characteristics of Neutral Sites. No rimsherds from this site were available to me.

*Fonger Site:* Brantford Township.

Described in the *Annual Archaeological Report of 1902* as being on Lot 50, Concession 2, this description errs as lots in Brantford township are not numbered this high. It is described as occupying four to five acres on the banks of a small creek that empties into Fairchilds creek. The intersection of Concession 2 and this creek would place the site about five miles northwest of the Sealey site, or two miles northeast of the city of Brantford. E. Sackrider has collected from the site, and though he did not know the lot number, he indicated this was the general position.

It is reported that the site was found in 1880 or earlier, and that a large quantity of relics were recovered, but were scattered among numerous collectors. It has been suggested that the large amount of abandoned material found here was due to raids of the Iroquois (Waugh, 1902).

Sackrider showed me a small quantity of pottery from the Fonger site, which parallels pottery from other sites of this study. He states that ample evidence of European trade is to be found. Burials are not reported.

Plate 8. Artifacts from Burke single burial and ossuary. a, clay vessel of Neutral Trianguloid type, 25 cm. high; b, clay vessel of Neutral Incised type, 20 cm. high. These vessels found in single extended burial. c, clay vessel of Genoa Frilled type (Seneca), 20 cm. high; d, clay vessel of Neutral Shoulder Bowl type, 12 cm. high by 20 cm. width; e, f, h, clay Acorn Cup pipes; g, Square Castellated clay pipe with fluted incised stem; i, flattened type of stone Vasiform pipe; j, two hole conch shell gorget, approx. 12 cm. long. All items in Morton-Cleland collection.

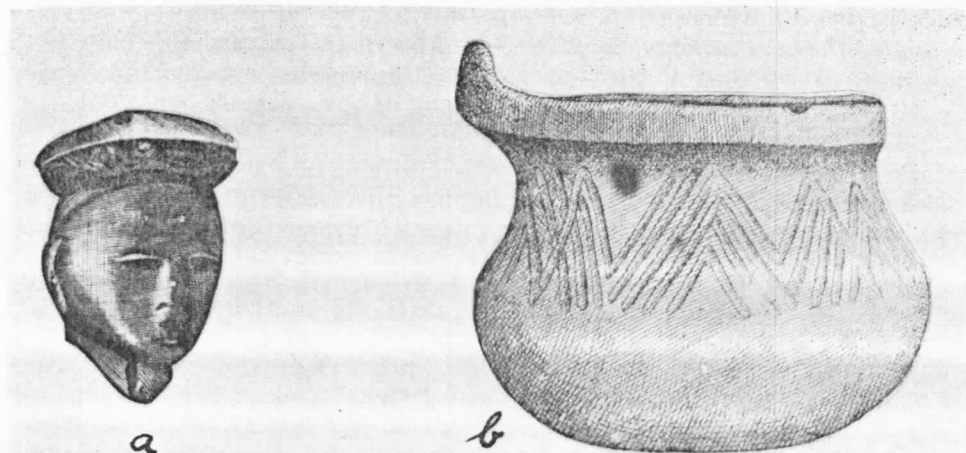


Plate 10. Artifacts from upper section of Dwyer ossuary, recovered in 1885. a, effigy from rim of stone pipe; b, clay vessel of neck decorated motif, 6 cm. high. Illustrations reproduced from annual reports of the Canadian Institute for 1886-87, and 1887-88.

perfect [Pl. 10, b], four clay pipes and three broken clay pipes, three tally, or record bones, six bones from two inches to four inches long, worn as ornaments, twenty-five beads about two inches long made from the central portion of sea shells, seventy-nine smaller beads, thirty red stone and glass beads, several hundred specimens of wampum, some pieces of hammered copper, a number of horn and bone utensils and a quantity of broken pottery, etc. The presence of glass beads and hammered copper indicates contact with the white settlers, and the skull ornaments seem to make it clear that the communication was kept up with tribes even as far south as the Gulf of Mexico. The prospects are excellent for the formation of a first class collection of aboriginal relics."

Early numbers of the *Ontario Annual Archaeological Reports* refer to ossuaries in this township, and to objects donated to the Provincial Museum by James Dwyer of Beverley Township. In the *Report of 1886-87*, page 21, is an illustration of a clay vessel with the following caption: "It was found in an ossuary on the farm of James Dwyer, Beverley, a former habitat of the Neutral. From the same place we have been able at various times, by generosity of the proprietor, to add many fine specimens to our collection (Pl. 10, b)". In the same report are illustrations of a pierced antler, large bone tubes, a human skull gorget pierced with seven drilled holes and a complete turtle carapace rattle, all listed from the Dwyer farm.

The *Report for 1887-88*, page 46, illustrates a beautifully carved stone pipe effigy from the Dwyer farm. The *Report of 1888-89*, page 48, lists quantities of glass beads, some of red, some of other color groupings suggesting ossuary origin. In this list are numerous items from Dwyer, many fragmentary, as if from a midden source.