



Artifacts



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The Shepaug Valley Archaeological Society

Authentic Indian Festival Will Be Here September 29

ONONDAGA INDIANS are coming - to Washington(CT)from their reservation near Syracuse to share with SVAS members and friends one of their two most important annual celebrations - The Iroquois Harvest Festival.

Led by SVAS Director Aldelphina Logan, they will reproduce authentically the dancing, songs and prayers which comprise the traditional ceremony.

The ceremonies will be performed following a traditional Indian meal, consisting of Indian foods cooked and served by Miss Logan and her confreres in Indian manner.

Site of the ceremonial event will be the Parish House of the First Congregational Church of Washington (on the Green). Dinner reservations at \$5 per plate are for 6 pm or 8 pm. The full ceremony will be enacted following each serving. (A few reservations are still available by sending checks to Shepaug Valley Archaeological Society, Box 85, Washington, CT 06793.)

Behind the Scenes

The people known as the Iroquois, of which the Onondagas are a part, had two very important events each year, Miss Logan relates. The Harvest Festival, scheduled for reenactment here in Washington this year, is a natural follow up to the Strawberry Festival, celebrated in the spring.

Through the Strawberry Festival, an Iroquois gave thanks to the Creator for the beginning of his life. The festival honors the Creator who has given of himself. The Iroquois in turn gives humble thanks by individual prayers.

The Harvest Festival, on the other hand, represents the giving of life for the future. This service (capsulated into a two-hour presentation for the SVAS visit) normally lasts four days.

"The future would not be possible if the Creator did not give warm days,

rain and good breezes," Miss Logan explains. "When we gather the harvest, we know that our humble prayers have been heard. As Indians, we never petition for anything. This is a service of thanksgiving.

Chanted Prayer

"In this Harvest Festival, we offer a great prayer chant to our Creator. We acknowledge our three sisters -- beans, corn and squash.

"All plant life is held in great respect, because we know we had nothing to do with making it grow. We are amazed that the Creator has included us. So we pray in thanksgiving. In perpetual humbleness we express gratitude for the harvest -- without which we would be unable to live.

"We give humble thanks, too, for the health of our children; for our young mothers and fathers; and for the safe and

Know Your Directors . . .



HARLAN H. GRISWOLD, a distinguished Connecticut banker, made state history something of an avocation long before SVAS aroused his interest.

He is a member of the CT Historical Commission, the Antiquarian and Land-

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secure wisdom of our elderly.

" . . . and so we gather in dance, chant and song -- as we shall for our friends in Washington (CT) on September 29."

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Dig Those Features Very Carefully!

by John A. Pawlowski

TO A relic collector, the only important items at a site are those he can collect -- those he can pick up and take away readily. But to the archaeologist, "features" - the uncollectables - are of equal importance. And they are much more difficult to handle. Usually they will go unnoticed by the novice.

Typical of these features which mean so much to the archaeologist are storage and garbage pits dug by the Indians; postmolds of poles placed into the ground for a drying rack, shelter frame of palisade wall; the fire pits or hearths used for cooking and even burials.

These features provide more information about living habits in past cultures than do the artifacts themselves. Features tell us how people in these long-ago cultures cooked and stored food; the size and shape of their dwellings and other vital facts. Features often contain the charred remains of past meals, and, of most importance, the charcoal of past fires. This charcoal can be carbon-dated to tell us the date when the site was inhabited.

Features, therefore, need to be excavated and recorded very carefully. Yet clues to features are not always as obvious as the dark black carbon-stained earth of a fire-pit. Only slight changes in soil color may appear -- or a simple arrangement of rocks. Usually, any such change in soil color or rock arrangement should be treated as a feature -- and carefully excavated. Scattered flecks of charcoal and red-stained soil are clues to past fires. An area of rust-red earth could be a lead to a burial. Burials, particularly, are difficult to excavate and should never be attempted by a novice. A professional archaeologist should always be sought to direct the exposure.

The need for such experienced expertise in unearthing features is evidenced by the number and delicacy of the procedures such professionals use when a feature is encountered.

First, the feature is cleaned off with a paint brush and its exact location is recorded on a map. An initial photograph or drawing is made. If a photograph, it is mounted on a title board with information about the site, square, and feature number on stratum. A scale and north indicator is also included.

Next a section cut is made to determine

After Hours

-with SVAS President Ned Swigart

The thread of Indian history has been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. And there are unmistakable advantages to this Indian way of communication -- despite some obvious disadvantages of the spoken as compared to the written word.

These advantages are dramatically clear to anyone privileged, as I was recently, to hear Miss Aldelphina Logan's eloquent description of the life of her Onondaga people over the ages. (Miss Logan, SVAS members know as an SVAS Director and a direct descendant of the respected friend of Indians and whites alike, Tal-ga-ye-e-ta, chief of the powerful Cayuga Iroquois.)

First of all, the Indian way of spoken communication is a deeply personal exchange between the older and younger generations. It is an intimate exchange between grandfather, son and grandson; between grandmother, daughter and granddaughter. Through the spoken word they participate together in life's experiences. Such communication is potent far beyond any "instant education" for children in front of a TV set, while mother and father are off to work.

From these spoken exchanges emerge two important results: (a) there is no generation gap and (b) no disruption of the family unit exists among orthodox Onondaga Indians. In an Indian family, the older people are respected and revered for the history they have witnessed and can articulate. And think of the responsibility of an adult to be able to define in effective and exacting words the es-

sence of his tribe's history, mythology and religion. Think, too, of the responsibility of an Indian youth. He must listen well, for this will be almost his sole source of education about his world. Certainly in earlier days, an Indian youth's very survival depended on listening well. No wonder the Onondaga called themselves the "Ho - du - nau - shu - nee" or the "builders of homes" (the family people).

The oral teaching of history has some other interesting side effects upon Indian culture and on the Onondaga culture in particular. Each wedding and funeral, and each religious and social festival of consequence in Onondaga daily life is attended by the whole tribe as a "living witness" of the occasion. Thus, the whole tribe participates totally in its own history in a very personal way.

Finally, a largely oral means of communication creates art forms of unique value. Music, dance and oratory become much more than entertainment. They become teaching devices, highly evolved and highly skilled, to recount by image and sound to the gathered villagers in the most dramatic way possible the proud heritage of their ancestors.

The two major Onondaga festivals, the Strawberry Festival in the Spring, and the Harvest Festival in the Fall, exemplify all that is Onondaga. The whole tribe participates through music, dance and oratory in a deeply moving religious event which combines the recounting of their past with the witness of their present life experience.

the profile of the feature; then a detailed drawing or photograph.

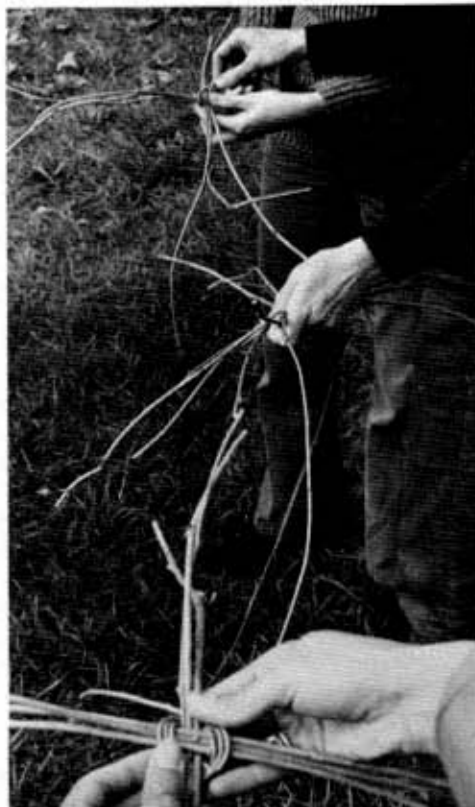
With postmolds or pits, care is taken to determine the exact top of the feature, since some pits at multi-component sites are intruded into older occupation levels. Location of postmolds is accurately recorded, so dwelling shape and sites can later be determined.

So it is clear that care and patience

are necessary for proper excavation of features. The gratifying reward for care and patience is a wealth of good data that can be shared with other archaeologists. (A good detailed description how to excavate features can be found in *The Amateur Archaeologists Handbook*, by Maurice Robbins ... published by Thos. Y. Crowell, Co., New York, N.Y. in 1965.)

How Indians Made Pots & Baskets

For four years, the Eliot Pratt Education Center at New Milford has been studying and recreating in practice many different early skills and crafts of Connecticut Indians. Here, Daniel Hart, the Center's director, projects these studies and experiences backward to describe how these Indians probably went about some of their production of pottery and of baskets.



How early Connecticut Indians set the bottom of a willow basket. Willow branches were sometimes used because of their flexibility, despite their not being as sturdy as oak or ash.

EARLY CONNECTICUT Indians were both prolific and skillful in fashioning and firing pottery and in producing both plaited and coiled baskets. Both crafts involved use of available natural materials, including the natural dyes procured from black walnuts, butternuts, goldenrod marigolds and onion skins.

Pottery

Most early Connecticut Indian pottery was made from the native red clay so widely available on the banks of tributary streams in the state. Prior to forming a pot, it was usual to add grog (i.e. sand or ground shells) to the clay -- to give it body and to help prevent breakage during the firing process.

A common procedure for making a small pot was to excavate in the ground a pointed hole six to nine inches deep and six to nine inches wide. This hole might be lined with wide flat mullein or dock leaves. In the very earliest times, however, it is likely that grasses and tree leaves were used, since both mullein and dock came to Connecticut from early English settlers. They are not native plants.

After the hole was dug, a small ball of clay was placed at the bottom of the hole and shaped to fit the contour. Then successive coils were placed on the pot to make it larger and larger. (The diameter of the pot was increased by placing coils to the outside of the cup and decreased

by placing coils to the inside.) Often a smooth pebble, shaped by a stream or seashore waves was used to smooth the pot both inside and out.

After drying for three to seven days, a pot made by this procedure was ready for firing.

Firing

The Indians fired pots with an above-ground technique. In this above-ground

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News Shorts

MEMBERSHIP for the 1972-1973 year is approaching 400. This nearly 200% increase over the previous year has allowed SVAS to carbon-date six additional Indian firepits . . . and has paid also for publication of the 92-page Connecticut Archaeological Society Research Bulletin being made available to SVAS 1972-1973 members upon request.

Fourteen regular memberships pay the cost of a single C-14 date for an Indian settlement. Six Contributing or three Sustaining memberships will more than cover this \$140 cost.

The 1973-1974 membership year has just begun -- and with it hopes for another year of major membership advance as well as steady increase in the proportion of Contributing, Sustaining and Benefactor members.

Call or write to Membership Chairman Mrs. Jared Synnstedt for information on how best to contribute to furtherance of these growth aims. Her address: Main Street, Bridgewater, CT 06752.



FUND RAISING to build and endow the American Indian Institute of Connecticut continues at a satisfactory rate. Gifts and pledges to August 1 totalled \$230,000. The mini-goal of \$250,000-by-September 1 seems likely to have been attained by the time you read this. Attainable too seems the final \$300,000 total by January 1, 1974.



DIGGING this past summer has been a banner season. More than 5000 items were catalogued in the first two weeks of digging. More than 500 people participated in the digging program before it closed down late in August.



MOST RECENT SVAS C-14 DATE received from the Geochron Laboratory dates a rock shelter unearthed by SVAS diggers in Southbury (CT) area. Date of the shelter: 1450 AD plus or minus 110 years. (It bears Geochron number G 2990.) Material from this shelter and a nearby campsite includes pottery, bone (from such animals as deer and turkey), hickory nuts and many quartz and flint triangular arrow heads and tools.

Artifacts

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How Indians Made

Pots and Baskets *(continued from page 3)*

firing, shaped pots were placed two or three feet from the fire. Then they were moved, over a period of two to three days, closer and closer to a continuously burning fire. When the pots were well cured, they were turned upside down on stones in the coals. Next they were filled and covered with rotted wood. Then dry wood was heaped on top.

The firing was completed when, several hours later, the coals had burned out.

As in producing pottery, the early Indians used available native materials in all of their basketry. Eastern Woodland baskets were made from willow, black or swamp ash and white oak. Both willow and white oak were relatively easy to find, but black ash, a swamp-growing tree, was not always so easily located.

Willow branches, because they are very flexible, were sometimes used for baskets, despite their not being as sturdy as ash or oak.

Splintering the wood pieces (splints) for baskets from oak and ash required both strong arms and patience. Ash splints were "cleaner" and their widths could be controlled better than oak splints. To get these splints, a young tree of six to eight feet in diameter had to be felled and cut to sizes eight to twelve feet long. Then the bark was stripped off by hand or hatchet, leaving the white layers below. Next, a small wooden mallet was used to beat the log and loosen up the top annual rings. An entire day was usually needed to beat and splint a log of this size.

Splints of a fairly uniform size were taken by scoring the log with a flint knife before peeling the layers off. After the scoring was done, a splint end was grasped and pulled off the length of the log -- with care to prevent breakage.

When oak trees were the source of splints, a tree of about the same dimensions was required -- perhaps a little larger in diameter. But the white oak had to be straight and clear with as few knots as possible. Otherwise, considerable difficult work was involved. When oak was used, it was customary to halve the log, then quarter it and finally to cut it in eights. Then each of the eights was worked by hand. Usually a small wooden wedge was placed at the end of a split piece and hammered until the end was opened up.

Then the piece was split apart its entire length. The fingers of both hands were then used to pry the pieces apart. Then

PROGRAM

OCTOBER 1973 THROUGH FEBRUARY 1974

FOUR exciting films and a year-end roundup of SVAS 1973 dig achievements are scheduled for the first five meetings of the 1973-1974 Society year, Meetings Chairman Ron Whittle announces. As before, each monthly meeting will be held in the Town Hall in Washington Depot on a Thursday evening. Starting time: 8 pm. Mark your calendar now for:

October 4, 1973

"THE VOYAGERS"

-- a film which dramatically depicts early exploration of the Great Lakes by the French. (It will be a vehicle for discussing white contact and trade with area Indians.)

☞

November 1, 1973

"THE LONGHOUSE PEOPLE"

-- a film devoted to the culture of the Iroquois people, our neighbors to the West.

☞

December 6, 1973

"THE GUNSMITH"

-- a film (of the celebrated "Craftsmen of Williamsburg" series) illustrating in exquisite detail a most important Colonial art.

☞

January 3, 1974

IN PERSON, SVAS President Edmund K. Swigart will report on 1973 SVAS digs. He will display artifacts uncovered during the summer and comment on their significance.

☞

February 7, 1974

"ANCIENT PROJECTILE POINTS"

-- a detailed film illustrating many aspects of lithic technology. (Anyone interested in the possibility of recreating such artifacts cannot afford to miss this informative presentation.)

each of the new sections was opened up and pried apart also.

When the grain was not perfectly straight -- and usually it wasn't -- the splints tended to "run out" or break off. Real manual skill was necessary to pull left or right to center the splint.

Know Your Directors

(continued from page 1)

marks Society of CT, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and is vice-president of the Old Woodbury Historical Society. That the future remains his chief interest, however, is typified by his leadership in the CT Development Commission (of which he is a past chair-

man and is still vice-chairman) among his many other contributions to civic and business betterment.

Director Griswold was born in New Jersey, brought up in Pennsylvania and New York, got his first bank job (messenger) in Canada . . . and has lived in Connecticut (Woodbury) since the mid-50s.

He was graduated from Wesleyan University, and pursued graduate studies at University of Toronto. He was chairman and chief executive officer of the Waterbury National Bank when it merged in 1971 with the City Trust Co. to form The City National Bank. Now he is senior vice-president of Connecticut Financial Services Corporation, a holding company which owns the Bank.