

# Ones that didn't get away...

## George Frederick Clarke's story of fishing and archaeology

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Dr. Clarke collecting along the Miramichi. He wrote "...when I am tired of walking or digging, I sit and watch the river..."

These are just a few of the 2,700 artifacts collected by Dr. Clarke in New Brunswick. The collection includes stone tools and other pieces from the Pre-contact period, many from the Archaic period, 3,000-9,000 years ago. Many artifacts are from sites near the Saint John, Tobique, and Miramichi Rivers. These sites reflect Dr. Clarke's strong association with New Brunswick waterways. His expeditions are recorded in his books *Someone Before Us: Our Maritime Indians* (1968); *Song of the Reel* (1964); and *Six Salmon Rivers and Another* (1960).

Dr. Clarke excavated many old Native American campsites on the river, most near to salmon pools. He was interested in the stories the artifacts had to tell. These stone tools were originally manufactured and used by the Mi'kmaq in a life deeply connected with waterways - hunting, fishing, canoeing and portaging. Among the artifacts are gouges and axes for making canoes, plummets for fishing with nets, ceramics for cooking, and scrapers for cleaning skins of animals and working with wood.

Many of the artifacts were pieces washed from the banks of the rivers by the fast moving spring freshet. If Dr. Clarke had not recovered them, they would have been lost. Now, as he hoped, the artifacts are maintained in a research and teaching collection at the Department of Anthropology, University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. These are the... "Ones that didn't get away"



Dr. Clarke found this plummet on a knoll near The Forks of the Main Southwest Miramichi River. The plummet, which is 7.5 cm long, 3.9 cm in diameter, and weighs 83.4 g, was buried at a depth of 30 cm, and was not associated with any other artifacts. In the archaeological literature, two types of plummets are usually distinguished: earlier bulbous-bodied types, and later faceted types. Both types are associated with the Late Archaic period (6,000-4,000 BP). This plummet is not as strongly faceted as some, and may be transitional between the two types. Plummets are thought to have been used as weights in fishing gear. However, because Native people ceased using plummets long before European contact, the functions of such artifacts remain unknown.



These two sherds were located by Dr. Clarke in a hearth feature near The Forks of the Main Southwest Miramichi River. Ceramic manufacture began approximately 3,000 years ago in the Maritimes and continued until European contact, an era known as the Maritime Woodland period. To make the ceramics, clay was coiled and formed into the vessel shape, smoothed together, decorated, and fired in open hearths. Decorative motifs and materials changed over time periods. Vessels like these allowed Native people to easily store and cook food. Analysis of food residues on some sherds shows that ceramic vessels on the Miramichi were used to cook herbivores such as deer and moose, migratory birds, and fish such as Atlantic salmon.



Dr. Clarke found this broken piece from a ground-slate bayonet at The Forks of the Main Southwest Miramichi River. Native people ceased making slate bayonets long before European contact; as a result, these artifacts are somewhat mysterious. Bayonets with hexagonal cross-sections and incised decorations have sometimes been interpreted as symbolic representations of swordfish bills. Such bayonets are often found associated with plummets and short-channeled gouges, and were made during the Late Archaic period (4500-3800 BP), a time when Native people hunted swordfish in the Gulf of Maine. However, the bayonet from which this piece came has a bi-convex cross section, and has no indication of decoration; it may have functioned as a lance head.



Is it a fish hook or is it a pendant? Or is it something else? We can make educated guesses, but right now that is all we can do. This is one of two unusual flaked stone eccentrics that were part of Dr. Clarke's collection. To date we have no record of where or when he found these. Since Native peoples did not use a hook and line for fishing, we can be confident they are probably pendants used for personal decoration. Since the method of carving these from stone requires a very steady hand and lots of experience, this must have been made by a master. At only 5 cm total length, and 4.5 cm from the tip of the hook to the back, this is testament to the artistry and patience the maker must have had. To see its "twin" white hook, you will have to travel to the Woodstock Public Library, and find Clarke's display on site.



This ground-stone axe was found by Dr. Clarke at The Forks, Southwest Miramichi River, Carleton County, NB. The axe is composed of an igneous volcanic material and its shape greatly resembles modern steel axe-heads. The use-wear analysis of this axe's blade suggests that it was used to work pliable materials such as bone or wood. The handle region shows evidence of being wrapped with hide. This suggests that the axe may have been hafted into the socket of a handle in order to be used more effectively. This axe is consistent with axes that date to the Middle Woodland period, around 2,000 years ago.

An important component of the Woodland period tool kit was the scraper. This is a large unifacial end scraper, a retouched flake. It was found near The Forks, Main Southwest Miramichi River, and is depicted in Plate XXVIIa in Dr. Clarke's book *Someone Before Us*. This scraper is symmetrical and has a dorsal ridge, adding to its strength. It was probably hafted and was well used. Scrapers were used to scrape hides and for wood-working. During his travels along the eastern seaboard in 1605, Samuel de Champlain observed scrapers being used in the manufacture of dugout canoes.



This ground-stone gouge has been constructed out of a piece of argillaceous material that may be either oily shale or mudstone. It was given to Dr. Clarke by a family friend, Howard Curtis, in the early 1940s. The gouge was discovered during field plowing and had been used by Mr. Curtis as a substitute whet stone. The use-wear analysis of the tool's working edge suggests it was used to work bone or wood, and was later discarded due to a slight fracture that now runs the full length of the gouge. The tool's shape greatly resembles a canoe which may be symbolic of the tool's intended use. This gouge is consistent with gouges that date to the Late Archaic period, suggesting it may be 3,800 to 4,500 years old.