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BASKETRY FROM SITE 45Sn100, GENERAL COMMENTS

BY DEL NORDQUIST

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By Del Nordquist

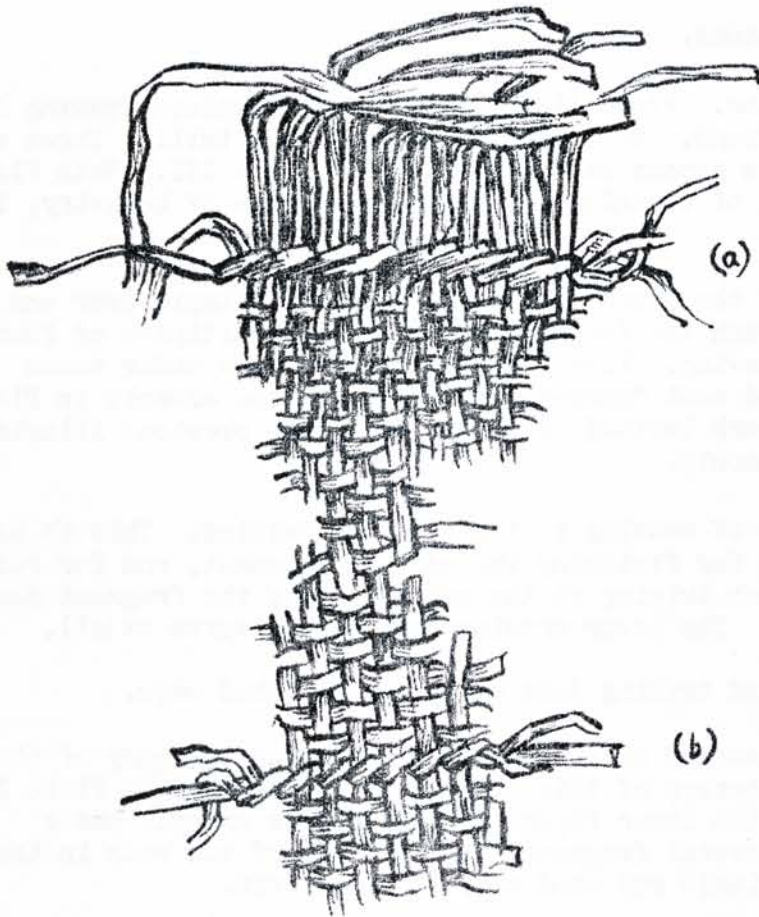
Probably the most important artifact yield from the Snoqualmie River site is basketry. Large and small fragments have been recovered; some sufficiently whole to give a rather good idea of the original. The excavation of such fragile material and its subsequent preservation has been one of the problems encountered in the present work.

Actual excavation required painstaking removal of the overburden and the definition of contours and extent of the basket before actual removal is attempted. Sometimes this is complicated by being in the edge of a square, making it necessary to remove the midden deposit in an adjacent square before the basket was recovered. Such was the case encountered by the Welds who found a post associated with basket fragments. It appeared that the post was forced through the basket indicating that it was intrusive, at least, to the horizon from which this particular basket originated. Practically all basketry removed came from levels thoroughly water-soaked. Indeed, it seems that this condition was the prime reason that such fragile material was preserved at all! Although, evidence of basketry has been found in upper levels, it was usually too decayed to handle and was found and defined only with careful brushing and troweling.

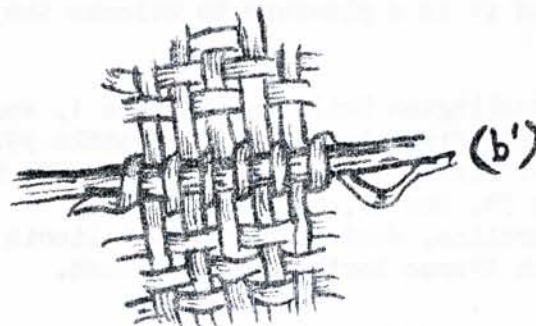
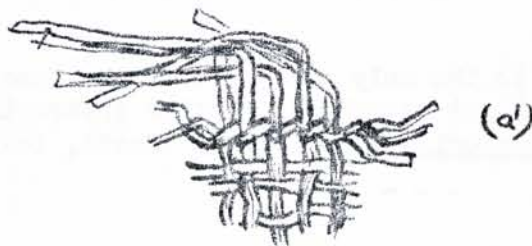
Preservational techniques varied from plaster casting to the use of alvar and acetone. Neither was satisfactory, nor the use of beeswax and benzine. The plaster retained the impression, but naturally, did nothing for the specimen itself. Alvar and beeswax techniques required drying prior to application; drying made pieces disintegrate and curl up. Even after alvar was applied the examples were so brittle as to prohibit examination or study. It was evident that if anything was to be saved another method was needed. C. G. Nelson developed and supplied the Society with a high penetration PVA solution (see formulae). The advantage of this material was that it was water-soluble and could be applied to artifacts in the field. All pieces so treated are intact and capable of being studied. For those interested the formula used is a solution of 25% Plyamul Adhesive #9153 (a polyvinyl acetate emulsion* from Reichold Chemicals Inc., White Plains, N.Y.) and 75% solution of "Firewater" (50 cc of heavy detergent of the Firewater Company of Las Altos, California mixed with 5 gallons of water).

Basketry types recovered predominate as plain weaves. Nine catalogued examples represent the type as seen in Plate I. They are made of split cedar or cedar bark. Most specimens fall into a category usually referred to as a "clam basket." This is a misnomer since they had more uses than one, although they were used for gathering and storing shellfish. The baskets reconstructed would have been moderately large, probably as much as one to two feet high with as much in length. One example, opened up and laid flat, has the gross measurements of 19" by 33" in its fragmentary condition. This type of basket was woven loosely enough to be designated as an open plain weave. Henceforth, this will be the

* Note: Similar to Elmer's Glue



455N100/130



designation used in descriptions.

Type two is a two-strand twine. Plate II shows an almost complete drawing of one of the finest examples found. Note that the bottom is a twill. Three examples represent this type, a second example is seen in Plate III. Both Plates II and III reveal the mixing of techniques and the third type of basketry, i.e. twilling.

Twill work is a variation of the plain weave. Instead of a simple over and under of the weaving material through the foundation, twill uses multiples of foundation elements in the interweaving. Plate II shows an over and under three elements giving a regular and neat "herring-bone" weave. The example in Plate III, made of coarser cedar bark instead of withes as in the previous illustration is an over and under two elements.

A fourth suggested technique of weaving is three-strand twining. This is used in the region of Puget Sound for finishing the edge of a basket, and for reinforcement. Plate I shows such twining at the upper part of the fragment designated in the drawing as (a). The lower drawing shows the reverse as (a').

Plate II also has three-strand twining just below the finished edge.

Lattice weaving is also represented as a reinforcement feature in many of the plain woven baskets. The exterior of this element is illustrated in Plate I, (b). The inside is seen in the lower figure at (b'). This example has a single rod reinforcement. Several fragments show the use of two rods in the body of the basket, with a single rod used near the upper rim.

Western Washington is rich in basket styles and technologies. They were frequently mixed in a single basket as shown in the foregoing description. It would not be surprising to find other techniques if excavation at 45SN100 is continued.

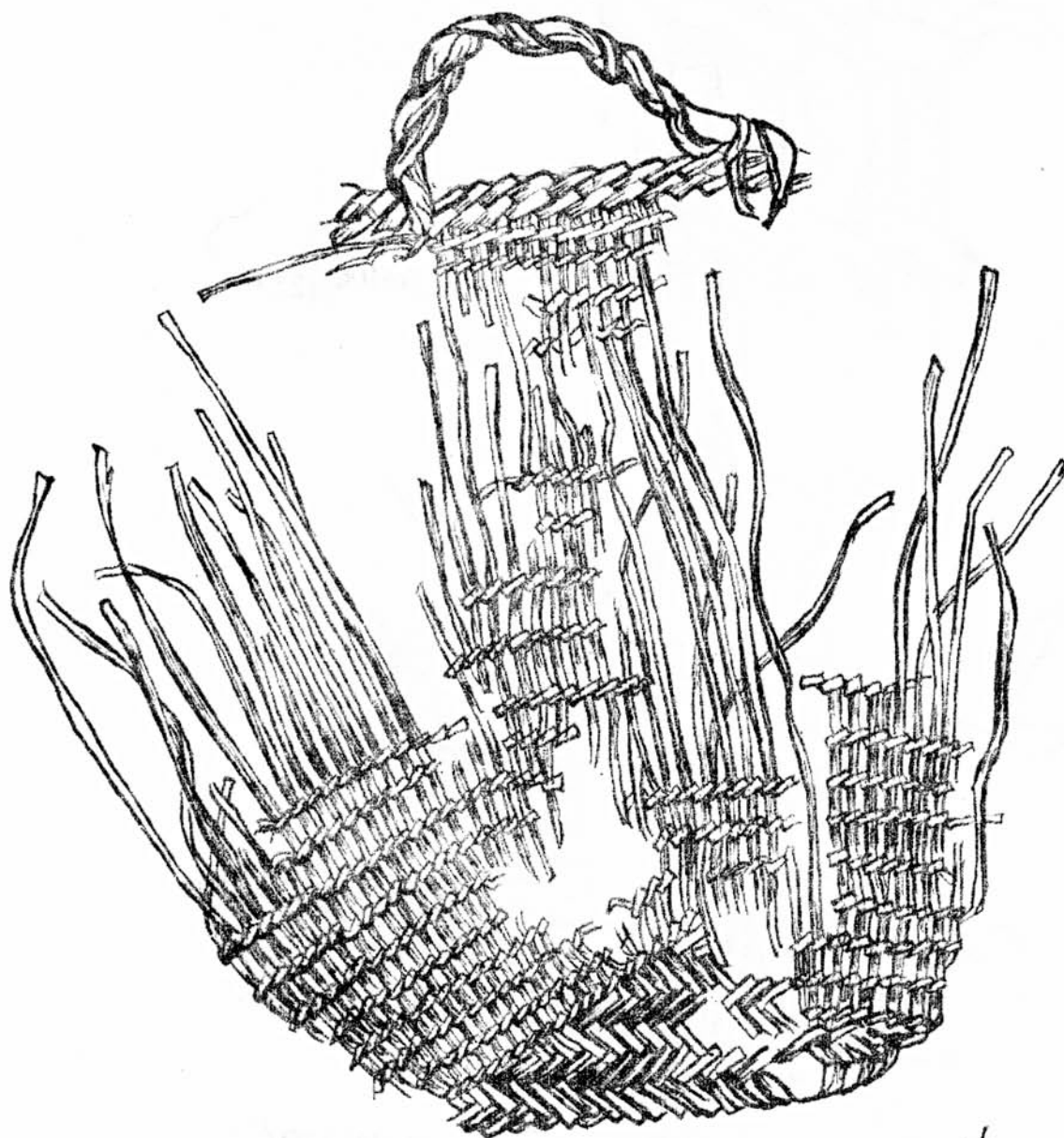
As far as the writer knows, this is the only site west of the Cascades that has yielded such an abundance of excellent examples. Further information will be published in the Washington Archaeologist about the artifacts, features, and materials found.

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MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT: In spite of the cessation of regular meetings, news of our activities got around and it is a pleasure to welcome the following new members to W-A-S:

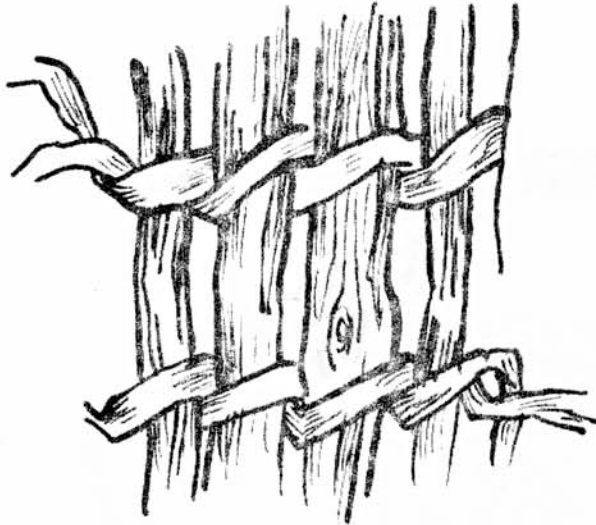
Robert B. Whitebrook, Washington Building, Seattle 1, Wash.
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Philip R. Evans, 702 9th Avenue North, Edmonds, Wash.

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155N100/2

PLATE II



45SN100/122A



45SN100/122B