

Place Royale: A Prehistoric Site from the Island of Montreal

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Excavations at Place Royale, Montreal, have been carried out since 1979 according to an agreement between the city of Montreal and the Quebec Ministry of Cultural Affairs, to assist in the ongoing rehabilitation of Old Montreal, an important part of both municipal and national heritage. Since 1981, la societe d'archeologie et de numismatique de Montreal, Chateau Ramezay, has been responsible for archaeological research under the agreement. The 1983 excavations, by Mr Jean-Guy Brossard and Mr. Arnold Feast, opened an area of approximately 15 sq. m. and discovered an undisturbed prehistoric midden beneath the historic levels (Brossard, In Preparation). It was not possible to distinguish stratigraphy within the midden. In prehistoric times, this site was located near the mouth of Rivière St. Pierre, an ideal location for a fishing campsite of the kind described by Cartier in A.D. 1535. Similar sites, like Steward and Driver, are located in eastern Ontario. Most of the prehistoric artifacts fall into two categories — Middle Woodland and Late Woodland. These two components are comparable with the nearby sites of Pointe-du-Buisson and Dawson.

Introduction

Scholarly interest in the prehistoric archaeology of the Montreal region has now spanned over one hundred years. The work begun by Sir John W. Dawson in the 1960's and continued by J.F. Pendergast and B.G. Trigger (1972), Laurent Girouard (1975), Norman Clermont and Claude Chapdelaine (1982) to the present day has contributed a great deal of information on the aboriginal habitation of Montreal Island and environs. We now know that the society encountered by Jacques Cartier in A.D. 1535 was the product of an *in situ* social development dating back to at least Early Woodland time (*circa* 1000 B.C.). Sites that can be assigned to this cultural period are found in New York, Ontario and Quebec. Their subsistence patterns began as a combination of fishing, hunting, collecting of plant foods and evolved into a horticultural economy with the adoption of corn, beans and squash, *circa* A.D. 1000. Settlements changed from small, seasonally occupied campsites to large semi-permanent villages complemented by small special-purpose

sites. Prior to the establishment of New France in the early 1600's this *in situ* development was terminated. The St. Lawrence Valley was abandoned by its Iroquoian-speaking inhabitants. Their fate remains one of the great unsolved mysteries of Canadian history. This is largely due to lack of archaeological evidence. This fact underlines the importance of our small but very special collection of prehistoric artifacts from Place Royale.

The prehistoric artifacts recovered from the excavations at Place Royale, (BjFj-3), in Old Montreal (Fig. 3) represent a wide variety of artifact types, many of them diagnostic. This is surprising, considering the small size of the assemblage. The majority of the artifacts pertain to two periods of occupation — the Middle Woodland (400 B.C. - A.D. 1000) and the Late Woodland, St. Lawrence Iroquoian (A.D. 1000-1550). For each of the following categories of artifacts I have recorded basic measurements and observations and presented them in Table 1 to 4. I hope that this will make written description less lengthy and facilitate comparisons of significant attributes with those from other sites.

Pottery

The sample of pottery from Place Royale consists of 27 analysable rimsherds, 23 non-analysable rimsherds, 46 fragments of necks and neck-shoulders and approximately 905 body sherds.

The body sherds represented in the sample are too fragmentary to mend and quantify to any extent. Let it suffice to say that surface treatments include cord marking, check stamping, incising, scarification, paddle marking, and plain. These techniques of body treatment are typical of Middle and Late Woodland pottery.

The majority of the necks and neck-shoulders are not decorated. Only one of the shoulders is carinated, all others being rounded. Of the necks only three are decorated. Specimen 4E24-1 bears a single horizontal row of ovoid punctates underlined by a double incised line. Specimen 3J5-1



Figure 1
Location of Place Royale in Old Montreal

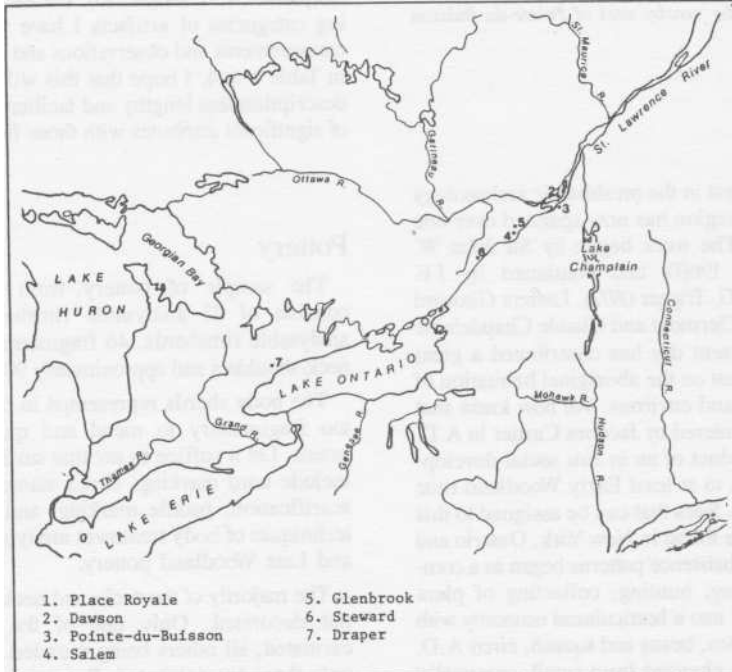


Figure 2
Sites mentioned in the text.

bears three horizontal rows of linear stamping. Specimen 4D12-1 (Fig. 5) is decorated with incised opposed lines typical of a Huron pottery type called "Black-necked".

Five of the shoulders are decorated. Attributes of decorative technique are presented in Table 1. All of the decorated shoulders date to the St. Lawrence Iroquoian occupation of the site.

TABLE 1

| Specimen | Punctate | Stamped | Incised |
|----------|----------|---------|---------|
| 3N3 | | | x |
| 4E14-1 | x | x | x |
| 4D16* | x | | |
| 4D12-3 | | x | x |
| 4E17-6 | | x | x |

*carinated

Data recorded for the 27 analysable rimsherds is presented in Tables 2 and 3. All of the 17 collared rimsherds (Table 2; Fig. 3) relate to the Late Woodland occupation of the site.

If we examine the Late Woodland rimsherds we see that three specimens have high collars, that is, 35 mm or more. Generally speaking, the lip and basal collar thickness do not vary significantly, with the exception of specimen 4D19-4 which is thick and block-like in profile. The predominant decorative technique is incising. Dentate, cord-wrapped stick stamping, and push-pull are minor techniques. Lip decoration, interior decoration and sub-collar decoration are all present. Secondary decoration in the form of hollow-reed punctates and ladderplait occurs on only three specimens. Three specimens have castellations, all of the classic pointed variety.

Of the ten collarless rimsherds, (Table 3, Fig. 4), seven belong to the Middle Woodland occupation of the site. Specimen 4E24-7 is decorated with pseudo-scallop shell obliques on both interior and exterior sides of the rim. Four horizontal lines executed in a dentate technique underline the pseudo-scallop shell obliques on the exterior of the specimen. Specimen 4D15-4 is decorated with two

irregular horizontal rows of short incised lines with linear stamping on the edge of the lip. Specimen 4E12-4 is decorated with oblique linear stamping on the interior of the lip and linear stamping on a channeled lip. The exterior motif consists of two rows of cord-wrapped stick stamping crossed by a series of irregular oblique incised lines underlined by a row of linear stamping. Specimens 4E17-5 and 4E13-2 are very similar. Each has a vertical cord-wrapped stick stamped motif beneath which are widely spaced exterior punctates with interior bosses and horizontal cord impressions. It is not certain that they are from the same vessel because of variability in the dimensions of lip thickness and height of decorated area but it remains a strong possibility.

The remaining four collarless rimsherds pertain to the St. Lawrence Iroquoian occupation of the site. A variety of forms of stamping is the favoured technique. Specimen 4E23-4 is crudely stamped along the interior and exterior lip edge with a cord-wrapped stick. Specimen 4D19-1 is stamped along the exterior edge of an everted lip with ovoid punctates. Specimen 4E24a is decorated with linear stamping on the exterior edge of the lip. Specimen 4E24-4b is decorated with linear stamping on the interior of the lip, criss-crossed stamping on the lip, and punctates on the rounded exterior of the lip.

Although our sample of pottery is too small to make any meaningful statistical comparisons with other sites, non-statistical comparisons are revealing. The two sites in closest proximity to BjFj-3 are Pointe-du-Buisson and the Dawson site (Fig. 2). Pointe-du-Buisson 4 (Clermont and Chapdelaine 1982) is a special purpose fishing station occupied mainly during the late Middle Woodland period. The majority of the pottery from Pointe-du-Buisson 4 is decorated with cord-wrapped stick and dentate stamping as is the case with the Middle Woodland pottery from BjFj-3. Likewise, the motifs and decorative techniques of the pottery pertaining to the St. Lawrence Iroquoian occupation of the site are similar to those found at the Dawson site: for instance, the unusual use of dentate stamping (Pendergast and MacNeish 1972:270, 302) and the presence of Huron pottery types such as Black-necked. On the other hand, a comparison of data from Pointe-du-Buisson 2, the St. Lawrence Iroquoian component of the occupations at Pointe-du-Buisson (Girouard 1975), with the material from BjFj-3 shows less similarity. It is most likely that the two occupation periods from prehistoric BjFj-3 are contemporaneous with late Middle Woodland Pointe-du-Buisson 4 and the Late Woodland Dawson sites.

TABLE 2
Collared Rimsherd Attributes

| Specimen | Collar ht. (mm) | Lip thck. (mm) | Basal collar thck. (mm) | Incised | Dentate | Corded-stick | Linear stamp | Push-pull | Hollow-reed punc. | Ladderplait | Sub-collar punc. | Interior dec. | Lip dec. | Castellation | Type |
|----------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------|---------|--------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|----------|--------------|--------------|
| *4D12-1 | 23 | 6 | 10 | x | | | | | | | | | | | Huron |
| 4E28-3 | 16 | 7 | 9 | | x | | | | | | | | x | | St. Lawrence |
| 4E17-3 | 33 | 6 | 8 | | x | | | | | | | | | | St. Lawrence |
| 4E12-5 | 21 | 8 | 11 | x | | | | | x | | | | | | St. Lawrence |
| 4E12-1 | 18 | 7 | 8 | x | | | | | | x | | | | | St. Lawrence |
| 4E20-2 | 51 | 8 | 11 | x | | | | | x | x | | | x | | St. Lawrence |
| 4E20-1 | 42 | 11 | 12 | x | | | | | | x | | | | x | ? |
| 4E25-5 | 43 | 8 | 7 | x | | | | | | | x | x | x | | St. Lawrence |
| 1P21 | 19 | 6 | 11 | x | | | | | | | x | x | | | St. Lawrence |
| 4B19-1 | 23 | 9 | 10 | x | | | | x | | | x | x | | x | Huron |
| 3N3-1 | 12 | 9 | 13 | x | | | | | | | | x | | | Huron |
| 4D15-7 | 16 | 7 | 9 | x | | | | | | | x | | | | Huron |
| 4D12-4 | 11 | 7 | 8 | | | | x | | | | | | | | Huron |
| 4D12-2 | 19 | 6 | 8 | x | | | | | | | x | x | | | St. Lawrence |
| 4D19-4 | 13 | 5 | 13 | x | | | | | | | x | | | | St. Lawrence |
| 4D16-4 | 22 | 13 | 15 | | | | | x | | | | | | | Huron |
| no prov. | 10 | 10 | 9 | | | x | | | | | | x | x | | St. Lawrence |

*includes 4D18-2, 4D13-7, 4D13-5 and 4D16.

TABLE 3
Collarless Rimsherd Attributes

| Specimen | Lip thck. (mm) | Incised | Corded-stick | Exterior punc. | Interior punc. | Dentate stamp | Pseudo-scalloped shell | Linear stamp | Lip dec. | Interior dec. | Band of dec. (mm) |
|----------|----------------|---------|--------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|----------|---------------|-------------------|
| 4E17-5 | 12 | | x | x | | | | | | | 27 |
| 4E12-4 | 9 | | x | | | | | | x | x | 17 |
| 4E13-2 | 9 | | x | x | | | | | | | 22 |
| 4E23-4 | 12 | | | | | | | x | | | ? |
| 4E24-4a | 9 | | | | | | | x | x | | ? |
| 4E24-4b | 9 | | | | | | | x | x | x | ? |
| 4D19-1 | 11 | | | | | | | x | | | ? |
| 4D15-4 | 10 | | | | | | | x | | | 16 |
| 4E16-2 | 7 | | | | | | | x | x | x | 22 |
| 4E24-7 | 9 | | | | | x | x | | x | x | |

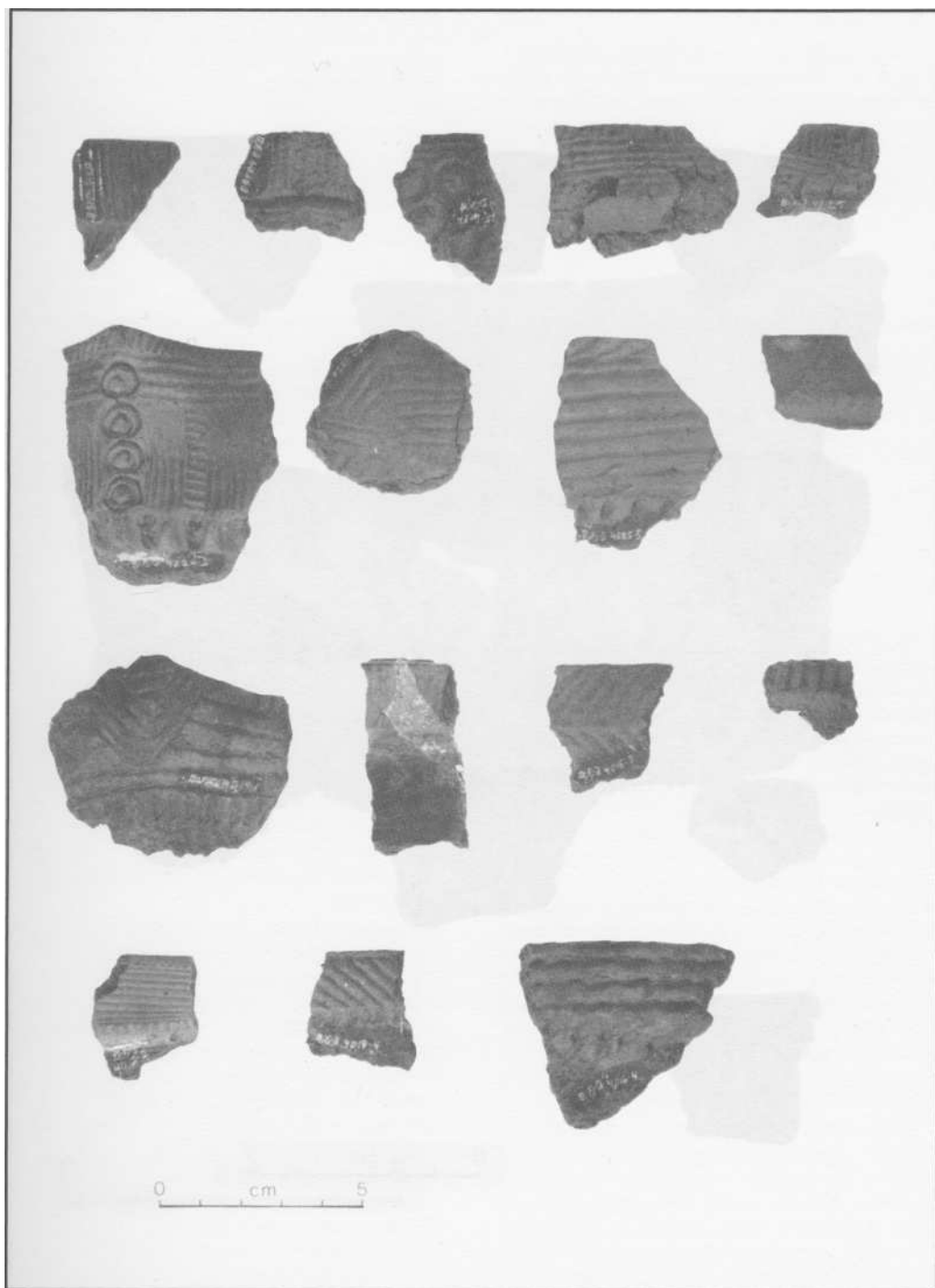


Figure 3
Collared rimsherds: (top left to bottom right)
4D12-1, 4E28-3, 4E17-3, 4E12-5, 4E12-1, 4E20-2, 4E20-1, 4E25-5,
1P21, 4B19-1, 3N3-1, 4D15-7, 4D12-4, 4D12-2, 4D19-4, 4D16-4.

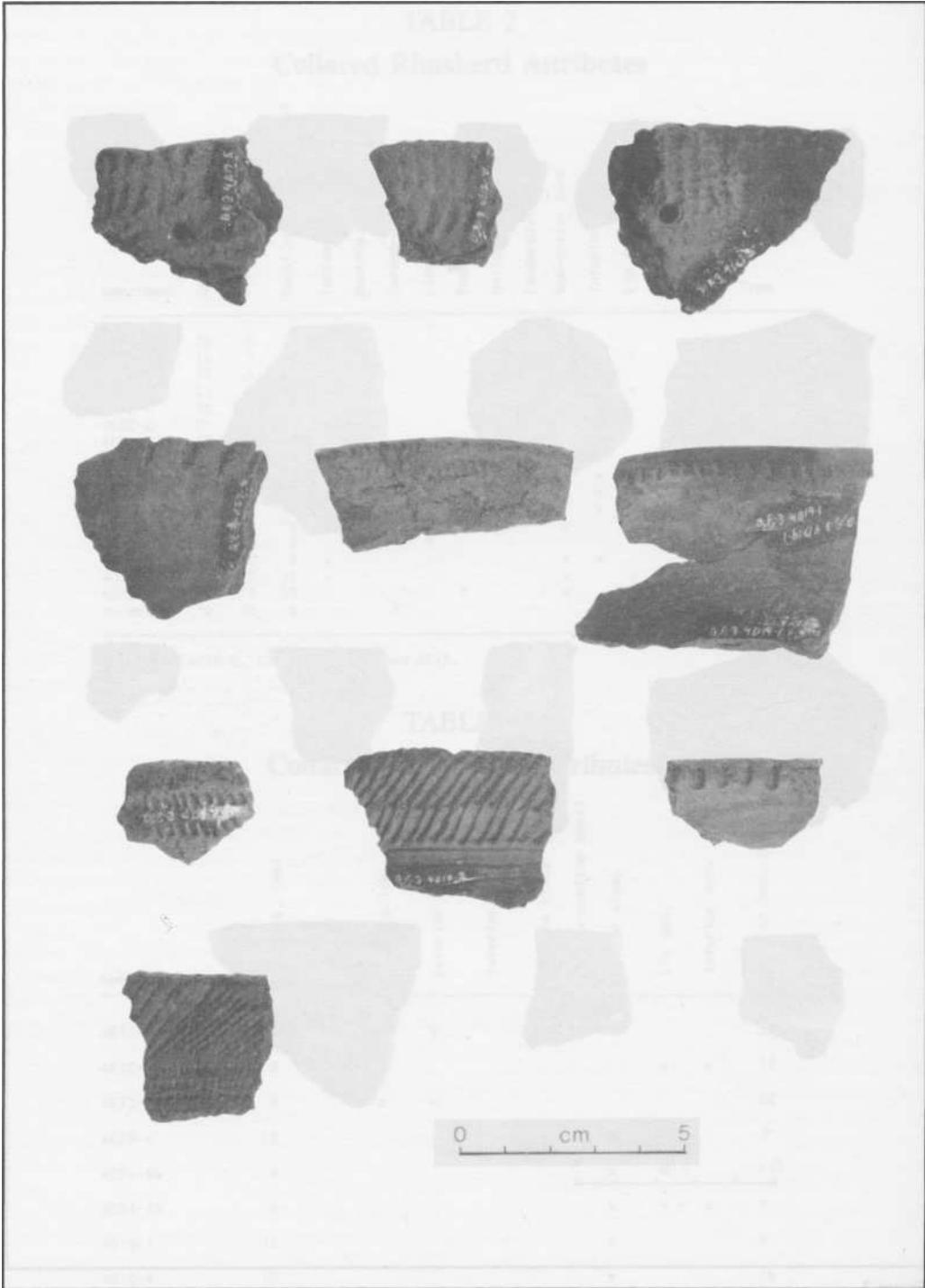


Figure 4
Collarless rimsherds: (top left to bottom right)
4E17-5, 4E12-4, 4E13-2, 4E23-4, 4E24-4a, 4D19-1, 4D15-4, 4E16-2, 4E24-4b, 4E24-7.

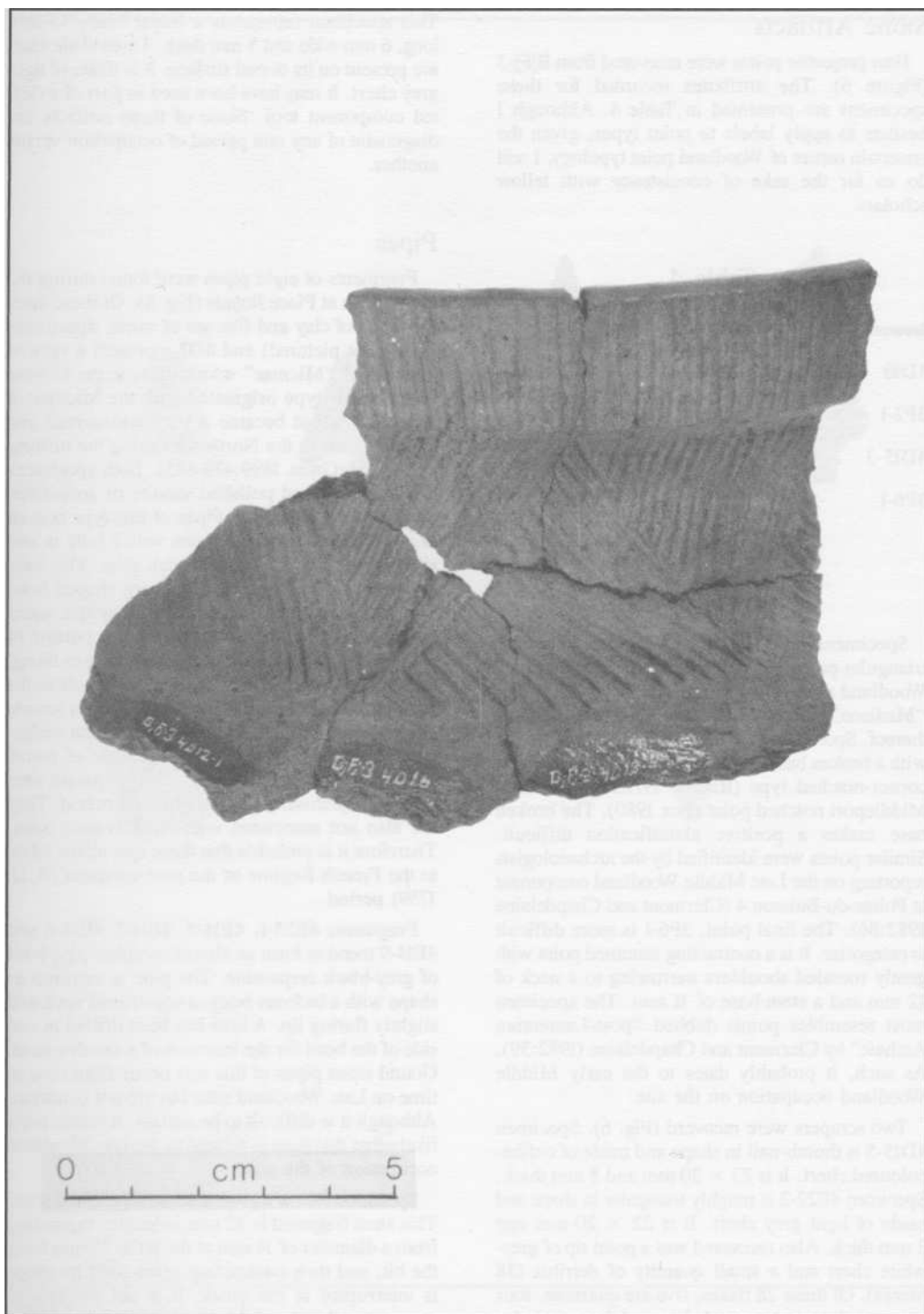


Figure 5
4D12-1 Black necked rimsherd

Stone Artifacts

Four projectile points were recovered from BjFj-3 (Figure 6). The attributes recorded for these specimens are presented in Table 4. Although I hesitate to apply labels to point types, given the uncertain nature of Woodland point typology, I will do so for the sake of consistency with fellow scholars.

Table 4

| Specimen | Length(mm) | Width(mm) | Thickness(mm) | Type |
|----------|------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 4D10 | 20 | 15 | 6 | Madison |
| 3F2-1 | 21 | 15 | 4 | Madison |
| 4D15-3 | 40 | 25 | 5 | Jack's Reef |
| 3P6-1 | 39 | 22 | 7 | post-Laurentian Archaic |

Specimens 3F2-1 and 4D10 represent small triangular points that are commonly found on Late Woodland sites. They fit into Ritchie's category of "Madison" points (1971:33) or other local variants thereof. Specimen 4D15-3 is a corner-notched point with a broken base. It could represent a Jack's Reef corner-notched type (Ritchie 1971:26) or even a Middleport notched point (Fox 1980). The broken base makes a positive identification difficult. Similar points were identified by the archaeologists reporting on the Late Middle Woodland component at Pointe-du-Buisson 4 (Clermont and Chapdelaine 1982:86). The final point, 3P6-1 is more difficult to categorize. It is a contracting stemmed point with gently rounded shoulders narrowing to a neck of 12 mm and a stem base of 11 mm. The specimen most resembles points dubbed "post-Laurentian Archaic" by Clermont and Chapdelaine (1982:39). As such, it probably dates to the early Middle Woodland occupation on the site.

Two scrapers were recovered (Fig. 6). Specimen 4D15-5 is thumb-nail in shape and made of coffee-coloured chert. It is 23 x 20 mm and 8 mm thick. Specimen 4E22-2 is roughly triangular in shape and made of light grey chert. It is 22 x 20 mm and 2 mm thick. Also recovered was a point tip of grey-white chert and a small quantity of detritus (28 pieces). Of these 28 flakes, five are quartzite, four are grey slate, two are red slate and the remainder are of a variety of colours of chert. Only one is of particular interest, specimen 4E28-1 (Fig. 6).

This specimen represents a linear blade 15 mm long, 6 mm wide and 5 mm thick. Three blade scars are present on its dorsal surface. It is made of light grey chert. It may have been used as part of a slotted component tool. None of these artifacts are diagnostic of any one period of occupation versus another.

Pipes

Fragments of eight pipes were found during the excavations at Place Royale (Fig. 8). Of these three are made of clay and five are of stone. Specimens 3Q1-1 (not pictured) and 4D7 represent a type of pipe called "Micmac" which dates to the historic period. This type originated with the Micmac of Nova Scotia but became a very widespread and popular form in the Northeast during the historic period (McGuire 1899:479-485). Both specimens are of carved and polished steatite or soapstone, medium-grey in colour. Pipes of this type consist of a wedge or key-shaped base with a hole in one side for the insertion of a wooden stem. This base is surmounted by an inverted acorn shaped bowl on a short constricted neck. Both of our specimens have a small drilled hole in the inferior portion of the base to facilitate suspension on a string or thong. In both cases the bowl has been broken off at the neck and is missing. Specimen 4D7 has a simple incised design along the superior edge of the wedge-shaped base. Although these pipes are of native manufacture, they do not occur on Iroquoian sites during the prehistoric or proto-historic period. They are also not associated with early contact sites. Therefore it is probable that these specimens relate to the French Regime or the post-conquest (A.D. 1759) period.

Fragments 4E25-1, 4E14-5, 4E14 7, 4E14-8 and 4E14-9 mend to form an almost complete pipe bowl of grey-black serpentine. The pipe is vasiform in shape with a bulbous body, a constricted neck and slightly flaring lip. A hole has been drilled in one side of the bowl for the insertion of a wooden stem. Ground stone pipes of this sort occur from time to time on Late Woodland sites but are not common. Although it is difficult to be certain, it seems most likely that this pipe is related to the late Woodland occupation of the site.

Specimen 3K1 is a ground stone pipe of red slate. This stem fragment is 32 mm in length, expanding from a diameter of 14 mm at the bit to 22 mm from the bit, and then contracting again until its shape is interrupted at the break. It is not possible to reconstruct the rest of this pipe's stem or bowl from the fragment we have. It could relate to either of our prehistoric periods. Red slate was a popular

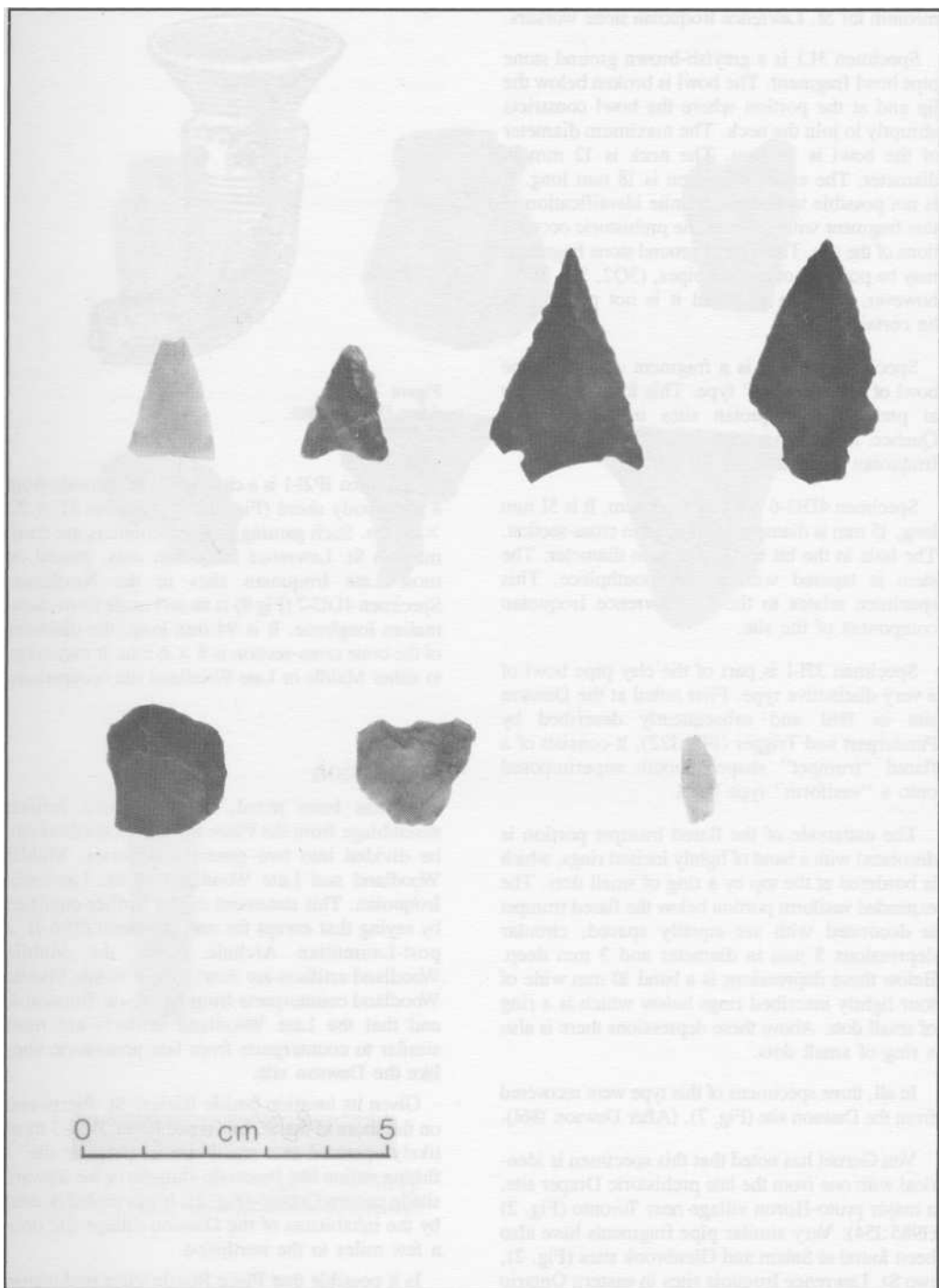


Figure 6
 Projectile points: 4D10, 3F2-1, 4D15-3, 3P6-1
 Scrapers: 4D15-5, 4E22-2
 Linear flake: 4E28-1

medium for St. Lawrence Iroquoian stone workers.

Specimen 3L1 is a greyish-brown ground stone pipe bowl fragment. The bowl is broken below the lip and at the portion where the bowl constricts abruptly to join the neck. The maximum diameter of the bowl is 29 mm. The neck is 12 mm in diameter. The entire specimen is 18 mm long. It is not possible to make a definite identification of this fragment with either of the prehistoric occupations of the site. Three other ground stone fragments may be portions of broken pipes, (3Q2, 3J1, 3P6), however, they are so small it is not possible to be certain.

Specimen 4C22-2 is a fragment of a clay pipe bowl of the "trumpet" type. This form is popular at prehistoric Iroquoian sites in Ontario and Quebec. It can be associated with the St. Lawrence Iroquoian occupation of BfFj-3.

Specimen 4D13-6 is a clay pipe stem. It is 51 mm long, 15 mm is diameter and round in cross-section. The hole in the bit end is 5 mm in diameter. The stem is tapered with a flat mouthpiece. This specimen relates to the St. Lawrence Iroquoian component of the site.

Specimen 3J1-1 is part of the clay pipe bowl of a very distinctive type. First noted at the Dawson site in 1861 and subsequently described by Pendergast and Trigger (1972:122), it consists of a flared "trumpet" shaped mouth superimposed onto a "vasiform" pipe bowl.

The underside of the flared trumpet portion is decorated with a band of lightly incised rings, which is bordered at the top by a ring of small dots. The expanded vasiform portion below the flared trumpet is decorated with six equally spaced, circular depressions 5 mm in diameter and 3 mm deep. Below these depressions is a band 10 mm wide of four lightly inscribed rings below which is a ring of small dots. Above these depressions there is also a ring of small dots.

In all, three specimens of this type were recovered from the Dawson site (Fig. 7). (After Dawson 1861).

Von Gernet has noted that this specimen is identical with one from the late prehistoric Draper site, a major proto-Huron village near Toronto (Fig. 2) (1985:1.54). Very similar pipe fragments have also been found at Salem and Glenbrook sites (Fig. 2), two St. Lawrence Iroquoian sites in eastern Ontario (Pendergast 1966:Plate 4, 10; 1981:Plate 7, 13). This type of pipe is so distinct that I would label it "trumpet-vasiform" so as to distinguish it from other very different "vasiform" types.



Figure 7
After Dawson 1861.

Specimen 1P21-1 is a circular clay disc made from a plain body sherd (Fig. 9). It measures 21 x 22 x 5 mm. Such gaming discs or counters are common on St. Lawrence Iroquoian sites, indeed on most Late Iroquoian sites in the Northeast. Specimen 4D13-7 (Fig 9) is an awl made from mammalian longbone. It is 94 mm long; the diameter of the ovate cross-section is 8 x 6 mm. It may relate to either Middle or Late Woodland site occupations.

Discussion

As has been noted, the prehistoric artifact assemblage from the Place Royale excavations can be divided into two general categories, Middle Woodland and Late Woodland or St. Lawrence Iroquoian. This statement can be further qualified by saying that except for one specimen (3P6-1), a post-Laurentian Archaic point, the Middle Woodland artifacts are most similar to late Middle Woodland counterparts from Pointe-du-Buisson 4, and that the Late Woodland artifacts are most similar to counterparts from late prehistoric sites like the Dawson site.

Given its location beside Riviere St. Pierre and on the shore of the St. Lawrence River, BfFj-3 most likely operated as a small special purpose site, a fishing station like Pointe-du-Buisson or the Steward site in eastern Ontario (Fig. 2). It was probably used by the inhabitants of the Dawson village site only a few miles to the northwest.

Is it possible that Place Royale's late prehistoric occupations were visited or sighted by Jacques Cartier in 1535? Cartier recorded the presence of small fishing stations all along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. Archaeological evidence



Figure 8
Pipes: (top left to bottom right)
4D7, 4E25-1 etc., 3K1, 3L1, 4C22-2, 3J1, 4D13-6

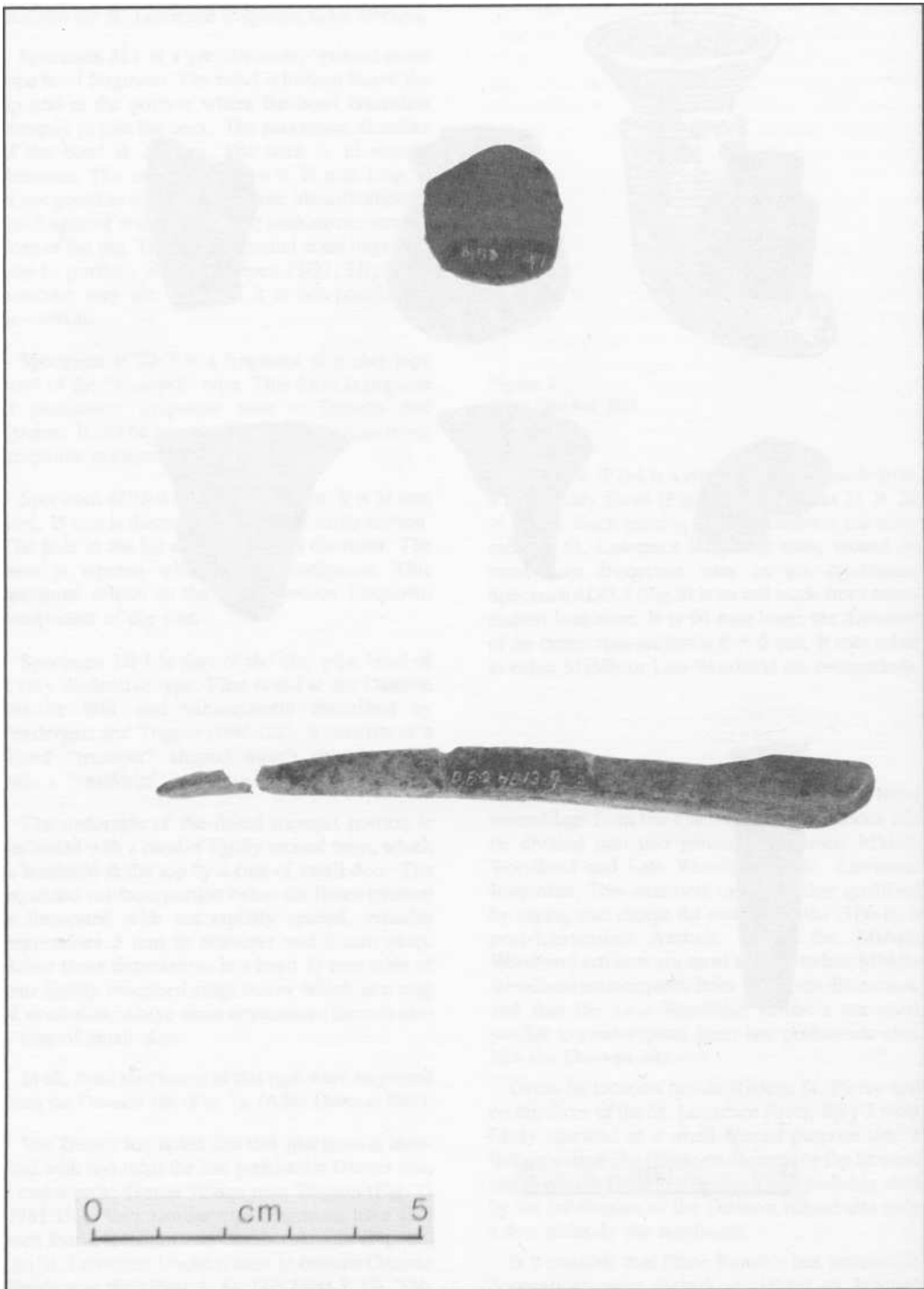


Figure 9
1P21-1: Clay disc
4D13-7: Awl

indicates that the answer must be no. Although certain European goods were recovered from the excavations, none was found to be in direct stratigraphic association with native pottery, lithic or bone artifacts. Even allowing for the disturbance or displacement of trade goods originating before the permanent establishment of New France and thus after the disappearance of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians, the trade goods that are present in other areas of the site (beads, etc.) date from 100 years or more after the time of Cartier (W.F. Fitzgerald, personal communication). The uncertainty of St. Lawrence Iroquoian chronology at the present time has been noted by a number of authors (Marois 1978; Jamieson 1982; Clermont, Chapdelaine and Barre 1983). Therefore, it is not possible to say more than that the St. Lawrence Iroquoian component at Bfj-3 dates to the late prehistoric period.

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