

Praying Mantis: A Unique Glen Meyer Village in London

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This paper summarizes discoveries at the Praying Mantis site (AfHi-178), an unusual Early Ontario Iroquoian village in the Byron area of southwest London, Ontario (Figure 1). The site exhibits many unique aspects in terms of location, internal village organization, burial practices and more generally, Iroquoian ceremonial behaviour, including a house extension apparently purposefully created to encompass several ritual features and associated activities. These unique aspects are the focus of this paper.

Background

The Praying Mantis site was discovered in 1993 by the London Museum of Archaeology (now Museum of Ontario Archaeology) during a routine Stage 2 archaeological assessment of lands to be developed as a housing subdivision. Stage 3 assessment was completed later in 1993, and then the site was totally excavated in the fall of 1993 and spring of 1994 (London Museum of Archaeology 1993, 1994). The site clearly falls into the Glen Meyer branch of the Early Ontario Iroquoian stage based on its geographical location in southwestern Ontario (between clusters of Glen Meyer branch sites on the Caradoc Sand Plain to the west and Norfolk Sand Plain to the east-southeast; see Williamson 1990) and conformity to a wide variety of characteristics as initially elucidated by Jim Wright in his definition of "Glen Meyer" (J. V. Wright 1966:101). These characteristics include, for example, the nature of the ceramic assemblage (vessel forms, motifs and techniques) and the presence of crude, poorly-decorated elbow-shaped ceramic pipes, triangular chert projectile points and shale pebble pendants. Characteristic Glen Meyer

branch ceramic types occurring at Praying Mantis include Ontario Oblique, Glen Meyer Oblique, Glen Meyer Linear Stamped, Glen Meyer Necked and Stafford Stamped. Specific traits at Praying Mantis which are consistent with a number of other Glen Meyer sites (as tabulated in Wright 1966:138-144) include a high incidence of collarless ceramic vessels (96.5%), a high incidence of vessels with punctates and bosses, and eclectic mixtures of exterior motifs (plain, simple obliques, opposed obliques, cross-hatched obliques, horizontals and multiple bands combining different motifs) and techniques (linear stamp, dentate stamp, crescent stamp, turtle suture stamp, incised, push-pull) (for details of the site ceramic assemblage see Howie-Langs [1998]).

Wright (1966:101) assigned a time range of 1000 to 1300 A.D. to the contemporaneous Glen Meyer (in southwestern Ontario) and Pickering (in southeastern Ontario) branches of the Early Ontario Iroquois Stage. Since the time of Wright's publication, a large number of radiocarbon dates have not only confirmed that general age range but also extended it back slightly in time, such that "a ca. A.D. 900 inception date appears most reasonable with the present evidence" (Williamson 1990:310).

Due to the presence of specific motifs and techniques on the ceramic vessels, the Praying Mantis site is assigned to the latter portion or terminal end of the Glen Meyer sequence. These specific motifs and techniques include, especially, the incised and push-pull horizontals on the exterior, lip and interior of some vessels. Although those traits are present at Praying Mantis, they occur in minor amounts but nevertheless presage the subsequent Middle Ontario Iroquoian Stage (Uren and Middleport Substages) where such traits

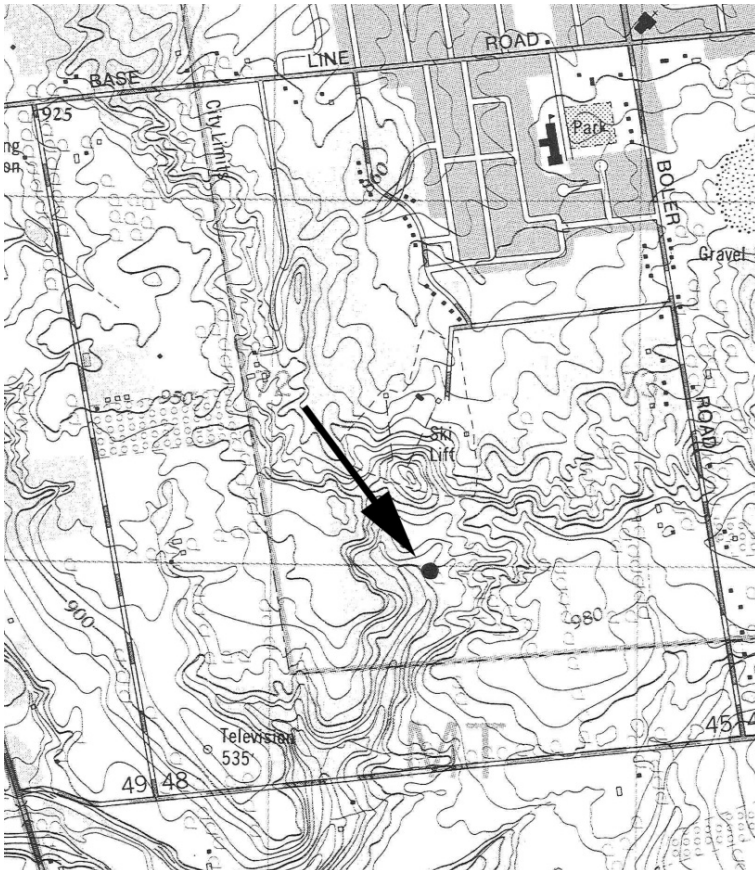


Figure 1. Site location in Byron, Southwest London (based on NTS 1:25,000).

attain very high percentages. Specific instances of such traits at Praying Mantis include just four vessels with an exterior rim motif of push-pull horizontals, a single vessel with an exterior motif of incised horizontals, 18 vessels with horizontals (executed by both incising and push-pull) on the neck, and a single vessel with a push-pull horizontal motif on the interior.

Settlement Pattern

The physical location of the Praying Mantis site in itself is somewhat unusual (Figure 1). It was situated on a small eastward extending lobe of the Caradoc Sand Plain (Chapman and Putnam 1984:146) known as the Byron Annex, which, in southwest London, is wedged in between the Thames River spillway to the north and the Ingersoll Moraine and Dingman Creek drainage

to the south. The site is located in a slight hollow or valley at an elevation of 276 metres (905.5') A.S.L., whereas to the immediate north the terrain rises sharply up the Byron Ski Hill (also known as Boler Mountain), to an elevation of 300.8 metres (987') A.S.L. The ski hill is the highest point of land in London. The area just to the west of Praying Mantis and at the base of Boler Mountain contains the headwaters of a small tributary flowing south into Dingman Creek. Thus, the Praying Mantis site location is surrounded on three sides by much higher land. The overburden soils in this area are a mixture of stony glacial till and sandy loam, but the subsoil under the site was very yellow sand, which contributed greatly to our success in recognizing the dark black post moulds, black features and bright orange hearths.

The Praying Mantis site did not sit in isolation, since there is evidence for another Glen Meyer

component on top of the Byron Ski Hill (AfHi-78) and several Early, Middle and Late Ontario Iroquoian components within a four kilometre radius. In fact, during the same assessment of the 10.2 hectare subdivision that led to the discovery of Praying Mantis, three additional Glen Meyer components, interpreted as activity areas associated with Praying Mantis, were also discovered by the Museum (London Museum of Archaeology 1993); these were registered as the Off the Beaten Path (AfHi-176), Grasshopper Ridge (AfHi-177) and Baby Hawk (AfHi-179) sites. Our selection of site names here was purposeful, to recognize the abundant fauna that characterize the tiny but extremely diverse eco-zone where the sites were located. Ready access to water, easily tillable soils and plentiful floral and faunal resources no doubt contributed to the selection of this location for the Praying Mantis village.

Praying Mantis was a village 0.23 hectare (0.57 acre) in extent, consisting of at least three longhouses surrounded by a palisade. Discontinuous rows of post moulds and a variety of features outside of the three defined longhouses may pos-

sibly indicate that other structures once existed at the site.

The three houses were all oriented in a general west-east direction, but there was some variation in the orientation and placement of these three houses within the village. With reference to the overall village plan (see Figures 2 and 3), the three houses were labelled from south to north as House 1, House 2 and House 3. Houses 1 and 2 were parallel to each other, oriented on a longitudinal axis of almost 55 degrees west of grid north (thus, running slightly northwest to southeast), and stacked closely together (average of 2.5 metres between north wall of House 1 and south wall of House 2) at the south end of the village. In contrast, House 3 was oriented almost true west-east (longitudinal axis 90 degrees west of grid north) and was placed well to the north, at the north end of the village. There was a minimal distance of 12.5 metres and a maximum distance of 16 metres between the north wall of House 2 and the south wall of House 3. The space between Houses 1 and 2 at the south and House 3 at the north contained several individual features and

Praying
Mantis Site
AfHi-178

(Excavated from Sept. 1993
to June 1994)

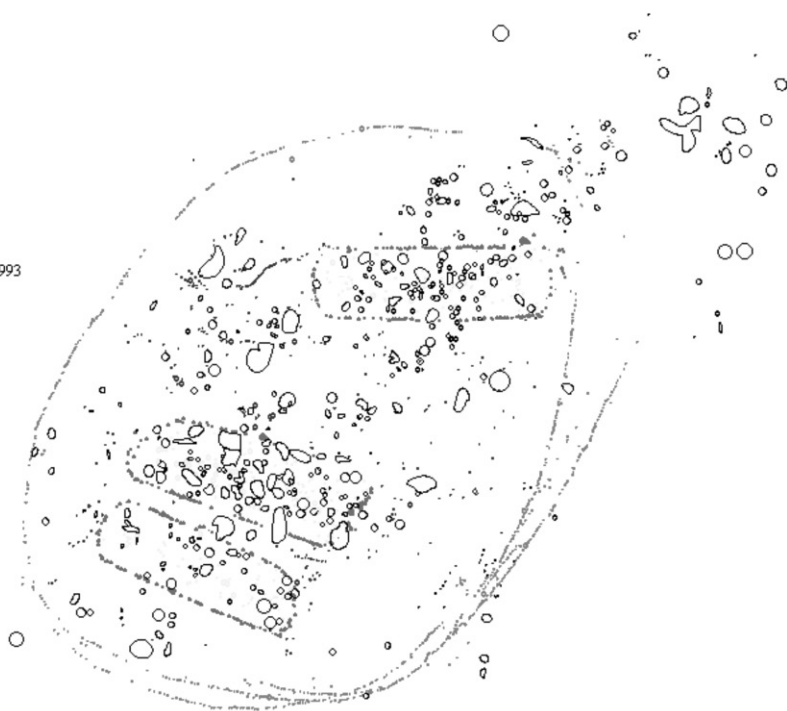
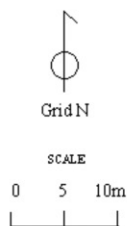


Figure 2. Praying Mantis site plan.

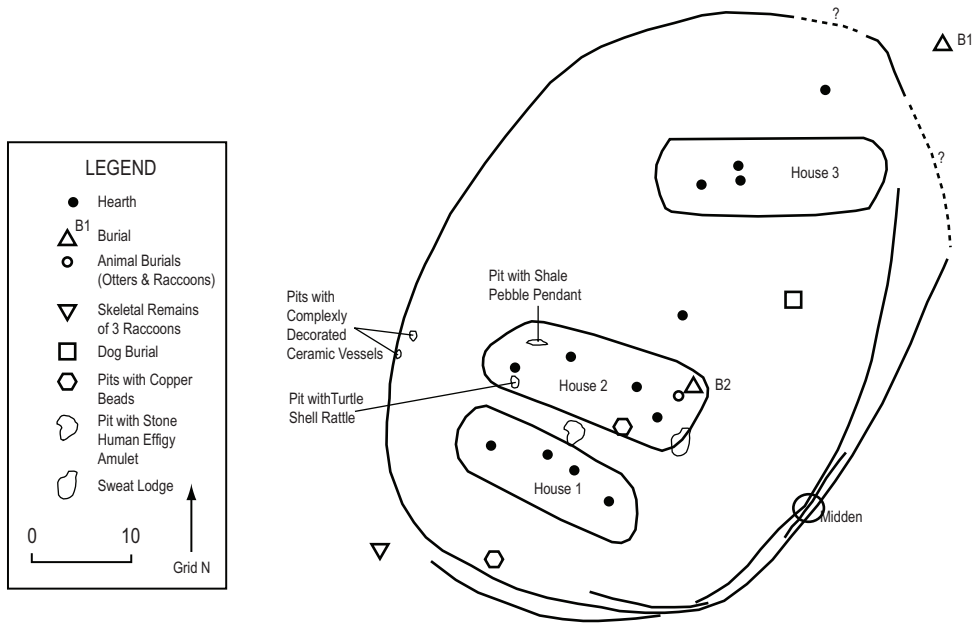


Figure 3. Interpretive map of the Praying Mantis site.

clusters of features to indicate an extensive exterior activity area or series of activity areas. In fact, it was some of these exterior house features that yielded the largest numbers of reconstructable ceramic vessels found at this site.

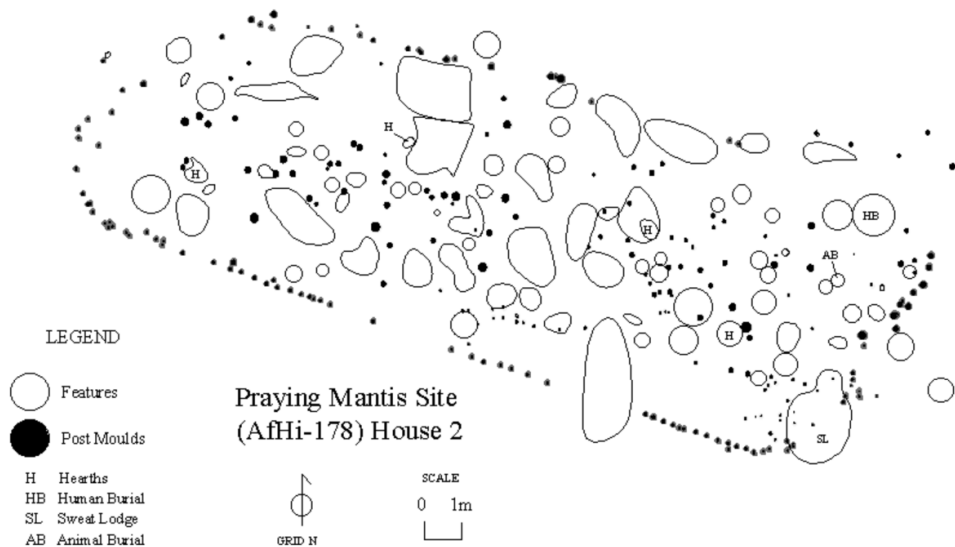
House 1 was 21.0 metres long and 6.5 metres wide. An internal row of post moulds crossing the house at its east end suggests that it was either extended from an original length of 16 metres, or that it was internally partitioned with a storage cubicle at the east end. The house contained a total of 39 interior house features, including four hearths aligned down the centre axis and 12 larger, stratified refuse-filled pits. The features inside the house were definitely clustered into three groups, one at the west end (with one hearth), one in the centre (with two hearths), and the third in the eastern extension or storage cubicle (with one hearth). All four of the hearths were quite substantial in size (see Table 1).

House 2 was a maximum of 23.7 metres long (Figure 4). There was evidence that this house had undergone considerable alteration during its lifespan, which involved widening it from 6.0 metres to perhaps as much as 8.0 metres. The

south side wall of the house was relatively clear and uniform, but a confusing array of post moulds and features including several overlapping or intersecting features along the north side wall made it very difficult to determine its precise final alignment. All of the re-building required the re-alignment of interior support posts to accommodate the widening, and the construction of the eastward extension of the house. This alteration of the house is highly significant since a burial pit with seven individuals, a unique pit with an unusual array of animal bone deposited into it, and a sweat lodge feature (all of which will be discussed below) were all situated in the area of the eastern house expansion (see Figure 4). There were 84 features within this house, including four hearths and 31 larger, stratified, refuse-filled pits. Unlike House 1, these features were randomly scattered throughout the house and included ones in the central corridor and others under the side benches. The four hearths were more or less aligned down the central corridor of the house, and as in House 1 they were quite substantial in size (Table 1). The second hearth from the east end of the house intersected,

Table 1. *Data on hearths.*

Square #	Feature #	Location	Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Depth (cm)	Plan View	Profile
430-615	7	House 1, west end	153	98	68	Ovate	Basin
425-620	14	House 1, centre	56	36	36	Ovate	Basin
425-625	5	House 1, centre	45	45	53	Circular	Conical
425-625	7	House 1, east end	47	25	33	Ovate	Conical
435-615	3	House 2, west end	78	63	10	Ovate	Basin
435-625	1	House 2, centre-west	35	21	13	Ovate	Basin
435-630	7	House 2, centre-east	90	76	23	Ovate	Basin
430-630	5	House 2, east end	103	82	45	Ovate	Basin
450-635	1	House 3, west end	105	60	14	Ovate	Basin
450-640	6	House 3, centre-west	128	80	21	Ovate	Basin
455-640	8	House 3, centre-west	25	25	5	Circular	Basin
440-635	8	North of House 2	92	52	21	Ovate	Irregular
460-650	2	North of House 3	60	42	47	Ovate	Irregular

**Figure 4.** *Detail of House 2 at the Praying Mantis site.*

or was intersected by, a large refuse-filled pit (190 cm long, 139 cm wide and 40 cm deep), with the hearth abutting the southeast corner of the refuse-filled pit. An interesting discovery within this refuse-filled pit was segments of two broken ceramic vessels with “boiling rocks” inside them.

House 3 was 24.0 metres long and 7.1 metres wide. The east end of this house came to within one metre of the palisade along the east edge of the site. The house contained 84 interior features

(the same as House 2), including three hearths and 21 larger, stratified, refuse-filled pits. Like House 2 and unlike House 1, these features were randomly scattered throughout the house and included ones in the central corridor and others under the side benches. The three hearths were aligned down the central axis of the house but were all located in the western half of the house; there was no evidence for any hearths in the eastern half of the structure. In the exact centre of

the west end wall of the house and in direct alignment with the end wall post moulds there was a rectangular area, 70 cm long (north-south) and 54 cm wide (east-west), of very hard-packed gravel. This area was interpreted as a doorway where gravel had been thrown down and packed into the soil to keep the entranceway dry.

The palisade surrounding the village was continuous but varied from one to three rows. Beginning at the northeast corner of the village, the palisade was a single row of posts all the way around the north and west sides to the southwest corner, where it became double. The double row of posts continued along the south side and most of the way up the east side of the village, at which point it diverged. As shown in Figure 2, there was a cluster of subsurface cultural features (including a primary burial pit) beyond the northeast edge of the village and the diverging palisade up the east side might potentially have been expanded outward to enclose those features. However, despite a concerted effort of shovel-shining, no actual evidence for such a hypothetical palisade in that location was found. At the southeast corner of the site, and again part way up the east side of the village, segments of an "extra" or third row of palisade were inserted; these may have been constructed to create funnel-shaped entrances into the village, or to restrict access into it.

The orientation and spacing of the three houses within the palisade enclosure suggests there might possibly have been some form of internal village segmentation, perhaps with the occupants of Houses 1 and 2 being "aligned" together in a social grouping that was different from the people living in House 3. However the ceramics from each of the three houses were internally distinct, suggesting that in fact there were three separate social groupings at the site, one living in each house.

A midden area that was more of a refuse-filled depression than a true midden accumulation, was located between the three palisade rows at the southeast corner of the village (Figure 3) and it was systematically excavated by hand as a series of contiguous one-metre squares.

There were a wide variety of features outside of the houses, including two hearths (one in the

centre of the village and one in the northeast corner of the site between House 3 and the palisade) and a series of quite complex refuse-filled pits, especially in the activity area between Houses 2 and 3, and along the inside of the palisade in the southwest corner of the site.

The Praying Mantis village is different from most other Early Ontario Iroquoian villages in that it was quite small and seemingly did not undergo the expansions or contractions which characterized many of the other known villages of that time period. For example, the Van Besien site expanded at least three times into a complex village 1.2 hectares (3 acres) in size (Noble 1975:8-10), a minimum of 14 house structures at the Calvert site were constructed with different orientations at various times throughout the century it was occupied (Timmins 1997:35; also see Williamson 1990:306), and multiple construction periods indicating expansion or contraction were evident at DeWaele (Fox 1976:177-178). All three of those sites also had evidence for multiple rows of palisades built at different times throughout the life of the village, as well as house structures superimposed on one another and house structures which were placed over top of former palisade lines. None of that settlement pattern complexity existed at Praying Mantis, although as noted above there were some discontinuous rows of posts and several features (some of which intersected/overlapped) outside of the three defined houses, which might indicate the presence of other structures.

Human Remains

Two burial features were discovered on the site and excavated under the direction of Dr. Michael Spence after the necessary permissions had been obtained from the Regional Coroner, the Ontario Cemeteries Branch Registrar, and Oneida Nation of the Thames (Onoyota'a:ka). Dr. Spence then undertook a detailed analysis of the recovered remains.

Burial 1

Burial 1 consisted of the partially exhumed remains of an adult female aged 50 to 60 who had initially been interred as a primary burial

within a shallow pit (135 cm east-west by 130 cm north-south) located just outside of the palisade beyond the northeast corner of the village (Square 465-660, Feature B1) (see Figure 3).

The woman had been laid to rest in a flexed position, laying on the left side, oriented north-west to southeast with the head to the southeast. The pit fill contained an occasional chert flake but was otherwise sterile. Three flotation samples totalling 13.6 kg of soil from in and around the burial were sterile.

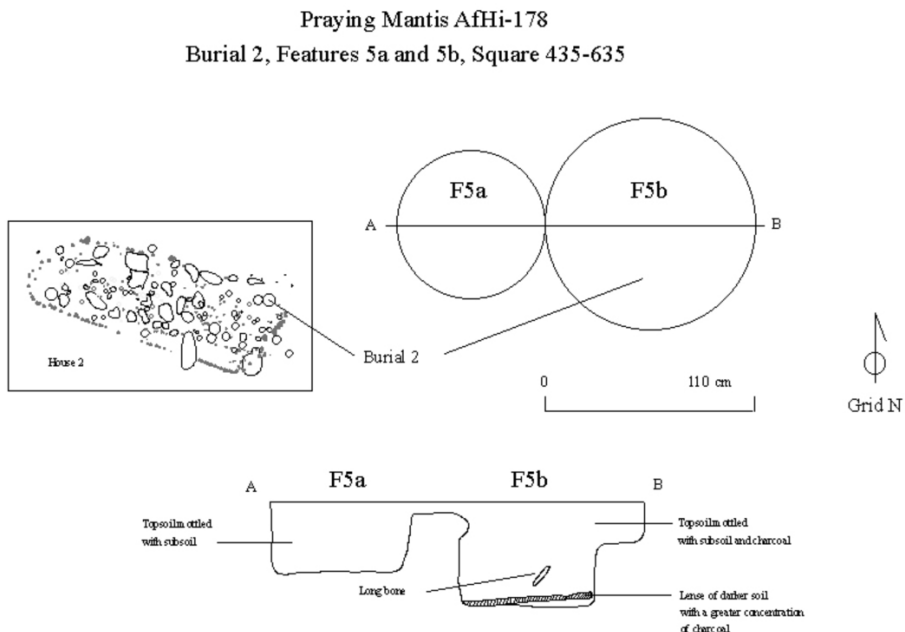
Burial 1 was fascinating because of the nature of the skeletal elements present versus those that were absent. The cranium, mandible, all teeth, both scapulae, cervical vertebrae 1 through 5, and all of the arm and leg bones except the right patella had been purposefully removed, presumably for reburial by the site inhabitants at some other location. However, as will be discussed below, those removed elements were not re-interred into the "ossuary"-type burial pit elsewhere on the site, which contained the partial remains of seven different individuals. The only skeletal elements remaining in the original primary burial pit, all in their correct anatomical position, were the remainder of the vertebral

column (C6 down to coccyx), the manubrium and sternum, all of the ribs, both clavicles, the sacrum, both innominates, the right patella and a small fragment of the right parietal.

Burial 2

The partial remains of at least seven different individuals were deposited as secondary interments into a single large pit located along and just inside of the north wall of House 2 (Square 435-635, Feature 5; see Figures 3, 4 and 5). The plan view and profile of the pit were quite complex and indicate the burials were confined to a small area in the south half of one of two intersecting refuse-filled pits (Figure 5).

When the feature was first exposed in plan view, it was a large, irregular-shaped stain of dark black soil in the yellow subsoil, measuring 199 cm long (east-west) by 134 cm wide (north-south). When profiled, it was found that there was a uniform 18 cm thick layer of fill and artifacts, but below this 18 cm thick layer the feature could be segregated into two distinct components. The western portion, labelled Feature 5A, was a typical refuse-filled pit 80 cm in diameter, extending to a depth of 56 cm with a basin-



shaped profile. The eastern portion, labelled Feature 5B, was bathtub-shaped in profile, 110 cm in diameter, extending to a maximum depth of 90 cm. The north halves of both 5A and 5B were removed. When cleaning the faces to record the profiles, a human long bone was noted in the wall of the unexcavated south half, extending from a depth of 50 to 65 cm in Feature 5B. Subsequent excavation revealed a dense concentration of human bone in Feature 5B, primarily at the 50 to 80 cm depth and somewhat crammed into a deposit only 50 cm in plan view diameter. Excepting the human bone in Feature 5B, both Features 5A and 5B contained typical village refuse, and there was refuse and a lens of darker coloured soil and charcoal, with artifacts, under the mass of human bone in Feature 5B. Thus, it would appear that the human bone was deposited within an already existing refuse pit, and after the human bone was deposited, additional village refuse was added to the pit.

In total, Features 5A and 5B yielded 599 artifacts. The 18 cm thick layer on top of the two features was the most productive, with 169 ceramic sherds including four fragmentary rims, two lumps of clay, 56 pieces of chipping detritus, two pieces of schist, and 39 animal bones (38 of which were calcined). The 56 cm layer of fill in Feature 5A contained 73 items including 37 ceramic sherds, 23 pieces of chipping detritus, one ground stone schist fragment and 12 animal bones (11 of which were calcined). The fill above the human bone mass in Feature 5B yielded 198 items including 163 ceramic sherds (three of which were fragmentary rims), 28 pieces of chipping detritus and seven animal bones (five of which were calcined). The lens of soil below the mass of human bone in Feature 5B (85 to 110 cm below surface) yielded 42 items comprised of 13 ceramic sherds, 13 pieces of chipping detritus and 16 pieces of animal bone (13 of which were calcined). Flotation samples from Feature 5B, including fill from amid the human bone, contained one ceramic body sherd, seven fragmentary ceramic sherds, four chert flakes, one piece of mica, and five animal bones (four of which were calcined). Charcoal was present throughout the fill of both features, as was fire-cracked rock.

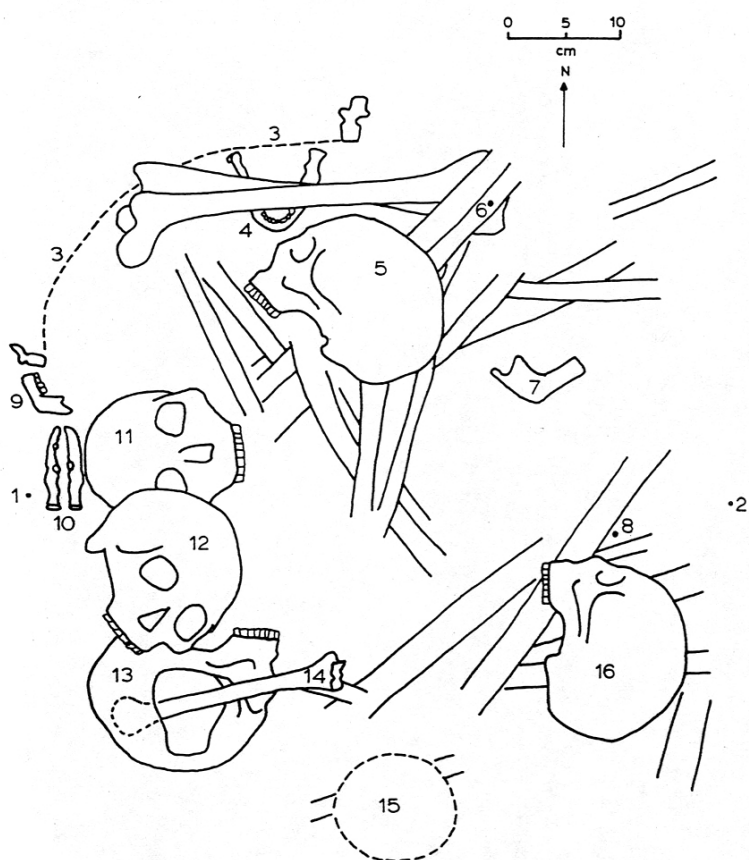
The specific individuals secondarily interred in Feature 5B were as follows:

- 2a sub-adult 13-14 years
- 2b sub-adult 12 years
- 2c sub-adult 4-6 years
- 2d infant, less than one year
- 2e adult male approximately 40 years
- 2f adult female 17-20 years
- 2g adult female approximately 30-40 years

Evidence suggests that, in general, the crania and mandibles were purposefully laid around the perimeter of the pit (Figure 6). A single articulated vertebral column from C7 to L4 was also laid, in a curving fashion, around the outside ring. Then "clusters" or "handfuls" of long bones were placed within the circle of crania. These clusters of long bones (containing from two to 19 skeletal elements) appear to have been handfuls of bones that had been picked up and laid carefully and meaningfully into the pit, sometimes maintaining the correct anatomical positions, although interestingly some of the clusters or handfuls contained bones from more than one of the seven identified individuals. This practice suggests a totally new meaning for the phrase "bundle" burial. This was obviously part of a carefully planned ceremonial ritual for the re-interment of the village deceased, although the number of specific skeletal elements from each individual was highly variable.

None of the skeletal elements discovered in the Burial 2 feature were from an adult female aged 50 to 60 and so the woman who had been interred in the Burial 1 feature outside of the village, and who was partially exhumed, could not have been placed within the Burial 2 feature. The mystery as to her final (secondary) resting place remains unsolved. It must be emphasized that Dr. Spence's excellent technical report (1994a) outlined several complex and unique aspects about these burials. One of the most unusual, however, was the case of individual 2f, an adult female aged 17 to 20. There had been extensive perimortem or post-mortem alteration of her cranium as it exhibited a large number of cut marks, especially clustered on the occipital, right parietal, both temporals and the right zygoma. Furthermore, a right humerus (upper arm bone),

Figure 6. Arrangement of crania and culturally-modified mandible in Burial 2 (from Spence 1994a: Figure 1).



not necessarily belonging to her, had been deliberately inserted through a hole in the left side of the cranium with “the proximal end of the bone against the interior surface of the supero-posterior part of the left parietal” (Spence 1994a:13; see Figure 6 #13 and #14). Aside from that cranium and the culturally-modified mandible to be discussed below, only one other skeletal element in the Burial 2 assemblage had any evidence of cut marks; that element was the left humerus of Individual 2E (adult male approximately 40 years of age) that had a series of marks indicating that the soft tissue and muscles had been deliberately cut to sever it from the forearm (Spence 1994a:12).

Culturally-Modified Human Mandible

A unique inclusion within the Burial 2 feature was a single culturally-modified mandible from a middle aged adult male (Figure 6: #10). This

mandible did not correspond to any of the crania or other skeletal elements belonging to the seven individuals identified in the Burial 2 feature (or the single individual in Burial 1). Thus, the mandible represents another individual. The mandible seems to have been carefully laid into the secondary burial pit just outside of the “ring” of crania, and was positioned to directly abut the cranium of Individual 2A (sub-adult 13-14 years of age; Figure 6: #11), which itself was positioned just below (under) and to the north of (but touching) the cranium of Individual 2B (sub-adult 12 years of age; Figure 6: #12). The mandible was found in two pieces, separated along the natural fusion line at the chin, but apparently laid down side by side with the chin pointing north and the rami pointing south, as if the bone had been snapped in half, folded together and then laid in the pit. The superior parts of both the ascending rami had been deliberately cut off

(Figure 7). There were numerous cut marks and striations on the two pieces, and a total of five holes had been purposefully drilled (4) or punched or reamed (1) through them. The holes ranged in diameter from 2 to 8 mm, and at least two of the holes appeared to have been made after the mandible was snapped in half. Dr. Spence (1994a:17) concluded that this cultural modification may have been undertaken to convert the mandible into a mask, or for attachment of the two pieces to some other object. None of the other skeletal elements within the Burial 2 feature could be matched to this one individual, and one possible interpretation is that the mandible belonged to a revered ancestor (Spence 1994a:17).

Instances of human mandibles modified in this manner are, apparently, exceedingly rare and previously unreported from any Iroquoian site. Masks made from drilled human mandibles were reported from a Mississippian site in Kentucky (Cook and Munson 2002), a unique mask-headress made from pieces of modified human cranium was interred with a cremated Hopewell burial at Mound City, Ohio (Baby 1956:303-305; 1959:33) and five modified human mandibles were recovered at the Hopewell Edwin Harness Mound in Ohio (Greber 1979:33). Thus, the Praying Mantis specimen is highly significant and no doubt an indication of some form of ritual that has heretofore not been documented as part of the Iroquoian repertoire.

Animal Burials

There was a small feature (33 cm in diameter, 20 cm deep) in the House 2 extension (Figures 3 and 4), which contained a deliberately interred mass of animal bone consisting of elements from only three species. Of 231 faunal elements found in this pit, 160 were identified to species, as follows: 21 elements representing a minimum of two otters (both immature); 134 elements representing a minimum of nine raccoons (almost all of which were immature or juvenile); and five elements (mandible and leg fragments only) that represent one immature deer (Muir 1994). No other cultural material was deposited into this pit.

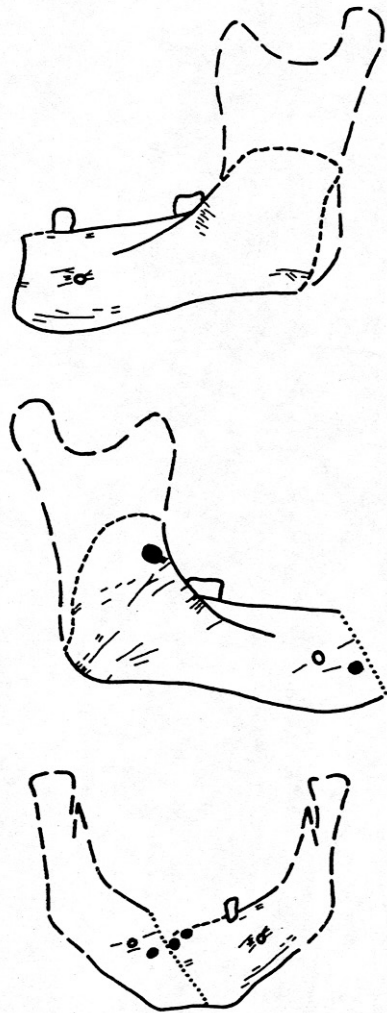


Figure 7. Culturally modified mandible in Burial #2 (from Spence 1994a: Figure 6).

The identifiable faunal elements for the two otters and nine raccoons indicate that entire animals were interred in this pit, since virtually all skeletal areas are represented: skulls (mandible, maxilla, and fragmented pieces of the skull bones such as the occipital, temporal, frontal and parietal), vertebrae (including atlas and axis), ribs, scapulae, pelvis (ilium and ischium), front legs (humerus, radius and ulna), back legs (femur, tibia, patella) and feet (carpals, tarsals, talus, calcaneum). None of the skeletal elements exhibited any cut marks or evidence of exposure to heat. The assemblage was composed overwhelmingly of

bones from immature animals, the only notable exceptions being a few leg bones from a maximum of two juvenile-aged raccoons (i.e. two right femurs and two left radii, plus one left humerus, one right ulna and one left ulna) and the left and right humeri from a slightly larger / older (i.e. "sub-adult") raccoon.

There is archaeological and ethnographical documentation for the ritual treatment of both otters and raccoons. It is known that raccoons were revered by many North American First Nations (Thwaites 1896-1901:67:251), that the Iroquoians distinguished raccoons from other animals due to their characteristic eyes (Thwaites 1896-1901:8:302) and that both otter and raccoon ("wild cat") robes were valued commodities for the Iroquoians to wear, and to trade to the French in the Contact Period (Biggar 1924:158; Sagard 1939:224; Thwaites 1896-1901:11:315; 41:81). The Iroquoians had (have) specific myths and legends featuring both Otter (Curtin and Hewitt 1918:151-154; Johnson 1911:52; Thwaites 1896-1901:5:155; 6:159; 67:153) and Raccoon (Curtin and Hewitt 1918:191-193) and there is a specific Iroquoian word (*gahado-goka-gogosa*) referring to Raccoon as "Masked Demon Spirit" (www.loon.com/raccoons/info/name-sakes.html). It therefore seems probable that the deliberate deposition of largely immature and certainly all young otter and raccoon bones (and the deer) in a single pit feature at Praying Mantis could reflect a symbolic reverence for those animals at a very early stage in the Iroquoian sequence.

The animal bone pit (Square 435-635, Feature 1) was situated inside of House 2, less than 2 metres from the Burial 2 feature and a sweat lodge (Figures 3 and 4). The location of these unique features so close to each other obviously leads one to speculate that they were created at the same time as part of the human re-interment ritual.

Another feature at the site was also remarkable because it contained the skeletal elements of at least three raccoons and little else: part of a single ceramic vessel, a handful of chert flakes and a hammerstone. That feature (Square 420-605, Feature 1) was situated outside of the palisade beyond the southwest corner of the site (see

Figure 3), it being the only feature located there. None of the bones exhibit cut marks so these animals apparently were not butchered for their meat or hide. One can only speculate about why that pit was positioned where it was and why it contained primarily raccoon bones. Does it provide further evidence for the ceremonial or ritual treatment of that particular animal?

Dog Burials

A small dog was purposefully interred in a refuse-filled pit (Square 440-645, Feature 1), located in a somewhat isolated area devoid of other features, in the central-east area of the site between Houses 2 and 3 (see Figure 3). The pit was quite substantial, 256 cm long (north-south), 125 cm wide, with an ovate plan view and a bathtub-shaped profile 35 deep into the subsoil. The pit itself was littered with all the usual items one finds in a refuse pit including ceramic sherds, lithic detritus and animal bone (including calcined fragments). But in the southwest corner of this pit, there was a small, discrete mass of bones, some articulated and in the correct anatomical position, to indicate a dog had been interred there. There were no cut or butcher marks on the bones.

Another small dog was deposited in another refuse-filled pit (Square 450-670, Feature 2), located outside of the palisade at the northeast corner of the site (see Figure 3). The pit contained an array of artifacts including seven rim sherds, over 300 ceramic body sherds, a few chert flakes and a tubular bone bead. An interesting aspect of this particular feature, however, was that the vast majority of the animal bone deposited into it was derived from a single immature dog, including both mandibles, both maxillae, and most of the long bones (and their unfused epiphyses) and feet, but only a couple of the vertebrae and ribs were included. Other than the dog bones, this pit yielded six small fragments of calcined bone, two woodchuck teeth and a few deer skeletal elements including an unmodified distal phalange.

It could simply be that the village inhabitants interred two of their pet dogs (puppies) in these two pits, but the selective disposal of only certain elements to the exclusion of others in one of the

deposits, like the obvious ceremonial animal burial in House 2, seems to indicate some preferential or reverent treatment of at least one of the dogs.

It is well known that in later time periods the Iroquoians used dogs for a variety of purposes, including for hunting (i.e. Thwaites 1896-1901:6:299) and as scouts (Thwaites 1896-1901:32:27). The Iroquoians gave their dogs names (Thwaites 1896-1901:31:263-265) and the Jesuits documented that in one instance a Huron man who lost his dog to a bear when out hunting was so overcome with grief that he spoke of the death “so pathetically that you would almost have believed that he was relating the death of one of the brave Captains of the country” (Thwaites 1896-1901:14:33-35). The Iroquoians kept dogs as pets and had such fondness for them that they were sometimes interred with their owners, as in a specific instance documented by the Jesuits in which the Huron wanted to bury with a young girl her two dogs because “it is our custom to give to the dead what they loved or possessed when they were living” (Thwaites 1896-1901:8:267).

The Iroquoians had strong beliefs about the soul of a dog, and some rituals concerning death also applied to dogs. It is well documented, ethnographically, that the Iroquoians sometimes ate dogs at feasts (i.e. Thwaites 1896-1901:7:223) and the Iroquoian White Dog Sacrifice is legendary (see J. M. Wright 2004:306-309). Sagard (1939:172) recorded that the Huron believed that dogs had souls and that when dogs died their souls followed a path parallel to the path followed to the stars by the souls of deceased people. A few years later the Jesuits recorded that the Huron believed the path leading to the “Villages of Souls” was guarded by a dog (Thwaites 1896-1901:10:147). It has also been written that many cultures in North America believed dogs were “spirit guides for the human soul to the afterworld” (Engelbrecht 2003:67), and Oberholtzer (2002:3) cited a wide variety of sources that document the occurrences of dog sacrifices and burials stretching across Canada from the Maritime Archaic period in Newfoundland to historic Northwest coast groups. Both Engelbrecht (2003:15) and J. M. Wright

(2004:314) noted a source (Cantwell 1980:491) that claimed dogs were “intermediate between the forest, the world of the animals, and the camp, the world of man” and that this therefore made dogs an “ideal mediator or messenger between these worlds” in the Iroquoian cosmos (Engelbrecht 2003:15). Some Iroquoians also believed that dogs could warn them about the approach of ghosts and evil spirits (Beauchamp 1922:221). Joyce Wright (2004:305-306) noted that one of the reasons the Wendat (Huron) had such strong regard for dogs (and bears) and beliefs in the souls of dogs (and bears) was due to the role of a dog as a pivotal character in the Iroquoian creation story: Aataentsic fell through a hole in the sky only because she was chasing a dog who was chasing a bear (see Thwaites 1896-1901:10:127).

Complete or nearly complete dog skeletons have been found as burials at many archaeological sites in the Northeast, from at least the Late Archaic period onward. For the Iroquoian sequence, dog burials were present from the Early Ontario Iroquois stage Pickering branch Bennett site (Wright and Anderson 1969:13) to the Middle Ontario Iroquois stage Nodwell site (Wright 1974:88) to Late Ontario Iroquois stage sites such as Cleveland. A dog mandible also accompanied a human burial in an Early Ontario Iroquois stage Pickering branch burial pit at the Serpent Mounds complex (Johnston 1968:50, 132). Some of the data about actual dog “burials” are equivocal, such as the case at the Early Ontario Iroquois Stage, Glen Meyer branch Van Besien village where a complete dog skeleton encountered in a midden square “shows that while this canine was discarded in an articulated condition, no special burial pit or ritual accompanied its demise” (Noble 1975:11). Also, the precise cultural affiliation of some sites where dog burials have been found remains open to interpretation, such as the case at the Dymock II component in Elgin County, southwestern Ontario (Fox 1982:7); that site might be Early Ontario Iroquoian and/or Western Basin Algonkian. An extensive compilation of numerous known Iroquoian dog burials is contained in J. M. Wright (2004:311-313).

Items of Potential Ritual Significance

Beads, Pendants and Amulets

Five native copper beads were recovered at Praying Mantis, representing some of the earliest known copper beads from any Iroquoian site. Copper beads have previously been reported at only three other Glen Meyer branch sites: Dewaele (Fox 1976:190), Yaworski (Williamson 1985:315) (also see Williamson 1990:300) and Stafford (Wright 1966:39).

All five of these beads are tubular and each was made by “rolling” up a single small piece of copper. They have lengths ranging from 8.89 to 22.25 mm (mean = 14.26 mm) and diameters ranging from 6.0 to 9.57 mm (mean = 7.65 mm). Two of the beads were found in a 52 cm deep feature under the bench row in the south-east end of House 2, and the other three were together in a 29 cm deep refuse-filled pit located between House 1 and the palisade at the south end of the site (see Figure 3).

There were five tubular beads and bead fragments made from bird long bone shafts. The complete beads have lengths ranging from 14.61 mm to 24.59 mm (mean = 19.78 mm) and diameters ranging from 6.10 mm to 9.40 mm (mean = 7.95 mm). Two of these were found in adjacent one-metre squares in the midden, a third was from a refuse-filled pit along the western palisade, a fourth was from a refuse-filled pit outside of the palisade at the northeast corner of the site and the fifth was from a refuse-filled pit within House 1. There were also three bird long bone shafts that had been scored around the circumference for the removal of bead tubes. One of these was found in a refuse-filled pit within House 3 and the other two were found together in a refuse-filled pit outside of the north wall of House 3. The shaft found in the pit in House 3 was 110.78 mm long and had a partial score around its circumference which, if completed, would have removed a tubular bead 25.68 mm long and 9.9 mm in diameter, still leaving an 85.1 mm long shaft that could very easily have provided two or three additional beads.

In addition a single stone bead and a single stone pendant were recovered. The stone bead is

a discoidal fossil, 9.94 mm in diameter and 3.10 mm thick. It was discovered in a one metre test square during the Stage 3 assessment of the site, in an area which ultimately proved to be on top of the east end of House 3.

The stone pendant is a black shale pebble, teardrop shaped, with a single perforation drilled in the narrow top end. It is 26.88 mm long, 23.13 mm wide and 3.66 mm thick, and the bi-conically drilled hole is 2.54 mm in diameter. It was found in the lower portion of a 36 cm deep refuse-filled pit in the northwest corner of House 2 (see Figure 3). William Fox (2004) recently presented the astute suggestion that particular black shale pebble pendants found on diverse sites in the Lake Erie drainage basin had symbolic and spiritual significance. This suggestion is supported by one such pendant with an incised snake/lightning motif, found on the pre-contact Neutral Alward site in Elgin County (artifact curated at Museum of Ontario Archaeology). It is noteworthy that Fox’s (2004) study demonstrated that the material from which these shale pebbles were made derives from a single geological formation in southwestern Ontario, that unmodified pebbles of that material can still be collected today along the north shore of Lake Erie around and between Port Stanley and Port Bruce (just west of Long Point), and that the earliest archaeologically documented use of those pebbles for pendants comes from the Early Ontario Iroquois Stage (Glen Meyer branch) Goessens and Stafford sites on the Norfolk Sand Plain near Long Point (Wright 1966:37). Fox’s research also verified that the use of these pebble pendants reached a “zenith of popularity in the north Erie shore core area during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with numerous specimens recovered from sites such as the Pound village” (where over 40 were found) ... “Thereafter, they occur sporadically on sixteenth century villages, such as Lawson, Brian and the Southwold Earthworks” (Fox 2004:296). The presence of a shale pebble pendant at Praying Mantis is therefore consistent with present knowledge and confirms an Early Ontario Iroquoian genesis for their use.

A single marine shell bead, probably *Marginella* sp., was recovered from a refuse-filled feature in

the centre-east end of House 2 (Square 435-630, Feature 16). This find is consistent with similar discoveries at other Glen Meyer branch sites such as DeWaele (Fox 1976:190) and Elliott (Fox 1988:6, 8); it can also be noted that marine shell beads have been found at a couple of earlier sites assigned to the Princess Point complex (Fox 1990:176).

A single brachiopod fossil fragment was encountered in the midden at the southeast corner of the site, and fragments of two Late Archaic period "Genesee" type Broadpoints were also found (one of which was in a 77 cm deep feature). The use of fossils for beads and pendants and the curation of fossils and projectile points from earlier time periods as "curios", has been documented on a number of other Iroquoian sites in London area (Pearce 2003).

A human effigy stone amulet with an open (blowing or sucking?) mouth (Figure 8) was found amid the fill in a pit situated in the narrow corridor separating Houses 1 and 2 (see Figure 3). The effigy is 28.45 mm tall, 14.75 mm wide and 16.76 mm thick. It was made by carving a piece of mudstone or siltstone (material identified by Dr. James V. Wright after a personal inspection of the item in 1998). The effigy is shaped somewhat like a mushroom or toadstool with human head perched atop a "stem" or pedestal. The base of the pedestal is uneven and the effigy does not stand upright on its own. There is a 5.25 mm hole drilled in the pedestal, from the base, part way up the shaft and exiting out the side of the shaft; this hole is 13.68 mm long within the 20.06 mm long shaft. It is possible that the effigy was mounted onto another object such as a piece of bone or wood, like an eraser on the end of a pencil. The human face sits at a 45 degree angle (chin sloping down) on the pedestal, and consists of two eyes, a nose, the mouth and a pointy chin. The eye sockets are quite deep (3 mm) and a further pin hole in the left eye socket leaves the distinct impression that it was meant to represent the pupil of the eye. The forehead slopes upward and backward and in the centre of the very top of the head there is a distinct concavity 6.41 mm in diameter and 4.0 mm deep, as if the medial halves of the parietals had been



Figure 8. *Stone human effigy amulet.*

removed from the skull. Just behind the concavity there is a distinct nub protruding upward, like a very tiny "topknot". The head measured from the bottom of the chin to the top of the nub is 18.82 mm long. On the front of the pedestal, on the neck below the chin, there is a narrow vertical ridge extending three-quarters of the way down the pedestal; this was created in bas-relief by carving the soft stone material away from both sides of it. This narrow ridge (looking somewhat like, in modern parlance, a neck tie) parallels the esophagus.

Effigies have been found at other Early Ontario Iroquoian stage sites, but most of those other known examples are animal effigies, not human effigies. There was a reported "medallion human face" on a pipe stem from the Glen Meyer DeWaele site, a supposed human effigy at the Pickering Bolitho site (Williamson 1990:299), and recently a carved piece of sandstone with simple punctate indentations to represent two eyes and a mouth was uncovered at the Glen Meyer King's Forest Park site (AhGw-1) in Hamilton (Martin Cooper, personal communication, October 2006). Human effigies certainly occurred in much earlier time periods elsewhere as known, for example, by an engraved pebble

from the Late Archaic Coteau-du-Lac site on the St. Lawrence River in Quebec (Marois 1987:13, 23, 33), a clay (or stone?) one from Les Galops Rapids site near Brockville, Ontario (J. V. Wright 1995:248, 250) and a marine shell one from the Picton site on the Bay of Quinte (Ritchie 1949:37; J. V. Wright 1995:252). However, the Praying Mantis human effigy, and perhaps the King's Forest Park specimen, are apparently the first of their kind from Ontario Iroquoian sites, since they are stand-alone stone amulets and not part of an effigy pipe or ceramic medallion. Another human effigy stone amulet or maskette with a blowing or sucking mouth was found at the Middle Ontario Iroquois stage (Middleport substage) Nodwell site (J. V. Wright 1974:153) on the east shore of Lake Huron at Port Elgin, Ontario. Stand-alone human effigy figurines are also known from later sites, as for example a specimen described in the *Annual Archaeological Report, Ontario* (AARO) for 1896-97 (page 59) from the Huron village referred to as the "Old Fort" in Whitchurch Township, York County.

The Praying Mantis effigy is quite unlike the effigy on any human effigy pipe known from later Iroquoian sites. For example, there is nothing similar to it among the many effigies illustrated or described in the pages of the AARO (issued first by the Canadian Institute, then by the Provincial Museum, between 1887 and 1928), by Laidlaw in a series of six articles in the AARO (1903, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1924), or in articles by Mathews (1976, 1979, 1980, 1981) or Noble (1979). However, some of the specific elements or characteristics of the Praying Mantis effigy did appear on many later human effigy pipes. Of especial interest is one particular Huron Iroquoian ceramic effigy pipe from Medonte Township, Simcoe County illustrated by Mathews (1976: Plate Ic, National Museum of Canada catalogue number VIII-F-8494), which had a "blowing" open mouth, deep eye sockets, a topknot and an incised motif on the neck/chest area resembling ribs and the vertebral column. Could it be that the Praying Mantis specimen was an early prototype for concepts that would much later in time become ensconced in Iroquoian belief systems?

The Praying Mantis human effigy must also be considered in the context of the human punctate face motifs, which appeared for the first time in the Iroquoian sequence on Early Ontario Iroquoian ceramic vessels (three punctates, two representing the eyes and one representing the mouth, almost always positioned on a castellation). Examples are known from many sites including the Goessens Glen Meyer branch site (Wright 1966:Plate I, Figure 14) and the Bennett Pickering branch site (Wright and Anderson 1969: Figure 6; Plate IX, Figure c; and Plate XI, Figure b). As noted elsewhere herein, the human face punctate motif also occurred at Praying Mantis, being present on 10 castellated ceramic vessels. These 10 vessels were distributed across all areas of the site: one in House 1, two in House 2, one in House 3, two in the midden, three in refuse pits along the western palisade, and one in a refuse pit in an activity area between Houses 2 and 3 (Howie-Langs 1998:164).

As a matter of some interest, the pit which contained the effigy (Square 430-625, Feature 2) was somewhat atypical. It was ovate in plan view, 81 cm long and 74 cm wide. When excavated, it was found to have a bell-shaped profile which widened out at the bottom, at a depth of 60 cm below surface, to be 80 cm in diameter. The very bottom of the pit had been deliberately lined, first with a shallow layer of solid clay (which stood out remarkably in contrast to the yellow sand subsoil) and next with rows of broken ceramic sherds, all laying face down. In one corner of the pit, resting on the sherds, was a dense concentration of fish bone. Above this was a rather large, intact, ceramic vessel segment and a number of sherds which could be refitted to it, as well as sherds from a second vessel that could be partially restored. As with some of the pits in other areas of the site, this one seems to indicate a one-time ceremonial event which involved the deliberate preparation of a hole in the ground followed by the deposition of specific objects into it, including pots and the remnants of what might have been feasts. The same might also be said for a House 2 pit into which was deposited a largely intact ceramic vessel, sitting upright and containing within it a dense mass of fish bone.

Evidence for one-time feasting events occurred at other Early Ontario Iroquoian sites, such as Elliott (Fox 1988:5-6) and Calvert (Timmins 1997:231-232).

Mica and Red Ochre

The site yielded 12 fragments of mica and two tiny pieces of red ochre. These substances do not occur naturally in the area, so they had to have been transported to the village. These materials are most often employed in a ceremonial context and thus their presence at Praying Mantis provides further evidence for rituals and ceremonial activities at the site.

Significantly one of the pieces of mica was found in a flotation sample from the Burial 2 feature and might very well have been deposited therein as part of the reburial ritual. Nine other pieces of mica were in the flotation sample from a refuse-filled pit in the centre of House 3, one was from a refuse-filled pit in the activity area between Houses 2 and 3, and the twelfth piece was found in the midden. The two pieces of red ochre came from two adjacent features (depths of 42 cm and 62 cm) in the southeast end of House 1.

Modified Turtle Shell

Several fragments from the carapace of a snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) were deposited in a refuse-filled pit in the west end of House 2 (Square 435-615, Feature 2; location shown in Figure 3), and some of those pieces had been culturally-modified. The fragments include a majority of the upper left quadrant of the carapace when viewed from the ventral (inner) surface, head to the top. Three of the outer peripherals have an elongated burn or scorch mark on the dorsal (outer) surface. The interior surfaces of the corresponding costal, nuchal and neural bones which attached to those peripherals are all worn smooth or polished, as are some of the interior surfaces of other costals from the lower left quadrant of the carapace. The aforementioned neural, where the turtle's atlas and axis vertebrae would have attached, had the spiny process for vertebral attachment ground off and polished, and a 4.9 mm diameter hole was reamed through the top

edge of it. The corresponding bottom edge of the nuchal which attached to that neural is damaged but appears to have a reamed hole in it as well, forming the other half of the hole in the neural. The modification and wear on the turtle carapace are virtually identical to that on a snapping turtle shell rattle recovered from the early sixteenth century Lawson pre-contact Neutral Iroquoian village in northwest London (personal observation). Although pieces of modified turtle shell interpreted as parts of rattles have been discovered at other Early Ontario Iroquoian stage, Glen Meyer branch sites including Woodsmen (Wright 1966:38) and Van Besien (Noble 1975:36), the Praying Mantis carapace, if used as a rattle, is highly significant because it would represent the earliest known use of a snapping turtle for a rattle from any Iroquoian site.

A single piece of carapace from a Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingi*) found in a refuse-filled pit (Square 420-615, Feature 9) at the south end of Praying Mantis had several cut marks and striations on the interior surface, and that surface also exhibits a very high degree of polish. This fragment obviously had been used for something, but whether or not it was part of a rattle is unknown; it may have been part of a utilitarian container, or it may have been used to create some of the turtle suture stamped motifs on some of the ceramic vessels found on the site.

Ceramics

Considering the small size of the site, there were an extraordinarily large number of ceramic vessels. There were well over 500 analyzable rim sherds and a further 484 fragmentary rim sherds, many of which could be reassembled into complete or nearly complete vessels. Significantly, large segments of pots were sometimes deposited into certain features on the site, as for example the recovery of all or the major portions of five different pots in one feature abutting the palisade along the west side of the site, outside of the west end of House 2. Such actions might possibly be construed as the ceremonial dumping of these vessels after a communal feast. The very bottom of that feature that contained the five vessels was lined

with rocks, perhaps the boiling rocks that had been used to heat up whatever was in the pots.

Linda Howie-Langs (1998) undertook a detailed analysis of the ceramic vessels. The following points are noteworthy:

- 1) After reconstruction and mending, there were a total of 82 vessels which could be classified as “complete” (insofar as all of the attributes of the interior, lip and exterior from lip edge down to lower body or base could be accurately determined). Over one-half of these “complete” vessels were found in refuse pits within the three houses (eight in House 1, 23 in House 2, 16 in House 3), and six of the “complete” vessels were from the midden.
- 2) There were a minimum of 287 distinct ceramic vessels (the 82 “complete” vessels plus 205 others represented by distinct or unique analyzable rim segments varying from a single analyzable rim sherd to several large reconstructed rim segments from lip down to base of neck or to shoulder), broadly categorized as 277 collarless, five collared and five “rolled collar”.
- 3) Far more vessels were associated with House 2 (84 in number) than with House 1 (31), House 3 (46) or any of the exterior house activity areas.⁴ The mean exterior diameter of the “complete” vessels was 20.97 cm, but there were 19 vessels with rim diameters of 30 cm or more, the largest being 46 cm in diameter; nine of these large vessels were deposited in refuse pits inside the three houses.
- 5) 65 vessels had castellations, and on 10 of those vessels the decoration associated with the castellation was a punctate face motif.
- 6) There was a definite differentiation in the distribution of specific attributes, indicative of internal segmentation of the village. For example, the use of turtle suture stamp was confined to the ceramics associated with Houses 1 and 2 and totally absent from House 3. Several other specific traits were found or not found on the ceramics associated with a specific

house, such as an absence of the corded and push-pull techniques in House 1 but present in Houses 2 and 3, and the presence of several distinct attributes or motifs only on the ceramics from House 2.

The two most complexly decorated ceramic vessels found at the site were associated with House 2. The exterior motifs on the entire assemblage of vessels from the site were highly varied, and ranged from boringly plain (28 vessels with no exterior decoration whatsoever) to ones that were extremely complex. There were eight vessels that each had 10 or more separate bands or zones of exterior decoration, with the two most complex ones having 21 and 26 bands. Aside from those two most complexly decorated vessels, the next most complexly decorated vessel was one from House 3 that had 14 bands.

The vessel with 21 bands of decoration (Reconstructed Vessel #19, AfHi-178:220, 228) was one of the largest found at the site, with an exterior diameter of 45 cm. It had the following sequence of exterior motifs/techniques, from lip edge down to the body below the shoulder:

Band 1: cross-hatched linear stamp obliques (left to right superimposed over right to left).

Band 2: one horizontal row of closely-spaced exterior punctates (which did not raise interior bosses).

Band 3: one horizontal row of right to left linear stamp obliques.

Bands 4 - 8: five separate incised horizontal lines.

Bands 9 - 11: three separate rows of right to left linear stamp obliques.

Bands 12 - 20: nine separate rows of incised horizontals.

Band 21: a complex “zig-zag” motif comprised of multiple overlapping chevrons consisting of sets of from eight to ten incised obliques alternating left to right and right to left (i.e. a set of eight to ten left to right obliques abutting on both the left and right sides other sets of eight to ten right to left obliques). Where the “tails” of left to right and right to left obliques intersect, the motif is cross-hatched.

The 21-banded vessel is truly unique in many

ways. It is collared but there is no clear demarcation of the collar in profile view; the collar is convex graduating into concave at the neck below it. Bands 1 to 3 are on the collar portion, while Bands 4 through 20 extend down from the base of the collar to the bottom of the neck. Not counted as a separate "band" is a fairly wide plain zone (no decoration) located between Bands 11 and 12. Band 21 occurs on the shoulder, and that particular motif did not occur on any other vessel at the site. The body below the complex shoulder decoration is heavily cord-roughened. Under Wright's (1966:126-127) typological definition, this vessel would be classified as Glen Meyer Necked. In addition, the 21-banded vessel had both lip decoration and interior decoration. The lip decoration consisted of alternating right to left and left to right linear stamp obliques which extended across the lip/interior interface to give the visual impression of notching when viewed from the interior, but not from the exterior. The interior decoration consisted of three rows of right to left linear stamp obliques. This vessel had multiple castellations. The decorative motifs of Bands 1 and 2 had been purposefully omitted from the castellation area, and instead the punctate face motif had been applied (that is, the addition of three strategically-placed punctates to represent two eyes and the mouth of a human effigy). Whereas the punctates forming Band 2 of the vessel had been made with a dull, rounded stylus applied horizontally, the three punctates of the castellation motif had been made with an oblong stylus applied in an oblique upward direction.

The vessel with 26 bands of decoration was of medium size, being 20 cm in exterior diameter at the lip. On first inspection, it does not appear to be complexly decorated, as one first sees only five bands, all right to left obliques created by the same turtle suture stamp tool. However, upon closer inspection one can see that each of those five bands is really comprised of multiple overlapping bands of the identical motif. In other words, Band 1 is not one row of obliques, but rather a combination of five superimposed/overlapping rows of obliques, Band 2 is not one row of obliques but rather a combination of six superimposed/overlapping obliques, and so on. The

bands all occur on the upper rim portion of the collarless vessel, and the neck and shoulder are plain. The body below the shoulder is roughened with a ribbed paddle. In Wright's (1966:111-112) terminology, this vessel would be classified as Ontario Oblique. The lip and interior of this vessel are decorated in the same manner as the upper exterior, with overlapping obliques made with a turtle suture stamp tool. There are no castellations. Considerable effort and care went into the application of the stamped motifs on this vessel.

Major portions of each of the two complexly decorated vessels were recovered from two separate refuse-filled pits in what Howie-Langs (1998: Map 3) defined as the "Western Palisade Refuse Pits" activity area. These pits were situated 12 to 14 metres beyond the western end of House 2 (see Figure 3), but, significantly, several sherds from features within House 2 could be physically cross-mended to the two vessel segments found in the palisade pits. This proves beyond a doubt that the two most complex ceramic vessels originated in, or were used in, House 2, and were broken within House 2. Most of the sherds from the broken vessels were then discarded into the palisade pits outside of the house, but some of the sherds remained in House 2 and came to be deposited in features in the house.

Sweat Lodge

A turtle or key-hole shaped feature with a sloped or ramped entrance was located at the southeast corner of House 2, extending under the wall posts of both the south wall and east end of the house (see Figures 3 and 4). After the feature was excavated, a single post mould was found in the centre of the feature and several other smaller ones were around the sloping walls of the perimeter of the feature. This feature has a number of similarities to sweat lodges, most of which had interior post moulds apparently placed there to support some sort of covering or superstructure. It is the only such feature at the site.

Sweat lodge features are known from a number of other southern Ontario Iroquoian villages

including the Early Ontario Iroquoian stage, Pickering branch Bennett (Wright and Anderson 1969:22-23, described as six “pear-shaped pits”) and Gunby (Rozel 1979:14; described as pits ‘intrusive through the west wall” of House 1) sites, the transitional Early to Middle Ontario Iroquoian stage Myers Road site (Ramsden et al. 1998), the Middle Ontario Iroquoian, Middleport substage Seppala site (Lennox et al. 1997:34; described as “turtle shaped” sweat lodge) and the Late Ontario Iroquois stage pre-contact Neutral Coleman and Moyer sites (MacDonald 1988) (also see MacDonald and Williamson 2001:67).

The Praying Mantis feature identified as a sweat lodge (Figure 9) is quite similar to some of the ones documented at several other sites, in that the main part of the “turtle shaped” pit was outside of the longhouse but entry was gained via a ramped or sloped entrance (the head of the “turtle”) located inside the house. The Praying Mantis pit had an overall keyhole-shaped plan view with a maximum length (north-south) of 282 cm and a maximum width (east-west) of 185 cm. The lobe-shaped entrance component of this pit was 90 cm long and 70 cm wide, while the main body of the pit

was rectangular, 192 cm long (north-south) and 185 cm wide. The profile was bathtub-shaped, shallowest at the north end (the entrance) and sloping downward to the south. The overall dimensions and 3.42 cubic metre capacity of the main pit are virtually identical to those at the Coleman site (see MacDonald 1988:21 and Figure 4). Unlike the sweat lodges noted at Coleman and other sites, however, the Praying Mantis pit was quite shallow, extending only to a maximum depth of 28 cm below the topsoil/subsoil interface. The Praying Mantis feature had a layered and lensed fill with the basal layer being a mixture of dark black organic soil and charcoal. The pit fill contained a range of artifacts consisting of three fire-cracked rocks, 55 ceramic sherds including one rim, 19 pieces of chert chipping detritus, two pieces of animal bone, charcoal and, perhaps reflecting a specialized use of the pit, a single ceramic gaming disc. MacDonald (1988:17-19) reviewed the documentary evidence for how and why the Iroquoians (and other First Nations) used sweat lodges: for personal hygiene, as a mechanism for social integration, but above all for religious or spiritual fulfillment. He also noted that there was

Praying Mantis AfHi-178
Sweat Lodge, Feature 3, Square 430-635

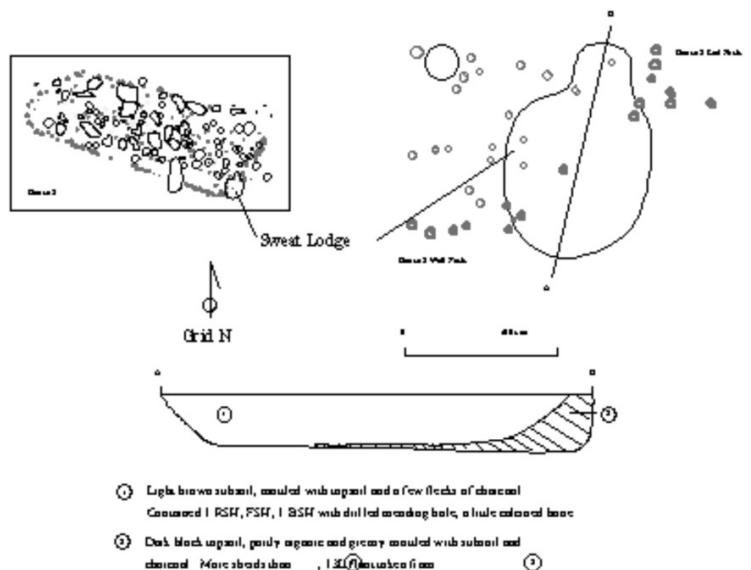


Figure 9. Location, plan and profile of sweat lodge feature.

an essential link between sweat-bathing and shamanism, and he quoted a passage from the Jesuit missionary Jerome Lalemant (Thwaites 1896-1901:26:175-177), which described how in the seventeenth century a Huron shaman built a small, one-man sweat lodge to facilitate his contact with the spirit world. Furthermore, MacDonald cited a variety of additional passages from the ethnohistoric record which dealt with communal sweats "by groups of men for curing ceremonies, religious convocation, ritual purification, maintenance of physical/spiritual health, recreation and social interaction" (MacDonald 1988:18).

The Praying Mantis feature confirms MacDonald's (1988:24) conclusion that ritual or communal sweat-bathing was one component of daily life in the Early Ontario Iroquoian village. The location of this sweat lodge at the eastern end of House 2 near other interesting features demonstrates the ritual uses of that house and of these features at an early time level.

Faunal Remains

There were remarkable differences in the overall number and distribution of faunal remains in House 2 as opposed to other areas of the site. First, faunal remains were present in virtually all of the House 2 features whereas in Houses 1 and 3 less than 75% of the in-house features contained faunal remains (Muir 1996:5). To be precise, of the 84 features in House 2, 77 had faunal remains, equating to 91.7% of the features; if one excludes the four hearths, the percentage of House 2 features with faunal remains was 96.3%. The corresponding figures for House 1 were 74.4% (or 82.9% of all features excluding hearths) and for House 3, 71.4% (or 74.1% of all features excluding hearths). Second, there were far more faunal remains (and also far more artifacts in total) from House 2 than from the other two houses. In fact, there were three times as many animal bones in House 2 than in either House 1 or House 3. While House 1 had 1513 pieces of animal bone and House 3 had 1187 pieces, House 2 had over 4500 pieces (Muir 1996:5). The primary reason for this difference was due to the fact that two features

within House 2 had extremely large numbers of fish bones deposited in them, perhaps the remnants of feasts.

Discussion and Conclusions

House 2 at the Praying Mantis site was somewhat different from the other two houses. It was expanded in terms of both width and length. It had within it three truly unique features: a refuse-filled pit that was also used for the secondary interment of seven individuals plus a culturally-modified human mandible that might have functioned as part of a mask; a nearby pit which contained a primary deposit of the bones of two immature otters and nine raccoons (immature and juvenile specimens); and near both the Burial 2 feature and the otter/raccoon bone pit there was a sweat lodge feature. One has to conclude that one or more sacred ceremonies took place in the east end of House 2, which minimally involved the secondary re-burial of seven individuals, the possible use of a mask made with a human mandible, the ritual deposition of some otters and raccoons, and the act of sweating in a sweat lodge. Whether or not all of these activities took place as a single event is purely a matter of speculation. Yet, it can be noted that in later Iroquoian time periods, there are unequivocal data that sweat lodges and burial ceremonies were coeval, as for example at the Middle Ontario Iroquoian Stage Hutchinson site (AkGt-34) where two sweat lodges were found within a mortuary area of four burial features (where primary interments had been largely exhumed for re-burial elsewhere) (Robertson 2004).

Several other interesting finds also came from this same end of House 2, including two of the overall rare rolled copper beads, the marine shell bead and a ceramic gaming disc. The stone human effigy amulet was recovered from a pit just outside of House 2. As noted above, the pit with the amulet (Square 430-625, Feature 2) was very atypical in that it involved the deliberate preparation of a pit, the careful inclusion of several specific objects into the pit including pots and what might be the remnants of a feast. In

addition, another House 2 pit, located just north of the one just described, also had another largely intact ceramic vessel, sitting upright and containing within it a dense mass of fish bone perhaps also suggesting a one-time feasting event. It is also noteworthy that the culturally-modified snapping turtle carapace was discovered within House 2, albeit from a pit in the west end of this structure. As a probable rattle, an important ritual object in post-contact times, this item also highlights the ceremonial role of this structure. Also associated with House 2 was the only shale pebble pendant found at the site.

That human burials were found at Praying Mantis was not unexpected, since Spence (1994b:9-14) had documented the presence of human burials on at least 21 other Early Ontario Iroquoian sites (16 Glen Meyer branch sites including Praying Mantis and six Pickering branch sites). Those burials included primary interments, secondary interments of the partial remains of one to several individuals, the “discarding” of left-over skeletal elements from presumed primary burials which had been exhumed and had a majority of their skeletal elements re-buried elsewhere (i.e. at locations not yet discovered), and “ossuary”-like burial pits with the secondary deposition of as many as 29 individuals. One of the features excavated at the Glen Meyer branch Elliott site (overlapping villages) was somewhat similar to the Praying Mantis Burial 2 feature in that it had likewise been first used for refuse disposal before human remains were interred in it (Fox 1988:5-7). Yet, there appear to have been three unique characteristics about the Praying Mantis burials. The first was that the individual interred in a primary fashion in Burial 1 had been partially exhumed for re-burial elsewhere. The second was that in the Burial 2 feature, the crania from seven individuals were carefully arranged in an outer ring before “handfuls” or “clusters” of long bones were deposited within the ring of crania. The third was that the Burial 2 feature also included the deposition of a culturally-modified mandible from another individual, a trait heretofore not documented among the Ontario Iroquoians.

The evidence for ceremonial activity at Praying

Mantis does not stand alone. At the Calvert site there was a unique feature containing specific bones from the head, wings and tail of a rare bird (Carolina parakeet) in association with a stone pipe bowl (Timmins 1997:232; von Gernet and Timmins 1987). A ground and carved mudstone object with a reptilian or salamander-like effigy on it was also found at Calvert (Timmins 1997:123), as was a one-of-a-kind rattlesnake effigy carved on a piece of antler (Fox 2003). In interpreting these Calvert site finds, one author wrote that they symbolized both the underworld and the upper world and that their appearance at one site “reinforces the spirit world dichotomy characteristic of Great Lakes Native religious belief systems” (Fox 2003:6). At the Elliott villages, Fox (1986:14) inferred that “minor amounts of certain bird species such as hawk, eagle and blue jay may reflect localized ritual activities.” This was especially the case for Feature 283 at Elliott, where a refuse disposal pit was first used to receive a ceramic vessel and some fish bones, which perhaps were indicative of a ceremonial feast, and subsequently used for the interment of some human remains (representing at least four individuals; Spence 1988:10-11) along with a bone from an eagle wing (tentatively identified as golden eagle) and three small marine shell beads (*Marginella* sp.) (Fox 1988:6, 8). Thus the Praying Mantis site has added valuable data to a growing body of evidence for ritualism and ceremonialism in the Early Ontario Iroquoian period.

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All of the data and artifacts relating to Praying Mantis are curated at the Museum of Ontario Archaeology, 1600 Attawandaron Road, London.

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