

K.C.S., Windsor, N.S.
28th May 1946

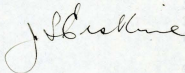
Dear Mr. Raddall:

Thanks for the letter. I certainly enjoyed that walk and should be glad to repeat it here or elsewhere. Please remember that if anything takes you towards Wolfville during the summer months, we have usually a spare bedroom.

I enquired about that article for you. Helen Beals who teaches Art at Acadia, says that it is not yet published. Thus far it has only been given as illustrated lectures. However, the manuscript has been accepted by the Canadian Geographic Magazine and may be out shortly. The author is Walter Abell, formerly professor of Art at Acadia. Miss Beals says also that there were some recent articles on the subject which she had collected for her own use and promised to send me the references when she has a chance to look them up, but as yet she has not done so. She is a very reliable person.

I hope inspiration flows freely. Best wishes for the success of the new novel.

Yours sincerely,



Miss July 9

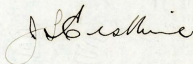
K.C.S., Windsor, N. S.
23rd June 1946

Dear Mr. Raddall:

Miss Beals has sent along the references to certain articles on Nova Scotian architecture which might be of interest. The Ronald Peck referred to has been doing some instructing at Acadia during the past season. His home is in Wolfville, but he is a bit of a wanderer and not easy to lay hands on. If you should have any difficulty in laying hands upon "Maritime Art" also, we have, I think, a complete set and could send these numbers along.

School is very nearly over now. I have a few tedious days of invigilation before me, and then home for the summer. The only item of historical news is probably not at all new to you. My boy was botanizing at Avonport with Gordon Haliburton who showed him the "French ruins", a few cellars. He said that they had found "Mexican" coins in the field nearby. I suppose these would be Spanish silver reales, pesetas and pieces of eight, but it surprises me that there should only be these and not English money as well. If I remember correctly, this area was settled only after 1700. In Jamaica I saw a good many Spanish medios, mostly of Carlos III, but there were quite as many coins of George III still to be seen. Also it seems odd that the Acadians should have had enough money for any to have been scattered about, but this would probably be hoards scattered in the burning of the houses.

Best wishes.



J. S. Erskine

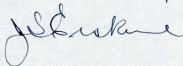
Dr. T.H.Raddall,
Liverpool, N.S.

Wolfville, N.S.
2nd June 1957

Dear Dr.Raddall:

I was thinking of dismembering one of the South Shore shell-mounds in the hope that recent developments, such as carbon-dating, might give us rather more exact knowledge of the time when the Micmacs replaced the Red Paint people. Mr.Donly at Mill Village said that he knew several shell-heaps but that he thought that I should do well to write to you to find out which had already been worked over. I have not been able to hear that anyone has brought together the knowledge concerning Indian remains. At King's College School many years ago you mentioned to me an excavation which should Red Paint tools, and I understood that these had all gone to the United States. The excavation of Red Paint mounds at Chezzetcook mentioned by Willoughby in his "New England Archaeology" is probably the same cited by the author of the "Micmacs of Eastern Canada". However, almost everyone I speak to, tells me about some well-known camp-site which I have never heard of. I should like to get some of this material into available form and adequate collections and types of implement into the N.S.Museum. Anything that you can tell me about this matter I should welcome most gratefully.

Yours sincerely,



J. S. Erskine

*Ans'd ✓ sent
him my notes on the
Park Falls heaps
June 7/57*

Wolfville, N.S.
11th June 1957

Dear Dr. Raddall:

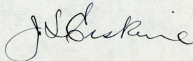
It was very kind of you to let me see your notes on the Port Joli shell-mounds. I have typed a copy for my further information and am returning it to you herewith.

My objective at the moment is a survey of the Indian remains of the province - simply the pawing-over of as much varied material as possible in order to try to see whether any classification emerges. The Science Museum in Halifax finances me, essentially as a botanist, and lets me wander into odd byways which are rarely profitable to the museum's exhibits. So "rich" diggings are less important than indicative ones, and a bagful of datable charcoal would be worth more than a perfect tomahawk. The chances are a hundred to one that I shall turn up with nothing but the general picture that Willoughby and others have already made in New England archaeology. When I abandoned my earlier career as a rolling stone and took up moss-gathering in Nova Scotia, I added some eight percent to the number of moss-species known in the province, but I have probably disturbed geological theory and have made our botany seem only rather more commonplace. One never knows.

Wherever I go I seem to come across your footprints, whether on Sable Island or at the house of Dewey Nickerson on Seal Island. (He is never tired of talking of your visit and was hoping you would be back some year at the lobster fishing.)

Thank you again for the information.

Yours sincerely,



J. S. Erskine

July 26th, 1957

Dear Mr. Ereskine,

The people who study (and worry about!) the water level in the storage dam below Indian Gardens tell me that the water is dropping 1/10 foot per day, and that it will continue to drop all through the month of August, rain or no rain. Even a heavy and long continued rain would merely fill up the back lakes and the extensive swamps above Rossignol, which are like dry sponges at the present time. By the third week in August, possibly sooner, parts of the small hillocks on the old Indian Gardens site will begin to appear for the first time in many years. Since the dam was built in 1929 I can remember only three very dry summers in which these mounds reappeared, and each time we found a lot of Indian material.

Therefore I suggest that you put off your visit to Indian Gardens as long as possible. The Mersey Paper Company will not be using their camp building there any time this summer, so far as they know now, and you are welcome to use it. Whenever you decide to come, get in touch with me, or if I'm not in town, with J. Roy Gordon, of Milton, phone Elmwood 4-3956. Gordon is the Mersey Paper man in charge of river operations, and will let you have the key. He is one of my old relic-hunting companions, knows the whole area perfectly, and will be happy to give you any assistance he can.

Sincerely,

Wolfville, N.S.
29th July 1957

Dear Dr. Raddall:

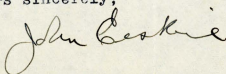
Thank you very much for the information and advice about visiting Indian Gardens as late as possible in August. That should fit in admirably with my other possibilities.

I have at last finished ridding my garden of its jungle of weeds, and we are able to see what the pheasants and the neighbour's cows have left of it. So this morning I got back to work and followed up the Gaspereau Lake gossip. Washout. I was able to spot camp-sites and even foretell just where the fire would have been lighted from the analogy of the Port Joli sites, but they were clearly basket-maker's camps, though one had a few flakes of quartz and slate which might not be accidental. There was also a six-inch nail which was quite datable.

I have been rereading Lescarbot with the result that I am half-converted to your view of the Port Joli sites. Lescarbot's Souriquois live in "towns" with palisades, eat no mussels (=clams), make no pots, and depend upon the French for their iron arrowheads. But I am inclined to believe that this represents the third phase in the historical development of the culture, that of Specialization, which was precipitated, from New York to the St. Lawrence, by the shift of the fur-trade to the coast and river area. This might be expected to bring about religious changes encouraging war and consequent shifts of custom. War drove the Iroquois from the St. Lawrence Valley, and war and the fur-trade were responsible for most of the other changes in custom to be found in Lescarbot. War would have resulted in a greater influx of prisoners with consequent enrichment of culture; it would have led to greater travel and less dependence upon local resources. One could find parallels in the development of the German tribes. But, of course, this is a theory to be proved or disproved. However, I incline to think that the burials may be both older and newer than the secret cremation or exposing places, which may represent part of the fear and suspicion that goes with war.

Tomorrow I am going to try to find an "Indian Orchard" on the Gaspereau which may be a portage camp. If that fails, I depart for Annapolis.

Yours sincerely,



J. S. Erskine

Wolfville, N.S.

24th August 1957

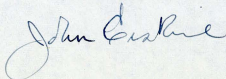
Dear Dr. Raddall:

On Wednesday last I called at your house to thank you for the help which you have given to my archaeological summer. Unhappily for me, you were out, so now I want to thank you again. Without the information with which you started me on my way and the assistance over the Indian Gardens, I should have accomplished very much less than the little I have done.

I promised to let you know the results. This summer all my three boys have been away, so I have saved repetition by typing out a Micmac News-Letter for them all to keep them up to date. I have added a copy on the Indian Gardens foray to let you know the results. They are surprising if not wholly convincing. Unhappily the salmon and eel-fishing sites were all eroded away or submerged, and I still lack any sites that show French influence. However, I was not hoping to solve all Nova Scotia's archaeological puzzles in two months.

School begins in another week, and meanwhile I am hoping to see Crowdis and to make plans for a flimsy Nova Scotian Archaeological Society. The aim of this would merely be to get into the hands of those interested a record of what is known about Indian remains, so that it all may be available for those who come after. Thus, I shall try to circulate a mimeographed report of my summer's doings to all whom I know to be interested, and to ask them to send in the names of others who might have something to contribute to our knowledge. For example, the Kelsalls have magnificent material on the petroglyphs, and these, being line-drawings, could be recorded easily by mimeograph. Otherwise this material, and only part of it, is recorded only in the tomb of the Smithsonian reports of 1888-9. Again, there are important areas in which there must be some enthusiasts of whom one has never heard and much hearsay knowledge to be gathered before it is lost. Then, during the winter evenings, I have also to sort and clean and weigh and number and record all my takings while my memory is still fairly clear.

Yours sincerely,



J. S. Erskine

The third foray of the summer was aimed primarily at the great site of Indian Gardens on the Mersey River. However, a detour was first made to try to determine the age of the site at Bear River. The hotel, which owned the land, turned out to be closed and the owner not available, but a small dig was done without permission. The whole site turned out to be a series of terraces which had grown outward at each other's expense as the overflow of clamshells continued. The dating of the site is largely negative. Arrowheads were being made, for some were found. The proportion of chips:shell was low which may mean the frequent absence of the menfolk and a dependence of the families upon shellfish and fish from the weirs. The presence of bones of moose, wildcat, birds and fish tell nothing about the age, for such bones seem to be well-preserved in the comparative dryness of shell-heaps and to perish rapidly in wet soil. No foreign material was found except on the surface of the sites where picnickers and campers had left the usual assortment of nails, cans and discarded clothing. It seems likely that such sites antedate the period of war and degeneration which accompanied the French trading along the shore after 1500, if the descriptions of Nicholas Denys are to be trusted as having applied generally.

The next step carried me to the Indian Gardens where, thanks to Dr. Raddall and Mr. Roy Gordon, I had permission to use the bunkhouse as a base for exploration. The Mersey River had been one of the greatest salmon rivers of Nova Scotia, and during the season of the salmon run and the autumn descent of the eels, comparatively large numbers of Indians gathered into a few small areas. When the present power development built the upper dam, the rising waters eroded more and more campsites, year after year, and exposed thousands of artifacts to be collected as souvenirs. The greatest collections, those of Raddall, Gordon and the late Brenton Smith, are still almost intact, but the others have been scattered and are now valueless from the archaeological point of view. Furthermore, as these arrowheads, knives, axes and gouges are of all periods from pre-Micmac until the last century, and as they probably include numbers of weapons taken in war during the period when the Micmacs were practically mercenary soldiers of the French, if we had all the artifacts gathered together in one collection, we should probably be no farther forward in our study of Micmac pre-history. My aim, then, was to find uneroded sites in which even a few artifacts might be found in a recognizable context.

For my first day I had no success. The few fragments of arrowheads on the beach told one nothing, except that their context had gone. The long trails of quartz chips seemed to belong to individual houses of which no other trace remained. I tried inside the wood wherever channels suggested winter-flowing brooks, but here the possible sites were many and the only ones that had been used were recent. So I tried placer techniques, looked for fans of quartz spreading from uneroded ground and then searched for the probable apex of the fan. This yielded two partial sites.

One site, on the western shore, on the northern side of a winter-brook a few yards to the north of the old caretaker's house-site, had been eroded until only about one square yard an inch deep of ash and chips was to be found under a foot of overlying gravel. However, some seven yards to the north of this was a boulder, fifteen feet long and eight feet high, rising perpendicularly on its southern face. This was an obvious site for a lean-to or kettle-hearth, and under an overburden of from nine to fifteen inches of sand and stones there lay up to sixteen inches of ash protected by a complex of lesser boulders which enclosed two natural hearths. The whole had been protected from the erosion of winter waves and drift-ice by the boulder, and what remained was a shallow triangle five yards wide by one and one-quarter deep at the centre. Two whole arrowheads and three broken ones were found, two of which last may fit together, and there were many fragments of pottery, some decorated with curved zigzags and others with rectangular indentations. Bones were reduced to small chalky nodules, except for one or two fragments which were in contact with the boulder. The best arrowhead was of jasper with corner-notches to form barbs and tang. A larger one was swallowtailed, i.e. without haft for attachment, and was of argillite. The others were white quartz. The site was probably a winter one, since it was set back nearly one hundred yards from the former edge of the river, but it is possible that it was used also for the salmon season. The lack of bones reduces the chance of guessing at this. The proportion of chips, quartz:North-Mountain stones, was nearly as high as on the South Shore. There was nothing in the culture that was not matched exactly in that area except a potsherd with a hole drilled for suspension. Pots varied from very thick to rather thin, and had the slightly everted lip common in northern Algonkian pots. There was no intrusive material to suggest European contacts or even contacts with other tribes from which one would hazard a date before 1500 A.D.

The same technique turned up another site on a flat knoll flooded only at extreme high water. This was to the south of the winter-flowing brook at the north side of Telfer's Field, some two hundred yards south of the old Indian Gardens. The whole knoll showed a thin occupation layer, small hearths and many quartz-chips and potsherds. By a central boulder, however, there was a hearth with ash about six inches deep, except on the west side where the waves had eroded it entirely. The site yielded quartz chips and much jasper from the bottom to the very top. There were a few arrowheads of typical and good workmanship, and these seemed to be at all layers. Micmac pottery came only from the lower layers. A pierced slate sinew-smoother and a bone skin-scraper were unusual. Bones were either reduced to chalky nodules or very fresh, and some moose-teeth by the central boulder were still white. There was also a factory-made clay pipe, reduced to fragments; five wrought-iron nails, of which one was twisted like a fish-hook, and two were from the lower half of the occupation layer; fragments of a yellow and white cup,

filled with ash and incorporated in the upper part of the occupation layer, a green and white plate, and a brown and white bowl; and a Nova Scotian halfpenny token pierced in the upper section either as a medallion or as a fishing spinner (or perhaps both), and bearing the date 1832. It showed no signs of wear.

The picture given by this site is somewhat confused. The first European house in the neighbourhood was that of the caretaker of the dam and probably miscellaneous lumber-camps of which we know nothing. These last may go back to the middle of the nineteenth century, the first to about 1898. The cart-track from Telfer's house to the shore passed about twenty yards from this site, but Telfer's was built in the present century. There is no question of the European element having contaminated this site from outside.

On the other hand, we do have to consider seriously the possibility of there having been ~~six~~ two camps of different periods on the same site. An examination of a section of the thickest occupation layer suggested three wavy horizontal lines of lighter colour, but these were too faint to follow. A great deal of slate and gravel was mixed with the ash, and this suggested that beach gravel had been spread over the floor at different times. But this belonged to the upper three-quarters in which the European articles were found. It remains possible that the Micmac pottery, which was all near the bottom, belonged to the undatable, earlier diffuse camp-site, whereas the European elements, the fresher bones, and the bulk of the chippings belonged to the nineteenth century site which may well have been pinned down by being a permanent "huddle-camp" and not a portable wigwam. What is most interesting is to find that flint-chipping continued until the nineteenth century and used the same techniques as in earlier periods. Of course, there remains the possibility of misinterpretation, but the fact that the older Micmacs of the present day still know how to make bows and of what woods for preference, suggests that the whole culture-complex of bows and arrows is not far behind them. The proportion of jasper in the chippings was distinctly higher than in the other site and suggested a family from the Fundy Shore.

Pick-ups from the shore included some broken quartz points, an unfinished jasper point, and a long-oval chalcedony knife or spearhead of the two-ended kind which seem designed to split a spear-handle or to pierce the hand of the wielder. Mr. Harold Whitman reported having found two grooved hammers above the old Indian Gardens. The lower river yielded no implements and no datable sites. A visit with Mr. J.F. Donly to Timber Island Brook drew blank, for the hill where tradition places a cemetery (said to have been dug up), showed some sunken places in which there had been fires. One of these held more than six inches of ash and contained one quartz chip and a fragment of clam-shell. It was not more than twenty-four inches by eighteen. Another was smaller. It seems likely that these have been casual hunters' camps, not graves.

January 23, 1961

Dear Mr. Erskine,

My thanks for sending me a copy of the Proceedings of the Nova Scotian Institute of Science, containing your own paper on shell heaps of south-western Nova Scotia. I have read it with deep interest.

As you know, the investigations of Smith, Parker and myself were simply those of curious amateurs, and we confined our efforts to the sifting of four or five heaps at Port Joli and Port L'Hebert, leaving the rest untouched. (We found that local fishermen and others invariably followed close on our heels, shoveling recklessly in the exposed heaps under the delusion that we were seeking "treasure" of some sort!)

There is an implication in your paper (page 348) that Indian Gardens was chiefly a salmon fishing site. With all deference I find this hard to believe, if that was your intention. During the salmon run (April to August) the best fishing site on the Mersey was at the foot of the Milton rapids, which was also the head of tide-water. The name Salmon Island there is significant. We know from Micmac tradition that their people camped in numbers, during the salmon run, about the small cove opposite this island. In their diminished numbers they continued to do this as late as the 1830's; and the favorite method was spearing from canoes at night, using birch-bark torches for lures, and preferably when an incoming tide brought a run of salmon to the foot of the rapids.

In autumn, when the Fall rains began (usually in October) there was a great migration of eels towards the sea; and at this time numbers of Indians camped at the foot of Big Falls, where they set up weirs of brushwood. Their name for this place, ~~Mac-mac-aw-rook~~, means The Big Fish Weir Place. In building the hydro-electric development at Big Falls in 1929, the N.S. Power Commission cut off and drained part of the old river bed. This revealed the foundation stones of several of the ancient weirs, piled in the characteristic V formation, in which the Indians had formerly wedged their brushwood.

I could never find any such traces in the rapids (Lake Falls) which flowed past Indian Gardens, presumably because the rush of water there made brushwood weirs impractical. Indeed there were no signs of Indian weirs above Big Falls until one came to the stream between Kejinkujik Lake and Rossignol, a long way above Indian Gardens.

JAK

Wolfville, N.S.
24th January 1961

Dear Dr. Raddall:

Thank you for your letter of yesterday.

I think that the treasure-hunting mania has diminished among the fishermen. Children still play jacksal to one's digging, but grown-ups cannot even be paid to go near the sites. I have never seen evidence that anyone had followed me, and I have returned to most of my old digs. The theory of treasure remains, but it is now reduced to talk.

I must admit that the direct evidence is all on your side with regard to Indian Gardens and the Mersey generally. Noel Dexter tells me that chips are thick on Salmon Island still, and I must try out the area next summer. Reluctantly, I must admit, for fishing sites make difficult and uninteresting digging compared to shell-heaps. As I have read about northern Indians generally, there were two favourite spots for spearing salmon, below the rapid where the salmon gathered before the climb, and in pools above the rapids where they rested after it. I have found few salmon sites - Lequille and Sherbrooke - and both were at or near the bottom of the rapids. Were weirs essential in salmon-fishing? I doubt it.

But on the negative side, if the camps at Indian Gardens were not for fishing, what were they? The two fragments that I dug were almost certainly hunting camps of winter, but they were set much farther back from the water than the others. The amount of game necessary to maintain so large a village as the chips suggest would be quite beyond the possibilities of the neighbourhood. Almost certainly they preserved some of their summer's catch in the latest (IG) period, though the evidence is all from Scotch Point (PJ3). Later they had agriculture, but we have no evidence of this before the mission period. I cannot see any source of food sufficient for such a group except a run of fish. It is a great pity that we have not a documented record of Indian Gardens points and exactly where they were found. I have seen nothing from the beach that looked older than PJ which is really indistinguishable in points from IG. In your collection there are some Boreal Archaic pieces, but these may have come from lower down where we know that the Boreal Archaics camped.

I am painfully aware that most of my conclusions are based on too few facts, and I hope that in time to come we may be able to clear up some of the confusions. We shall have to act quickly if we are going to. Last summer I tried out the technique of finding sites by searching the museum records to learn where pieces had come from. In only one case did I find a site by this method. All the rest had been destroyed in the last eighty years. There are considerable private collections in the province. As the owners die, these will become scattered and archaeologically useless. It would cost something to record all this, but it ought to be done.

Yours sincerely,

J. Baskin

J. S. Erskine
Wolfeville

January 28, 1961

Dear Mr. Erskine,

My mention of weirs on the Mersey was merely to point out the two kinds of fishing camps known to have existed -- the salmon fishing camp at Salmon Island Cove during the months of May, June and July; and the eel-weir camp at the foot of Big Falls during October. Above Big Falls I saw no sign of eel-weirs until I got to the Nejistukajik stream.

Thus I cannot believe that Indian Gardens was primarily a fishing camp. The tradition of the Micmac here was that their ancestors wintered at Indian Gardens, departing for the river mouth and the coast in summer. There were good reasons for this. One was the matter of shelter and fuel. The Indian Garden camp was much less exposed to winter storms than those on the coast. Having no adequate wood-cutting tools they had to depend on dry dead-wood. At Indian Gardens they had easy access by canoe to the dead-wood along the shores of the adjacent lakes; and when the severe cold set in they could drag the wood over the ice by "tabalan".

Also there was the matter of food. Undoubtedly they smoked and dried salmon, alewives and possibly eels, for winter use; but these could have supplied only part of their needs during the long months of snow. Their best resource was in the hunt. Bull moose could be lured within arrow range during the rutting months of September and October, and right down to modern times the best moose-hunting was to be had inland, not on the coast. This was true also of the caribou. A short distance west of Indian Gardens, beginning about Kempton Lake and West Brook, lay the long chain of swamps, ~~culminating~~ culminating in the huge Dunraven Bog, which were a famous feeding ground for herds of caribou. (Lord Dunraven and his companions, in the 1870's, slaughtered the last of these fine herds on the bog which still bears his name.)

When spring opened the river and brought back the alewives, the salmon and wildfowl, there was every reason to depart for the coast. And there, if the man felt lazy, the squaw could always dig up a meal from the nearest clam flat. Also there was the matter of sanitation. The excreta dropped by large numbers of people, over a period of several months, must have made the Indian Gardens camp a very noisome place when the snow melted.

This shuttling habit of the Indians persisted until modern times. Thus the Micmac group at Two Mile Hill (just above Milton) used to leave their shacks and wander in families along the coast between Lunenburg and Shelburne, making and sealing baskets, bows for lobster traps, etc., and fishing for trout, salmon and alewives -- locally known as "kiacks". One of my informants, Sam Glode of Two Mile Hill, could remember his family doing this as late as the 1890's.

Sincerely,