

**Excerpts from a**  
**Report on the 2004 Investigations at the Emmerson Springs Village**  
**(AkGx-5), Town of Halton Hills, Ontario Under Licence P081-002 and**  
**P081-004**

**Submitted to the Ministry of Culture and to the Ontario Heritage**



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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Table of Tables .....	5
Table of Figures .....	7
Acknowledgements .....	10
Introduction .....	12
Location and Environment.....	14
Site location .....	14
Geology and lithic resources.....	14
Geomorphology .....	15
Soils.....	16
Climate.....	18
Flora and Fauna.....	18
Previous Investigations .....	21
1984 – Fox Survey .....	21
1994 – Poulton and Associates Controlled Surface Collection and Survey .....	21
1997 – Ontario Heritage Foundation excavations .....	23
2002 – University of Toronto Field School .....	23
2003 – University of Toronto and University of Toronto at Mississauga Fieldschools.....	25
Methodology .....	27
Grid mapping and contour mapping .....	27
Investigation of settlement plans .....	27
Investigation of middens.....	28
Investigation of the hillslope midden deposits.....	29
Determination of northern site boundaries using test-pitting .....	29
Public archaeology.....	30
Geophysical survey.....	31
Results of 2004 Archaeological Investigations.....	35
Topographic Mapping.....	35
Grid Map.....	35
Settlement Pattern .....	35
Features and Settlement Pattern.....	38
Field edge midden.....	42
Midden 3 .....	47
Test Pits.....	50
Geophysical survey.....	56
Ceramic Analysis .....	61
Methodology .....	61
Results.....	61
Technological characteristics.....	61
Size characteristics.....	62
Form characteristics.....	63
Design characteristics .....	65
Typological classification .....	70
Analysis of Smoking Pipes from the Emmerson Springs Village Site.....	75

Methods & Results.....	75
Intra- and Intersite Comparisons.....	80
Smoking Pipes - Conclusions .....	82
Lithic Analysis.....	84
Chipped Stone.....	84
Methodology.....	84
Raw material.....	84
Points.....	84
Wedges.....	87
Scrapers.....	88
Miscellaneous Chipped Stone.....	90
Utilized flakes .....	91
Chipping detritus.....	91
Ground and grinding stone.....	92
Ground stone.....	92
Grinding stone.....	95
Metal.....	97
Worked Bone .....	100
Faunal Analysis.....	103
Introduction.....	103
Background.....	103
Methods.....	104
Distribution by Class.....	105
Fragmentation .....	106
Modification by fire .....	106
Mammalian findings.....	107
Rodentia:.....	108
Carnivora: .....	110
Artiodactyla: .....	111
Avian Findings.....	111
Reptilian findings.....	112
Amphibian findings .....	112
Fish findings.....	113
Other identifications.....	113
Seasonality .....	114
Discussion.....	115
Conclusions.....	116
References Cited .....	117
Appendix 1. Permissions granted by the property owner .....	121
Appendix 2. Soil feel test used for assessment of soil texture.....	122
Appendix 3. Plan and profile photographs .....	123
Appendix 4. Data from Geophysical Surveys.....	125
Appendix 5. Metric attributes of Rim Sherds and Fragmentary Rim Sherds .....	137
Appendix 6. Attributes of decoration of Rim Sherds and Fragmentary Rim Sherds. ....	144
Appendix 7. Catalogue of smoking pipe fragments and basic description.....	155
Appendix 8. Attributes of Chipped Stone Points.....	157

Appendix 9. Identified faunal remains..... 159

## Table of Tables

Table 1. Climatic data for the Huron Slopes. From (Gillespie, et al. 1971).	18
Table 2. Flora and fauna found in the Carolinian and Canadian Biotic Zones. Compiled from Finlayson (1998: 66-67).	20
Table 3. Materials collected in the 1984 Fox and Fox survey.	21
Table 4. Material recovered during the D. R. Poulton and Associates 1994 investigations.	22
Table 5. Material recovered during the 1997 OHF excavations.	23
Table 6. Material recovered during the 2002 University of Toronto excavations.	24
Table 7. Material recovered during the 2003 University of Toronto excavations.	25
Table 8. Materials recovered in features discovered in 2004	40
Table 9. Comparative thickness and richness of units excavated and E159 (Midden 2).	43
Table 10. Classes of material recovered from excavated midden units (2004). Note that some counts are underestimates because numerous fragments of charcoal and unanalysable bone were not counted.	46
Table 11. Contents of materials recovered from Feature 201 to 203, in the Midden 3 area	48
Table 12. Mass of artefact classes recovered from nine Midden 3 units excavated in 2004.	49
Table 13. Number of items recovered from Midden 3 units in 2004, by class.	50
Table 14. Location and contents of test pits dug on the western slope by K. Ivic.	51
Table 15. Class of materials recovered from positive test pits.	51
Table 16. Contents of positive test pits dug by Laurentian fieldschool students.	54
Table 17. Breakdown of rims and fragmentary rims analysed by temper type.	62
Table 18. Shape of the collar. Values in parentheses are percentages of the total number that could be assessed for both interior and exterior shape.	65
Table 19. Inferred tools used for producing the decoration on the upper rim.	65
Table 20. Inferred techniques used for producing the decoration on the upper rim.	66
Table 21. Frequency of a plain motif on the upper rim	66
Table 22. Frequency of oblique motifs on the upper rim.	67
Table 23. Frequency of horizontal line motifs on the upper rim.	68
Table 24. Frequency of strings of round element motifs on the upper rim.	68
Table 25. Frequency of crossed line motifs on the upper rim.	68
Table 26. Frequency of opposed triangular plat motifs on the upper rim.	69
Table 27. Frequency of remaining motifs.	70
Table 28. Motif types of rims from Emmerson Springs and Wallace.	70
Table 29. Distribution of rim sherds and fragmentary rim sherds by type (Latta 1983; MacNeish 1952).	71
Table 30. Descriptive summary of identifiable pipe bowls from the Emmerson Springs Site.	76
Table 31. Descriptive summary of analysable pipe stems from the Emmerson Springs Site.	79
Table 32. Comparative frequencies of smoking pipe types from the Emmerson Spring and Wallace sites.	81
Table 33. Chronological trends in pipe bowl form	82

Table 34. Attributes of lithic debitage recovered from Midden 3. ....	92
Table 35. Types of ground stone objects recovered in 2003 and 2004.....	93
Table 36. Grinding stones recovered in 2003 and 2004 .....	95
Table 37. Copper based metal objects discovered at Emmerson Springs in 2002-2004. .	97
Table 38. Dimensions of copper based metal objects.....	98
Table 39. Distribution of selected mammalian species from five sites close to Emmerson Springs. Percentages do not total to 100 because some specimens have been excluded from the list. The values for the five most common taxa are shown in bold. .....	104
Table 40. Breakdown of faunal material by class. Data for Wallace from Berg (1986: 6) .....	105
Table 41. Heat modification of faunal specimens .....	107
Table 42. Richness of mammalian assemblages from five Neutral Iroquoian sites .....	107
Table 43. Mammalian taxa identified in samples recovered from 2002-4 (NISP).....	108
Table 44. Avian taxa identified in samples recovered from 2002-4 (NISP) .....	112
Table 45. Reptilian taxa identified in samples recovered from 2002-4 (NISP).....	112
Table 46. Amphibian taxa identified in samples recovered from 2002-4 (NISP) .....	112
Table 47. Osteichthyes taxa identified in samples recovered from 2002-4 (NISP).....	113

## Table of Figures

Figure 1. The location of the Scotsdale Farm and Emmerson Springs Village. Modified from Fox (1984).	14
Figure 2. A section of the soil map of Halton County showing the location of different soil types in comparison with the location of Emmerson Springs. From Gillespie et al. (1971).	17
Figure 3. Forest near Owl Creek, west of Emmerson Springs and at a lower elevation. .	19
Figure 4. K. Ivic screening sediment from a test pit on the east slope. ....	29
Figure 5. Student digging a shovel test pit at the north end of the field. ....	30
Figure 6. Resistivity survey by ANTR3095 students .....	31
Figure 7. Magnetometer survey by ANTR3095 students .....	32
Figure 8. Satellite image of Emmerson Springs showing the areas trodden down for magnetometer survey. ....	33
Figure 9. Location of lines surveyed in geophysical survey.....	34
Figure 10. Contour map of Emmerson Springs and the southwestern slope .....	36
Figure 11. Areas excavated in 2002, 2003, 2004 by fieldschool students.....	37
Figure 12. ‘Denatopia’ excavations by ANTR3095 students from Laurentian University in 2004 .....	38
Figure 13. Distribution of posts and features on the lower terrace of the field, as uncovered in 2002, 2003, and 2004. ....	39
Figure 14. Feature 205, sectioned for profiling. ....	40
Figure 15. Sectioned post mould (PM500).....	41
Figure 16. N290E210 Square plan photograph showing line of post moulds running approximately east-west.....	41
Figure 17. Conjectural house locations based on distribution of posts and features. See above for grid location. ....	42
Figure 18. Lower terrace showing location of midden units excavated in 2004 (in black). ....	42
Figure 19. Excavation of N285E159 near completion of the excavation. ....	43
Figure 20. North and East profiles of N285E159, traced by Tracey Li.....	44
Figure 21. South and West profiles of N285E159, traced by Tracey Li. ....	45
Figure 22. Large castellated rim sherd recovered from N285E159 .....	47
Figure 23. Excavation of Midden 3 on Public Archaeology Day, August 2004. Note excavation of the plough zone by trowelling. ....	47
Figure 24. Units excavated in Midden 3 in 2002, 2003 and 2004, showing the location of post moulds and features.....	48
Figure 25. Total mass of artefacts recovered from units in Midden 3, excluding ground and rough stone. ....	49
Figure 26. The location of test pits dug on the western slope and determined locations of artefact bearing deposits. ....	52
Figure 27. Location of test pits dug by K. Ivic. Coloured squares are positive test pits; white ones are negative test pits.....	53
Figure 28. The location of test pits dug by the Laurentian fieldschool students and the approximate boundary of the site.....	55
Figure 29. Resistivity readings along N270, N275 and N280. ....	56

Figure 30. Resistivity readings along E185, E190 and E195 .....	57
Figure 31. Results of magnetometer survey carried out in August, 2005.....	58
Figure 32. Location of Magnetometer survey lines, 2004 .....	59
Figure 33. Magnetometer along N270 between E200 and E248.5 .....	60
Figure 34. Histogram showing the estimated diameters of pots in the sample (n = 77)...	62
Figure 35. Histogram of lip thickness (mm) of 154 sherds .....	63
Figure 36. Histogram of thickness below the collar (mm) of 90 sherds.....	63
Figure 37. Collar height (mm) of 91 measurable sherds .....	64
Figure 38. The difference in the thickness of the collar and the thickness of the pot below the collar (mm).....	64
Figure 39. Cord impressed rim decoration. Left: cord impression; Right: cord-wrapped stick impression. ....	66
Figure 40. Castellated pot with vertical incisions and a plain lip .....	72
Figure 41. Castellated pot with oblique incisions on the interior and exterior rims. ....	72
Figure 42. Two sherds from small pots. Left: Oblique incisions on the collar and punctates on the shoulder. Right: Two rows of punctates on the collar, and a convex strip for a castellation.....	73
Figure 43. Two pots with plain collars and modified lips. Left: A collared pot with punctates on the lip. Right: A collarless pot with a notched lip. ....	73
Figure 44. Two high collared pots, the one on the left with a drilled hole in it.....	74
Figure 45. Complete plain pipe (N285E159 II-5-1) .....	76
Figure 46. Pipe bowls including barrel and coronet forms .....	77
Figure 47. Effigy pipe bowl fragment (N277E191 I-1).....	78
Figure 48. Groundstone possible pipe or bannerstone fragment .....	78
Figure 49. Pipe stems .....	79
Figure 50. Point fragments recovered from Emmerson Springs in 2003 and 2004.....	85
Figure 51. Point tip with impact fracture originating from snapped edge .....	86
Figure 52. Retouched triangular flake, possibly a point abandoned in manufacture or a child's point .....	86
Figure 53. Complete points recovered from Emmerson Springs in 2003 and 2004.....	87
Figure 54. Wedges recovered in 2003 and 2004.....	88
Figure 55. Side and endscrapers recovered from Emmerson Springs in 2003 and 2004 .	89
Figure 56. Informal scrapers on flakes .....	89
Figure 57. Fragments of scrapers. Top row, distal fragments; bottom row, proximal fragment (right) and splinters (left).....	90
Figure 58. Fragmentary ground stone axe .....	93
Figure 59. Fragmentary ground stone celt .....	94
Figure 60. Pecked hammerstone .....	95
Figure 61. Metate fragment with area of wear in its centre .....	75
Figure 62. Copper-based metal tubular constructs recovered from Emmerson Springs, 2002-2004. Top row: N287E159-I-4-15, N275E175_III-2-16, Middle row: N285- 159-III-5-10, N285E159-II-8-20, N275E175-II-13-12, Bottom row: N280E195-I-12, N310E189-1-12.....	99
Figure 63. Flat copper based metal objects recovered from Emmerson Springs (Right: N329E199-1-19, Left N282E192-I-13). ....	99
Figure 64. Dorsal and ventral faces of two modified deer phalanges.....	100

Figure 65. Fragments of relatively complete bone beads .....	101
Figure 66. Bone bead fragments .....	101
Figure 67. Caudal vertebra (probable canid) incised around one end .....	102
Figure 68. Breakdown of faunal material by class (N follows class) .....	106

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## Introduction

This report outlines the results of eleven weeks of fieldwork undertaken at Emmerson Springs Village (AkGx-5) in the summer of 2004. Fourteen undergraduate students from the University of Toronto (St. George campus) and nine staff participated in ANT311 in May and June 2004. Eleven undergraduate students from Laurentian University and three staff participated in fieldwork in July and August 2004. Additional contributions were made by Dena Doroszenko of the Ontario Heritage Foundation, a student employed by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, and volunteers.

This work comprises a follow up to work begun in 2002 and continued in 2003. The main areas on which we focussed our work in 2004 were

- to finally determine the location of longhouse walls suggested by excavations in 2002 and 2003;
- to determine the nature of the hillslope midden north of midden units N275E175 and N279E175 excavated in 2003;
- to attempt to determine the extent of hillslope midden deposits through testpitting; and
- to re-examine the question of site size through test pitting by students familiar with artefact identification.

We set aside a search for the palisade for logistical reasons. We aimed to collect further information that could help place the site chronologically and determine its relation to the Wallace site (AkGx-1).

The goals of the field school included both pedagogical and research objectives. Among the former were teaching of basic field skills: hand excavation using both trowels and shovels, use of mapping equipment, and recording methods. In addition, I wished to emphasize the link between fieldwork and research - that our methods and location of excavation relate to research interests - and that plans and methods evolve based on the results of ongoing fieldwork. Students in the ANT311 course were challenged to contribute to an ongoing discussion about how the excavation should proceed in light of a series of research questions of varying complexity.

Student projects entailed examination of the resources present in the Emmerson Springs vicinity. These were also conducted at Hart House Farm so as to avoid contamination of the archaeological site. The student projects included:

- 1) Determination of the density of chert in the till;
- 2) Determination of the types of igneous rocks locally present that would have been available for use in production of groundstone tools and as pottery temper;
- 3) Reproduction of Iroquoian pipes using local clays;
- 4) Organization of 'School Day' when students from Limehouse Public School were invited to visit the site and Public Archaeology Day, when friends and parents were invited to visit the site.

During the fall of 2004 and winter of 2005 two students at Laurentian University assisted in cataloguing of material from the excavations. In addition, another student systematically examined light fractions for Eastern White Cedar, a second student worked on point counts of different minerals in thin-sections of pottery and a third student began a study of the chemistry of cherts represented in the collection using Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy. All of these studies are on-going. Students at

University of Toronto at Mississauga continue to work on identifying plant remains from the site.

This report follows the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Culture. Some of the sections included below are repetitions of the background provided in the 2002 and 2003 reports (Hawkins 2002, 2006). The analysis sections include materials recovered in both 2003 and in 2004 and with the exclusion of the faunal analysis section, these sections are repetitions of the analysis sections in the 2003 report.

## Location and Environment

### *Site location*

The Emmerson Springs Village (AkGx-5) is located on the Scotsdale Farm, a property William and Violet Bennett bequeathed to the Ontario Heritage Foundation. The village lies on Lot 9, Concession 9, Esquesing Township, Halton County, Ontario (Figure 1). It is most easily accessed via the Bennett Heritage Trail, which leads northeast from 8th line. The site is found on a promontory overlooking Owl Creek, a tributary of the Credit River.

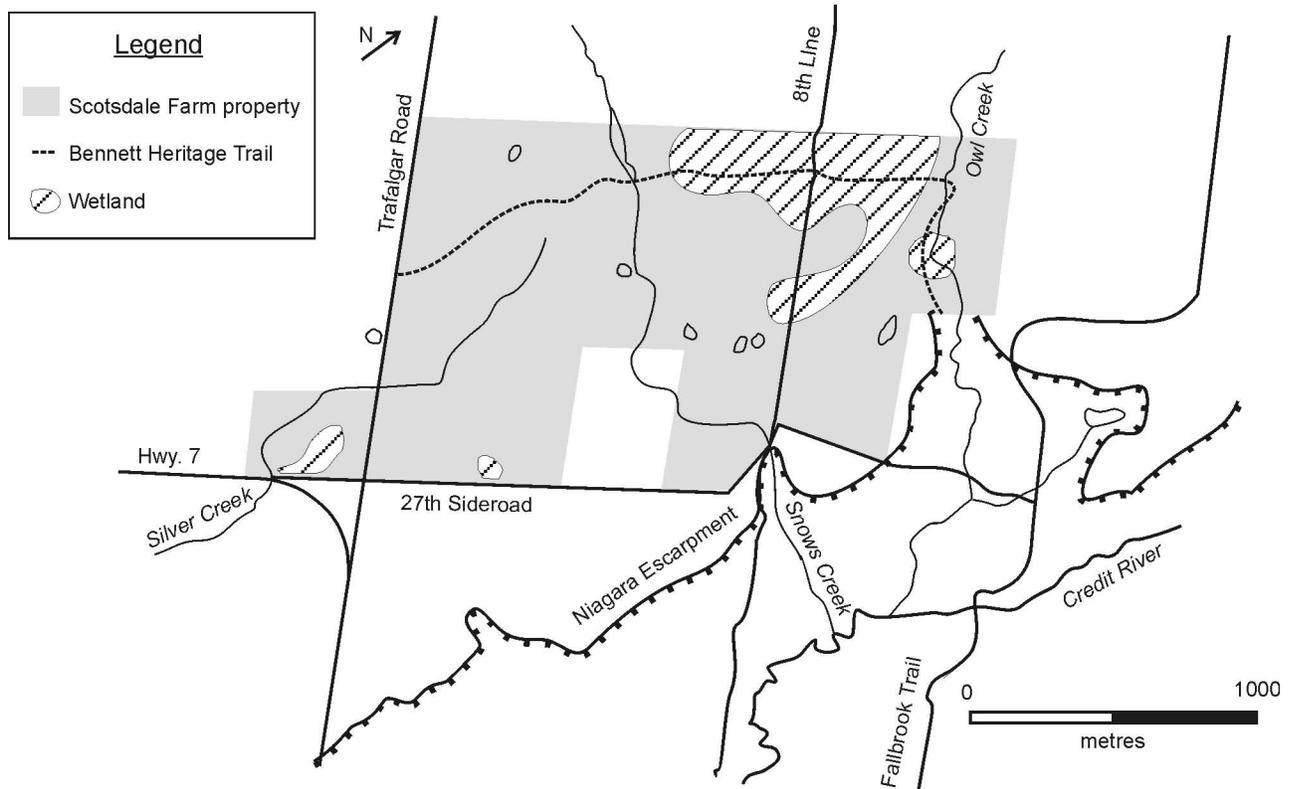


Figure 1. The location of the Scotsdale Farm and Emmerson Springs Village. Modified from Fox (1984). (Note: village location deleted from original map)

In the following sections I consider the environmental context of the site in terms of the suitability of the region for practice of agriculture, the available natural resources including water, flora, fauna, lithic and clay resources. Finally, I outline the climatic conditions during the period of occupation.

### *Geology and lithic resources*

The Scotsdale Farm is underlain by Middle Silurian Amabel Formation limestone (Fox 1984; Ontario Geological Survey 1991). Underlying this is Queenston shale (Chapman and Putnam 1984; Ontario Geological Survey 1991), an important source of clay for modern brickmakers and a source used by at least one art pottery manufacturer

(Guillet and Joyce 1987). Fox (1984) recovered non-cultural fossiliferous chert pebbles, beige to cream in colour in till and outwash deposits. He suggests that Amabel formation limestones are the likely source of these cherts. A student project carried out in 2004 (Jolliffe, Lee and Landry 2004) demonstrated that the density of chert in the sediment is very low, and that in addition to beige and cream coloured chert, dark brown translucent and orange chert pebbles are present. All of the chert recovered through this project was very small and the density of chert was very low, suggesting that local lithic resources would not have been sufficient for procurement of material for chipped stone tool manufacture.

In addition to bedrock formations other lithic resources available in the vicinity include those in secondary context: glacial and fluvially redeposited rocks. We have not systematically surveyed the area to determine the location and nature of rocks in secondary context, but we did note their presence both in the soil on-site and in the creek-bed west of the site. Both of these locations are likely sources of the metamorphic and igneous rocks such as granite, schist, and amphibolite. Student project conducted in 2004 examined the availability of chlorite schist and amphibolite, two raw materials used for ground stone tools. Students were not successful in locating either material in the creek bed or in the stone fences that line the local fields (and which would represent the material present in the till). However, they sampled a small area and non-systematically, so the results of this survey must only be that these materials are not locally common.

While archaeologists commonly focus on the source of chert for chipped stone manufacture, it is important to remember that stone was used in a variety of ways. We recovered fire-cracked rock, hammerstones, grinding stones, groundstone tools, a stone effigy, and a fragment of a groundstone pipe. Characterization of the mineral additions made to clay (temper) suggests that potters used minerals derived from stone rather than unconsolidated sediment (Hawkins 2002). Therefore, a future survey of locally available stone would contribute to understanding past landscape use.

Although local sources of chert for chipped stone manufacture apparently exist (Fox 1984), the occupants of Emmerson Springs did not use them to any significant extent. As described in the 2002 report (Hawkins 2002), the chipped lithic assemblage is overwhelmingly dominated by Onondaga chert. According to Fox, the closest source of Onondaga chert would have been at least 100 km south of the site. Outcrops of other chert types (Lockport or Ancaster) lie closer to the site (Eley and Bitter 1989: 104), but only minor amounts of non-Onondaga cherts occur in the archaeological assemblage.

### ***Geomorphology***

A number of features of the local geography are relevant to understanding habitation of Emmerson Springs.

Water is seasonally available from Owl Creek, a tributary of the Silver Creek, which is itself a tributary of the Credit River. Owl Creek is fed, in part, by a spring that flows from the hill slope west of the site. On the west side of Emmerson Springs one finds a 'spillway' (Poulton and Associates 1994: 3), a former drainage channel formed by glacial meltwater during the Pleistocene (Chapman and Putnam 1984: 15). As is typical of such features (Chapman and Putnam 1984), a cedar swamp is present at the base of the slope. Poulton describes a second spillway on the east side of Emmerson Springs. This meets the western one on the southwest of the site. He describes these lowlands as "active

year-round drainages with associated bogs, still pools and cedar stands." We noted that by mid-summer a tributary of Owl Creek north of the site was dry.

As described above, the spillway is a likely source of lithic raw materials other than chert. Cedar swamps provide winter yarding habitats for white-tailed deer.

The site itself is found on a terraced plateau. This topography, described below, likely structured the settlement pattern: the hill slope separating two terraces was an unlikely location for longhouses. Glacial till (Wentworth Till) overlies limestone bedrock on these terraces. Till may have served as a source for both clays and lithic resources, however excavation has shown that the location of clay is unpredictable and the C horizon in the occupation area varies in texture from sandy loam through clay.

Considered on a different scale, the Niagara Escarpment is a major geomorphological feature in the region. The significance of the Niagara Escarpment in the past requires consideration of a number of factors. It is a highly visible feature of the landscape, is difficult to traverse in places and may be considered either a pathway or a barrier or both. Further, it may be considered in terms of resources: shales outcrop, the Credit River and tributaries flow at the base of the escarpment in the study region, and swamps may have provided habitats for white-tailed deer. Crawford (no date) cites it as an example of an 'edge' where floral diversity and productivity may be high. Numerous Iroquoian sites have been documented associated with the Niagara Escarpment south of Emmerson Springs (Finlayson 1998).

### ***Soils***

Consideration of the soils of Emmerson Springs includes the bedrock geology, the nature of the quaternary deposits, classification of the soils that have developed in this area and differences between the published soil classification and our field observations. Emmerson Springs lies atop the Niagara Escarpment on Amabel formation limestones, dolostones, siltstones and sandstones (Freeman 1979). In some areas near the site, sediments are very thin and bedrock is exposed. Much of the fire-cracked rock we recovered is sandstone and dolostone and is likely to have been procured locally. The Amabel formation is underlain by soft Queenston shales, limestones, dolostones and siltstones (Freeman 1979). These are exposed in the face of the Niagara Escarpment east of the site.

The Quaternary deposits on which the Emmerson Springs soils were formed are the Halton tills, which are described as a 'red to brown gritty silt to clayey silt till' (Karrow, et al. 1990). Our observations of the sediment underlying the plough zone include patches that fit the above description, however sediment texture ranges from gravely through clayey, with some areas having a high sand content.

According to Gillespie (1971) three soil series occur in the Emmerson Springs vicinity: Farmington loam (a brunisolic soil), Lockport clay (a luvisol) and Dumfries loam (a luvisol). Based on the soil map for Halton county, the site itself lies on a Farmington loam (Gillespie, et al. 1971)(see Figure 2). This soil has three horizons

1. Ah horizon, characterized as 'Very dark grayish brown (10YR3/2) loam; medium granular structure; friable consistency, slightly stony; pH 7.0' colour, a loam texture, medium to granular texture- soil type from the map

2. Bm horizon, characterized as ‘Yellow brown (10YR5/4) loam; medium subangular blocky; firm consistency; moderately stony; pH 7.4.’ The depth of the Bm horizon ranges from 6 to 11 inches.

3. R, characterized as ‘Dolomite bedrock’ (Gillespie, et al. 1971).

The designation of the soil as Farmington loam did not fit well with our field observations. Specifically, the horizon underlying the plough zone varies in colour from 5YR 3/4 through 10YR 4/3, and varies in texture from sandy loam to clay loam. More importantly, however, although we dug to well below 30 cm (11 inches) both on site and off-site, we did not encounter the dolostone bedrock. A test pit at the base of the slope northwest of the slope showed a layer of alluvial silt over dolostone bedrock at approximately 30 cm below surface. Some of the sediment deposition in this area is likely a recent event given that we discovered a chert flake in this location.

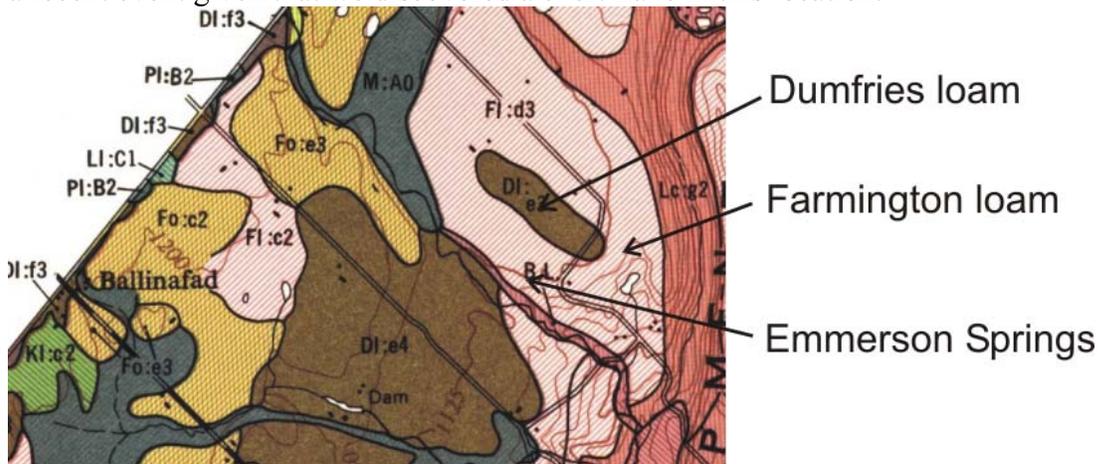


Figure 2. A section of the soil map of Halton County showing the location of different soil types in comparison with the location of Emmerson Springs. From Gillespie et al. (1971).

The Soils of Halton County show an outcrop of Dumfries loam near the site location. This is a stony luvisol developed on till. The soil horizons typical of a Dumfries loam are:

1. Ah, characterized as ‘very dark grey (10YR 3/1) loam; fine crumb and granular structure; friable; very stony; pH 7.0’
2. Ae1, characterized as ‘dark yellowish brown (10YR4/6) granular and small weak subangular blocky; friable; stony; pH 7.0’
3. Ae2, characterized as ‘brown (10YR5/3) loam; weak medium subangular blocky; friable; stony pH 7.0’
4. Bt, characterized as ‘Reddish brown (7.5YR 5/5) loam; medium subangular blocky; friable; stony; pH 7.4’
5. Ck, characterized as ‘Yellowish brown (10YR 5/4) stony loam till; calcareous; pH 7.8’



Figure 51. Point tip with impact fracture originating from snapped edge



Figure 52. Retouched triangular flake, possibly a point abandoned in manufacture or a child's point

The complete points may be classified as belonging to one of three basic forms: triangular points with a convex base, triangular points with a concave base, and triangular points with a barb.

The lengths of the points without barbs range from 25.0 to 30.1 mm, while widths range from 14.3 to 19.6 mm. In most cases, the dimensions of these points fit within those expected for both Daniels Triangular and Naticoke Triangular points (London Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society 2001). However, Naticoke points tend to be narrower and their normal length range is 30 to 45 mm. Both types are made from Onondaga chert and both usually have convex lateral edges and concave bases making it difficult to distinguish between the two types (London Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society 2001). The Emmerson Springs points range in size and there is no clear division between long narrow and small wide points. This suggests that all can be placed within the same type, and that this is the Daniels Triangular type. This is consistent with expectations based on the known distributions and chronological placement of these points: they are found as far northeast as Milton and are found at Neutral confederacy sites from A.D. 1550 until the mid-seventeenth century dispersal (London Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society 2001).



Figure 53. Complete points recovered from Emmerson Springs in 2003 and 2004.

The only Late Woodland point type that is specifically described as barbed is the Glen Meyer Tanged point, which is found on sites dating from ca. A.D. 700 to A.D. 1300. It seems unlikely that the points recovered from Emmerson Springs are Glen Meyer Tanged points. Indeed, the length of one point falls outside the expected range. Illustrations of Daniels Triangular Points show that occasionally the base is oblique to the centre of the tool, resulting in a barbed base (London Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society 2001). Given that both points fall easily within the dimensions described for Daniels Triangular points, the simplest explanation is that they are both variants of this type.

### **Wedges**

The sample of wedges and wedge fragments recovered in 2003 and 2004 includes eight objects; all except for one are made from Onondaga chert. They include both objects that appear to have some type of standardized form and those that make be a by-product of bipolar reduction. The average size of the eight pieces is 19 mm X 17 mm X 6 mm. Many show hinge fracturing on opposed edges and bifacially, as would be expected of both bipolar reduction and from use as wedges.

## Discussion

As described above, the settlement patterns and material culture uncovered at Emmerson Springs in 2004 confirms its identification as a Late Iroquoian village, probably with affinities to other sites on the Niagara Escarpment or the Spencer-Bronte creek drainages. Given the estimated date of 1550 to 1580, identification as 'Huron' or 'Neutral' may be premature.

The introduction to this report introduced several research questions, which will now be considered.

1) Where are the longhouse walls associated with the features uncovered by excavations in 2002 and 2003?

The longhouse on the lower terrace runs approximately east to west, and our excavations appear to have uncovered the western end of this house. A row of posts immediately south of this may represent a second house or a palisade. A row of posts in an isolated unit to the east may represent an extension of the first house or may be a third house.

2) What is the nature of the hillslope midden north of midden units N275E175 and N279E175?

The hillslope midden at E159 appears quite localized, with the unit at N285 being much richer and deeper than that at N287. It appears that artefacts accumulated in a natural crevasse. None of the material in N285 appears plough disturbed, but the upper levels do appear to be formed by slopewash.

3) What is the extent of the hillslope midden?

Examination of this midden by testpitting determined that it extended from the top of the slope to the creek. However, it did not have great lateral extent, occurring mainly on the slope below N280-N287.

4) Is the estimation of site size determined in 2002 correct?

A second session of testpitting of the north section of the field, focussing on the eastern half did not result in a radical change in the estimation of site size.

Artefacts recovered in the 2004 season did little to change our assessment of the site age, nature or cultural affiliation. We recovered more copper-based metal but no glass trade beads. The pottery is dominated by types with vertical or oblique lines on the rim. The faunal remains suggest a group of people dependent primarily on white-tailed deer, but who also exploited a number of other species. There is nothing to suggest that this was not a small village dating to about 1550-1580, and occupied throughout the year.

## Conclusions

The 2004 excavations at Emmerson Springs resulted in an expanded understanding of the settlement patterns of the site, and in the extent of the midden deposits adjacent to this area.

Suggestions for future excavations include:

- 1) expanding the excavations in to determine the length of longhouse 1;
- 2) expanding the excavations to the south to determine whether the row of posts parallel to longhouse 1 represent a second house or a palisade;
- 3) investigation of the area to the east where we discovered a clear row of posts;
- 4) investigation of the settlement pattern on the upper terrace; and
- 5) limited excavation of the Midden 1.

Midden 1 is a rich resource. The basic proportions of different animal species did not change a great deal when the sample examined was expanded from about 10,000 to over 30,000. Therefore, it seems unlikely that further identifications will result in major changes in the future. Similarly, the nature of other artifact classes appears to be fairly well known at this time. Therefore, excavation in Midden 1, which provides mainly artifactual and ecofactual data, should be conducted conservatively to preserve deposits for future excavations.

Emmerson Springs once again provided students with the opportunity to excavate in different contexts and gave them exposure to a wide range of artefact types. The site is a valuable resource and could be used in an educational context for many years to come.