

The Middleport Horizon

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Throughout a large portion of Southern Ontario a number of Iroquois sites have been excavated which possess certain close qualitative and quantitative correspondences. It has been the spatial extent of these sites which has stimulated the term "Horizon", and, although regional variations naturally occur they appear to be of a minor nature relative to the cultural variability present in the preceding and following stages of Iroquois cultural development in Ontario. The concept of a Middleport Horizon was initially raised by MacNeish (1952: pp. 84-85) who states:

"Carrying on into the next horizon of the Pound and Middleport sites are Ontario Oblique, Ontario Horizontal, and Middleport Crossed. This period also marks the first prominence of Pound Necked, Lawson Incised, and Middleport Oblique. It is evident that about this time the Huron and the Neutral separated."

The aim of the present study is to elaborate upon this concept and to offer further substantiating data.

Artifactual and non-artifactual evidence has been used but the basic methodology follows MacNeish (1952) and Emerson (1956) in its reliance upon the analysis of rim sherds. The problem of an adequate ceramic sample presents itself at a number of the sites examined. It has been suggested by multiple ceramic analysis of single Middleport Horizon components that a sample as low as fifty rim sherds may afford type frequencies adequate for valid spatial and temporal inferences. The proposed validity of such small samples appears to stem from the few ceramic types that are present on these early sites as opposed to the more complex ceramic elaboration and cosmopolitanism of later Iroquois sites where, as MacNeish (1952: p. 92) men-

tions, a rim sherd count of from three hundred to five hundred represents an adequate sample.

The map illustrates the approximate distribution of the Middleport Horizon in Southern Ontario and New York State and the location of the six sites considered. Table I lists the basic data concerning the sites examined and Table II gives the rim sherd analysis for each site.

TABLE I

<i>Site</i>	<i>Excavator</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Analysed</i>	<i>Rim Frequency</i>
Middleport	Wintenberg	N.M.C.	MacNeish	308
Pound	Nash	U. of T.	MacNeish	676
Robb	O.A.S.	O.A.S.	Wright	184
Millroy	O.A.S.	O.A.S.	Wright	129
Nodwell	Knechtel/Wright	—	Wright	60
Inverhuron	Knechtel/Wright/ Kenyon	R.O.M.A.	Kenyon/Wright	235

N.M.C.	—	National Museum of Canada
U. of T.	—	University of Toronto
O.A.S.	—	Ontario Archaeological Society
R.O.M.A.	—	Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology

TABLE II

<i>Type in Percentage</i>	<i>Nodwell</i>	<i>Robb</i>	<i>Millroy</i>	<i>Middleport</i>	<i>Inverhuron</i>	<i>Pound</i>
Middleport Oblique	43	51	33	15	12	16
Lawson Incised	18	7	9	12	22	7
Ontario Horizontal	5	16	8	38	9	24
Iroquois Linear	13	14	—	—	3	—
Sidey Crossed	5	—	—	—	4	—
Middleport Criss-Cross	3	2	1	17	—	3
Lawson Opposed	3	1	2	—	6	P
Huron Incised	2	3	5	—	5	—
Syracuse Incised	2	—	1	—	—	—
Ontario Oblique	2	—	1	8	2	—
Black Necked	2	P	6	—	3	—
Sidey Notched	—	1	—	—	—	—
Ripley Collared	—	1	—	—	—	—
Ripley Plain	—	2	—	1	4	P
Pound Necked	—	—	19	5	10	46
Richmond Mills	—	—	2	—	—	—
Niagara Collared	—	—	—	2	—	1
Lalonde High Collar*	—	—	—	—	13	—
Seed Incised	—	—	—	—	5	—
Pound Blank	—	—	—	—	—	3
Miscellaneous	—	2	10	—	2	—

*Ridley: 1952

As can be seen from Table II, Middleport Oblique, Lawson Incised, and Ontario Horizontal have a substantial representation at all six sites and it is this trio of pottery types which is regarded as the major marker of the Middleport Horizon. Other forms are frequently in association such as Iroquois Linear, Middleport Criss-Cross, Lawson Opposed, and Pound Necked.

In addition to the distinctive pottery types the Middleport Horizon sites possess similar pipe types, projectile points, bone implements, and settlement pattern characteristics. The pipe types are predominantly of the broad, conical form and are usually decorated with very finely incised rings encompassing the bowl or a series of opposed obliques. Projectile points tend to be of the narrow, triangular, side-notched variety rather than the unnotched, triangular form which is characteristic of later Iroquois sites. This last correspondence, however, is quantitative rather than qualitative. An artifact which appears to be present on all Middleport Horizon sites is a modified deer toe bone. The proximal end of the bone is cut away leaving the exposed marrow cavity. A perforation is then made through the distal articulation. This particular artifact is frequently regarded as a unit of the cup-and-pin game but might have served equally well as a bangle. Matting or netting needles also are frequently present but their value as a quantitative marker is yet to be tested. All the sites are small, being usually less than three acres in area. The sites also appear to be situated without any regard to defence and only very tenuous evidence of palisading has been noted at one site (Wintemberg: 1948). Sites may occur on flat plains at the edge of small creeks (Nodwell and Robb), on low knowls at the edge of major rivers (Middleport) or minor tributaries (Millroy), and along lakeshores (Inverhuron). Numerous small campsites consisting of one or two middens are also characteristic of the Middleport Horizon. Some of the sites are seasonal such as the Inverhuron Site (Kenyon: 1959) which was occupied in the spring or early summer during the exploitation of fishing resources. These settlement pattern characteristics differ markedly from the western Huron of the Humber Valley area where endemic warfare led to large, palisaded villages being located on high and easily defended hills (Emerson: personal communication).

Figure I represents a partial modification of one portion of MacNeish's Iroquois developmental sequence (MacNeish: 1952, Figure 23, p. 87). Starting at the base and progressing upward a continuous sequence from the Goessens Site to the Middleport Horizon is indicated. Actually a pre-Middleport horizon appears to be represented in the Glen Meyer Focus (Lee: 1952) as reflected by the distribution of the Goessens, Stafford (Lee: 1952), Miller (Kenyon: 1960), Boys Barrie (Ridley: 1958), Frank Bay (Ridley: 1954), and Sugar Island (Ritchie: 1949) sites. An effective ceramic typology, however, must be established before the interrelationships of these widely dispersed sites to one another can be evaluated. Sometime between the Uren period and the Middleport Horizon, influences from Southern Ontario were reaching into western New York State resulting in the occurrence of Iroquois Linear and Ontario Horizontal on the Dansville and Long Point sites. To what extent the local Seneca development was affected by these influences is difficult to say but that a relationship was established between the two areas is strongly suggested by ethnohistoric data as well as the distribution of pottery types (Guthe: 1958). For example,

"The westernmost Seneca settlements were especially friendly with the Erie. On both sides of the Niagara river were the villages of the Attiwandaronk or Neutral, considered an old and parent body of all the Huron-Iroquois. Within one of their villages near the Niagara lived Ji-gon-sa-seh, "The mother of Nations," a woman who was a lineal descendant of "the first woman of earth." (Parker: 1922, p. 158).

And,

"Up to this time the early Seneca had mingled more with the Erie and the Neutral nations, than with the Onondaga and Mohawk." (Parker: 1922, p. 207).

In the eastern and the northern portions of Southern Ontario, sites of the Middleport Horizon were gradually favouring pottery types characteristic of the Huron. Present evidence suggests that the Petun are archaeologically identical to the Huron and the Inverhuron and Nodwell sites are inserted in a hypothetical branch

leading up to the Petun solely on the basis of their geographical occurrence in the historic Petun area and not on the grounds of ceramic differences. Historic Petun ceramics (unpublished data) are virtually indistinguishable from the neighbouring historic Huron ceramics thus suggesting that the tribal units represent an archaeologically artificial separation. Ethnohistoric evidence tends to substantiate the archaeological evidence. In the southern area of the Middleport Horizon a separation apparently took place around Southwald times leading to the differentiation of the Erie and the Neutral tribal units.

In conclusion, the evidence derived from the Middleport Horizon sites creates the impression of scattered, small groups of farmers living in relative peace and receiving only slight external influences. From this Middleport Horizon base it is postulated that internal change was largely responsible for the eventual differentiation of the Neutral, Erie, and Huron-Petun tribal units.

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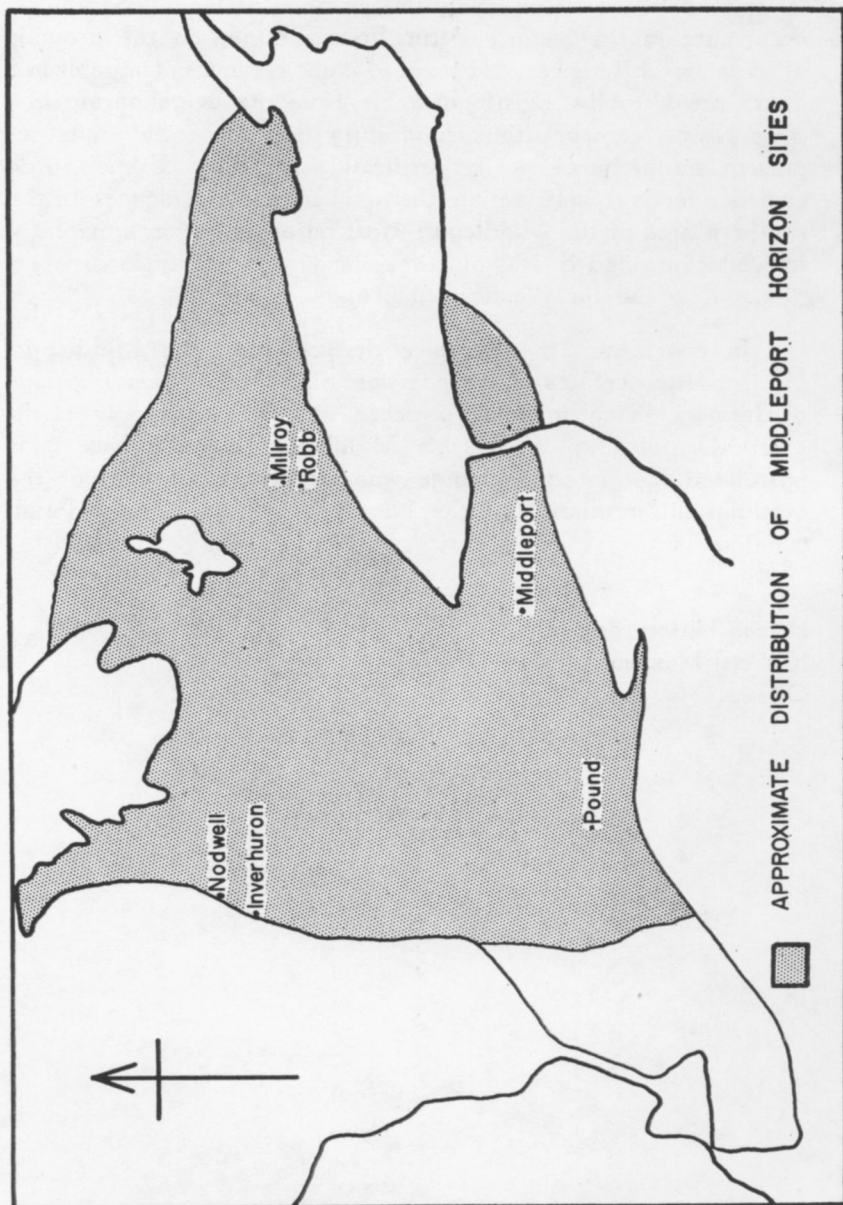
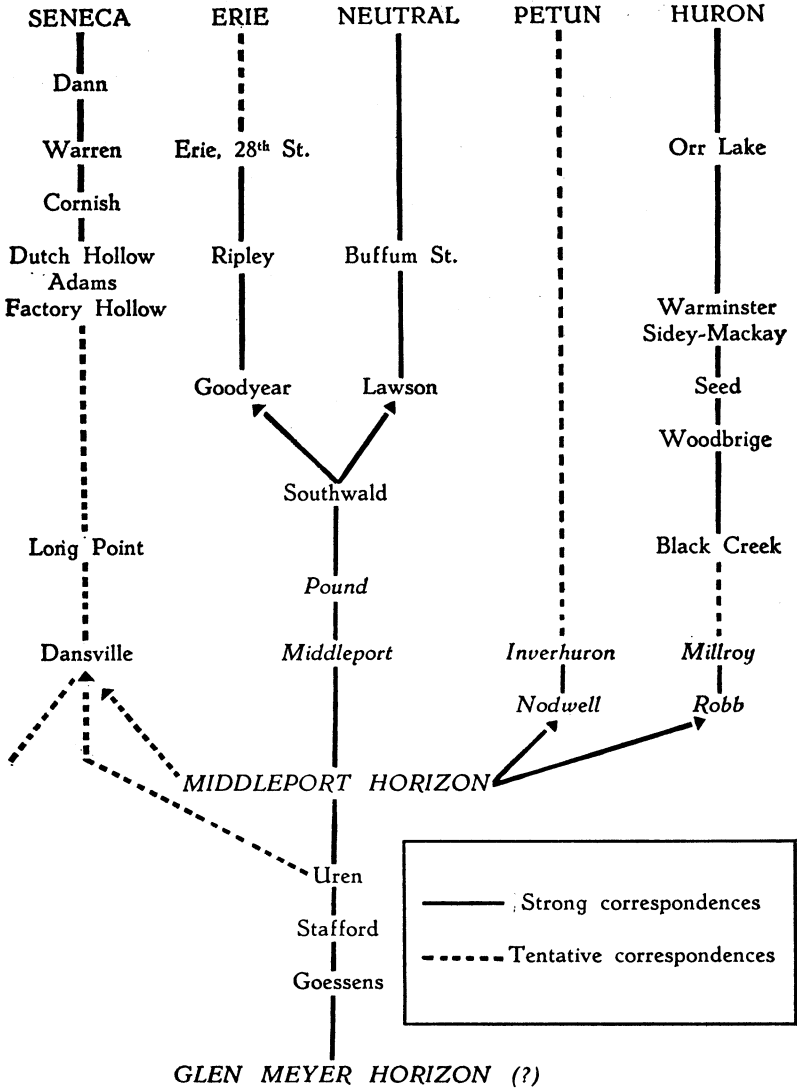


FIGURE I



DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCE OF THE ONTARIO IROQUOIS

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