

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES OF NEW BRUNSWICK ARCHAEOLOGY

Selections from the

George Frederick Clarke

Collection

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Dr. George Frederick Clarke

Dr. George Frederick Clarke (1883-1974), a Woodstock-area dentist, sport fisherman, conservationist, author, poet, and avocational archaeologist and historian, pioneered archaeological research in the central St. John River valley. Over the course of half a century (from the 1920s to the 1960s), Dr. Clarke amassed, through surface finds and excavation, a collection of artifacts spanning approximately 8000 years of New Brunswick archaeological history. The 2700 artifacts in his collection were recently donated to the University of New Brunswick by the Clarke family.

In keeping with Dr. Clarke's wishes, the University of New Brunswick intends to use the Clarke Collection in teaching, research and public outreach activities. Undergraduate Honours students in archaeology are conducting preliminary research into a selection of the artifacts. Each student has chosen an artifact to study, placing it in geographical and chronological context, and considering material, manufacture, and function. We are learning that these artifacts provide many clues about life in the past, and that they pose puzzles and mysteries that will continue to challenge archaeologists for years to come.



Bifacial Scraper, Tobique River

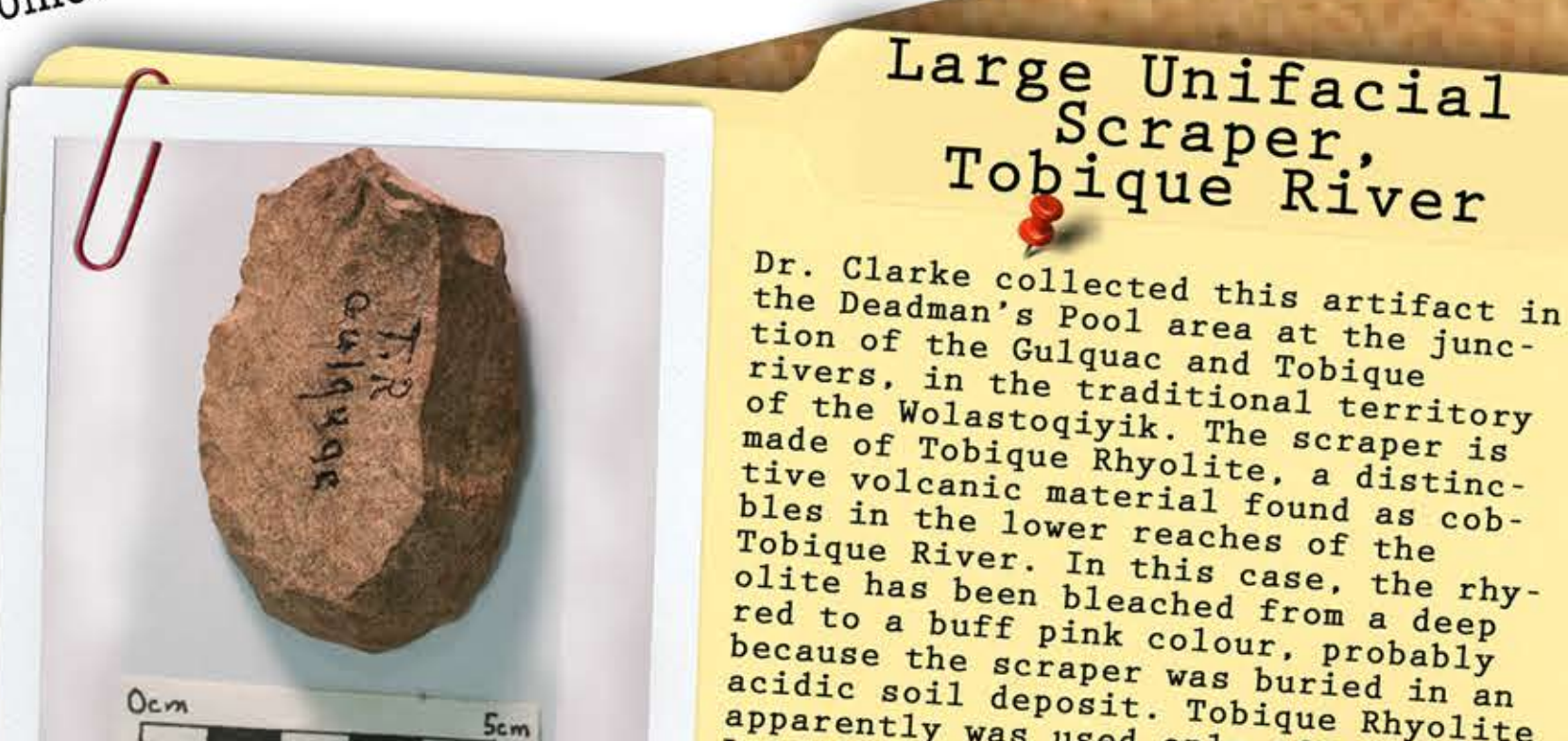
Dr. Clarke found this artifact on the Tobique River in the traditional territory of the Wolastoqiyik. To make the bifacial scraper, a working edge was flaked unilaterally onto the base of a small triangular biface. Bifacial scrapers are usually attributed to the Early Woodland Period (3000-2200 BP). The biface on which the scraper was made is 5.61 cm long, 3.21 cm wide and 0.90 cm thick, and resembles artifacts sometimes referred to as "cache blades" (Granger 1978). It is made from a dark-coloured, opaque, waxy, variegated chert. The origin of this chert is not known; it may be exotic to the place where it was found.

Detective Ramona A. Nicholas



Tobique Bifacial Scraper

dark-coloured, opaque, waxy, variegated chert. The origin of this chert is not known; it may be exotic to the place where it was found.



Large Unifacial Scraper, Tobique River

Dr. Clarke collected this artifact in the Deadman's Pool area at the junction of the Gouluac and Tobique rivers, in the traditional territory of the Wolastoqiyik. The scraper is made of Tobique Rhyolite, a distinctive volcanic material found as cobble in the lower reaches of the Tobique River. In this case, the rhyolite has been bleached from a deep red to a buff pink colour, probably because the scraper was buried in an apparently was used only after the large size of the scraper, 6.87 cm long, 4.48 cm wide and 1.73 cm thick, and the apparent absence of ceramics in the area where it was found, suggest that it dates to the Terminal Archaic (4000-3000 BP) or Early Woodland (3000-2200 BP) periods. The flake: no attempt was made to remove the striking platform or to thin the scraper, suggesting that it was used hand-held rather than hafted. End-scrapers are common artifacts in the archaeological record of the far Northeast; however, the ways that they were used, and the relationships among scraper size, shape and function, remain largely unexplored.

Detective Christian C. Thériault

Ceramic Sherd, Big Clearwater, Miramichi River



Big Clearwater Ceramic Sherd

This sherd from the rim of an aboriginal ceramic vessel, which measures 5.0 cm by 7.0 cm, is one of several sherds found by Dr. Clarke in the traditional territory of the Miramichi River that was an important travel route for Native people. It can be ascribed to Ceramic Period 2 (CP2) of Petersen and Sanger's (1991) seven-phase sequence for the far Northeast. Similar ceramics were made between about 2150 and 1650 BP. Hallmarks of CP2 vessels, which this sherd exhibits, include grit temper, circular punctates, pseudo-scallop shell plain- and rocker-stamped surface treatment, smoothed interior surface, excavate rim shape, and relatively thick vessel walls. The reasons for ceramic vessels in the surface treatment and decoration of ceramic vessels remain enigmatic.

Detective Cora A. Woolsey

Flaked- and Ground-Stone Axe, Miramichi River



Flaked- and Ground-Stone Axe

Dr. Clarke found this axe blade on the Miramichi River in the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq. It measures 15.0 cm long, 5.1 cm wide and 3.15 cm thick, with a weight of 311.0 g. The axe blade was made by flaking, then partially grinding a piece of hard, fine-grained stone, possibly a volcanic silicate. It bears striations at the base and near the cutting edge that may be evidence of hafting and use-wear. Flaked and ground-stone axes are usually attributed to the Terminal Archaic (4000-3000 BP) and Early Woodland (3000-2200 BP) periods (Turnbull 1976). It is not known why this distinctive technology was used to make axes during these periods, but not in earlier or later times.

Detective Angus Morrison



Bristol Bi-Pointed Biface

This biface is one of an apparent cache of similar bifaces and associated artifacts surface-collected and excavated from a terrace of the St. John River at Bristol, in the traditional territory of the Wolastoqiyik. The biface has a symmetrical, laurel-leaf shape, at a maximum of 11.1 cm, and is very thin for its size. It is made by bifacially retouching a large flake of dark, fine-grained variegated volcanic material. The pointed tip of the biface exhibits an area of unusual grinding or wear striations; the opposite end appears to retain part of the striking platform of the original flake. Bifaces as strongly biconvex as this one are unusual in the regional archaeological record. However, since the cache contained several large stemmed projectile points resembling the Adena type (Hranicky 2011), it is likely that this biface dates to the Early Woodland period (3100-2200 BP), a complex and poorly understood part of the regional culture-history sequence.

Detectives Kristine A. Roesler and David W. Black

Historic Ceramic Tobacco Pipe, Meductic Flat



Meductic Flat Tobacco Pipe

This early seventeenth-century tobacco pipe bowl was collected by Dr. Clarke at Meductic Flat on the St. John River, in the traditional territory of the Wolastoqiyik. According to Walker (1977:1515), tobacco pipes like this were made in England between AD 1620 and AD 1650. Typical early seventeenth-century pipes are characterized by a small bulbous bowl, flat by a incised banding below the heel, an incised banding below the heel, and a configuration bowl rim, and a configuration that angled the bowl away from the smoker. In this case, there are two incised grooves below the rim, neither of which extends completely around the bowl. The upper groove is visible to the eye; the lower one is much fainter, and requires magnification to be detected. Usually, there are indications, such as the symbol of a maker or a particular design, which enable the pipe to be dated more precisely. There are no such marks on this pipe, so its age and affiliation remain somewhat obscure.

Detective Sarah E. Little

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Grand Lake Gorget (York Co.)

This two-holed gorget is made of a tabular piece of ground and polished banded slate, measuring 10.2 cm long, 4.8 cm wide, and 0.75 cm thick. Dr. Clarke recorded that it was found at Grand Lake in York County—in the traditional territory of the Chipewyan-Lake system that formed a portage route from the St. John to the St. Croix and Fenobscot rivers. This type of object is called a gorget (or gerge) decorations worn by some Native peoples in the early Historic Period. Banded-slate gorgets are attributed to the Early and are regionally considered diagnostic of the Middlesex Tradition (Turnbull 1986). Several functional interpretations of gorgets have been suggested: as spear-thrower weights, as hafted to a wooden handle, casts doubt on previous speculations.

Detective Anne E. Thornton



Flaked Stone Drill

Dr. Clarke found this flaked-stone drill bit on the St. John River in the traditional territory of the Wolastoqiyik. The drill bit is diamond-shaped in cross-section, with a slightly flaring base; the tip is missing. It is made from a hard, fine-grained, grey-brown stone, perhaps a chert or felsite, of unknown origin. Similar drill bits are associated with the Susquehanna Tradition of the Terminal Archaic Period (4000-3000 BP). Drill bits are usually interpreted as cutting tools used to make cylindrical holes through wood, bone and stone artifacts. The tip of the drill has broken off as a result of a bending fracture, suggesting that lateral pressure may have been applied during use. Evidence of "push-pull wear" has been observed on similar Susquehanna-type drills by Bourque (1995:114).

Flaked-Stone Drill Bit, St. John River

However, in this case, the tip of the drill has broken off as a result of a bending fracture, suggesting that lateral pressure may have been applied during use. Evidence of "push-pull wear" has been observed on similar Susquehanna-type drills by Bourque (1995:114).

Detective Kenneth R. Holyoke

Semi-Faceted Plummet, Miramichi Forks



Semi-Faceted Plummet

Dr. Clarke found this plummet, which he referred to as "pear-shaped," at the forks of the Miramichi River in the traditional Mi'kmaq territory. It is 7.5 cm long, 3.9 cm in maximum diameter, and weighs 83.4 g. In the archaeological literature, two types of plummet are usually distinguished: earlier bulbous-bodied types, and later faceted types. Both types are associated with the Late Archaic Period (6000-4000 BP) (Robinson 2001). This plummet is not as strongly faceted as some and may be transitional between the two types. Plummetts are believed to have been used as weights in fishing gear and for pean contact, the functions of such artifacts remain somewhat mysterious.

Detective Sarah C. Durham

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