

SITE WITH 2 LONG HOUSES FOUND IN MOHAWK VALLEY

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CANAJOHARIE, N.Y., July 27— One day in 1981, Donald Rumrill, a retired steamfitter and an amateur archeologist, discovered a fire-cracked rock, some beads and two flint arrow points in a cornfield overlooking the Mohawk River here.

Today, 60 diggers directed by a professional archeologist have almost completed excavating the site, identified as a village occupied by the Mohawk Indians in the early 1600's.

In 1634, a Dutch explorer, Hieronymus van Den Bogaert, described eight Indian villages in the Mohawk Valley. One of them was called Canagere, five miles southeast of here.

"We believe this is that village," said Dr. Dean R. Snow, a professor of archeology at the State University at Albany, who is directing the excavation and is an expert on the Mohawks. Epidemics of 1633

Professor Snow is in the third year of a 10-year project to measure the impact of epidemics of smallpox and measles, introduced by Europeans, that swept through Mohawk villages in central New York in 1633.

Dr. Snow was standing on the bare soil of a five-acre field that was not planted this year because a wet spring prevented the use of tractors.

Some of his associates used shovels and wheelbarrows to uncover eight inches of top soil churned by tractors in previous years. Others used small trowels to sift through the undersoil, looking for post holes, beads, arrowheads, pipe fragments and stone tools.


Among those at the dig were anthropology students from the State University at Albany and Oneonta and volunteers from Berne Knox High School and Farnsworth Middle School, both near Albany, and Earthwatch, a nonprofit organization in Boston that aids research projects. The People 'Are Marvelous'


"I came here for my vacation," said Herbert Brammeier Jr. of Fort Myers, Fla., a 62-year-old cartoonist. He is an Earthwatch volunteer who said he paid \$600 to dig for two weeks.


"The work is a bit tedious," he said, after dumping a wheelbarrow full of earth. "But the people you meet are marvelous."


Lara Descartes, a junior in high school, said the work was interesting, even though she had been digging for two weeks and had not uncovered anything important.


The diggers work in two large areas marked by yellow ribbons that outline the outer walls of two long houses. Each was 120 feet long and 20 feet wide, with several hearths


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scooped out of the earthen floor on the center aisle. Families lived along the sides of the long houses, facing each other and sharing the hearths for cooking, Dr. Snow said.

Moved Every 10 or 20 Years

"The houses were built rather like a Pullman car," he said.

At its height, the village consisted of 16 long houses, with a total population of between 900 and 1,000 people, according to Dr. Snow.

The villages moved every 10 or 20 years because the land around them became worn out, nearby firewood was used up or the populations grew so much that they had to find new space, he said.

"One of the pleasures of doing an archeological dig in this part of the world is that you can get a snapshot of history," Dr. Snow said. "We can clear a large area and get picture of the village as it really was."

Among the conclusions he drew from his excavation was that the village had not been occupied very long. He cited the fact that his diggers had found very little accumulation of the bones and seeds that would normally be expected in a garbage dump of a long-term settlement. Beads of Many Colors

In addition, he quoted van Den Boggaert, who said that when he went to the village in 1634, it did not have the usual stockade Mohawks built for protection and that it seemed overbuilt for its population. That, to Dr. Snow, was another piece of evidence confirming the epidemics of 1633.

Standing at a table on the site covered with bags and boxes filled with artifacts, Dr. Snow demonstrated some of the findings. In transparent plastic boxes where white, red and black, Venetian red and robin's-egg blue beads. In paper bags were white kaolin pipestem fragments, some broken stone-scraping tools, a brass point from an arrow and a thimble with a hole in it that was probably used as a bangle. Dr. Snow and his assistants will complete their work next Friday and spend the rest of the summer analyzing their findings.

"It turned out better than we dared hope for," he said. "It has given us two long houses rather than the one we hoped for. We hoped to find one large central hearth, and we have found many. We hoped to find an adequate bead sample, but we have boxes of them."

Photo of Dr. Dean R. Snow spraying down excavation site in Canajoharie, N.Y.; Photo of Dr. Snow with Donald Rumrill; Map of area

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