

“These artifacts...will not be further analyzed:” Canadian and European Ceramics in Algonquin Park

Ellen Blaubergs

ABSTRACT

“These artifacts...will not be further analyzed” is a rather a bold statement contained in a brief section entitled “European Artifacts”, in a monograph titled *Algonquin Park Archaeology, 1971* (Hurley *et al.* 1972:84). It clearly represents the bias towards historic artifacts prevalent at the time. Thirty-four years later, a reassessment of some of the sites listed in the above-mentioned report included the reexamination of those historic artifacts. In particular, European and Canadian ceramics were reanalyzed and will be discussed in this paper, as will ceramic finds from recent archaeological work in Algonquin Park. These ceramics, and those in storage at the Park Archives, will help demonstrate the availability of a wide variety of wares to farmers, campers, loggers, trappers, and lodge/hotel operators during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Potential ceramic ware sources such as catalogues, newspaper advertisements, and china stores will also be presented.

RÉSUMÉ

L'affirmation « Ces artefacts... ne seront pas davantage analysés », publiée en 1971 dans une brève section de la revue Algonquin Park Archaeology (Hurley et collab., 1972, 84) intitulée « European Artifacts », témoigne clairement des préjugés de l'époque à l'égard des artefacts historiques. Trente-quatre ans plus tard, l'examen de certains des sites énumérés dans ce rapport a entraîné le réexamen d'artefacts, notamment de poteries européennes et canadiennes. La présente communication abordera cette étude ainsi que les découvertes de céramiques lors de récentes fouilles dans le parc Algonquin. Ces poteries, tout comme celles entreposées dans les fonds d'archives du parc, aideront à documenter la grande variété de céramiques auxquelles les fermiers, campeurs, bûcherons, trappeurs et exploitants de gîtes et d'hôtels avaient accès à la fin du XIX^e siècle et au début du XX^e siècle. Nous présenterons aussi certaines origines potentielles pour ces céramiques, telles que les catalogues, publicités dans les journaux et magasins de porcelaine.

Introduction

After a nearly three-decade hiatus, a renewed interest in Algonquin Park archaeology now includes the collective goal of improving the understanding of the use of the Park landscape by different cultural groups over time (Allen: 2005). Interestingly, both the Park's First Nation and Euro-Canadian pasts have excited researchers such as Bill Allen, Tom Ballantine, and Rory MacKay. Their efforts will ultimately illuminate Algonquin Park's history by giving voices to the people, who for various reasons were often absent in the written record.

Until Ballantine's excavations at Basin Depot in the late 1990s (Ballantine 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b) and MacKay's more recent undertakings at the Egan Farm (see MacKay in this volume) there had been virtually no work or interest in Euro-Canadian archaeology in the park. Mackay and Reynolds' book *Algonquin* (1993) amply demonstrates the incredible potential for decades' worth of archaeological study.

During the summer of 2005, a preliminary assessment of decades-old reports, field notes, and collected artifacts related to historic archaeology in Algonquin Park was undertaken. Included in our efforts were several trips to the Algonquin Park Museum Archives where the physical examination of these documents and artifacts was facilitated by park archive staff.

Only a few historic artifacts from previous archaeological work remain in that collection. William Hurley collected these during his 1971 survey. Other artifacts include an assortment of non-archaeological metal tools related to the various and numerous industries and businesses of the Park’s past. A few complete ceramic vessels associated with the late 19th and early 20th century hotel and lodge operations are also available for study.

This paper will provide a very brief description and analysis of European and Canadian ceramic wares from Algonquin Park’s archaeological and non-archaeological collections. Recent finds by Bill Allen in 2005, although not abundant, may eventually be linked to Aboriginal farming, which is known to have occurred near the sites he is researching and testing. Selected ceramics from Basin Depot, a site near the Park’s southwest boundary that features its oldest extant structure, ca. 1892, will also be included.

All of these examples should demonstrate the availability of a wide variety of wares to farmers, campers, loggers, trappers, and lodge and hotel operators during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Potential ceramic ware sources such as catalogues, newspaper advertisements, and china stores will also be briefly presented.

European and Canadian Ceramics from registered archaeological sites

A 1972 report by William Hurley, Ian T. Kenyon, F.W. Lange, and Barry M. Mitchell, details their 1971 survey work in the Park. A very brief but tantalizing two-page section reports on the European-manufactured artifacts found during their survey:

European artifacts were recovered at a number of sites during the 1971 survey. The bulk of this material consists of ceramics, glass and iron artifacts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the most part, they represent goods discarded or lost by trappers, homesteaders (e.g. the Dufond farm) or lumbermen. These artifacts are listed in the site report section and will not be further analyzed (Hurley et al. 1972:84).

Interestingly, three European-manufactured glass beads recovered from three different sites (BkGp-12, BIGp-17, BIGs-3) received more than a cursory analysis and are typed using several classification systems including Kidd’s (1970) and Pratt’s (1961).



Figure 1. Green bottle glass fragment from site CaGp-7 on Cedar Lake. Note the embossed “Cie,” an abbreviation of the French word “compagnie.”

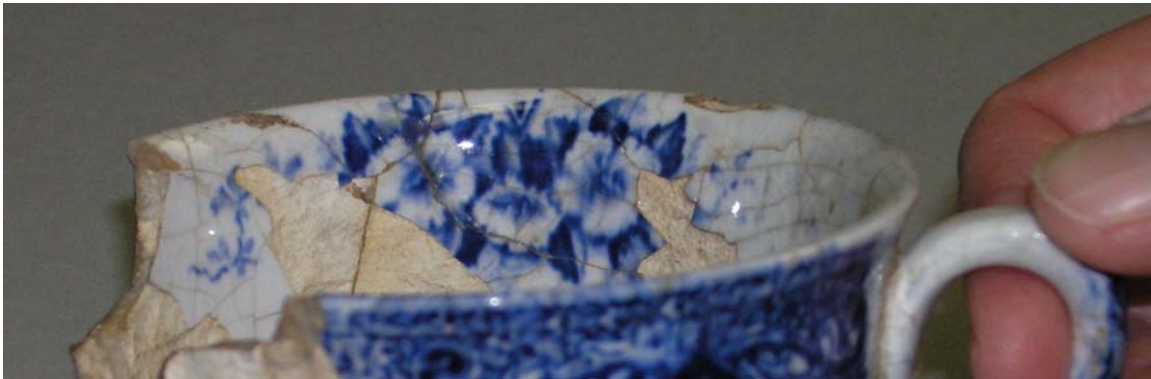


Figure 2. Reconstructed white earthenware cup with blue transfer print from CaGp-7.

One other page in this report (Hurley *et al.* 1972:34) includes a list of “historic” artifacts found at a site given the Borden number CaGp-7. These artifacts include:

- Reconstructed White Earthenware Cup with Blue Transfer (1)
- Reconstructed White Earthenware Plate Fragments (3)
- Green Bottle Glass Fragment (1)
- Earthenware Fragments (15)

CaGp-7 is located on the south shore of Cedar Lake on a sand beach fifty by ten meters in dimension, across from the settlement of Brent in the northern part of the park. Cedar Lake is immediately northeast of Catfish Lake on the upper Petawawa River. CaGp-7 is one of 25 sites on Cedar Lake, the largest lake on the Petawawa-Nipissing River system.

The Algonquin Park Museum Archives still retains the green bottle glass fragment (Figure 1), a soda or beer bottle probably manufactured in Quebec, as well as the white earthenware with blue transfer cup (Figure 2) and plate (Figure 3) in its collection. The other earthenware fragments have been lost.

A reconstructed vitrified white earthenware dinner plate (Figure 3) from CaGp-7 measures 8.5 inches in diameter. The plate and cup both exhibit an unidentified two tone



Figure 3. Reconstructed white earthenware plate with blue transfer print from CaGp-7.

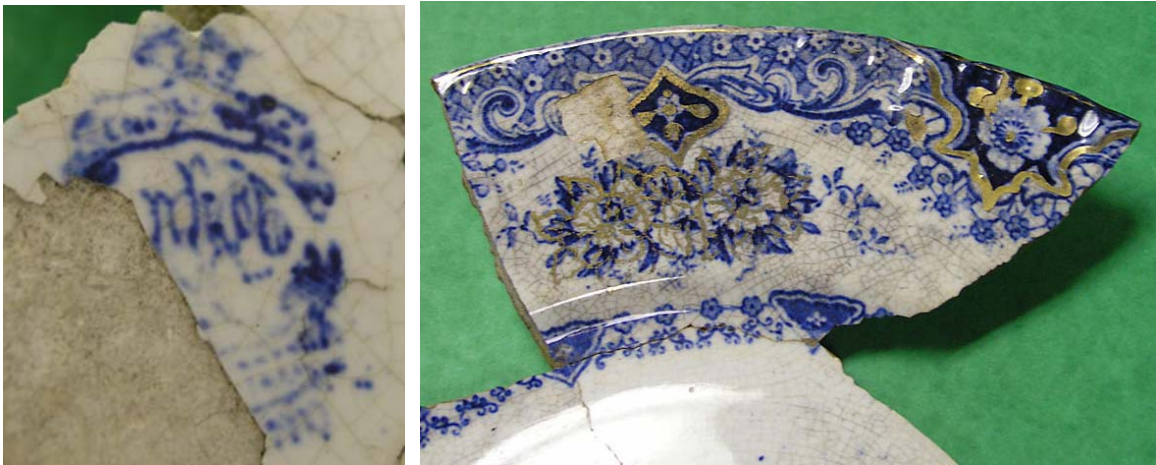


Figure 4. “Flown” maker’s mark on reverse of plate. Figure 5 Detail of gilding on plate.

blue transfer-printed floral pattern with gilt edging and gilt within the pattern. A mark on the reverse side of the plate is too “flown” to be readable (Figure 4). Bright gold gilding (Figure 5) on English wares was first introduced in 1870 and is still a popular decorative method on contemporary ceramics (Miller *et al.* 2000:12).



Figure 6. Examples of ceramic tableware for sale in the 1897 Sears Roebuck catalogue.

Sets like these were readily available from catalogue merchants such as the T. Eaton Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company in Canada, and Sears Roebuck in the United States (Figure 6), and is popular in the early 20th century.

It is tempting to speculate on the nature of site CaGp-7 and how this partial set of tableware might have been used. Possible uses of this site include uses such as a lodge, a hotel, guest cabins, a farm, and possibly even use by research expeditions (e.g. a UofT School of Forestry field camp), which began to spring up at the turn of the 20th century.

Basin Depot

Basin Depot in the southeast corner of the park was the most important logging depot on the Little Bonnechere River and the Old Bonnechere Road. It was a supply and stopping site for loggers. Over a span of more than 100 years, successive companies built shanties, stables, blacksmith shops and storehouses on this site. As early as 1852, several roads radiated from here to logging camps on the Barron, Madawaska and Petawawa Rivers. In 1890, it boasted a post office, a blacksmith shop, company boarding house and several other buildings. As well, ten acres of cleared land nearby were partially planted in potatoes (Stabb and Mackay 2002:18).

In the late 1990s, members of the OAS Ottawa Chapter, under the direction of Tom Ballantine, conducted excavations at Basin Depot. A midden deposit proved particularly insightful vis-à-vis the availability of ceramic wares to Depot residents (Figure 7). In



Figure 7. A selection of ceramics excavated from the midden at Basin Depot.

in addition to the ubiquitous vitrified white earthenwares associated with the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some earlier wares were also found (Ballantine 2000:14-16).

One diagnostic ironstone fragment from the St. John’s Stone Chinaware Company dates between 1873 and 1900. This pottery was one of Canada’s most important; the first and only real successful producer of tableware in the country. In fact, it was the only Canadian whiteware factory that managed to stay in existence for any length of time. Managing to compete with the British pottery industry on all levels, it offered many of the same patterns, such as the Wheat Pattern (Collard 1984:281, 284).

A moulded black basalt sherd proved to be an unusual discovery and is our first evidence of Wedgwood in the wilderness. This fine-grained black stoneware was available in Canada as early as 1780 (Collard 1984:109). In a 1799 advertisement, a Montreal store sold black basalt teapots, advertising it under the name “Egyptian black”. One Wedgwood item also in black basalt that had wide popularity in Canada from 1815 to 1845 and that was advertised in many parts of the country was the inkpot. These were usually described as ‘Wedgwood black inks.’ An advertisement in the *Montreal Gazette* listed ‘Wedgwood black inks’ in English and “Cornets Noir de Wedgwood” in French. Another Montreal advertisement for ‘Wedgwood in every popular design’ was still running in the 1870s (Collard:110). Black basalt’s popularity waned shortly thereafter.

Another early find from the Basin Depot excavations highlights the presence of young people. A number of ceramic sherds were reconstructed and conserved to form a virtually complete child’s plate (Figure 8). A black transfer- printed image of a “circus” scene with a male figure riding backwards on a horse, and another figure being kicked by



Figure 8. Reconstructed child's plate with circus scene from Basin Depot.

the horse was applied to the centre of this refined white earthenware piece. A slight rococo rim with a moulded border of florets is also apparent. No manufacturer's mark was placed on the reverse side.

By the mid-1830s light blue, black, brown, green, and red-printed ceramics were fairly common, and available to Canadian consumers. Although this particular plate may have accompanied the purchaser to Canada, it could also have been purchased locally.

The “circus” scene on this plate is certainly intriguing. To help identify the pattern, from Basin Depot, it is necessary to flash back to London in the year 1770. Equestrian shows were all the rage at this time, and displays of trick riding were especially popular. Among the first equestrian stars of this era was Philip Astley, a young Sergeant Major, recently discharged from His Majesty's Light Dragoons. Philip was also an entrepreneur with keen business sense. He used his reputation for both superb horsemanship and his bravery against the French during the Seven Years War to give exhibitions displaying



Figure 9. Burnt blue spongeware sherd from Baptiste Camp, Lake Louisa.

Figure 10. Three vitrified white earthenware sherds from Purcell Cove, Galeairy Lake.

much showmanship and panache. Astley developed the “Tailor’s Ride to Brentford”, an act combining clowning and horsemanship.

Astley played Billy Button, an inept little tailor who is determined to ride to the village of Brentford as quickly as possible to cast his vote for a popular underdog politician. After much difficulty mounting his horse, he is finally successful, only to find that the horse will not move; until it gallops off so quickly that he is thrown to the ground. With his talents for clowning, riding, and business, Astley successfully developed his little equestrian variety show into an entertainment empire. He died in 1814, but his descendants carried on in the family business and became one of the premiere circus family dynasties in Europe. Astley is traditionally credited with the title of “Father of the Circus” (Blaubergs 2005)

Not surprisingly, we know that at least one European potter capitalized on the fame of Billy Button/Philip Astley, and created children’s plates with this popular character such as the one found at Basin Depot (Figure 8). Further research may reveal the manufacturer of this plate. The majority of children’s and/or nursery wares appear to date between 1830 and 1840 (Neale 2000:52-53).

Ceramics recovered from recent surveys and test excavations by Bill Allen

In more recent years, Bill Allen has done a considerable amount of survey work in Algonquin Park and has found a number of sites with European ceramic wares. Short descriptions of these finds follow.

Pete’s Point (BiGo-05), Lake Louisa

Bill collected four redware flowerpot sherds and a clay bead at Pete’s Point (BiGo-05) on Lake Louisa. Although we have yet to determine the true identity of “Pete”, there could possibly be a First Nations connection to this placename. We do know there was a ranger cabin at the find site, so “Pete” may have been the ranger there. The first superintendent of Algonquin Park was Peter Thomson who arrived at the newly constructed village of Mowat at Canoe Lake in 1893, so there may yet be a connection there as well (MacKay 2002:10). The ranger cabin is right on top of an older site that yielded quartz flakes, a chert tool and a trade bead.

Baptiste Camp (BiGo-2A), Lake Louisa

Seven European and Canadian-made ceramic fragments were collected by Allen at the Baptiste Camp Site on Lake Louisa. Tableware is represented by two mostly exfoliated vitrified white earthenware (VWE) “microsherds”, two burned VWE sherds, and a burned blue sponged or stamped body sherd (Figure 9), which dates between 1850 and the early 20th century. Two coarse salt glazed/Albany-slipped stoneware fragments include one thick rim sherd from a milk pan or crock. This vessel may have been made locally and would have been available by 1840 until the early 1900s.

Lake Louisa is featured prominently on an important 1855 map long before Algonquin was a park but about the time that serious timbering was starting in the area. The site has links to Chief John Baptiste of Baptiste Lake and the Pikwakanagan First Nation at Golden Lake (B. Allen 2005: personal communication).

Purcell Cove (BiGn-07), Gaileairy Lake

Purcell Cove ceramics include one VWE body sherd with a light blue transfer-printed pattern, a plain white VWE body sherd, and two VWE body sherds with brown transfer-printed patterns. Most the glaze has exfoliated off each of these sherds and they all date from the last half of the 19th century into the early 20th century (Figure 10).

Non-archaeological examples of ceramics from Algonquin Park

The coming of the railway in the late 19th century increased the recreational use of Algonquin Park as it became accessible to visitors from points across Ontario and beyond for the first time (Tozer and Strickland 2004:22).

On display in the Algonquin Park Visitors Centre Centre and in the Museum Archives are examples of ceramics used at during the railway hotel era. Camp Minnesing, a wilderness lodge resort on the southeast shore of Burnt Island Lake (Figure 11), was operated by the Grand Trunk Railroad and Canadian National Railway between 1913 and 1923. It was affiliated with the Highland Inn, built by the Grand Trunk Railroad on Cache Lake in 1908. Camp Minnesing (lodge) was purchased by Dr. Henry Sharman in 1923, for the purpose of holding religious seminars (Mackay R. 2002:14).

Egg cups and Dinner Plates

Two vitrified white earthenware/semi porcelain eggcups and two dinner plates are decorated with gold gilding along the rim and also along the base, in the case of the eggcup. The cup portion of the eggcup is decorated with a decal of a maple leaf and the name “Canadian National Hotel System” (Figure 12). A red transfer printed mark found on the bases of the eggcup and plates names Théodore Haviland as the maker of these items (Figure 13).

Théodore Haviland was the son of David Haviland, a successful U.S. importer of English china and manufacturer of Limoges china, ownership of which was the goal of every Victorian Canadian housewife[!], according to ceramic historian Elizabeth Collard (1984:192). After David’s death in 1879, his sons Charles and Théodore carried on the



Figure 11. Camp Minesing lodge.



Figure 12. Egg cup marked with logo for the Canadian National Railway’s hotel system.
Figure 13. Maker’s mark on the base of the eggcup.

business. By 1892 the partnership had dissolved and Théodore Haviland set up his own company (Théodore Haviland & Co/La Porcelaine Théodore Haviland) and Haviland products continued to be imported into Canada. He died in 1919 and his son William took over the Limoges-based firm. In 1941 he bought all marks, models and rights from Haviland & Co. (Kovel 1986:258).

At present, these items can be dated between 1892 and either 1919 or 1941. When the establishment date for the Canadian National Railway Hotel System is determined, the dates for the eggcup and these other Haviland vessels can be tightened up.

GTR Muffin, Washbasin, Water jug, and chamber pot

A small vitrified white earthenware/ironstone muffin (plate) 3 inches in diameter is shown here (Figure 14). It, along with a washbasin, a water jug, and a chamber pot, were all used by Minnesing lodge guests.



Figure 14. GTR plate.



Figure 15. Maker's mark on bottom of GTR plate.

The abbreviation “G.T.R.” appears in green transfer-printed cursive writing on the interiors and/or exteriors of these vessels (Figure 14). The bases are marked, “Grindley’s Vitrified for Hotels & Clubs A. Wiley & Co. Montreal” (Figure 15).

The Grindley Hotelware Co. of Tunstall, England began producing hotelware in 1908. These vessels date between 1908 and 1923, the year the Canadian National Railway took over the Grand Trunk Railway. (Godden 1984: 293; Kovel 1986:90; MacKay 2002:15).

A.T. Wiley was known for his startling advertisements for his Montreal China Hall store. “War in China” was an example of one such ad, used to sell sale items. In 1880, he warned people to “beware of picket pockets” at the Dominion Exhibition and “hold fast to your money to buy fancy goods”, again, at his Notre Dame St. store (Collard 1984:73-74).

Conclusion

The European and Canadian ceramics from Algonquin Park currently available for study are not numerous, with the exception of those from the midden at Basin Depot. They are, however, highly indicative of a wide variety of mass-produced goods available to farmers, depot residents, lodge owners, loggers, and numerous other occupants of the Park during the second half of the 19th and through the early 20th centuries. Despite physical isolation from large urban centres, direct ceramic purchases could be made from stores such as the one at Basin Depot. In addition, mail order catalogue and newspaper advertisement purchases were also possible. The occupants at these sites were certainly aware of current ceramic trends in the world beyond the forest (Davies 2005:70)!

It is hoped that future diagnostic European and Canadian ceramic finds and other artifact types will lead to more substantive, integrated, and specialized analyses. Not only are these artifacts tangible links to the past, they also contain “messages” for us to decipher (Triggs 2005:198) and incorporate into a much larger Algonquin Park history!

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