

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE ROUGE¹

by

William S. Donaldson

The Rouge River, named by the French for the colour of its clay alluvium, is one of a series of streams that drain the gently rolling countryside north of Toronto, Ontario. From its sources in the high land north of Richmond Hill, it cuts its way south-easterly through York County to empty its waters into Lake Ontario just west of Frenchman's Bay.

Though long recognized by local collectors as an archaeologically rich area, no organized investigation was carried out until 1956, when The Ontario Archaeological Society began a systematic survey of the Rouge Watershed to determine the extent and nature of this prehistoric occupation.²

By the end of the first year's survey, which was partially financed by the R.D.H.P. Conservation Authority, it was evident that urban expansion was destroying many valuable sites. Since then, most of our work has been concentrated in those areas immediately threatened. Where permitted, surface samples have been taken and local collections photographed. These indicate that most cultural levels from late Archaic to Historic are represented.

To date, twenty-two sites have been located and five of these excavated: the Elliott site, just east of Agincourt; the Robb site, three miles to the north, near Armadale; the Fairty ossuary, only a few hundred yards east of the Robb; the Milroy site, south-east of Cedar Grove, and the Draper site, seven miles to the north-east, near Atha Road Station.

Although the analysis of the recovered material has not yet been completed, sufficient study has been carried out to fit these sites fairly accurately into the archaeological picture.³

1. This report is a slightly modified version of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Eastern States Archaeological Federation at Toronto in October, 1960.
2. This survey actually includes all areas administered by the Rouge, Duffin's, Highland and Petticoat Conservation Authority.
3. The figures presented here for the Elliott and Robb site material cover only that portion of the sample analysed by the author at the time this report was written. A comprehensive report is now in rough draft and will soon be submitted for publication.

The Elliott site is located on the western slope of a rolling clay loam hill which is bordered on the east and west by small feeder streams of the Highland Creek. Six hundred square feet were excavated in a small wooded area half way up this slope. The only features encountered during excavation were a few small, dish-shaped fire pits and ash lenses. All cultural material was recovered from a charcoal-flecked layer of dark sandy loam which averaged six inches in depth.

The lithic inventory contained nothing of diagnostic value, consisting mostly of mottled grey chert chips and cores, some of which had been re-touched for use as scrapers, and a small bowl fragment from a steatite pipe.

The worked bone series includes a carved and polished awl or hairpin, a netting tool, seven awls, a modified beaver incisor, two large bird bone tubes and a polished section of mammal rib. Two deer phalanges had been gouged out at the proximal end and drilled through the distal extremity, possibly for use as jinglers or cup-and-pin units.

A complete miniature specimen and bowl fragments from 14 clay pipes were recovered. The miniature and one of the larger bowl fragments bear a crude zone-incised decoration, but two others have this decoration carefully executed. One bowl is encircled just below the lip with a band of four finely incised lines and a basal row of elongated punctates. On two there are three rows of punctates below the rim, one of which has an additional two rows hanging festoon-like around the bowl. One pipe has a series of horizontal and vertical punctates which divide the bowl into rectangular areas, some of which are filled with parallel incised lines. The remaining seven bowls are undecorated and relatively small in size.

Seven of the 15 stem fragments are sufficiently complete to be of diagnostic value. All are relatively short and noticeably flattened on top, one being nearly triangular in cross section. One pipe had a small projection at the base of the bowl.

Though no evidence of coil construction has been encountered yet during analysis of the pottery,⁴ it was noticed that a few of the rims had been built up by the addition of fillets. Restoration indicates that most of the rims carry two bluntly pointed castellations, the only type present on this site.

Rough sorting shows that Iroquoian Linear is the major pottery type recovered, with 22 vessels tentatively listed under this

4. The works of MacNeish, 1952, and Ridley, 1958, were used as references in classifying the pottery mentioned in this report.

classification. Next in frequency is Ontario Horizontal and Ontario Oblique with 9 each. Represented by 7 vessels is an unclassified type which duplicates Middleport Oblique in all respects except that paddle-edge impressions replace the oblique incising below the lip and a stab-and-drag technique is used in place of the horizontal incising on the lower rim and neck. Middleport Oblique is represented by four vessels and three variants which substitute an inclined dentate stamping for the oblique incising. Two vessels, closely related to Ontario Oblique, combine impressions from the sutured edge of a turtle plastron with dentate stamping. The neck areas of these vessels are decorated with widely spaced, oblique rows of paired punctates. Other types present are: 4 of Ridley's untyped Boys' site dentate, two of which have interior punctates that do not raise external bosses; 3 collarless vessels having a double row of thumbnail impressions below the lip; an undecorated, incipiently collared vessel; a castellated vessel having two rows of vertical stamping on the collar separated by a linear cord impression, which also appears on the lip and in horizontal rows below the collar; a castellated vessel that has opposed triangular areas on the collar filled with parallel push-and-pull incising and is decorated on the lip with a row of oblique punctates; a notched lip vessel having a row of oblique dentate on the rolled rim outlined by paired rows of linear punctates and, beneath this, a herringbone pattern of oblique dentate. Quite a number of small seed or toy pots were recovered. Most of these were crudely made and undecorated.

Fish bone formed the bulk of the food remains but a variety of mammal bone and half a dozen kernels of charred corn were recovered.

The Robb site, located on a more or less flat stretch of clay loam soil, is bordered on the north by a shallow, meandering tributary of the Rouge and extends southward through a wooded area into tilled fields, in which permission was not granted to excavate. For this reason the exact size of the site is unknown, but judging from the ash patches and distribution of artifacts in the ploughed fields, covers approximately 3 acres.

Two thousand square feet were excavated in the wooded area and bank of the stream. Several shallow firepits were discovered and a line of postmoulds traced for 12 feet but no definite pattern emerged. Three large boulders at the base of the stream embankment served as milling stones to grind corn, charred kernels of which were recovered from the dumps along with the predominating fish bone and mammal remains. These dumps in spots measured over two feet in depth but the black loam occupation strata seldom measured over 5 inches.

The worked chert inventory includes: a slender side-notched point, broken at the point of notching; a smaller, cruder, corner-

notched specimen; half a dozen side scrapers; a small graver, and numerous mottled grey flakes and cores, many of them re-touched for use as scrapers.

Two nearly complete stone axes and three chisel-like tools were recovered, as well as 23 fragments of polished stone implements.

The worked bone series includes: 36 awls, 14 tubular beads of bird bone, 7 perforated netting needles, 3 pottery marking tools, a modified beaver incisor, an incised rib pendant, a small, unfinished, rectangular bead, and a deer scapula scraper.

Two complete specimens and bowl fragments of 65 other clay pipes were recovered. Thirty-six of these were undecorated and ranged in form from cylindrical to cone-shaped. One of the complete specimens falls in this group and measures over $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the rim of its cone-shaped bowl.

Seventeen others, of similar shape and size to the first group, have from two to a dozen incised lines ringing the upper portion of the bowl. Fourteen of these have a basal row of punctates. Two in this latter group have an additional row of punctates: one just below the rim and the other at the center of the incised band.

Seven bowls are covered with zone incising and five have punctuation as the sole decoration. One of the latter, a complete specimen, is highly polished and tapers to a blunt point at the base of the bowl.

Two fragmentary effigy forms were recovered. One of these represents a soft-shelled turtle and the other, a frog or lizard.

Eighteen of the pipe stem fragments were complete enough to be of diagnostic value. Most of these were longer than the Elliott series and round in cross section but two were slightly flattened on top and one was decidedly so. Half of the tips had been expanded by pressing the end while the clay was still wet.

At the time of writing, 174 rim sherds from this site had been sorted and classified. These included: 122 Middleport Oblique, 30 Ontario Horizontal, 3 Ontario Oblique, 3 Iroquoian Linear, 3 Niagara Collared, 2 Middleport Criss-cross, and one sherd each of Lawson Incised, Pound Necked, and Barrie Plain. Eight unidentified types included: 3 which substitute a push-pull technique for the incising of Middleport Oblique; two incipiently collared, neck-incised types, and one having several rows of linear dentate below the collarless rim.

The Fairty ossuary, situated on high ground just east of the stream bordering the Robb site, is a bowl-shaped burial pit measuring just under 11 feet in diameter and sunk nearly 6 feet into the hard

clay loam. The skeletal remains are now under study at the University of Toronto but field notes indicate that over 300 individuals were packed into this burial pit, mostly in the form of bundle burials or in some state of disarticulation. Evidence of looting was discovered in the upper levels and may account for the paucity of grave goods. A few potsherds and fish vertebrae, a flint scraper, and a discoidal shell bead complete the inventory.

The Milroy site lies between the Little Rouge and Petticoat Creeks, about 300 yards north of Steele's Avenue. The land here is relatively level pastureland, bordered on the east by a small woodlot.

The bulk of the recovered material is now under study at the University of Toronto, which assisted the O.A.S. in excavating this site. The remainder, a small sample of artifacts, is in the O.A.S. collection.

This sample contains 30 analysable rimsherds, including: 9 Huron Incised, 5 Sidey Notched, 5 Lawson Incised, 3 Lawson Opposed, 3 Seed Incised, 2 Black Necked, 1 Warminster Horizontal, 1 Sidey Crossed, and 1 Onondaga Triangular variant. Six of the sherds were castellated: 2 pointed types, 2 notched, and two unclassified notched variety, formed by merely heightening the rim and drawing a blunt tool across the peak of this elevation.

Smooth, incised, and fabric-impressed body sherds were noted in this sample and shoulder punctation appears to be favoured.

The clay pipe series contains 6 bowl and 16 stem fragments. The bowl specimens include: a crude miniature carrying two incised lines beneath the rim, three ringed-barrel types, one classic trumpet, and one modified trumpet form.

Cord or twisted grass had been used to form the holes in two of the stems. The remainder were formed over reeds or twigs. One stem section, from near the base of the bowl, carries the modelled tail and hindquarters of a lizard.

Just north of Atha Road Station and bordered on the east by a small tributary of the west branch of Duffin's Creek, lies a relatively level area of approximately 7 acres which contains the Draper site. Two thousand five hundred square feet of this was excavated by the Society, mostly in the midden areas, from which several hundred fish and mammal bones, as well as numerous charred corn and corn cobs, beans and plum pits were recovered.

An inspection of the artifact complex reveals the following diagnostic items: small triangular flint points; ringed-barrel, trumpet, and effigy pipes, and flattened deer phalanges. The pottery

series includes: Huron Incised, Sidey Notched, Sidey and Warminster Crossed, Pound and Black Necked, Lawson Incised and Opposed, Onondaga Triangular, and a minor percentage of Lalonde High Collared vessels. A number of the neck decorated vessels have scalloped multiple castellations and body incising is not uncommon. Several hybrid types and elaborately notched rims were noted.

The presence of degenerate Woodland techniques and predominance of Iroquoian Linear and Ontario Oblique pottery types in the Elliott site series places it temporally in the Uren stage of Iroquoian development, while the Robb site pipe complex and linear incised pottery types such as Middleport Oblique and Ontario Horizontal mark it as a component of the Middleport period.

The few artifacts recovered from the Fairty ossuary are insufficient to substantiate a positive statement on its temporal and cultural position. Though less than a mile from the Robb, nothing could be found to tie it to that site, and no such connection with this period has yet been reported. We would therefor tentatively place it later in the Iroquoian series.

The Draper site, with its flattened deer phalanges, trumpet and ringed-barrel pipes, triangular points, eastern Iroquoian influences, and high percentage of Huron-like and neck decorated pottery types, is a late component of the Black Creek-Lalonde stage of Iroquoian development.

Although the sample was very small, the pottery series and ringed-barrel and trumpet pipes from the Milroy site are sufficient to classify it as an occupation close in time to that of the Draper site.

The non-artifactual debris from these sites indicates a gradual shift from a predominately fishing to a mixed farming and hunting economy.

In view of the current theories of Iroquoian development, the meaning of a Uren-like site in the Rouge Watershed is not yet clear. This is the only such site discovered to date in the survey and further research will be required to determine if it represents an isolated intrusion or forms part of a larger complex in this area.

The picture is clearer on the Robb, for several such sites have been located in the vicinity and suggests that by the Middleport stage of Iroquoian development, the Rouge supported a fair population.

The numerous sites of the following Black Creek-Lalonde stage, as typified by the Draper and Milroy sites and, possibly, the Fairty

ossuary, would indicate that this condition remained more or less static until the beginning of the Late Prehistoric period, when the area was apparently abandoned, for no sites of this type have yet been discovered by the Society.

An explanation of this apparent abandonment may lie to the north-east, in Victoria and Ontario Counties, where the author has discovered several sites of this period which seem to carry on the Rouge tradition. A report on this work is now in rough draft and will be submitted for publication in the near future.

Our work to date indicates that the Rouge Watershed was occupied at least as early as the late Archaic period and supported a more or less continuous settlement by Iroquoian groups from early Middleport to the beginning of the Late Prehistoric period.

When added to the work of others in this area, the data at present suggests that the Rouge Watershed was a major center of Iroquoian development and promises to be a fruitful area for further investigation.

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Bibliography

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