

New York State Archeological Association

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Contents

A Preliminary Report of the Smith Site, Shelter Island Roy Latham	1
Chapter Reports	8
Preliminary Report of Awards Committee	9

A Preliminary Report of the Smith Site, Shelter Island<sup>1</sup>  
Roy Latham                      Long Island Chapter

These notes present a preliminary account of our excavations and of the material recovered on the Smith Site, Shelter Island, from 1943 to 1953. A complete report with full descriptions and details is in preparation.

This coastal site is strictly prehistoric, but continued close to the contact period. No trade evidence was recorded. In the original surface, underneath the shells, were remains of an older occupancy. This older culture was not the Orient focus. The projectile points found below the shells were the narrow types, side-notched with straight bases, or stemmed. None had the notched base of the fishtail type. Except for one each of flint, jasper, argillite and slate materials, all were of white quartz. This type of point, commonly made from the core of quartz pebbles and frequently with the skin of the stone left on the base, probably antedates the fishtail type of Long Island, where it is common throughout on the surface. It is not found in the shellheaps of the later Indians of eastern Long Island. With the narrow points, below the shells, were found seven sherds of steatite; two sherds 38 feet apart contacted. The sherds represent two small vessels with notched rims. The steatite vessels in the Orient are so extremely variable that no comparison can be made with those from the Smith site. Twenty-seven pieces of rubbed graphite were taken from the lower culture; one was associated with a stemmed point and a steatite sherd. No graphite or steatite was found in the later culture on the site. Hematite paintstones were in both cultures. An incisor from a bear, drilled for a pendant, was in the lower, the only remains of a bear from the site. There were scanty remains of bone and antler, worked or unworked, in the lower. One long antler awl, four worn awls from deer bone, and two bone pins were the total worked bone from the bottom culture. Worked bone and antler were common in the upper leavings. Broken and flaked stones were common below, but only two hammerstones were found. Hammerstones were common at all levels above. Below were four small completely grooved axes and none above. One axe is somewhat adze-like; another is broken in the middle, and the fractured end has been used as a muller or hammer.

Shells were nearly lacking in the old cultural floor. There was a layer of large oyster valves, 15 inches thick, which had been set down below the old floor, and a hearth had been built on them. In the lime, ash and charcoal were charred deer bones. This hearth was attributed to the older culture. Aside from this hearth, nine others, placed with the older aspect, contained no firestone. Some of these hearths were quite large, four or five feet across, with the soil below reddened from the heat. The drilled bear incisor and some of the old type points were associated with these fireplaces.

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1. Presented at the NYSAA annual meeting, 6 April, 1957.

It is not certain if the older culture had pottery. A few sherds of old grit-tempered pottery were in the soil below the shells, but it is uncertain to which people they belonged. Sebonac pottery was common in the later culture on the site. Associated with the later Sebonac types of pottery were various Niantic styles. The Niantic pottery, showing Iroquoian influence, came in after the middle of the Sebonac period on the site (pottery from the site will be described in the final report on the site).

A large pot was found cached on the rim, intact with an arrowpoint at the side. This pot was cached over a pit filled with scallop shells, the valves covered with eight inches of sand. Two similar pots were found, likewise cached nearby over pits covered with sand which contained shells. Each of these two pots had the bottom third of the pot taken off by the plow (the site was a cornfield at one time). A small pot, 2 by 2 1/2 inches, was found intact in a small pit of soft-clam shells. It is decorated with fingernail punctations, partially done by the left hand and the balance by the right hand.

Corded, stamped, incised and punctate are all present. More than 50 decorative designs are recorded from the site.

There were two hollows on the site which, from the material uncovered, were winter quarters. In these hollows were no whelks, and only bone of fish that hibernate or are otherwise found here in winter. The floor of these winter lodges were 12 to 16 inches thick of broken, crushed and trampled quahog shells, leveled flat. On these had been built elevated stone hearths up to a foot in height, with an opening at the top to support a pointed-bottom pot. About 7 to 8 feet outside the floor on the north side was a line of post-molds, but none could be detected on the other sides. This shell floor was below the plowing depth of 200 years later. No pits were within the paved area, but they were common without on all sides.

There was a knoll between the hollows with many remains of migrant fishes, summer whelks, turtles and land snails, manifesting this higher spot to have been a summer resident section of the site. In one pit 470 whelks or conch shells were taken out. Every shell had the customary hole broken through the back of the shell so that the meat could be readily removed. In one pit was found the skull of a muskrat; also, an individual human mandible which had been gnawed by a dog or some other mammal.

Five burials were recorded during our excavations. (Several graves were opened about 50 years previous when the grounds were graded for a residence. These will be

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treated in the final report of the site). In four of the groves, the subjects were tightly flexed just under the plowing depth, with no offerings, which is normal for the eastern Long Island-shell-midden complex. The fifth burial, which because of its departure from the usual burial is doubtfully attributed to the older culture, was deep, 58 inches, and the subject was extended, lying on the back, head west. The skeleton was a middle-aged female, judged by a dentist to be 40 years old. Around the neck of the skeleton was the remains of a necklace consisting of 825 *Marginella* and a few *Olivella* shell beads. At the waist, on the left side, was an offering of two needles made from ribs of a deer, and two awls made from the ulna of a deer; two unworked deer ulna, to be made into awls later, were with them. At the breast was a pin made from deer bone, evidently used to pin wrappings together. At the knees was half of a pestle. About eight quarts of a bright limonite-stained sand were at the head, and the same amount was deposited at the feet. The skeleton was on light quartz sand and the golden-hued substance contrasted strongly in color. Its use explained the presence of several deep pits, barren of anything except soil: They were dug down into the stratum of this sand, which underlies the site in the section where the deep barren pits occurred. This material was the same as found in grave No. 5. It is believed that the people of the older culture used this substance with burials and dug the deep pits to obtain it. There was none of it with the later regular burials. The bone offerings show evidence that the woman made and used needles and awls. Shell beads were probably used by both sexes.

A catalog of the material from the Smith site

The two cultural layers are designated as the Upper and Lower.

	<u>Upper</u>	<u>Lower</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Chipped Stone</u>			
Projectile Points			98
Triangle, all quartz	46		
Triangle, straight sides and base	11		
Triangle, concave sides and base	17		
Triangle, straight sides and concave base	18		
Narrow, side-notched and concave base		15	
Notched	7	19	26
Stemmed		15	
Knives			
All plain forms	36	11	47
Scrapers			
Circular of quartz	66	1	67
Cache of 16, circular	64		
	16		

		<u>Upper</u>	<u>Lower</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Chipped Stone</u>				
Scrapers (con'd)	From broken arrowpoint, argillite		1	
Drills	Straight and expanded bases	11	2	13
<u>Polished stones</u>				
Celts	Regular types	12		
	Celt blank	1		
Gorget	Slate, two holes	6		
	Hematite, one hole	1		
Axes	Completely grooved		4	
Odd Forms	Pebble grooved around one end, probably pendant		1	
<u>Rough Stones</u>				
Hammerstones	Plain, used on ends	33	2	35
	Pitted	7		
	Grooved	1		
Mullers	Stones abraded on ends	5		
Pestles	Cylinder pebbles used on ends	4	1	5
	Offerings in grave		1	
Whetstones	Notched from working on celts, etc.	3		
Hoes	Edged	2		
Stone-working tools	Small slender pebble used on ends	2		
Net sinkers	Stones notched on side edges	22		
Mortar	Heavy stones with cups	5	1	6
	Bicupped	1		
Pigment	Hematite paintstones	22	10	33
	Graphite		27	

<u>Rough Stones</u>		<u>Upper</u>	<u>Lower</u>	<u>Tota</u>
<u>Pigment (con'd)</u>				
	Limonite sand in grave		1	
Bone and Antler	Awls	103	5	108
	Deer bone	85	5	90
	Bird Bone	17		
	Sting-ray spine	1		
	Notched on side near base	1		
Needles	From deer ribs	5	2	7
	In grave offerings		2	
Pins	Deer bone and antler	10	2	12
	In grave		1	
Harpoon Points	2 antler, one sturgeon bone	3		
Beads	From vertebrae of shark	2		
Arrowpoints	Deer bone and antler, all socket types	11		
	Wild turkey bone	1		
	Deer bone with angled edges	1		
Pendants	Drilled deer bone	1		
	Drilled bear tooth		1	
Pottery Tools	Beaver incisor for punctata work, No . 20568	1		
	Paddle of whale bone	1		
Cups	Lord turtle carapace	2		
Flakers	Cut antlers used on ends	14		
Steatite	Contacting sherds		7	
Pipes	All pottery, one perfect	17		
Pottery	Vessels determined by rims	117	2?	119
	Sebonac, as applied here	96		96
	Niantic, type showing Iroquoia n trend	21		
	Cached pots, and one small pot intact	4		
Shells	Necklace with 825 Marginella and Olivella shells		825	

		<u>Upper</u>	<u>Lower</u>	<u>Tota</u>
<u>Rough Stones</u>				
Shells (con'd)	Clam shells with worn edges	3		
Burials	Of our excavation	4	1?	5
	Flexed with no offerings	4		
	Extended with offerings (Others, uncovered about 1902, reported to have been from 2 to 28.)		1	
Hearths	Elevated stones to 12 inches;	3		
	on oyster shell bed;		1	
	on ground with no firestones; firepits	5	9	
<u>Miscellaneous</u>				
Natural History	Species recorded on site as utilized by Indians			
Mammals	Dog, muskrat, raccoon, beaver, bear, mink, cottontail, woodchuck, whale.			
Birds	Merganser, sea ducks, wild turkey, night heron, bobwhite, large hawk			
Reptile	Box turtle, loggerhead turtle, diamond back terrapin, black snake skull			
Fishes	Eel, sting-ray, sturgeon, shark, blackfish, porgy, bluefish, sea robin, flounder, codfish, and other small species.			
Crustacea	Lobster, blue crab, horsefoot crab			
Shells	Scallop, soft clam, hard clam (quahog), oyster, razor clam, half razor, surf clam, ribbed mussel, black mussel, blood clam, knobbed whelk, channel whelk, collared snail, Marginella, Olivella, three species of land snails were very common. On one morning in a short section of a trench, 700 specimens of <u>Anguispira alternata</u> were counted and over 100 of <u>Mesodon thyroideus</u> . This last species was in all stages of growth down			

Miscellaneous

Shells (con'd)	to the eggs, which were hard white pellets. The remarkable numbers of land snails, of woodland species, show that the site was heavily wooded when occupied by Indians. At the present time, only scattered snails of these species are found in the vicinity.
Vegetal	Charred hickory nuts, two species, black walnut, charred; a species not now found wild on Shelter Island; charcoal in hearths.
Mineral	Quartz of various colors, sandstone, limonite, hematite, graphite, jasper, flint, slate, argillite, schist, mica, soapstone, feldspar, claystone, etc.
History	The Smith site is situated on the west shore of Shelter Island sound, near the South Ferry. The late owner, F M. Smith, was the famous 20-mule-team borax king of Death Valley, California.

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NYSAA Has Lowest Membership to Population

Ratio of State Societies in ESAF

The 1957 directory of the Eastern States Archeological Federation bears interesting news for those concerned about the status of the NYSAA in the field of archeology.

Among other data, it provides total membership of each of the societies of the 17 states and one Canadian province. The table below shows that the NYSAA trails all of the states in ratio of membership to population. (Population in thousands, "Ratio" is members per million population; population figures are estimates for 1956 provided by Rand McNally Road Atlas, 1957 edition).

Read the following data carefully. They are cause for sober reflection. Why do we in New York make such a poor showing?

Certainly YOU must have some ideas on the subject. Why not write your comments and suggestions to the editor.

<u>State</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Ratio</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
Ala.	82	3,045	27	N.H.	63	560	112
Conn.	322	2,271	142	N.J.	399	5,515	72
Del.	103	394	262	N.Y.	250	15,518	16
Fla.	232	3,633	64	N.C.	110	4,300	26
Ga.	75	3,656	20	Penna.	797	11,070	72
Me.	80	900	89	R.I.	72	853	84
Md.	54	2,800	19	Va.	175	3,625	48
Mass.	499	4,950	101	W. Va.	85	2,008	42
Mich.	195	7,340	27	Ontario	75	5,256	14

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#### Auringer-Seelye Chapter Member Honored

The first presentation of the Francis F. Lucas Award, for excellency in metallography, was to have been made the first week in November by the American Society for Metals.

The award, made at the annual meeting in Chicago, is in honor of Dr. Lucas, native of Glens Falls, and member of the Auringer-Seelye chapter. It is to be annually endowed and perpetual. He was to attend the first presentation.

The noted scientist was for many years associated with Bell Telephone Laboratories. He was also known for his medical research for the United States government, and research in the rubber latex field. In, 1924 the Society for Metals, the outstanding metallurgical organization of the world, awarded Dr. Lucas the Henry Marion Howe Gold Medal for his work. At one time, Dr. Lucas was chairman of the New York State chapter of the society. He is a member of the NYSAA awards committee.

Dr. Lucas was born in Glens Falls, attended Glens Falls schools. Since retirement he spent his summers at Assembly Point, and winters in Winter Park, Florida. He now resides permanently in Winter Park.

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#### Long Island Chapter Reports Activity

The Long Island group submits the following report of the summer's activities:

1. Searches were continued for surface material on the farms, and also along some beaches, and some arrow-heads found.

2. Digging was done at the Smith site, on Shelter Island, and many old shells, etc. recovered. This site was partly explored some years ago and much fine material secured.

Now a real estate development may start building near the site, but as it is a rather large one, it may not all be covered. Efforts are planned to do further work at this site.

3. The exhibits were maintained at the Southold High School, and the objects were partly rearranged, etc.

4. The exhibits are being maintained at the Riverhead Museum Building.

5. Efforts are being made to secure a satisfactory location for a possible museum to safely house the many items now owned by this Chapter.

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#### Preliminary Report of Awards Committee

The NYSAA membership approved, at the annual meeting last April, a system of awards for special recognition. Subsequently the President appointed a committee to work out the details so the plan might be in operation before the 1958 annual meeting.

The committee: Marian E. White, chairman, Morgan chapter; Francis F. Lucas, Auringer-Seelye chapter; John H. Husing, Long Island chapter; Louis A. Brennan, Mid-Hudson chapter; Clyde Olson, Susquehanna chapter; Earl Casler, Van Epps-Hartley chapter.

A preliminary report has been prepared especially for THE BULLETIN. Such a report has two advantages. First, it gives the membership a chance to express opinions before, rather than after, the plans reach their final form. Since each chapter has a representative on the awards committee, it is hoped that opinions will be expressed freely to them or to the chairman. Secondly, the membership will be informed of the general lines along which the committee has been thinking, so that each member can be preparing to participate in the awards.

The membership approved two classes of awards, an achievement and a fellowship award. The first "may be awarded annually to any person who has made an outstanding contribution to the Association and its work". This person may or may not be a member of the Association. Recommendations for the achievement award will be submitted to the committee with a full statement of the achievement. The chapters will be asked each year for recommendations. In addition, any individual member may submit recommendations. The committee will study these recommendations and will have final authority in the selection for the award.

The second class of awards, election to fellowship in the NYSAA, is open to all members who through their activities have shown that they deserve recognition for their contributions to New York Indian affairs. Each individual case which is brought to the

attention of the committee will be judged on its own merits. The committee has been considering very carefully the circumstances which warrant consideration of a member for fellowship status. The thoughts which underlie our considerations are these:

Membership in, the NYSAA signifies both interest in New York State Indians and active participation in the preservation and promotion of knowledge about their culture. According to our Constitution, "The purpose of the Association shall be to promote archeological and historical study and research covering the artifacts, rites, customs, beliefs, and other phases of the lives and cultures of the aboriginal occupants of New York State up to and including their contact with Europeans..." Among our nearly 300 members this interest in Indians covers a wide range. On the one hand is the member who regards their archeology or history as a pleasant leisure-time activity. On the other hand is the serious student who wishes to make some solid contribution to the knowledge of New York State Indian life. It is this latter group which the committee believes should be recognized through the creation of a class of fellowships. The following policy is proposed. It is emphasized that this is a preliminary policy, and criticisms and comments are solicited.

1. Any member of the NYSAA in good standing may be elected to a fellowship upon approval by the awards committee of a completed research project. The major consideration will be the importance of this research as a contribution to our knowledge of New York State Indians.

2. The decision of the committee will be based on a report of the research project which must be submitted by the researcher in manuscript or published form. The minimum requirement will be one report which the researcher has prepared as sole or senior author, or at least two reports which he has helped prepare as junior author or collaborator, the number depending upon the nature of his contribution to the research.

3. The research project, as reported to the committee, will be assessed on the following points:

- (a) original research, either in the description and presentation of new data or new interpretations;
- (b) adequate description of the data and of the manner in which they were collected, including illustrations and proper references were required;
- (c) adequate description of the methods of analyzing the data;
- (d) competence in the use of techniques, which are scientifically, accepted procedures for collecting data;
- (e) competence in the use of scientifically acceptable methods for analyzing the data;
- (f) conclusions warranted by the analysis of the data;
- (g) understanding of the relationship of the research problem and the conclusions to current knowledge of New York Indians;
- (h) integrity, stemming from the absence of any discrepancies which might reflect on personal honesty or technical competence.

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Any member who has completed such a research project may be presented for consideration either by himself or by another member of the Association by submitting the completed research project to the awards committee. This informal manner of presentation does not in any way prevent a chapter from adopting more formal procedures to encourage its members to submit their research projects.

The Awards Committee will review every candidate's qualifications with the Executive Committee. Since the Executive Committee is composed of chapter presidents and two chapter trustees, this procedure will provide local as well as statewide assessments of the researcher's worthiness of recognition. However, the final authority for election of any member to fellowship will rest with the awards committee.

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