

Mundane Place or Sacred Space: Interpreting the Highlands Site (11Gr100), a Historic Native American Short Duration Occupation on the Des Plaines River, Grundy County, Illinois

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Archaeological excavations conducted at the Highlands Site near Channahon, Illinois exposed a small, short-duration historic period Native American occupation situated on the upland bluff overlooking the Des Plaines River. Excavated features included four shallow basins, one hearth and a unique semi-circular shallow depression. Historic period artifacts were sparse and included glass seed beads, pieces of scrap copper and lead, and triangular projectile points. Rich amounts of subsistence remains including elk and bison were also recovered from several features. The Highlands site is interpreted as representing a Potawatomi occupation dating to the late 18th or early 19th century. Using historical accounts and illustrations of Potawatomi sites and religious customs and activities, the Highlands Site appears to represent a Potawatomi ritual location. Although graves or human skeletal material were not encountered, the analyses of the artifact assemblage, feature morphology and patterning, and interpretation of the faunal assemblage suggests the Highlands site was utilized as a mortuary location.

The area surrounding the base of Lake Michigan at the point where the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers merge with the upper reaches of the Illinois River was the penetration point of the Potawatomi migration into the western Great Lakes region known as the Illinois Country. Beginning in the mid-1600s, the Potawatomi, who inhabited the western Michigan, initiated a series of westward movements to acquire larger hunting territories buttressing their participation in the North American fur trade and also to avoid pressure (and competition) from Iroquois raiders and trappers. The earliest mention of the Potawatomi south of the Great Lakes was the 1674 record of their foray down the Illinois River to trade with the Illiniwek near Peoria (Kellogg 1917:262). During the subsequent 100 years, the Potawatomi became increasingly focused on the acquisition of broader hunting territories, the taking and trade of furs, and the accumulation of French-provided finished goods and raw materials. The strength of the French and Potawatomi alignment is evidenced by the fact that Potawatomi raiding parties traveled as far south as

present day Tennessee and Mississippi to assist French troops attack pro-British Chickasaw villages in the region (Wheeler-Voegelin 1974:63-65). However, when the French were defeated during the French and Indian War in the 1760s, Potawatomi allegiance realigned toward the British. The Potawatomi and British cooperation continued until the British defeat during the War of 1812.

Permanent occupation of the region west of Lake Michigan by the Potawatomi was initiated in the mid-1740s when a large mixed Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa village was established near the mouth of the Chicago River (Sasso and Wilder 1998:187; Temple 1966:128). Over the next quarter century, the Potawatomi presence (along with the allied Ottawa and Chippewa groups) in the Illinois Country increased until the region was dominated by Potawatomi allied groups. By the late 18th century, permanent Potawatomi occupations were spread across Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Numerous British and American travelers noted Potawatomi hamlets, towns, and villages dotting the banks of the St. Joseph, Chicago, Des Plaines, Kankakee and Illinois rivers. As many as nine large villages are documented in the vicinity of the Des Plaines and Kankakee Rivers prior to the turn of the 18th century (Tanner 1987:99). Sasso and Wilder (1998) historical research of Potawatomi sites in southern Wisconsin suggest the Potawatomi presence in the region was intensive. A review of early 19th century pioneer narratives, government documents, and historic accounts from only five southern Wisconsin counties, Sasso and Wilder documented 261 habitations, special activity locations, resource exploitation stations, and sacred areas associated with the Potawatomi (ibid:191).

In spite of the long duration and intensity of the Potawatomi presence west of Lake Michigan, archaeologists have examined few occupations (O’Gorman and Farnsworth 1995; Sasso and Fawcett 1996; Wagner 2001; Wenner 1954). Within the broader region surrounding Lake Michigan, archaeological investigations of Potawatomi sites in Michigan and Wisconsin have included mission or trading post locations, village and habitation sites, and cemetery or individual burial locations (Hulse 1981; Nassaney 2002; Sasso and Wilder 1998; Schurr and Martin 2002). These more intensively occupied sites are typically well documented in the historic record and often result in archaeological signatures that are readily recognizable to archaeologists (Esarey 1997;

Walthal and Emerson 1992:5). However, other elements of the Late Historic Period Native American settlement and village structure are less well documented archaeologically. Eighteenth and early nineteenth century Potawatomi occupations included a various number of activity areas including dance grounds, agricultural fields, sacred spaces such as funerary camps, and other ephemeral sites that leave scant archaeological evidence of their presence. One of the few archaeological investigations of a Potawatomi activity area other than a village or burial location is the examination of the Raymond Center Cornfield site in Racine County, Wisconsin (Sasso and Wilder 1998:190).

Archaeological sites that date to the Late Historic Period (although rare and, consequently, rarely investigated) express considerable variation in size and degree of complexity. Factors that influence the composition of Late Historic Period sites include the time of year the site was occupied (summer/winter), social conditions during the time of occupation (war/peace) and the number of inhabitants (single structure/larger villages and nuclear family/multiple kinship groups) (Sasso and Wilder 1998; Wagner 2001:15).

The Highlands site (11Gr100) is a historic Native American archaeological site that appears to represent a limited activity, short duration occupation. In addition to the historic Native American component, the Highlands Site includes a low-density plow zone-confined artifact scatter related to prehistoric Archaic and Woodland occupations. The site is positioned in a cultivated agricultural field that encompasses a narrow projection of upland bluff that rises nearly 110 ft above the broad floodplain surrounding the confluence of the Des Plaines and Kankakee rivers (Figures 1 and 2). U.S. General Land Office survey records indicate that, when surveyed during the early 19th century, the vicinity of the site including the adjacent floodplain was forested. Large expanses of prairie opened in the uplands to the north and west of the site and a large area of floodplain prairie was present two to three kilometers southeast of the Highlands site.

A cluster of six shallow features consisting of four irregularly shaped basins, a large hearth containing cracked rock and charcoal, and an enigmatic C-shaped shallow depression or trench-like feature, represented the historic component. Artifacts recovered

from these features included a diverse array of subsistence remains and a sparse assemblage of trade goods. Using the glass bead assemblage as a temporal indicator, the

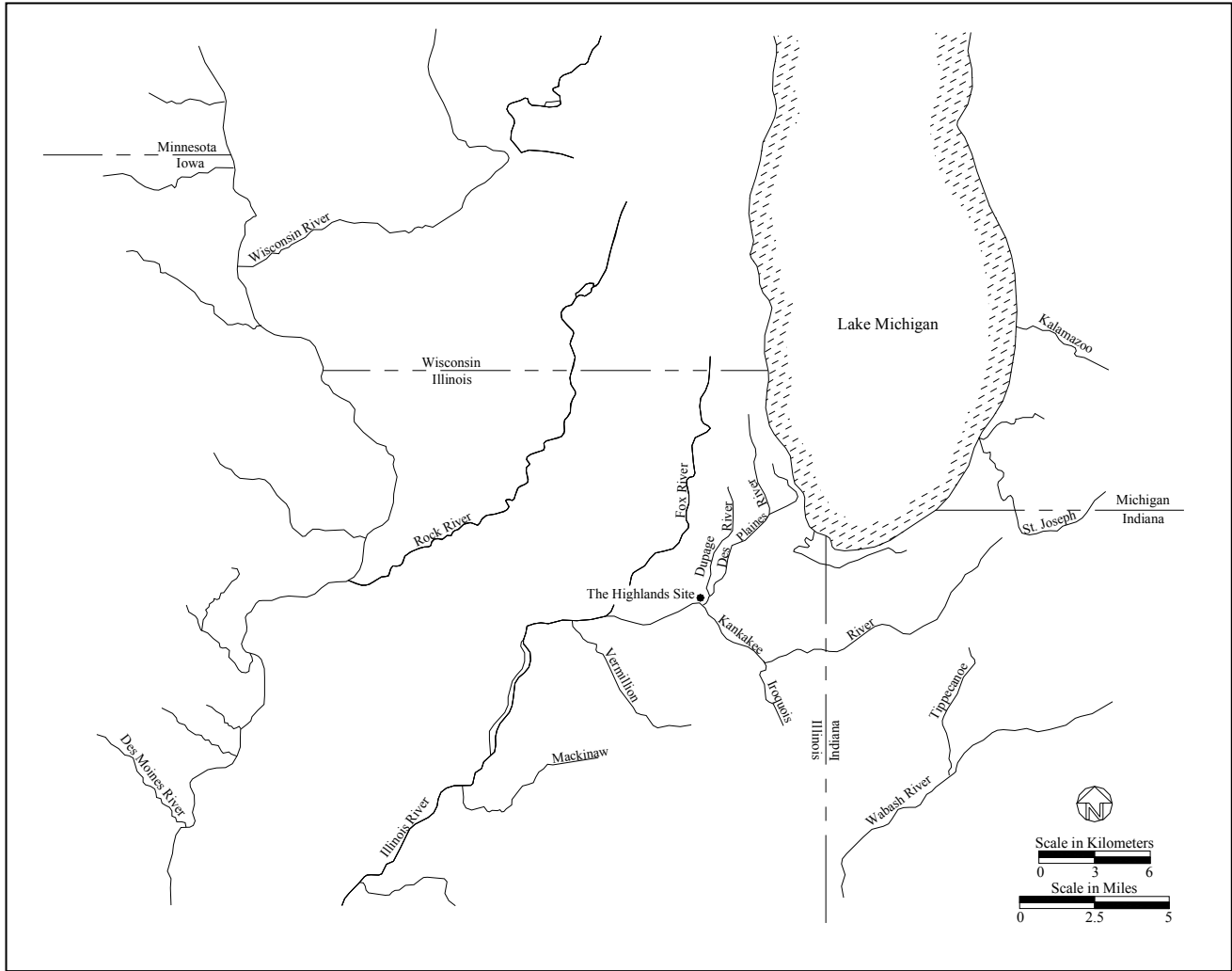


Figure 1. Location of the Highlands Site (11Gr100).



Figure 2. Portions of the Channahon and Minooka, IL 7.5 Minute USGS topographic maps showing the Highlands Site.

historic Native American use of the site dates to the Late Historic Period, which spans roughly 1760 to 1830 (Quimby 1966). This period coincides with the Potawatomi entrance and occupation of the southern Lake Michigan and upper Illinois River regions.

Interpreting the Highlands site's historic Native American component is hampered by several factors. First, the site's archaeological signature is at best faint. The few European-derived artifacts recovered from the site are not particularly useful temporal markers in that they span an approximately 60-year period. Also, there is no direct historical or archival documentation of a historic Native American occupation at the Highlands site. Finally, our correlation of ethnic identity with the Potawatomi is based on the fact that during the Late Historic period, the region surrounding the Highlands site was inhabited predominately by Potawatomi and allied Chippewa and Ottawa groups.

In spite of the difficulties, the few remains and sparse and enigmatic features, which constitute the Highlands site, the site does lend itself to some broad interpretations based on ethnographic accounts of Native American life ways at the turn of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Investigations at the Highland site affords the opportunity to examine a small, limited activity site, relate the spatial organization and artifact patterning to those described in ethnohistoric accounts, and speculate how such activities are reflected in the archaeological record. As Walthal and Emerson (1992:5) succinctly state, "The development and testing of models that predict what artifact patterns can be expected at such small sites may, in the future, lead to a much better understanding of the total range of sites in a given settlement system."

Historical Context

Western migration of Indian nations during the late 17th century was a common response to avoid Iroquois expansion and hostilities associated with the fur trade in the northeast and Great Lakes regions. Prior to the 18th century, Miami occupied the region surrounding the confluence of the Des Plaines and Kankakee rivers. Tanner (1987:32, Map 6) indicates a Miami village occupied in 1683 near the Highlands site. As early as 1688 the Des Plaines and Kankakee River valleys were inhabited by Wea (Pease and Warner 1934). However, the Wea abandoned northeastern Illinois sometime after 1700

to settle areas along the Wabash River near Tippecanoe, Indiana and Fort Ouiatanon near Lafayette in Indiana. The Des Plaines River valley following the exodus of the Wea appears to have been thinly settled until the occupation of the Potawatomi. By the early 18th century, the Pottawatomi moved into northeastern Illinois (Bauxar 1959). Tanner (1987: maps 13 and 19) illustrates a Potawatomi village at the confluence of the Des Plaines and Kankakee rivers circa 1768 and a “United Bands” village of Pottawatomi, Ojibwa, Ottawa, Mascouten and Kickapoo occupied in 1779 is shown south of the Highlands site. A circa 1811 map, the author of which is unknown, shows the Little Chief’s Village in the vicinity of the Highlands site (Tucker 1942, plat XXXVI).

Potawatomi Arrival Into the Illinois Country

During their flight to avoid eastern Iroquois raiders, the Potawatomi movements emanated from the Green Bay area and extended south around the shores of Lake Michigan. By 1695, there were sufficient numbers of Potawatomi in the vicinity of southwestern Michigan and northern Indiana’s St. Joseph River that the French established a mission to serve the 200 Potawatomi warriors and their families who had settled there. In the first decade of the 18th century, the Potawatomi expressed to the French their intent to leave their Michigan villages and settle in the Illinois Country (Temple 1958:128). However, it was also during this period that the Potawatomi (whose population never reached the numbers of other contemporary regional nations) were joined by Ottawa and Chippewa.¹

The confederation of the three nations (known as “the Three Fires”) had been formed prior to 1743 and was forged with the primary goal of removing the Illinois Indian’s presence from northeastern Illinois (Foreman 1940:131). “The Three Fires” confederation and groups of Sauk, Fox and Miami raided and skirmished with the Illinois

¹ Three Algonquian nations, the Ottawa, Chippewa and Potawatomi possess languages are closely related and nearly mutually intelligible. It is thought that the Ottawa and Potawatomi were originally part of the Chippewa nation, which was centered east of northern Lake Michigan. Following the European entrance in North America and the concomitant tribal disruptions associated with the fur trade and Iroquois raiding in the Upper Great Lakes, the Chippewa were driven west and split into three groups settling in separate places. At the time of French contact, the Ottawa were centered on Lake Huron, the Chippewa settled the shores of Lake Superior, and the Potawatomi occupied the Green Bay area.

throughout the 1750s until most Illiniwek groups were pressured west of the Mississippi River or south into southwestern Illinois.

Aligned with the French during the French and Indian War between 1754 and 1763, a number of mixed Potawatomi, Chippewa, and Ottawa villages were established in the Chicago region throughout the last half of the 18th century. Villages were reported in 1763 at the mouth of the Chicago River and, by 1774, twelve lodges were located at the confluence of the Illinois and Kankakee Rivers (Temple 1958:129). By 1775, the Potawatomi became so entrenched in northeastern Illinois that two Potawatomi groups were recognized: the “Potawatomi of the Prairie” or “Prairie Band” which were centered around the Illinois River and the “Potawatomi of the Kankakee” or “Kankakee Band” which included the groups centered on the Kankakee and Iroquois Rivers and the southern tip of Lake Michigan.

Numerous Potawatomi villages were reported in the vicinity of the confluence of the Des Plaines and Kankakee Rivers throughout the 1790s and 1800s (Alvord and Carter 1915). Lt. John Armstrong mapped the vicinity in 1790 and indicated at least eight villages in the region (Storm 1944) (Figure 3). There are no primary documents that refer to any type of Native American habitation or village location at the Highlands site. However, there is considerable evidence regarding the presence of various historic Indian groups in the region surrounding the site.

Throughout the 1820s, the Potawatomi continued to occupy the Kankakee and Illinois Rivers. Native American population estimates for the Chicago region numbered between 1,000 and 1,500 individuals in 1820. Large villages were positioned west of the confluence of the Kankakee and Illinois River, at the confluence of the Little Calumet and Grand Calumet Rivers, and 60 miles southeast of Chicago on the Kankakee (Temple 1958:145).

In 1832, as the Black Hawk War was closing, the Prairie Band and Kankakee Band of the Potawatomi ceded their lands along the Illinois, Kankakee and Fox Rivers to the United States government. While the Prairie Band abandoned the Illinois River basin and moved east near Logansport, Indiana, those Potawatomi affiliated with the Kankakee Band and living on the Des Plaines, Kankakee and other rivers in the vicinity of Lake

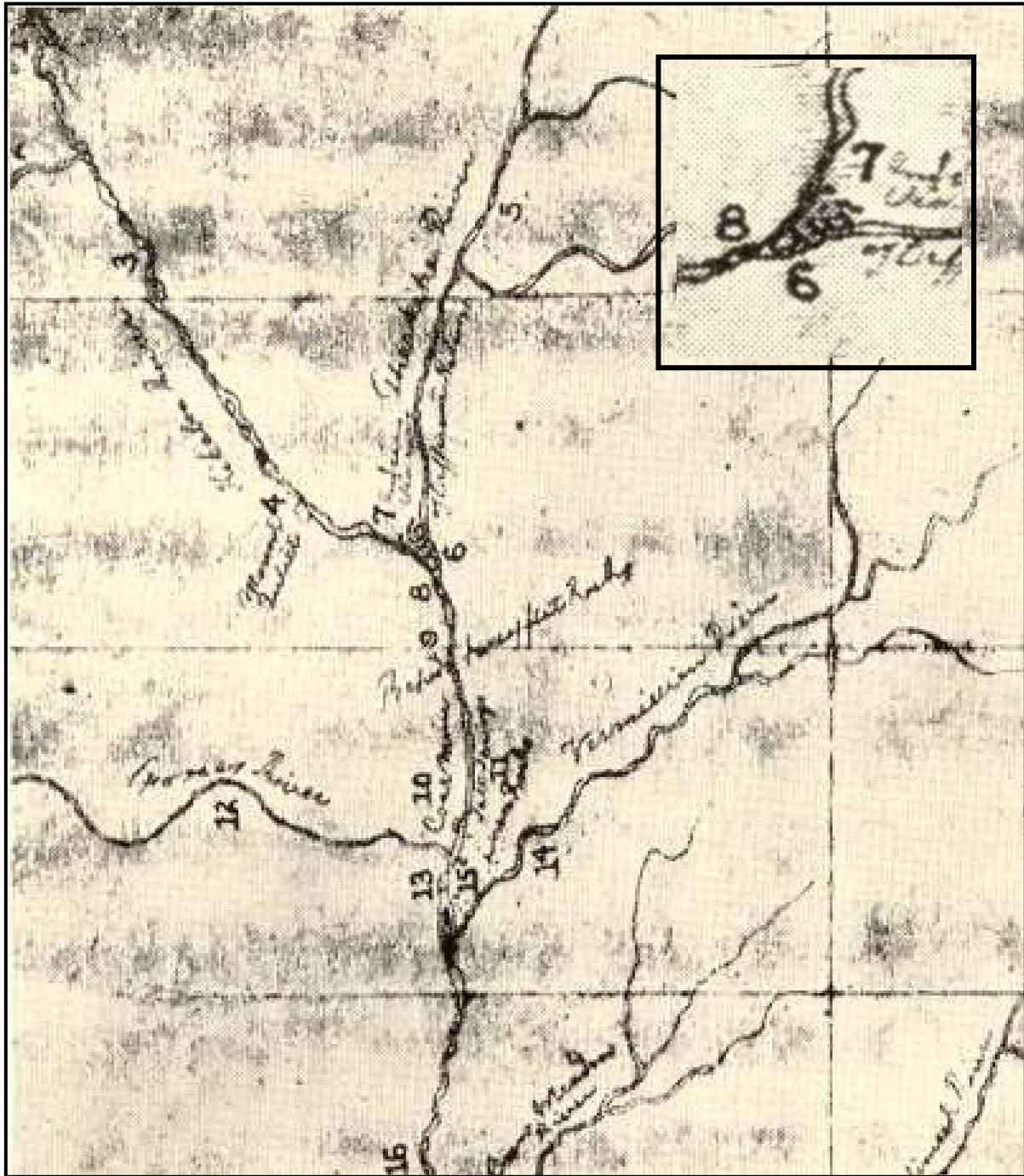


Figure 3. Lieutenant Armstrong's map of the Illinois River, 1790 (from Storm 1944). Description of the map: [3] Kibabou River (Des Plaines River); [4] Mount Juliet (Joliet); [5] Theakike River (Kankakee River); [6 & 7] Eight tiny circles denoting "Indian Villages of Different Nations" at the fork of the Des Plaines and Kankakee rivers; [8] Islands below the fork (Twin Islands); and [9] Rapids below the Twin Islands.

Michigan failed to emigrate out of Illinois. A final cession of lands claimed by “the Three Fires” confederacy was negotiated in 1833. This treaty called for the complete removal of Potawatomi, Chippewa, and Ottawa groups (who, by this time had become so intertwined that culturally differentiating between the entities was difficult) to lands west of the Mississippi River. In exchange for their Illinois holdings, “the Three Fires “ were granted five million acres of western property. With the ratification of the treaty by Congress in 1835, removals to “the Three Fires” reservation near Council Bluffs, Iowa occurred in September of 1835 (500-1000 individuals), spring of 1836 (712 individuals), July of 1837 (479 individuals) and March of 1838 (151 individuals). Similarly, 859 Potawatomi, Chippewa, and Ottawa were removed from Indiana to Council Bluffs in 1838 (Temple 1958:147-152).

During the early 1840s, the Prairie and Kankakee Bands of the Potawatomi merged under the name of the Prairie Band and occupied a small tribal reservation in southwest Iowa. A Federal removal of the Prairie Band again occurred in 1846, which allotted 77,400 acres in Kansas. Prairie Band landholdings were reduced in 1870 to 20,000 acres and a tribal headquarters was established in Mayetta, Kansas. By 1908, the population census reported only 676 Prairie Band Potawatomi. Population growth was nearly stagnant throughout the first half of the 20th century with only 811 tribal band members enumerated in the 1950 census. Today, the Prairie Band lists nearly 4,000 members².

Archaeological Investigations

A local resident who had found a catlinite pipe at the site first reported the Highland site to archaeologists at the University of Illinois in 1988. The site data form describes the site as an Early Historic Indian occupation based on the pipe. The pipe is described as a red catlinite elbow pipe, which was apparently found on the ground surface

² There are seven recognized groups of Potawatomi –six in the U.S. and one in Canada. U.S. groups included the Forest County Potawatomi of northern Wisconsin (12,000 acres and 800 members), Hannaville Potawatomi of upper Michigan (3,400 acres and 900 members), Huron Potawatomi of southeastern Michigan (120 acres and 600 members scattered in the general population), Pokagon Potawatomi of southwest Michigan (in the process of reacquiring a landbase for its 2,600 members scattered in the general population), and the Prairie Potawatomi.

during brush clearing. A photocopy of the pipe included with the archaeological site reporting form shows the pipe as complete and undecorated (McElrath 1988).

Archaeologists first visited the site in 1993 during a cultural resource inventory of the property surrounding the Highlands site slated for residential development (Hanson Engineers, Inc. 1993). Although the pedestrian reconnaissance at the site recovered numerous chert flakes and one Late Woodland projectile point, no evidence of the historic Native American component was identified. Additional archaeological investigations at the Highlands Site were conducted in 1994 to evaluate the site's potential significance (Hanson Engineers, Inc. 1994). Following a controlled surface collection, a series of mechanical excavations of nearly 8 percent of the Highlands site was conducted. Over 35 temporally diagnostic prehistoric artifacts and three prehistoric features were uncovered. Two small concentrations of lithic debris and a shallow basin containing limited amounts of lithic debris and cracked rock were identified. No historic Native American artifacts or deposits were identified at that time.

Based on the results of the 1994 investigations, the Highlands site was interpreted as representing a short-duration Archaic camp. On the basis of the testing results, the site was determined to be potentially significant as defined by the National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria and archaeological data recovery at the Highland Site was recommended in order to mitigate the adverse effects of the residential subdivision construction.

It wasn't until 1997 during mitigation of the site that the historic Native American component was identified. Following mechanical removal of the plow zone from a 90 by 240 m area of the site, a single concentration of features was identified at the sites easternmost periphery. The feature assemblage included four irregularly shaped basins, a large hearth containing cracked rock and charcoal, and a large, narrow, and shallow C-shaped depression (Figure 4). These were situated nearly 110 meters away from the artifact clusters and shallow basin exposed during earlier investigations.

Following excavations, two of these features (a basin designated Feature 8 and the C-shaped depression designated Feature 9) contained historic trade items and definitely could be correlated with the historic component (Table 1). The remaining three basins,

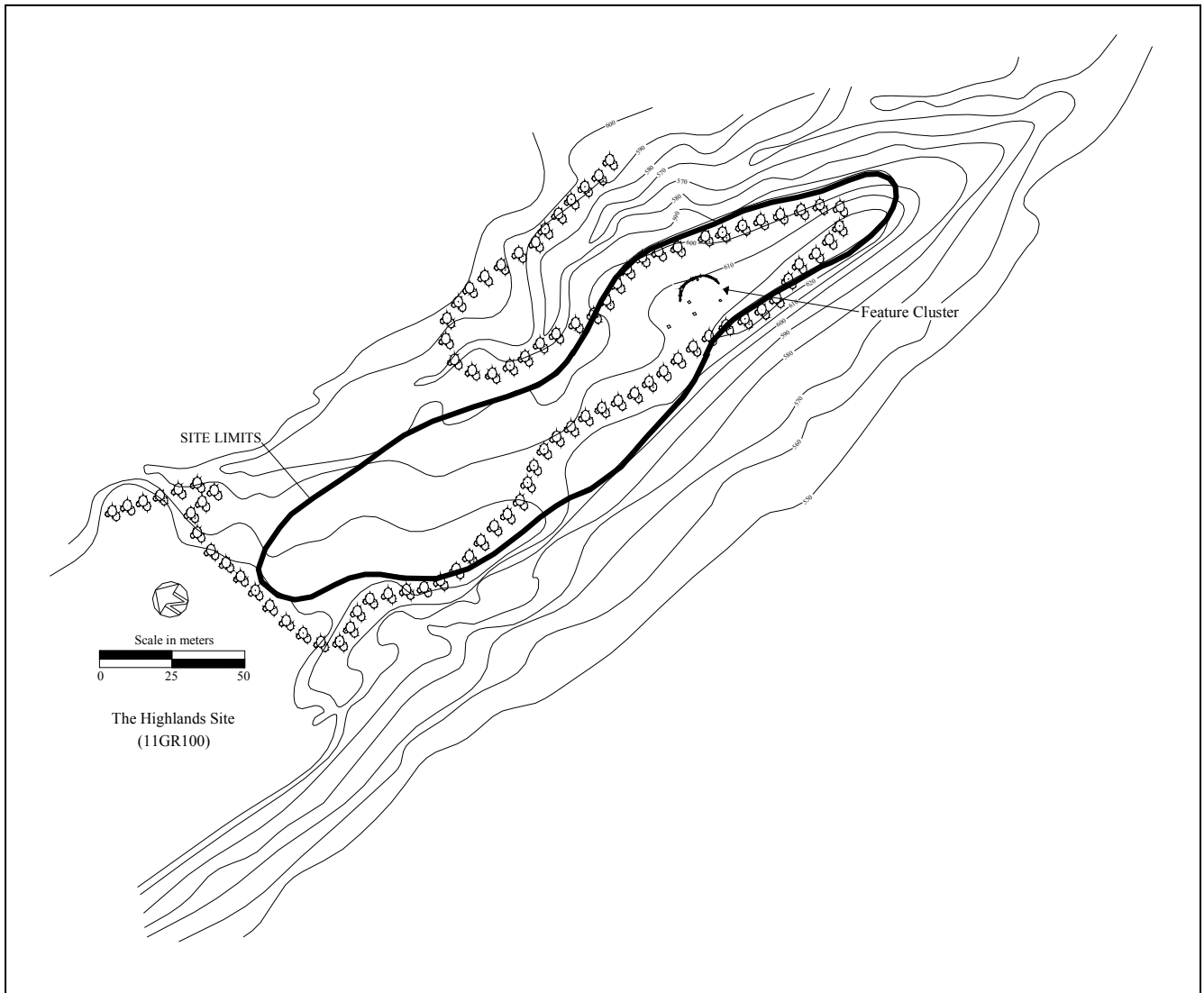


Figure 4. Highlands site topographic and feature plan map.

Table 1. Highlands Site Artifact Assemblage.

Artifact Types	Feature 4	Feature 5	Feature 6	Feature 8	Feature 9	Feature 10
Lithics						
Debris (N/Wt. g)	3/.7g	7 / 7.9 g	1 / 2 g	21 / 31g 2 Madison Triangular	44 / 130g 1 Madison Triangular	10 / 18g
Tools						
Trade Items						
Beads					11 White Seed Neads	
Scrap Copper					1 Irregular Piece	
Lead					1 Shot or Waste	
Unmodified Rock (Wt. g)	5 / 4g				38 / 516g	13 / 516g
Floral (N/Wt. g)	15 / .3 g				2194 / 28.7g	100000 / 134g
Faunal (N/Wt. g)		1 / 16 g			1318 / 1272g	1 / 3.1g

Features 4, 5, 6 (Figure 5) and the hearth, Feature 10 (Figure 6), are included with the historic Native American component based on proximity and the similarity in preservation of the faunal remains recovered from Features 8 and 9. All feature fill excavated at the Highlands site was processed through a flotation tank and screened through 1/8th inch mesh.

Features 4, 5, and 6 (Figure 5) are small and shallow oval-shaped basins. Each of these features are similar to one another in terms of morphology, fill characteristics, and material contents. The lack of material contents makes it difficult to interpret the function of these features. However, based on their circular shape and sizes, which averaged 50 cm in diameter and 18 cm in depth, Features 4, 5, and 6 may represent the basal portion of post pits. These pits are situated along the periphery of the circular area outlined by Feature 9.

Feature 8 is a large irregular basin-shaped pit that extends to a depth of 28 cm and had a volume of 142 liters (Figure 6). The fill consisted of very dark gray silty clay with concentrations of unmodified rock, charred plant remains, animal bone, and limited amounts of charcoal. Cultural materials recovered from the feature included two Madison triangular points, 12 pieces of lithic debris and a small galena cube. Faunal remains recovered from Feature 8 included elements of elk, deer and bison (Table 2). The function of Feature 8 is unclear; however, based on morphology it may be a post pit.

Feature 9 is a large c-shaped shallow depression or trench feature whose arc measures 13.5 m in diameter (Figures 7). The feature varied from 25 to 110 cm in width and had an irregular base that extended variously from 3 to 23 cm below the stripped surface. Feature 9 encircled an area slightly less than 50 square meters. Unlike the other features at the site, the fill of the depression was a homogenous dark loam that contained limited amounts of the naturally occurring rock and glacial till, which characterizes the uplands surrounding the Highlands site. The depression was discontinuous and exhibited two narrow gaps that appear to be due to erosion (Figure 8). The feature was positioned on a slight slope with the mouth of the C-shape feature opening upslope. The terminal ends of the feature were very shallow and irregular.

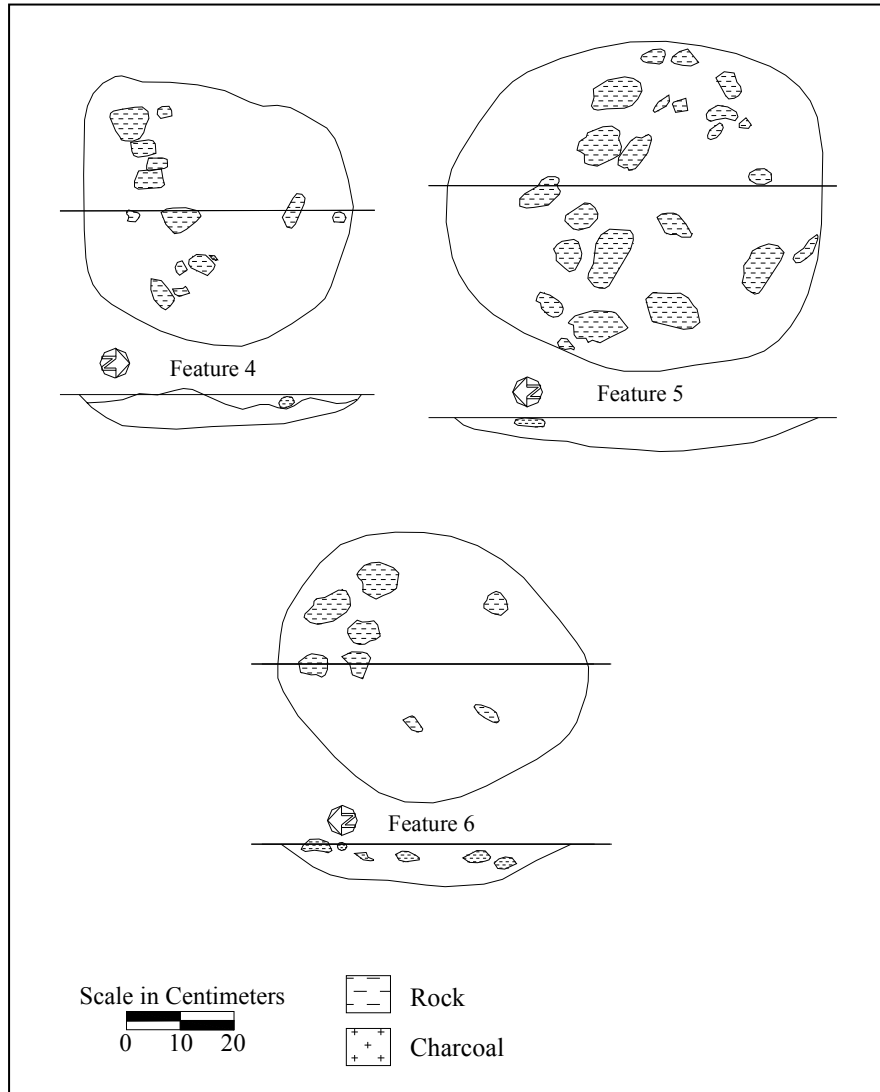


Figure 5. Features 4, 5, and 6 profiles and plan views.

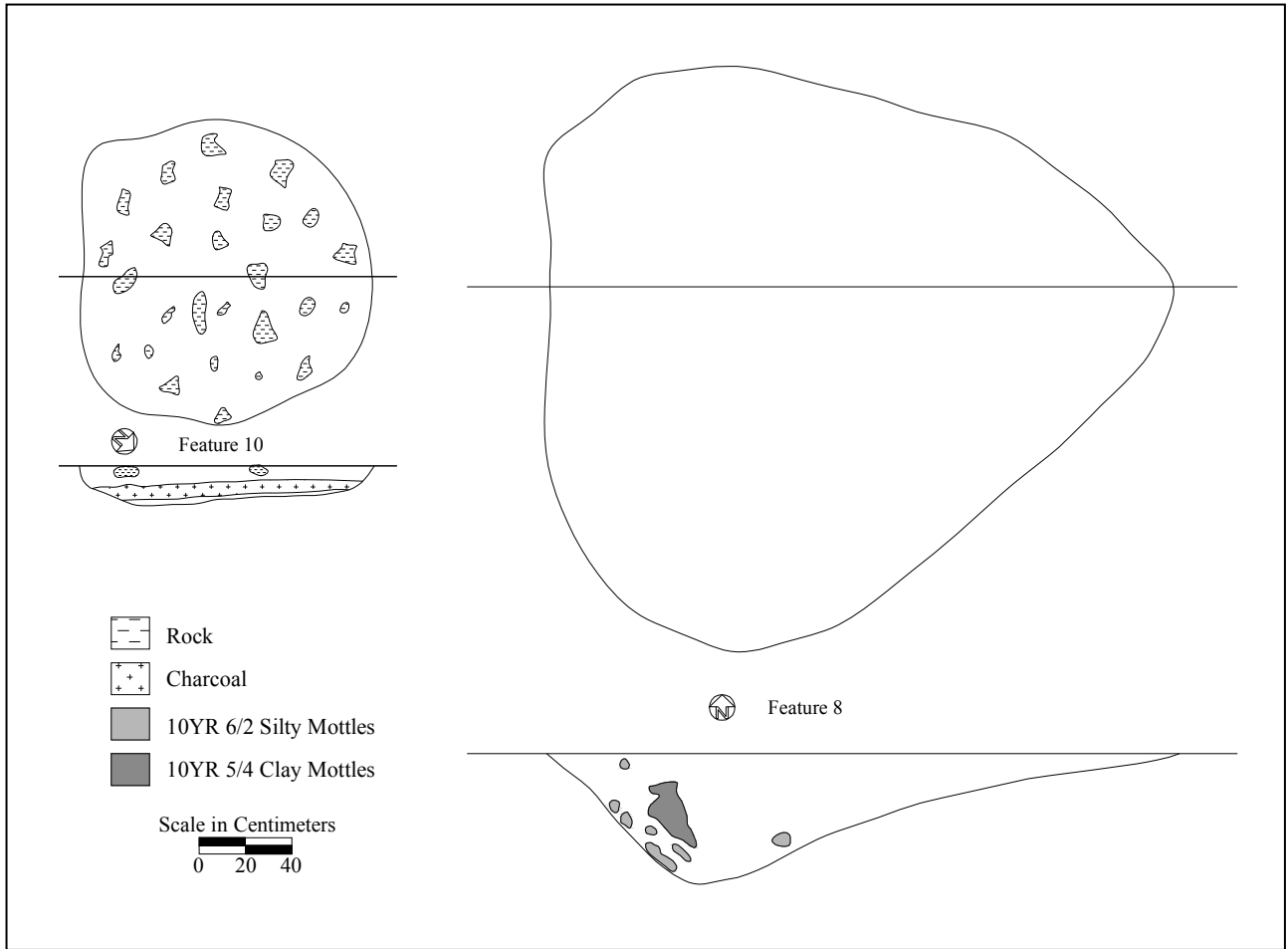


Figure 6. Feature 8 and Feature 10 plan and profile views.

Table 2. Distribution of Animal Remains (NISP) by Feature from the Highlands Site.

Taxon	Feature 5	Feature 6	Feature 8	Feature 9 Hand Collected	Micro Recovery	Feature 10	Total
Mammals							
Beaver				16	7		23
Muskrat					1		1
Dog/Coyote				1	4		5
Raccoon				1	1		2
Striped Skunk				1	1		2
River Otter				1			1
cf. Elk			1	1			2
White-tailed Deer	1		1	15	15		32
Bison				3			3
cf. Bison			1	17		1	19
Unidentified Large Mammal		1	7	502	335		845
Unidentified Med/Lg Mammal		2		41	99		142
Unidentified Medium Mammal				12	14		26
Unidentified Small Mammal					1		1
Birds							
cf. Trumpeter Swan				1			1
Canada Goose				1			1
Duck spp.				2	2		4
Wild Turkey				4	2		6
Unidentified Large Bird				11			11
Unidentified Med/Lg Bird					7		7
Unidentified Medium Bird				2	3		5
Reptiles							
Snapping Turtle				1			1
Pond Turtle spp				5	10		15
Unidentified Turtle					2		2
Fish							
Gar spp					1		1
Redhorse					2		2
Channel Catfied					2		2
Black Bass				2			2
Freshwater Drum				1	3		4
Unidentified Fish				10	26		36
Unidentified Vertebrate				3	292		295
Unidentified Mussel		50		3	16		69
Total NISP	1	53	10	657	846	1	1568
Total Wt. (g)	16	14.6	27.2	1066.2	205.8	3.1	1332.9

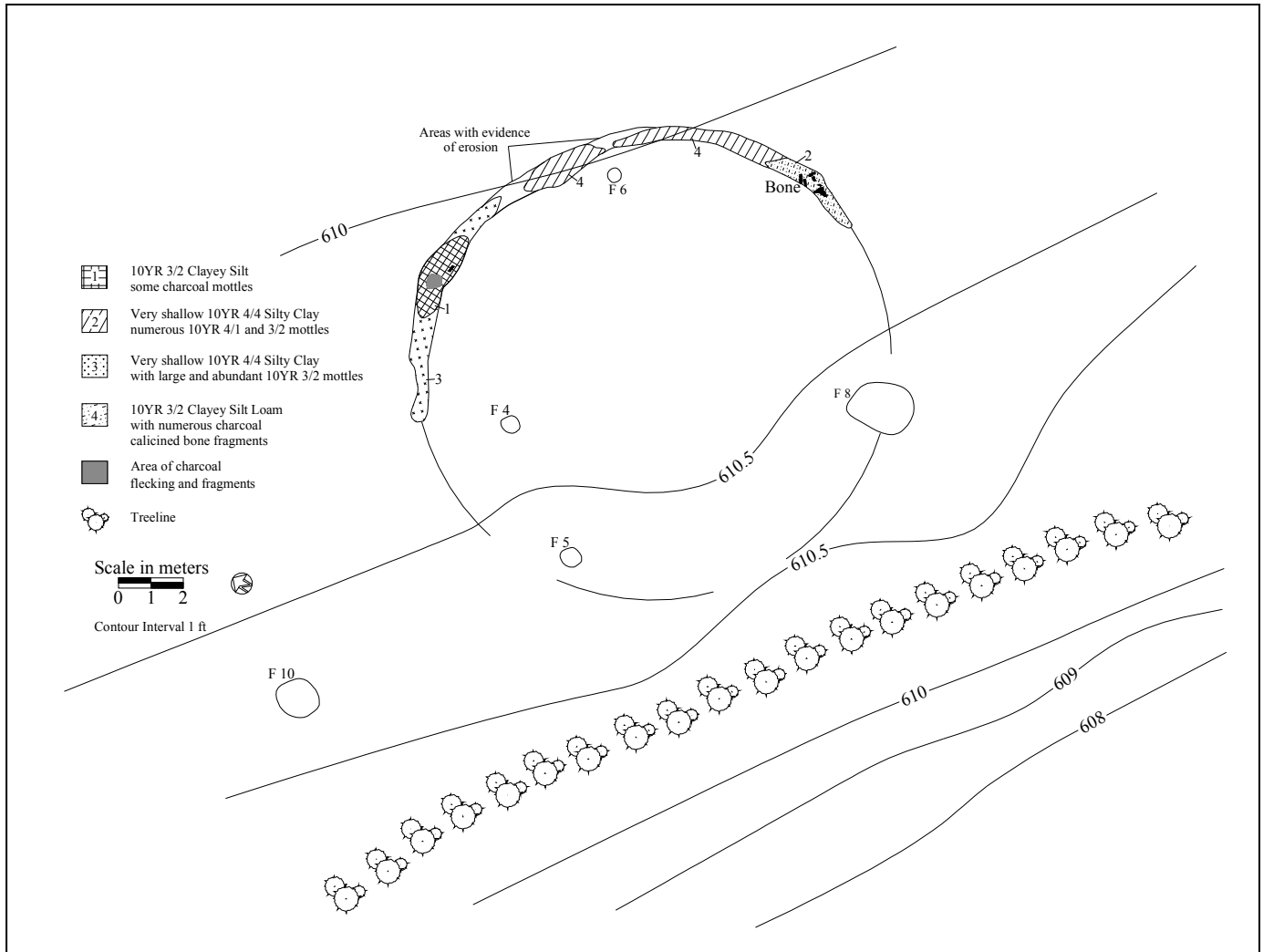


Figure 7. Circular depression or trench (Feature 9) plan view.



Figure 8. Photograph of circular Feature 9.

Based on the nature of the feature and its position on the slope, it appeared that the feature once represented a continuous “circle,” and that only a portion of the circular depression remains extant because it occupies the base of a slight slope and was more deeply buried by erosion following abandonment. Conversely, the portions of the circular feature situated on the topographically higher part the rise was lost to agricultural plowing, discing, and erosion. The presence of plow scars observed in the topographically higher area and absence of similar scars in the area surrounding the feature supports this conclusion. The extant portion of the circular depression was encountered only due to its position at the base of the slope, which was buried by erosion and, as a result, was somewhat slightly better protected from those activities that damaged the higher portion of the structure.

Most of the durable historic period artifacts and a large percentage of biological subsistence remains from the site were recovered from Feature 9. This feature rendered over 95 percent of the faunal material, 100 percent of the carbonized corn and bean fragments, 98 percent of the nutshell fragments (Table 3), one of the three Madison points recovered from the site, and 10 of the 11 glass seed beads recovered from the site.

Feature 10 is a large shallow basin containing numerous pieces of cracked rock and charcoal. Feature 10 was the only feature located outside of the circular area. The feature fill consisted of black clayey silt with large pieces of charcoal and a single lens of ash near the base of the feature. Feature 10 exhibited evidence of intensive *in situ* burning and the subsoil contained bright colored oxidized mottles. No artifacts or subsistence remains were found in the fill. The feature is interpreted as a hearth or fire pit.

Material Remains

The artifact assemblage recovered during feature excavations at the Highlands site is small and comprised of floral and faunal subsistence remains, glass seed beads, a piece of copper scrap, lead shot and sprue, a small galena cube, several Madison project points, and limited chipped-stone debris (Table 1). The presence of chipped stone debris

recovered from the features may be derived from earlier components at the site. Chert debitage is ubiquitous at the Highland site and recovered from the Ap and A-horizons. It

Table 3. Plant Remains by Feature from the Highlands Site.

Botanical Material	Feature 4	Feature 9	Feature 10	Total
Total Wood (N)	15	2055	100000	102070
Total Wood Wt. (g)	0.31	26.23	134.55	161.09
Breakdown by Taxon				
<i>Acer spp.</i> (maple)		5		5
<i>Celtis occidentalis</i> (hackberry)		1		1
<i>Fraxinus spp.</i> (ash)	3			3
<i>Quercus</i>		30	8	38
subgenus <i>Erythobalanus</i> (red oak subgroup)		25	12	37
subgenus <i>Lepidbalanus</i> (white oak subgroup)				0
<i>Ulmaceae</i>	1			1
Ring porous	5			5
Unidentifiable	6			6
Total Seed (N)		13		13
Breakdown by taxon (N)				
<i>Fabaceae</i> (bean family)		1		1
<i>Lithospermum spp.</i> (gromwell/puccoon)		2		2
Unidentifiable		10		10
Total Nutshell (N)		22		22
Total Nutshell Wt. (g)		1.18		1.18
Breakdown by taxon (N and Wt.)		4 (.12g)		4 (.12g)
<i>Corylus americana</i> (hazelnut)		7 (.10 g)		7 (.10 g)
<i>Juglandaceae</i> (hickory/walnut)		11 (.96 g)		11 (.96 g)
<i>Juglans negra</i> (black walnut)				0
				0
Total Maize (<i>Zea mays</i>) (N)		104		104
Total Maize Wt. (g)		1.33		1.33
Kernel		94		94
Cupule		10		10
				0
Miscellaneous Botanical Materials		11		11
Bud		1		1
Fruit tissue		9		9
Fungal fragment		1		1

is possible that lithic material from prehistoric occupations was mixed into the fill of features that were the result of the Potawatomi occupation of the site. Due to the mixing of components and the likelihood that non-diagnostic lithic items were incorporated in the fill of historic period features, only the tabulation and the distribution of this material class is offered in Table 1.

The bead assemblage consists entirely of white seed beads. A total of 11 very small white monochromatic drawn beads (Type Ia4 in the Kidd and Kidd (1970) classification and IIA1 in the Brain (1979) classification) were recovered at the Highlands site (Figure 9). Although somewhat inconclusive, the bead assemblage is typical of Late Historic period assemblages that Quimby (1966) dates to the period spanning 1760 to 1830. While the sample of beads from the Highlands site is small, a number of researchers propose that assemblages of small sized white beads are indicative of sites of the Late Historic Period (Berkson 1992:144; Quimby 1966:90). Although sparse, the material remains recovered from Features 8 and 9 suggest use of the site during the late 18th or early 19th centuries.

Madison Triangular projectile points were recovered from Features 9 (n=1) and 8 (n=2). The three examples are made from poorer quality chert, most likely derived from the glacial till. At a number of Middle (1670-1760) and Late Historic period sites (1760-1830), triangular projectile points dominate chipped stone tool assemblages. Berkson (1992:159-161) identified 13 examples of Madison points in the assemblage recovered from the Grand Village of the Kickapoo in McLean County, Illinois, which appears to have been occupied between 1790 and 1830. A single Madison Triangular point is present in the Potawatomi assemblage from the circa 1813 to 1834 Windrose site in Kankakee County, Illinois (Wagner 2001: 81; Figure 7.4I).

Biological Remains

The faunal assemblage from the Highlands site included approximately 1,570 animal remains weighing 1,932 grams representing 27 individual species (Martin 1998). Six classes or taxa were identified and included: mammals, birds, reptiles, fish,

unidentified vertebrates and bivalves or unidentified mussel (Table 2). Of the five features



Figure 9. Madison points and seed beads recovered from the Highlands Site.

containing animal remains at the Highlands site, the semi-circular depression yielded nearly 96 percent by count or 95 percent by weight of the animal bone in the assemblage. The only identifiable taxa appearing outside of Feature 9 were two white-tailed deer, bison and one elk recovered from Feature 8.

The most dominant of classes in this assemblage was the mammals. These contributed 70 percent of all specimens by count, over 90 percent by weight, and nearly 40 percent of the MNI. Beaver, muskrat, dog/coyote, raccoon, skunk, river otter, elk, deer, and bison were identified. Significant due to its rarity at historic period site in Illinois was the presence of bison in the assemblage. Three specimens from Feature 9 were identified as bison (Figure 10). These bison bones included specimens with distinct knife cut-marks from the removal of meat from the bone. This indicates that bison were at least occasionally hunted during a later period of the site's occupation. Only 2 percent of the specimens by count were bird bones and all were associated with Feature 9. Birds identified included Canada goose, duck, wild turkey and a Trumpeter Swan bone tube. The identifiable reptile bones recovered from the Highland site included three species snapping and pond turtle bones. Although the Highland site is situated in the bluffs, 47 fish remains from five species, gar, redhorse, channel catfish and black bass, and drum, were discovered. This assemblage suggests a short-term, warm-weather activity occupation at the site. Although the site may have functioned as an upland hunting and processing camp, the variety of animal taxa such as aquatic birds, turtles, fish and mussels is unexpected (Martin 1998:7).

Floral Remains

A sample of 154.0 liters of fill was examined from six features. Botanical remains were recovered from three shallow basin features and the semi-circular depression while charred wood was hand-collected during feature excavation. The macrobotanical assemblage consisted of several wood types, maize and wild mast resources (Parker 1998). The most abundant category of plant material from the site was wood. Of the six sampled features, all but one contained identifiable fragments of

wood, with the majority being carbonized or semi-carbonized (Table 3). Tree taxa present included oak, maple,

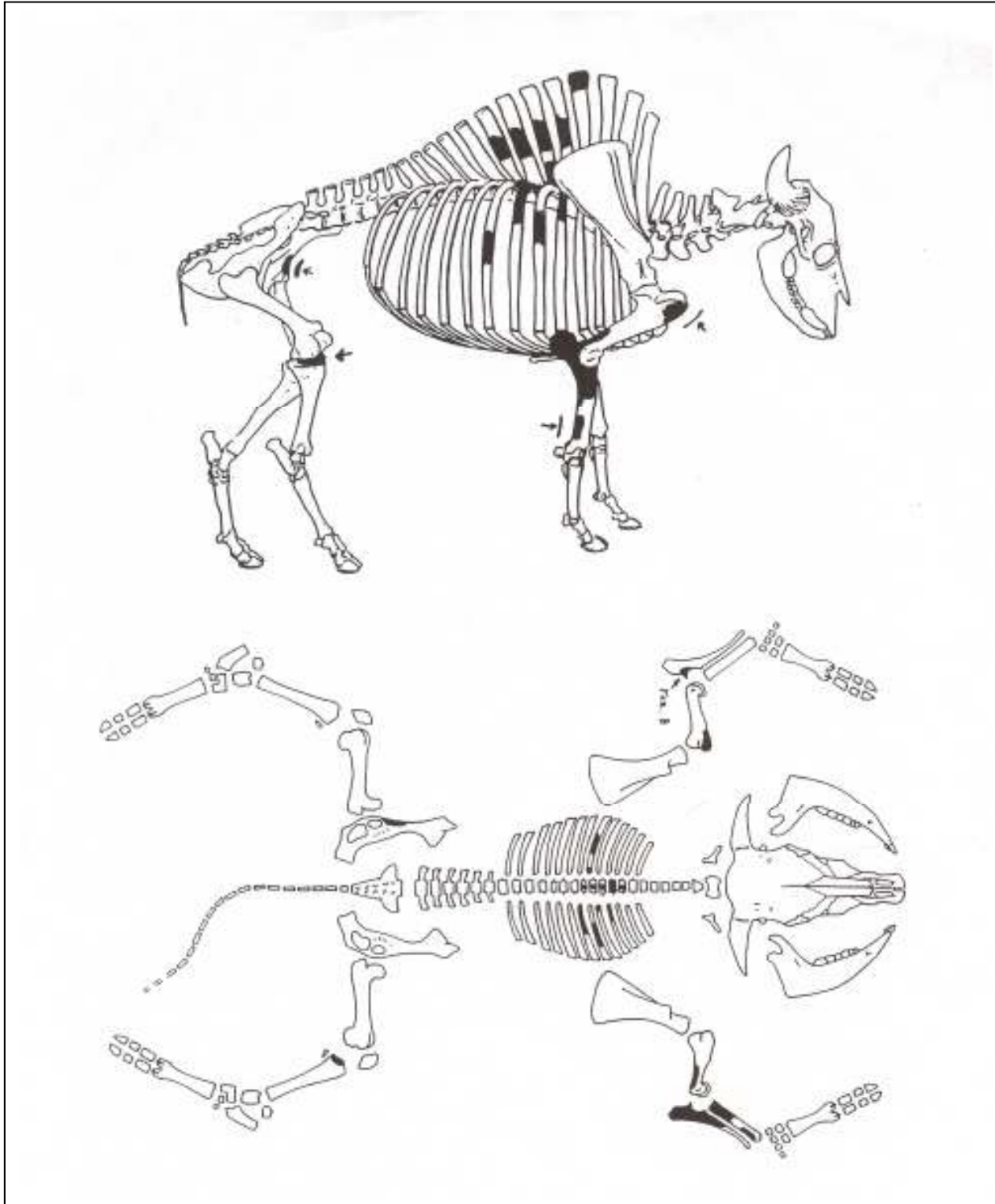


Figure 10. Bison elements represented in the Highlands site faunal remains assemblage (from Martin 1998).

ash, hackberry and elm. Nutshell, seeds and maize were present in the semi-circular Feature 9. A total of 104 fragments of corn (*Zea mays*) were identified. Of these corn fragments, kernels dominated over cob fragments. This may suggest that the maize was not grown near the encampment but grown elsewhere and brought to the site. Identifiable carbonized seeds recovered from the site included common bean and the seeds from the gromwell plant. Nutshell was the minor element in the assemblage, consisting of only 22 fragments of thick-shelled hickory, black walnut and hazelnut.

With the majority of the food plant remains being associated with the semi-circular linear depression, Feature 9, it can be postulated that this trench served a function associated with the disposal of meal-related refuse. Another possibility is that food remains (and trade artifacts) washed into the feature from a surrounding midden. Based on the widely scattered distribution of remains in the feature with no apparent clustering of artifacts suggesting food waste dumping, the second possibility appears most likely. The small assemblage of botanical materials recovered from this site reflects a minimal level of domestic activity consistent with a short term or specialized encampment, with the occupants consuming maize brought to the site from elsewhere and locally available nuts (Parker 1998:3).

Interpretations

The archaeological signature of the Highlands site—composed of a limited range of artifacts and the absence of long duration features such as storage pits or substantial post structures—points to a relatively cursory occupation. How and why the Highlands site was used remains a question. Almost certainly, the faunal and floral remains indicate a summer occupation of the site. The semi-circular depression or shallow trench feature (Feature 9) is an enigma—similar features are not reported or described in the archaeological literature.

The Highlands site is distinct from other regional historic Native American archaeological sites in the area surrounding the southern Lake Michigan basin in that the site appears to represent specialized, very short-term occupation at which minimal subsistence-related activities occurred. However, the site's limited array and general lack

of material remains, its absence of clear evidence of structural remains, and its absence of subsurface storage and waste disposal facilities—which would be typical of a habitation—suggests the site functioned in a manner other than for habitation. Conversely, the large size of the few features at the site, abundance and diversity of floral and faunal subsistence remains representing both upland and aquatic environments, and the absence of artifacts derived from special use activities or features related with such activities as hunting (e.g. gun or trapping parts), sugaring (e.g. light-weight cooking gear and numerous hearths), or nut collection (nutting stones, shell refuse and hearths), suggests the site was not utilized as a camp site or a staging area for hunting and foraging.

The lack of artifacts coupled with the enigmatic nature of the features at makes the site difficult to ascertain how the Highlands site was used. Several possible interpretations of the site's use, which we divide into secular and sacred realms, are proposed. Interpretations are drawn from and based on early 19th century descriptions and illustrations of Potawatomi residential sites, mortuary locations, dance grounds sites, and descriptions of Potawatomi ritual and ceremonial activities. For several of the interpretations postulated, we discuss how such use or activity would be reflected in the Highlands site's archaeological signature (i.e. feature types and distribution and the material assemblage).

Secular Interpretations

Defensive Structure: The depression or trench feature at the Highlands may be the remains of an expedient defensive enclosure based solely on its shape. A number of low earthen structures are reported in the region; however, most are considerably larger than the enclosure at the Highlands site. Oftentimes, earthen embankments are associated with an adjacent shallow ditch. It is possible that if an embankment was present, it may have eroded or plow down during agricultural activities. Many researchers interpret these embankment features to represent fortifications and indicate that earthen defensive enclosures appear to have a considerable time depth in the region. With the escalation of inter-tribal raiding and warfare associated with European contact, Brown and Sasso (n.d.:33) note that embankment enclosures are commonplace during the early historic

period—although the earthen enclosures used in their analyses are relatively large (enclosing .5 hectares or more), typically have embankments or ditches, and exhibit archaeological evidence for palisade walls. The semi-circular feature at the Highlands site may represent a very expedient form of defensive structure. La Salle reported similar expedient fortifications constructed by Iroquois raiders at the Grand Village of the Illinois in 1680. LaSalle described these fortifications as “rude forts of trunks, boughs, and roots of trees laid together to form a circular enclosure (Parkman 1869:192).”

The semi-circular feature at the Highlands site may represent a hastily built example of a redoubt or a type of defensive screen or obstruction in which the depression or ditch was used to reinforce the above-ground structure. Other possible interpretations of the historic component of the Highland site may include some type of hunting blind where game was driven into the C-shaped structure and ambushed. However, the absence of gun-related artifacts, projectile points, and lithic debris and the lack of evidence for animal butchering argue against this interpretation.

Domestic Structure: The features at the Highlands site may be the structural remains associated with a Potawatomi habitation. Through the 1830s, Potawatomi used two types of buildings: large rectangular lodges with straight sides that were covered in bark and mats, and smaller bark-covered dome-like huts. Lodges (Figure 11) were typically constructed of heavy timbers and included a center hall, multiple hearths and sleeping platforms positioned around the periphery of the interior walls (Edwards 1870:5-6). Smaller structures that were intended as single or extended family habitations are described as round or octagonal bark-covered wigwams. Similarly, winter structures were covered with an additional layer of grass or bulrush matting. Winter (Feest and Edmunds 1993:78) illustrates and describes O-kah-maus wigwam at the Kee-waw-nay Village in northeastern Indiana in 1837:

“(The) wigwam was made of bark and its structural lines formed very much like to the dome of some buildings that had been blown from its proper position and in its aerial flight had fallen to its present locality. It appeared to be based upon an octagon. It was open at the apex which facilitated the smoke

a



b

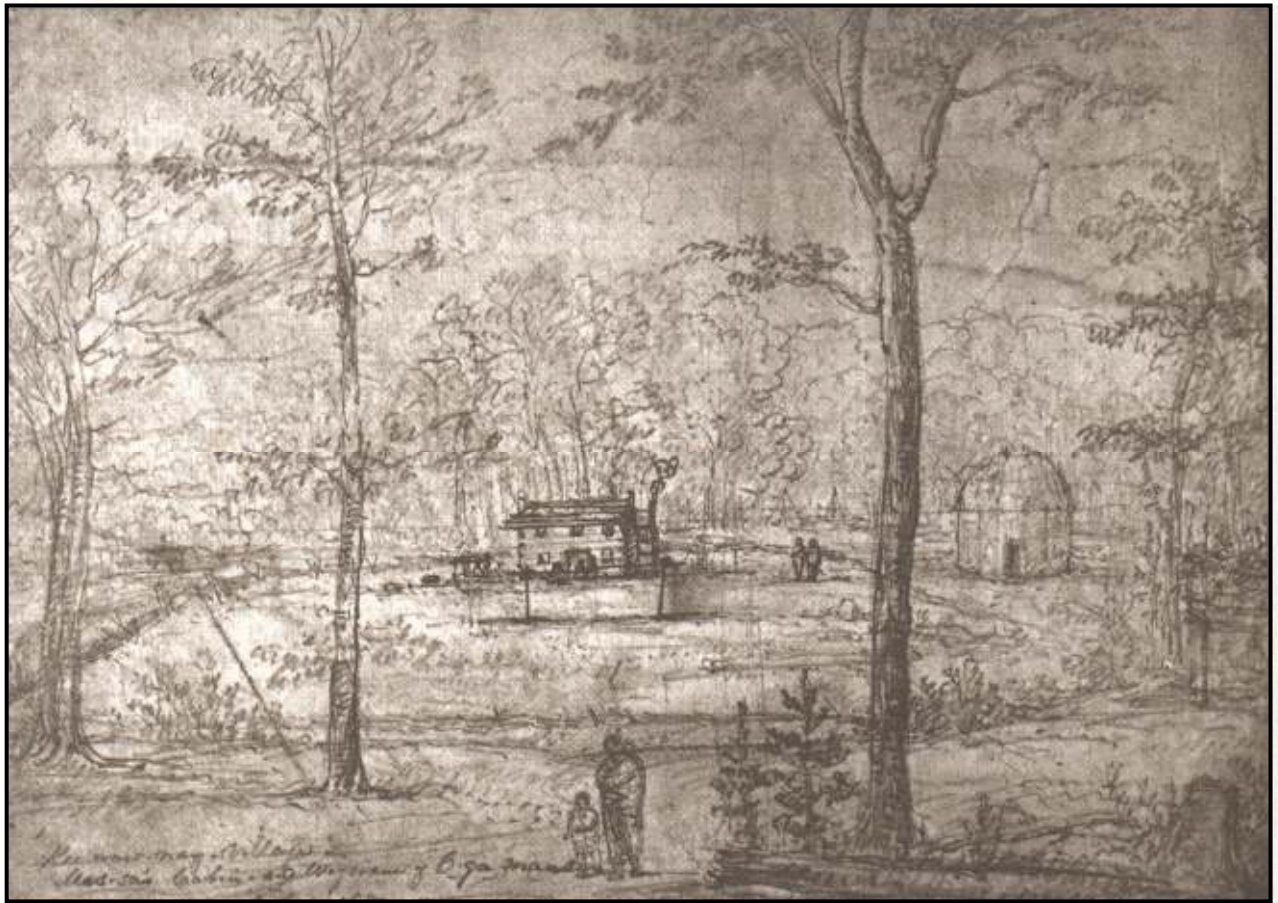


Figure 11. Sketches of Potawatomi structures at Kee-way-nay Village in northeastern Indiana drawn by George Winter in 1837 (Feest and Edmunds 1193:78).

from the central fire to escape to the open air. The frame work was built with many stout poles of hickory and was faced with bark-in squares or sections—with diagonal crossings of sticks, which acted as binders and kept the bark from bulging from the action of the atmosphere. It had a patchy appearance, was weather beaten—but it was unique and picturesque.”

The octagonal or round bark-covered building illustrated by Winter is interpreted as a “traditional” Potawatomi residential structure (Figure 11b). By noting that the structure was “unique and picturesque,” Winter seems to say that this type of structure and method of construction was, in 1837, no longer or not commonly used and practiced by the Potawatomi.

Temporary or expedient shelters were also bark-covered and small. Benton (1957:79) described the structures at Nic-sa-mah’s village north of Chicago as bark-covered “wigwams” (suggesting they were round or oval) that were so small they lacked an interior hearth. He states that, instead of an interior fire, a cooking fire was located outside the structure over which a kettle was suspended from a horizontal pole supported by vertical end poles. By the 1820s, bark-covered temporary or camp structures were replaced by the use of canvas tents (Feest and Edmunds 1993:Plate 32; Brown 1951).

While Highland site feature types and patterning do not suggest the presence of a substantial log lodge structure, it is possible that a bark “wigwam” like building or some other expedient structure was present. If the features at the Highlands site are the result of a habitation (whether it be temporary or semi-permanent), the circular depression may have functioned as a drainage feature, which possibly surrounded a structure that has left no recognizable signature. Historic Chippewa groups described a similar drainage feature to Frances Densmore (1929:23) at the turn of this century. Quoting from Densmore, a wigwam:

”...may be briefly described as consisting of poles planted in the ground. Brought together in arches and covered with mats. The framework was left in place on a campsite and the coverings carried from place to place.

Dwellings of this type are still seen among the Chippewa, and the erection of such a one on the White Earth Reservation was described by its owner. This wigwam was 12 feet long and 10 1/2 feet wide, with an entrance at one end. It was on slightly

sloping ground, and a shallow ditch was dug across the back, terminating halfway down each side, to carry off the water in case of rain. The frame consisted of six slender poles (three on each side) set in the longer diameter, and eight poles (four on each side) set in the shorter diameter of the lodge. The poles on the longer diameter were about 38 inches apart and on the shorter diameter about 14 inches apart. These poles were of ironwood, which is pliable when green and tough yet elastic when dry; thus it was possible to make a secure lodge of poles in inch or less in thickness.”

At the Highlands site, Feature 9 may represent a similar drainage ditch and if this feature encircled a structure similar to the one described to Densmore, the archaeological signature of the actual structure would be almost unrecognizable. However, the overall size of the Highland’s feature appears to be much larger than the drainage features described by Densmore. In addition, the character of the artifact assemblage—its range of artifact types and the density of material—does not suggest the Highlands site was used as a prolonged residential occupation. If the site was used as a temporary hunting or resource exploitation camp, the diversity of subsistence remains representing upland and riverine resource is unexpected. The faunal assemblage is represented by 20 vertebrate species and includes beaver, muskrat, dog/coyote, raccoon, skunk, river otter, elk, deer, bison, Canada goose, wild turkey, trumpeter swan, three species of turtle, and five species of fish. However, with the exception of four species of fish, single individuals represent sixteen taxa in the assemblage (Martin 1998:5). The variety of species and the lack of more than one individual representing each species argue against the site’s use as a hunting and processing camp.

Sacred Interpretation

Dance Circle: If our interpretation that Feature 9 was originally completely circular is correct and that only a portion of the feature remains extant, then this feature may represent an archaeological remnant of a Potawatomi circular dance ground. Circular dance grounds were common features of 18th and 19th century Native American villages in the Upper Midwest. A number of dance circles or grounds associated with

Potawatomi groups have been described from the region surrounding the Highlands site (Feest and Edmunds 1993; Matson 1872; Sasso and Wilder 1998). The dance ground adjacent to Shaw-waw-nass-see's Village near the confluence of Rock Creek and the Kankakee River near present day Kankakee, Illinois is described by Bloom in 1883. He states:

“To the northeast of the village, on Hugh Lancaster's farm, was a place where the Indians held their feasts and war dances. A space of seventy-five or eighty feet in diameter was leveled off, smooth as a barn floor. The sod or turf had been removed and piled up around the edge of the circle. This had stood for a long time, evidently, as the outside of the ridge of earth a heavy plum brush growth was standing, but the interior was yet smooth. Nearby this place was a spring of water which in those days never became dry (Bloom 1883:8).”

George Winter describes and illustrates a similar Potawatomi dance circle at the Kee-waw-nay Village in Indiana during July 1837. Winter's illustration of the dance ground somewhat matches Bloom's description (Figure 12) in that his drawing shows the prepared circular surface with onlookers occupying the peripheral mounds of earth and sod. Two eight foot poles connected with a horizontal pole and a fire occupy the center of the circle (Feest and Edmunds 1993:75).

The dance Winter witnessed was in celebration of council convened to initiate the Potawatomi treaty regarding their removal to western lands, and was clearly a secular event. However, religious ceremonies were held at dance circles even into the 20th century. The Potawatomi of Kansas held green corn ceremonies and other religious activities at circular dance grounds and, like at the earlier 19th century dances, women are described as sitting on sod benches that skirted the dance circle (Blair 1911:294). The Kansas Potawatomi positioned a large cross that was painted red at the center of the dance circle. Metzdorf (in Blair 1911:293-294) reports that “offerings” were often placed at the base of the center cross.

The archaeological implications are that the circular depression resulted from over excavation during sod removal activities and represents a peripheral remnant of the prepared dance surface. It is possible that this portion of the dance circle remains extant

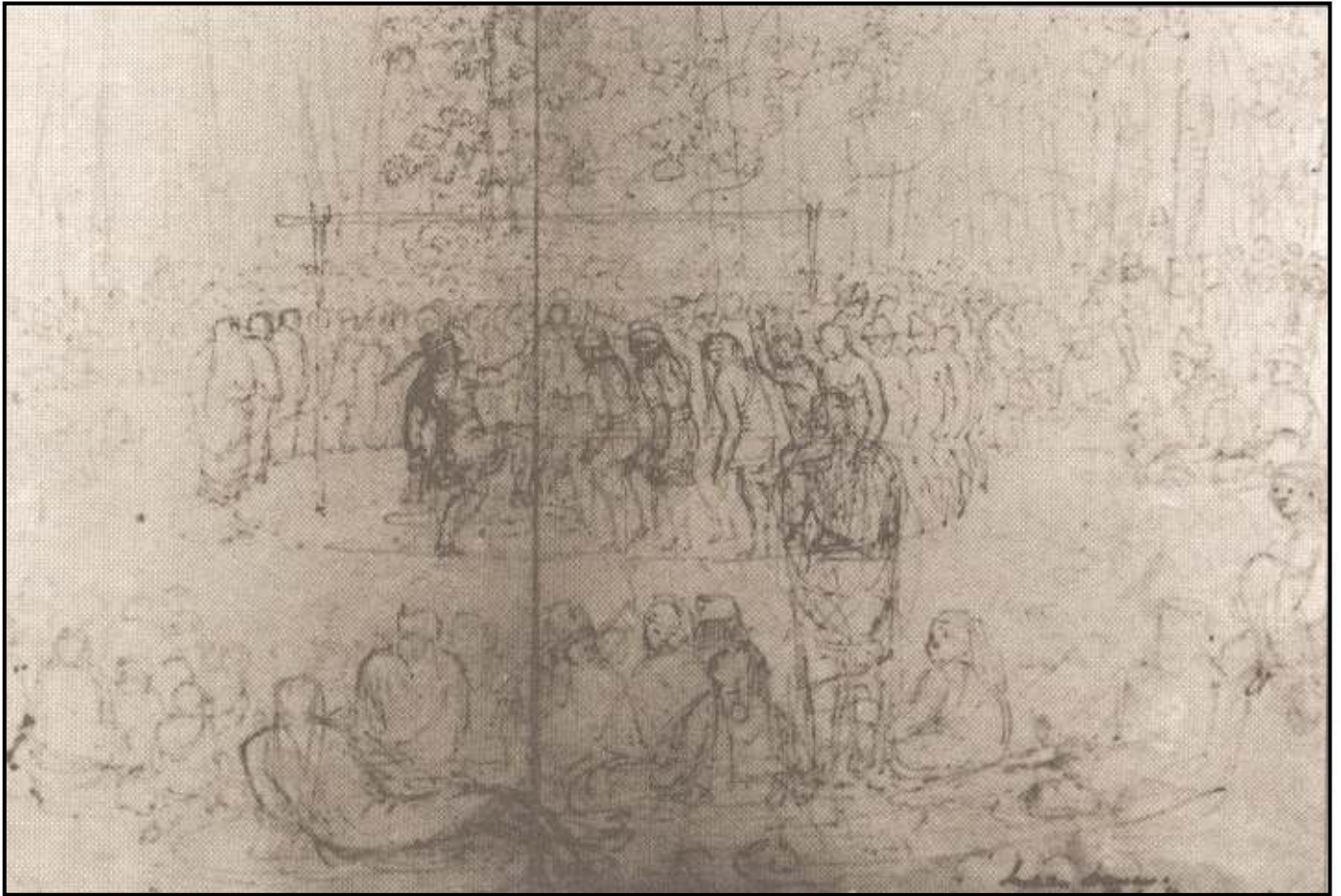


Figure 12. Sketches of a Potawatomi dance circle at Kee-way-nay Village in northeastern Indiana drawn by George Winter in 1837 (Feest and Edmunds 1993:75).

because it occupies the base of a slight slope and was more deeply buried by erosion following abandonment. The buried portion of the circle was subsequently protected from erosion and impacts resulting from agricultural plowing and discing. The absence of domestic-related artifacts, the presence of a large number of faunal and floral remains representing a diversity of species, and the assemblage consisting predominately of personal-related artifacts suggests some sort of special feasting activities rather than more mundane everyday activities.

Ceremonial Feature: The Highlands site may have been used in some ritual or sacred fashion. Kullen (1994) has suggested that a prehistoric/protohistoric Huber phase ditch and embankment enclosure in nearby Will County, Illinois was associated with Midewiwin ceremonialism. Historic Chippewa conducted a Midewiwin ceremony typically in an outdoor square or circular area, which was surrounded by benches or low fencing (Rizenthaler 1978:756). The diversity of faunal remains recovered at the Highlands site suggests a feasting event occurred at the site. The trench feature may be a remnant of the fenced-line circular Midewiwin ceremonial area. However, no evidence of fence posts was present within the Highlands site circular feature.

Mortuary Feature: The pattern of features and array of material remains at the Highlands site may be related to Potawatomi mortuary activity. A number of Potawatomi cemeteries and gravesites have been reported in the vicinity of the Highlands site (O’Gorman and Farnsworth 1995; Quimby 1966:143; Sasso and Wilder 1998; Vorreyer and Craig 2002). Historically, cemeteries are located near villages. There seems to be considerable variation in Potawatomi burial treatment which included below-ground graves (Feest and Edmunds 1993:80), shallow graves covered by oblong mounds (Feest and Edmunds 1993:81), above-ground burial houses, burials in hollow trees, or simply placed in a sitting position against in the open propped against a post, rock or tree (McCoy 1840:132; Bloom 1883:8; Sasso and Wilder 1998:202). Often, cemeteries were marked by white flags on long poles and individual graves included a post, usually painted red, which sometimes included symbols or other markings denoting war deeds,

clan affiliation or other information regarding the deceased (Benton 1957:80-81; Feest and Edmunds 1993:81).

Similar to dance grounds or circles, Potawatomi cemeteries often included the construction of a prepared surface. Winter's description of the burial grounds at the Kee-waw-nay village describes the care in which the Potawatomi prepared and tended cemeteries (Figure 13). He stated, "the small area of ground cleared from the green showed much devotional care and pains had been bestowed in keeping this scared spot free from the spontaneous weed (Feest and Edmunds 1993:81)." In another description of the cemetery, Winter adds, "the surface was free from grass, exposing the natural color of the earthy yellow tone...the ground was free from weeds and bore the evidence of watchful care (Indiana Historical Society 1948:116 in Wagner 2001:13)."

There are a number of descriptions of Potawatomi cemeteries at which the burials are placed on the ground surface. Sometimes the deceased is afforded a "grave house" made from logs or un-nailed boards³. Several sketches made by Winter show cemeteries occupied by above-ground crypts made from logs or branch and bark frames (Figures 13 and 14). Winter describes the burial ground at Kee-waw-ney as being occupied by:

"no less twenty tenements of death, over which were placed rude and moss covered logs of small diameter...many of the corpses were resting upon the surface of the earth. Through the interstices of one of these piles, curiosity led me to glance into the peaceful chamber of death—and I beheld the shocking and painful sight of a prostrate and decaying corpse (Feest and Edmunds 1993:81)."

Similarly, Bloom described the grave of Shawanasse, which he observed in Kankakee County, Illinois in 1838. He states that Shawanasse:

³ In contrast, Winters, in the early 1840s, sketched and described the Miami cemetery near the Village of Ke-na-pa-cum-a-qua at the confluence of the Eel and Wabash rivers in western Indiana and in the vicinity of the Potawatomi Village of Kee-waw-ney. Similar to the Potawatomi custom, he noted above-ground burials covered by armatures of saplings and bark. However, in his sketch, the remains of the warrior chief No-Ka-me-nah is the only burial contained within an aboveground puncheon and plank crypt. Unlike the Potawatomi cemeteries, the Miami cemetery is unmarked by flags, post or red-painted posts (Feest and Edmunds 1993:128, and Plate 49).



Figure 13. Sketch of the Kee-way-nay Village cemetery drawn by George Winter in 1837 (Feest and Edmunds 1993).

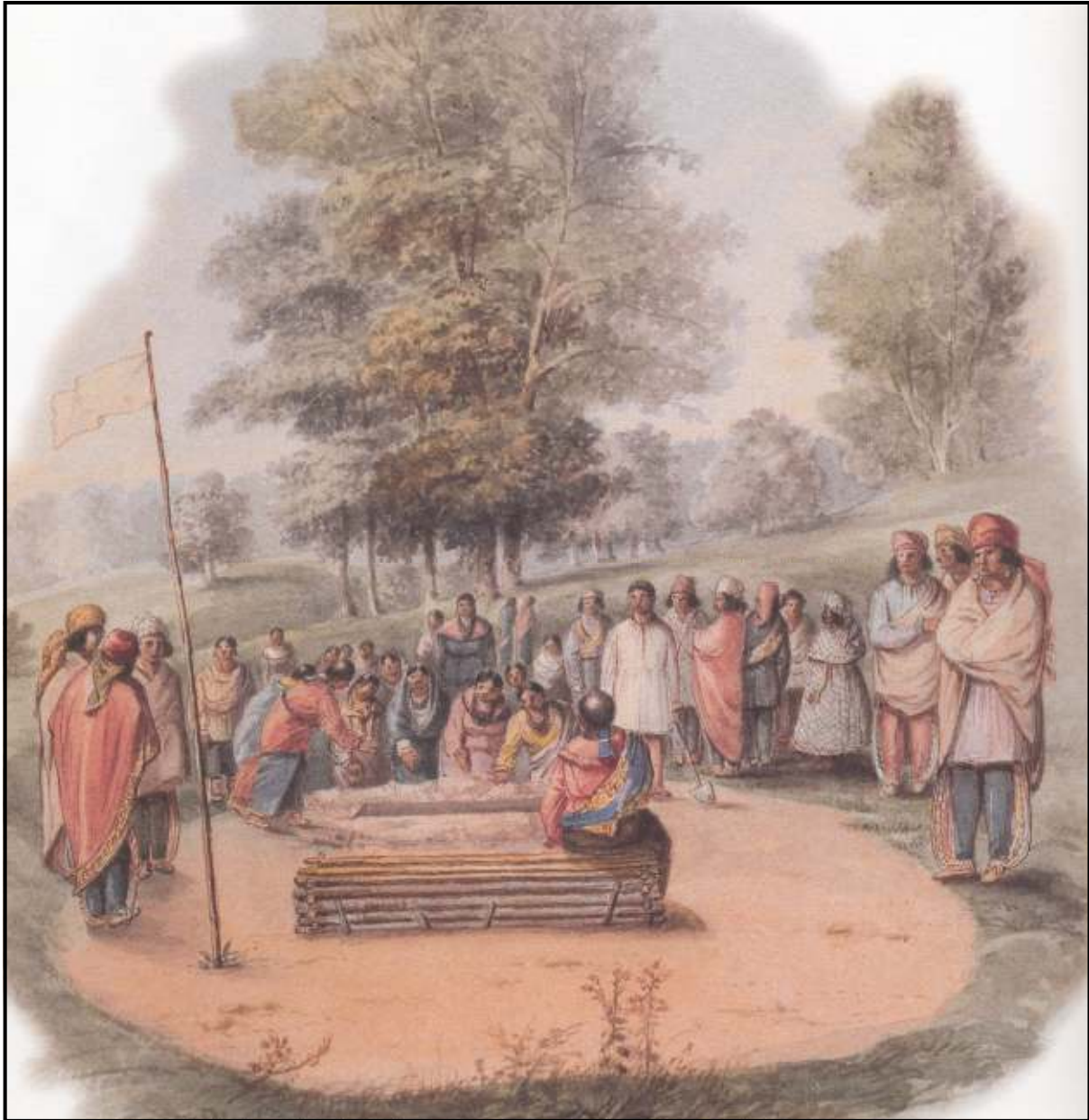


Figure 14. Scene of the burial of the sister of Chief O-ga-Maus at the Kee-way-nay Village drawn by George Winter in 1837 (Feest and Edmunds 1993: Plate 29).

“was buried above ground in a sittine (sic) position, facing the west and surrounded by a pen of split logs or puncheons, which were about three and one-half feet in length and two and a half feet wide. This pen was about three feet wide and long, a hole of about three by four inches was cut in the west side. With the chief were deposited his blankets, his rifle, a brass kettle, tomahawk, and various other small articles to keep him company on his journey to the spirit land (1883:8).”

Like many native groups in the Great Lakes region, Potawatomi custom required an individual's personal belongings to be included in the grave or burial structure. Typically, the body was wrapped in linen or wool robes and strapped to a plank or board prior to being placed in a burial house or grave and important personal belongings such as rifles, knives, tobacco, pipes, kettles and various other items were placed with the body. Burial ritual often included feasting at the gravesite and the construction of a fire. Winter states that at the burial of the sister of Chief O-ga-maus, after the burial, the relatives:

“sat down and partook of food while the friends of the family continued to surround the grave...the scene grew intensely striking....a large number of Indians stood within the shadows of the trees around (sic) the burial ground...(and) a fire had been kindled (Feest and Edmonds 1993:83).”

Feasting at the burial site was common among the related Ottawa and Chippewa. McCoy (1840) described feasts at Ottawa burials and reported almost yearly communal feast for dead, which included decorating graves, mourning, fasting and finally feasting. Similarly, food (and tobacco) was often left at the burial house each day for several days following internment (Feest and Feest 1978:783; Ritzenthaler 1978:753).

Ritual fires may have also been an important part of Potawatomi funerary custom. Winter remarked that a fire was “kindled” at the Potawatomi funeral he observed in 1837. The Chippewa custom required a fire to be built by the grave each evening for four consecutive days following the burial feast (Ritzenthaler 1978:752). Similar rituals are described for other Algonquin-speaking groups such as the Miami and Fox (Callender 1978:684, 642).

The archaeological implication of Potawatomi burial custom and cemetery structure is that, in the absence of a below-ground internment, Potawatomi cemeteries

may leave an almost unrecognizable archaeological signature. Above-ground burial houses and human remains that were abandoned and exposed to the elements would rot and leave no evidence of their presence, especially structures constructed of logs that lacked nails or other more durable construction materials.

Similarly, the contents of burial houses, such as the human remains and burial accoutrements, were vulnerable to exposure, scavengers and thieves and, as such, were unlikely to be drawn into the archaeological record. It is not unreasonable to expect scavengers such as coyote, wolves, and other animals to drag-off and distribute remains over a considerable distance. A similar fate would be expected for perishable items such as fabrics, leather, skins and furs, and wooden objects that may have accompanied the deceased. However, small durable objects, such as the beads, small triangular points, and scrap metal found at the Highlands site, would be expected to remain at a mortuary location. Bloom's description of the Potawatomi grave he observed in 1837 reflects the profound effects of exposure on surface burials. He states that six years following the death of Chief Shawanasee, his skull and larger bones had been carried away. Within forty years, there remained no evidence of the burial structure or indication that a burial was ever present at that location (1883:8).

Thieves also represented a serious threat to Potawatomi gravesites. Bloom (1883:8) details that after the family of Chief Shawanasee moved west, the personal items including the rifle, tomahawk and pipes contained in his burial house were stolen by a Frenchman named Joseph Chabonier. Winter described a similar incident regarding the rifle included with the Miami Chief No-ka-me-nah. He reports that not long after the burial of the No-ka-me-nah, an "enterprising Christian man" stole the "good rifle that was consigned to the grave with chief (Feest and Edmunds 1993:128)." Looting incidences such as these would result in not only opening the burial structure and possibly increasing the ease in which scavengers would be able to access the remains, but also limiting the number and types of durable objects which could possibly be incorporated into the archaeological record.

Depending on the nature of the ritual ceremonies and activities, whether below-ground or above-ground internment is used, and the type of structure used to contain the

deceased, and the incorporation (or lack thereof) of durable grave goods into the archaeological record would render some Potawatomi cemeteries almost unrecognizable. Events such as animal scavenging, looting, and desecration, which occurred post burial and abandonment, would also have a profound effect on the archaeological signature of a cemetery. One possible interpretation of the feature and material remains of the Highlands site is that the site represents a cemetery location such as those described.

The absence of human remains at the Highlands site is perplexing. Why would animal bone remain in archaeological context while human bone does not? The answer to this question may be a matter of the sequence of events at the site. If the food remains resulted from ceremonial and feasting activities, then they would have been deposited early when the cemetery was established and actively used. Since this surface was stripped of vegetation and the soil was exposed, remains left on the ground surface could be easily incorporated into open depressions or low areas of the prepared circle. Erosion associated with rain and snowmelts would fill and cap deposits and result in an archaeological context. The sparse amount of glacial till and the absence of larger naturally occurring rock and cobbles (which is ubiquitous across the Will County, Illinois uplands) suggest that the depression was filled naturally rather than intentionally. Human remains and associated burial accoutrements, on the other hand, would only be exposed following decay of the corpse and interment structure. Most likely, this would occur following cemetery abandonment and long after the circular surface was re-vegetated. As such, there would have been little opportunity for human remains to be buried and incorporated into the archaeological record once the cemetery is no longer tended.

Conclusions

In summary, historic Indian components in Illinois are a challenge to locate and identify mostly due to their apparent rarity and fact that their surface signature is often negligible. A small limited activity site, such as the Highlands site, whose entire European-derived artifact assemblage consists of a few glass beads and single pieces of copper and lead, illustrates this point. The Highlands site appears to represent a late 18th or early 19th century Potawatomi summer or spring occupation of short duration. How

the Native American inhabitants used the site remains unresolved. The Highlands site artifact patterning or internal organization does not suggest a lengthy habitation or resource exploitation station, such as a maple sugaring, nut collection, or hunting camps. The site's unique and enigmatic circular depression or trench feature, diversity of animal remains (including bison and elk) representing (for the most part) single individuals and floral remains (Eastern Eight-row Maize and Small-seeded Bean) may represent the archaeological remnant of a ritual area related to the Potawatomi.

Using ethnographic accounts and illustrations to develop historical analogies, the Highlands site seems to represent the location of either a ceremonial dance ground or a mortuary location used by the Potawatomi circa the 1800 A.D. The linear circular depression (Feature 9) may be the slightly more deeply excavated, peripheral remnant of a prepared surface that was an important part of both Potawatomi dance circles and mortuary areas. Similarly, the large fire pit (Feature 10), which displayed evidence of intensive use and lacked floral or faunal subsistence remains and artifacts, represents a ritual fire that was an important mortuary custom to many Algonquin-speaking groups of the Great Lakes region. Even the non-descript shallow pits (Features 4, 5, and 6) positioned within the circular structure, that contained no artifacts or biological remains, may have functioned as post pits for "red stakes" used by the Potawatomi to mark individual graves.

Feature 8 (which is somewhat larger and deeper than the Features 4, 5, and 6 pits) may represent a post pit excavated to support the long "flag" pole used by the Potawatomi to demarcate their cemeteries. Feature 8 is positioned along the southern-most periphery of the circular area, which correlates well with the "flag" poles Winter depicted at the periphery of the Potawatomi cemeteries that he illustrated in Indiana (Figures 13 and 14). Based on the cast of shadows shown in Figures 11 and 12 and the time of year these drawings were made, the "flag" poles are positioned either at the north or south edge of Potawatomi cemeteries and offers some credence to the interpretation that Feature 8 functioned as pit to support a similar flag.

The subsistence remains—the random and scattered distribution of which appeared to have washed (as opposed to being dumped as refuse) into the depression—

suggest a ritual use of the site. The plant and animal food remains appear to have resulted from feasting activities based on the uncommon diversity in species identified in the assemblage. The Highlands faunal assemblage mirrors the diversity of assemblages derived from feasting-related deposits associated with Illinois groups (Martin 1999). Such feast and “feeding the dead” customs were common among the historic Potawatomi, Ottawa and Chippewa and evidence of this custom at a mortuary or ceremonial location would not be surprising.

If the Highlands site represents a Potawatomi cemetery or mortuary location, the absence of human remains is not entirely unexpected. Potawatomi groups, along with a number of other historic Native American groups of the Great Lakes, practiced a burial custom that placed the body and personal belongings on the ground surface usually (although not always) within a grave house. Such practices would leave the body and burial items susceptible to looting, scavenging, exposure, and decay—all of which would inhibit the incorporation of remains into the archaeological record. Bloom’s (1883:8) description of the desecration of the burials and grave goods at the Potawatomi cemetery along the Kankakee River illustrates how Potawatomi mortuary sites could be unrecognizable shortly after cemetery abandonment.

In summary, the Highlands site is interpreted a locus of historic Native American ritual and ceremonial activities, which is infrequently identified in the archaeological record. The Highlands site may represent the archaeological remains of the Potawatomi religious and ideological system that surrounds their mortuary customs and activities. The model developed for this interpretation of the site is based on a handful of descriptions, accounts, and illustrations of Potawatomi burial and ceremonial customs. In the absence of these accounts, our archaeological impression of the Highlands site would remain in the secular realm as an “odd” short-duration campsite of limited importance and interpretive value. However, aided by ethnohistoric analogy, the site can be interpreted as a location of sacred activity. Such sacred locations are infrequently encountered, are difficult to identify archaeologically, and, as a result, remain rarely investigated.

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