

The Ontario Archaeological Society



ARCH NOTES edited by Nancy Powell

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MAY MEETING

DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 1965

TIME: 8:00 p.m.

PLACE: Room 251, Education Centre,
155 College Street, Toronto 2B

SPEAKER: Mrs. Ethel Brant Monture

I know that many of us were very disappointed to miss the opportunity to hear Mrs. Monture speak to us in March due to the impossible weather conditions. So we are delighted that she is able to come to us this month and tell us about some of her ideas on the place of the Indian in our history.

Recently Mrs. Monture gave a talk to the Ontario Education Association in which she blamed historians for the distorted view that most people have of the Indian. Francis Parkman was particularly guilty of this as he based his descriptions of the Indians on the Jesuit reports. The Jesuit fathers would speak of Iroquois treachery, cruelty and blood lust largely because these people resisted any attempts to evangelize them.

There are many areas in which Mrs. Monture feels that there is a bias of misunderstanding and intolerance of the Indian. We can look forward to a lively and constructive evening of discussion with this outstanding speaker.

THE APRIL MEETING

Last month our speaker, Mr. Ken Dawson of Port Arthur, gave us an excellent discussion of the archaeological activities in North Western Ontario. He described the work which has been done in this area on various sites from recent Acqua Plano Paleo Indian finds through to Boreal Archaic, Middle Woodland, Late Woodland, Laurel and Blackduck manifestations. Historical projects were also reported on including underwater activities on the old fur trade routes.

Later this year Mr. Dawson is to head a sub Arctic research project which will involve the co-ordination of various scientists in the fields of geology, palaeontology, zoology, ecology and archaeology. I am sure that under his most capable leadership discoveries and reports of great significance will be made. We wish him well in his future endeavours and we are very grateful to have had this opportunity to hear of his excellent work at first hand.

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY

When the European and American delegates descended upon Toronto on Easter weekend to attend the Underwater Archaeology Conference they were amazed to find no signs of spring gracing our fair city. You can imagine their horror and dismay on Easter Saturday when we were visited by one of the worst snow storms of the year. However, everyone soon forgot about the weather in the interest and excitement generated by the talks and discussions about this great new development in archaeological exploration.

There were too many excellent speakers to list them all here but outstanding among them were Dr. George Bass and his account of his work in the Aegean and Nicolas Flemming of Cambridge University who spoke about submarine cities and caves in the Mediterranean.

The papers will be published some time in the near future so that we can look forward to reviewing the results of this stimulating conference. It was good to see so many of our own members in attendance.

THE NEED FOR A REVISED CLASSIFICATION OF IROQUOIS POTTERY TYPES by Bill Donaldson

In 1952, R.S. MacNeish produced the first serious attempt to establish a comprehensive method of chronologically dating Iroquois sites. This pioneer effort, "Iroquois Pottery Types", was sorely needed and, despite its shortcomings (Carpenter, 1953; Pratt, 1960), it did provide a common yardstick for others to use in determining the nature of their sites.

Unfortunately, MacNeish seems to have retired from this field without having revised his original work, and except for a slight modification by J.N. Emerson (1956) no one else has tackled the job.

Pioneer works are meant to be built upon and this writer thinks it is time for someone to seriously consider such an effort.

We would suggest that any such revision or re-classification be expanded to include the proto-Iroquoian Glen Meyer and Owascoid material, and follow the lead of Marian E. White (1958) in using pottery vessels as the basic unit of comparison when determining the coefficients of similarity with other sites, rather than relying on rimsherds. We have found from experience that unless the sample is much larger than the minimum set used by MacNeish, reliance upon rimsherd counts can be misleading. For example: 74 of the 304 rimsherds in the Elliot site sample were typical Ontario horizontal types - a discrepancy of over 5%.

One matter that needs careful consideration is the criteria for such proposed pottery types. The overlapping requirements encountered in MacNeish's classification create an area of doubt for all who attempt to follow his classification.

A related problem in classification is the temporal shift in emphasis encountered in certain types. Such evolutionary drift is natural in hand crafted wares, but it needs clarification. For example, at what point in development is an Ontario Horizontal type considered to be within the Middleport Oblique classification? At what point is it considered to be Warminster Horizontal? Can a Sidey Notched type rim on a squatty globular vessel with a short, noticeably constricted neck, be equated with a Sidey Notched type rim on a vessel having an egg-shaped body and long, slightly constricted neck, when determining coefficient of similarity?

As an aside, we might mention here that some site reports give the impression that their authors have not encountered the problems mentioned here, for they have relegated their descriptions of the recovered pottery to neat classification tables, without explanatory text or illustrations. This may be due to superior knowledge of the subject, but this writer has found from experience that experts in this field do not always provide the same answer when shown the same rimsherd. We have therefore produced profusely illustrated and highly descriptive site reports to enable the reader to re-classify any of the material he wishes to suit his own concepts. We admit that this is somewhat cumbersome but, until there is universal agreement on the subject, we feel it is the only type of site report that can be relied upon for accurate comparisons.

It goes without saying, that to be universally accepted, any attempt to revise or re-classify pottery types in Ontario would have to be made by one or more of the professionals, or amateurs of professional calibre. The deficiencies of MacNeish's original work would have to be corrected, the problems mentioned here would have to be resolved, and the considerable body of information that has been accumulated in the intervening years would have to be incorporated. In addition, no such work should ignore the interlocking clay pipe series. If not included in the same work, it should at least be produced as a companion piece.

Obviously, any attempt at revision or re-classification of the Iroquoian pottery series will be no easy task. The gratitude of the archaeological student will, however, assuredly match it in proportion.

LITERATURE CITED

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Pennsylvania Archaeologist, Vol. 23, No. 2.

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am looking forward to a very good attendance at our May meeting because it is one of particular importance. It is, for example, the last time we gather before the summer break; it is the time we discuss plans for our fall meetings; this is the meeting when announcements are made on our spring dig.

Editor Nancy Powell had anticipated giving full details in this issue of Arch Notes regarding our dig. This proved to be impossible for a number of reasons. But on the 19th we can look forward to some special announcement by Dr. Dailey who has been searching our several sites over recent weeks. He will be giving more specific information on the site and date of the dig.

As this year's president I can say on behalf of your executive that we have been most encouraged at the attendance and interest at meetings. It is this kind of active participation that will build the Ontario Archaeological Society to the level of importance it deserves. Thank you all very much for your interest and enthusiasm and my best wishes for a good and interesting summer.

W.E. Granger

A FINAL MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Regretfully this editor bids you all adieu. Due to other commitments I feel that I can no longer carry on in my post as editor. May I wish you all good luck in your future endeavours.

Nancy Powell