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THE WASHINGTON ARCHAEOLOGIST

NEXT MEETING: SEATTLE CHAPTER - June 8, 1960 - 8:00 P.M.

MEETING PLACE: TED WELD RESIDENCE
1752 North 122nd
Seattle, Washington
Phone: EM 3-5887

This will be the last regular meeting of the season and the Weld's have graciously offered their home for this partly business and partly social affair. All members are urged to attend this extra-special meeting - it should be lots of fun.

SUMMER DIGGING

Digging at the Fish Town Site will continue during the summer for those members that are interested. Regular Society Digs will be on the second weekends of June, July and August. For any further information about summer digging, please call:

Lee Tracy = Activities Chairman

EM 3--1233

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A BURIAL SALVAGE AT A SOUTHERN PUGET SOUND MIDDEN SITE *

Since the southern Puget Sound area has been meagerly represented in the archaeological researches of the state of Washington there seems to be some justification for reporting formally on investigations carried out at the present site despite the limited amount of excavation done.

The owner of the property on which explorations were conducted, Mr. M. V. Peterson, contacted a burial in the excavations attendant to the construction of a basement under his home. Mr. Peterson called the Tacoma Museum which in turn called Dr. Gunther of the Washington State Museum. With B. Robert Butler, of the Department of Anthropology, University of Washington, I visited the site and carried out limited excavations on 12 and 13 March, 1959.

THE SITE:

This site (45 Pi 41) is located some 300 - 400 yards south of Dash Point in the northern environs of the city of Tacoma, Pierce County, Washington. (See Figure 1) It is impossible at present to determine the size of the site but it could be estimated to be 200 - 300 feet long and 20 - 30 feet wide. It lays at the foot of the slope or grade leading up from the present beach. The burial and the area examined lay about 15 feet above the present mean high tide. Mr. Petersen's home was constructed about 50 years ago. Other homes and lawns have been located continuously along the slope on which the site is situated and some grading appears to have been carried out. Midden deposits are present on the surface in various places but whether exposed naturally, by grading, or deposited in the grading process was not determined.

Mr. Petersen reported that in digging this basement much of the excavated dirt had been full of bone and shell fragments. His impression was that these had been in areas of concentration rather than randomly scattered. The nature of the soil was such that it sluffed off on the east face back to the excavation which had formerly been made for the foundation footing soon after the present excavators arrived and before stratigraphy could be profiled. The south wall had been disturbed in the construction of foundations, except for an area about two feet long which exhibited the same stratigraphy as the profile taken.

METHODS

Due to the nature of the fill it was deemed advisable to clean and record the profile on the north wall prior to removal of the burial. This face, which lay in part over the upper portion of the burial, was cleaned and recorded. Then the minimum amount of cutting of this face was carried out to permit the burial to be removed. The burial was exposed, measured, photographed, and removed, and additional profile was recorded. At this point the north face sluffed off to the foundation footing excavation.

The artifacts accompanying the burial were located and removed by Mr. Petersen prior to his contacting the skeletal material itself. He discovered one of the tools, then looked in the sand and found the others lying in the loose sand in which he was digging, with the exception of one portion of one tool. This, he recovered by screening the loose dirt which he had already removed. Its association with the rest of the objects is not in doubt for it was one of the antler hafts and fit one of the ground blades found with the burial. As soon as he

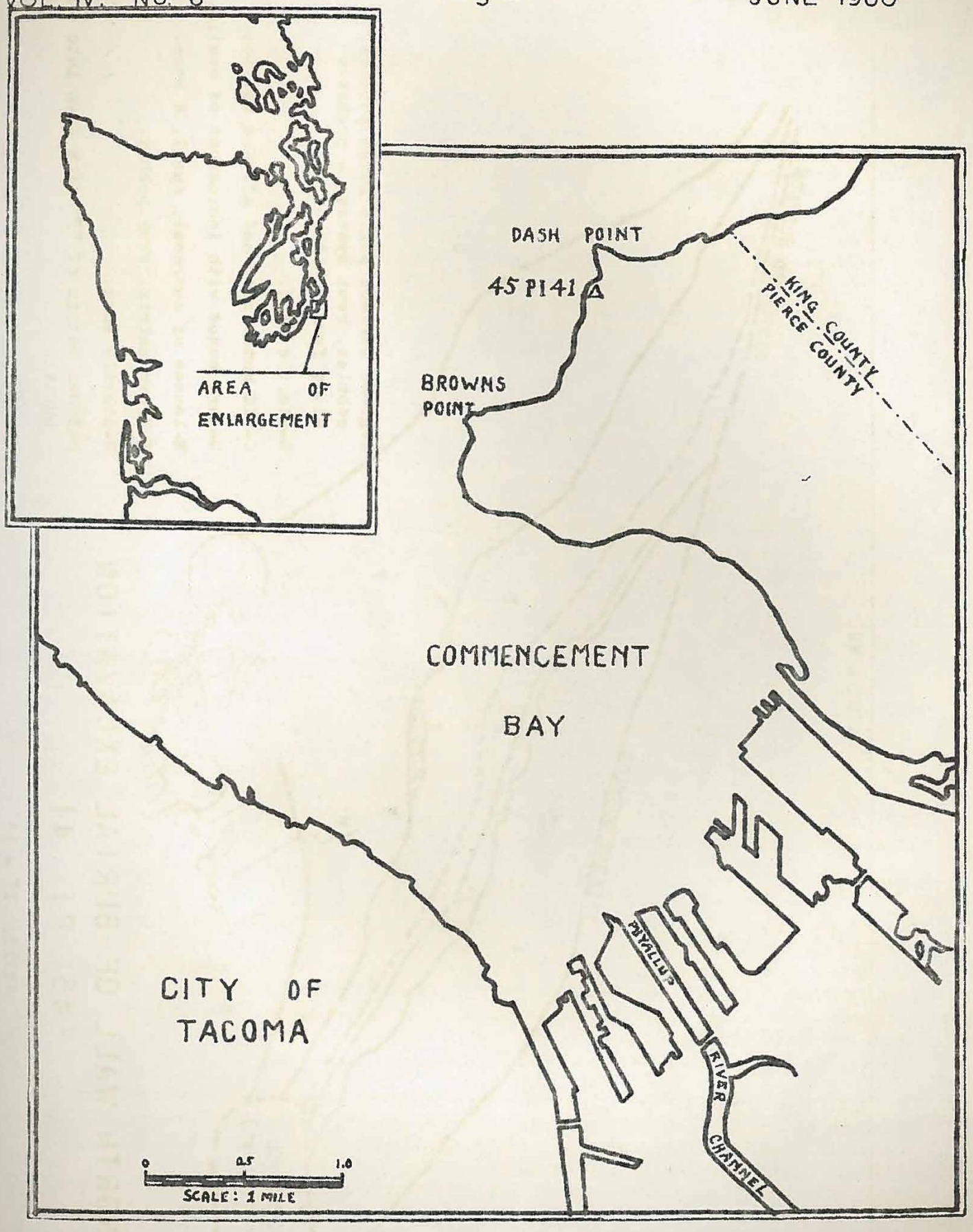
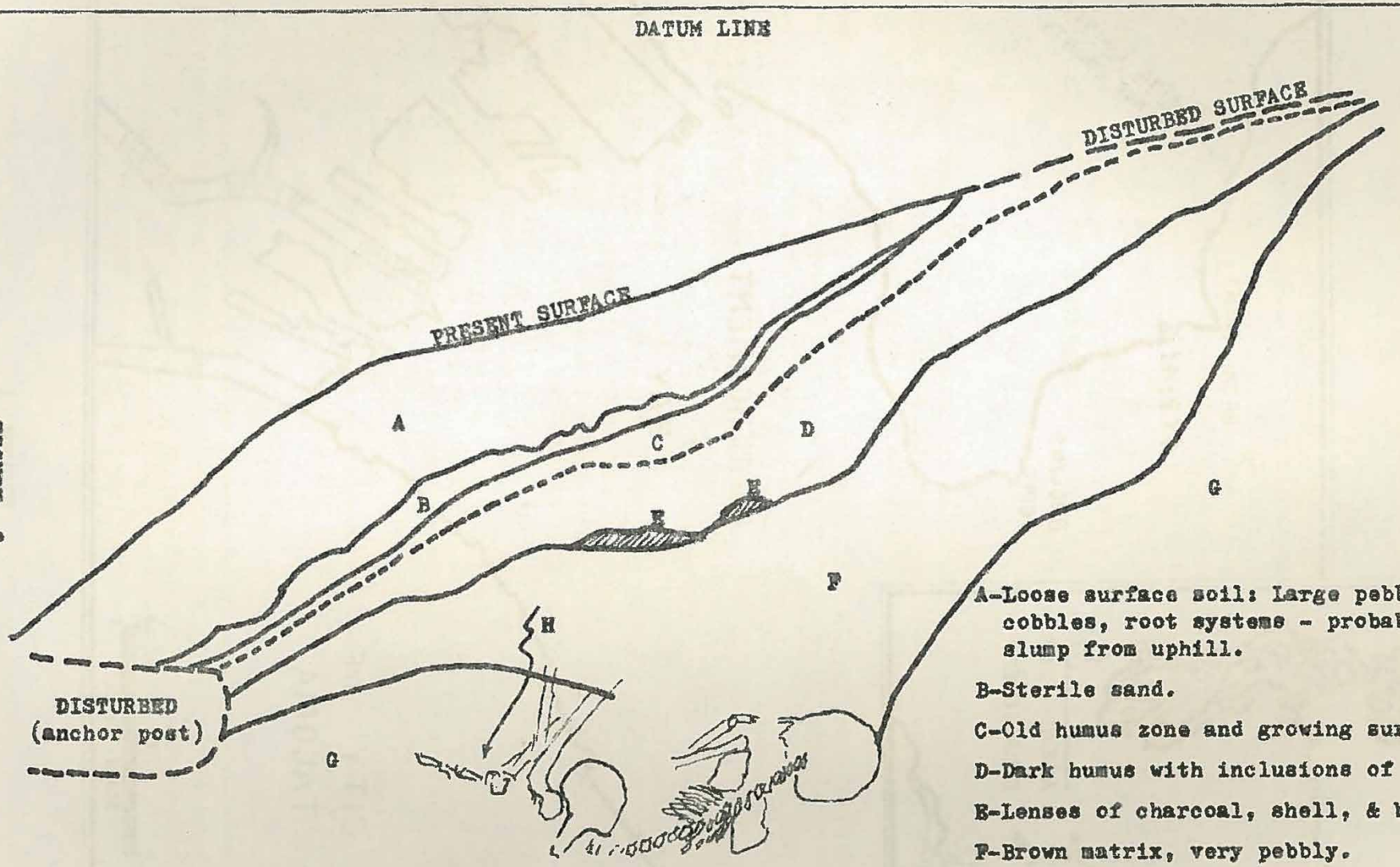

AREA OF ENLARGEMENT
DASH POINT
45 PI 41
KING COUNTY
PIERCE COUNTY
BROWNS POINT
COMMENCEMENT BAY
CITY OF TACOMA
PUYALLUP RIVER CHANNEL
0 0.5 1.0
SCALE: 1 MILE

FIGURE 1

FIGURE 2



NORTH WALL OF BURIAL EXCAVATION
45 Pi 41

SCALE: 1" = 1'

A-Loose surface soil: Large pebbles, cobbles, root systems - probably slump from uphill.

B-Sterile sand.

C-Old humus zone and growing surface.

D-Dark humus with inclusions of shells.

E-Lenses of charcoal, shell, & bone.

F-Brown matrix, very pebbly.

G-Sterile sand.

H-Brown matrix of "F" dips down into burial.

resumed digging he encountered the skeletal remains in the region of the pelvis and feet. At this point digging ceased until the archaeologists arrived.

THE BURIAL

The burial, which appeared to be that of a young male, was interred into the sterile sand which formed the bottom element of the profile. The body had been flexed and placed on its right side with the knees drawn up and the arms flexed so that the elbows were in the mid-section and the hands were immediately before the face. The skull way laying on its right side with the head tipped slightly forward. The head showed the same deformity as that described for the Puyallup by Smith. (Smith, 1940, Frontispiece and pp. 184 - 185). Two large stones were found in place below the hands and before the face. These exhibited no evidence of having been worked or altered beyond a primary fracture on one of them. No evidence was found to indicate any materials accompanying the burial other than the tools and stone already mentioned.

STRATIGRAPHY

The strata comprising the earth over the burial sloped, in the area excavated, at about 30°, on the average, down toward the beach. This appears to be about the degree of average slope of the whole bank on which the site is located.

The first element overlying the burial was a brown matrix which was very pebbly. (See F, Figure 2) This ranged in thickness from about three inches at the top and bottom of our excavation to about a foot and a half thick at the center of the slope. Shell inclusions were present but minimal. On the upper surface of this stratum there were lenses of charcoal, shell, and bone. (See E, Figure 2) These were restricted in size and were well defined. They ranged from about six inches to almost a foot in diameter, and were usually about 2 inches thick. Overlying these was a continuous stratum of dark humus with numerous inclusions of shell. (See D, Figure 2) This layer was thicker at the upper portion of our excavation, ranging from about one and a quarter feet thick to about six inches thick at the bottom of the slope. The upper portion of this layer was uncertainly set off into an old humus zone and growing surface. (See C, Figure 2) Overlying the old growing surface was a layer of sterile sand. (See B, Figure 2) The top layer was loose surface soil. (See A, Figure 2) This contained large pebbles, cobbles, and root systems and the thickness appeared to increase at the foot of the slope. This was probably either material which had sluffed from higher up the slope of the hill, or had been graded down in the process of building construction. This top layer appeared to be the only stratum showing disturbance. The layer of sterile sand (B, Figure 2) poses a problem. The proximity of the site to the present high tide level suggests a possible deposition during high water attendant to a storm of unusual intensity.

ARTIFACTS

There were five objects found in association with this burial. They appear to have been found at the level of the pelvis and apparently between the pelvis and feet. While these were not found <u>in sitα</u>, it appears that there is little possibility of their having been moved far before Mr. Petersen discovered them. Also it is unlikely that Mr. Petersen could be mistaken about the area in which they were found.

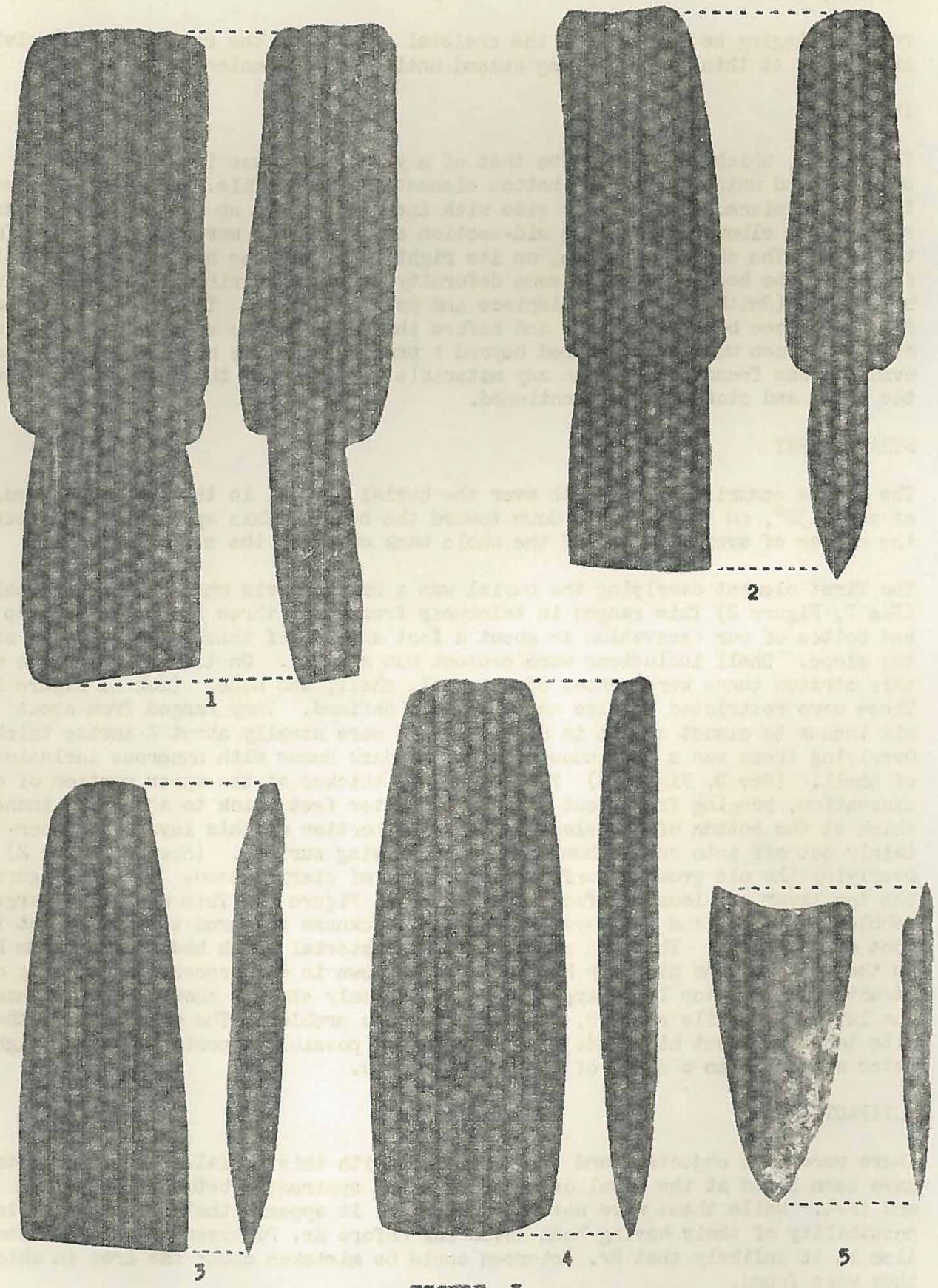


FIGURE 3

ARTIFACTS RECOVERED FROM BURIAL, 45 Pi 41

1 & 2 - Elk antler hafted, ground "jade" blades, 3 & 4 - ground "jade" blades, and 5 - finely chipped triangular blade of opal.

Four of the specimens were adze blades which had been sawn from "jade" and then ground into finished form. Two of these were supplied with antler hafts with sockets into which the blades fit. The antler used is that of the Roosevelt Elk, Cervus canadensis. None of the blades were inserted at the time they came to Mr. Petersen's attention but by matching blade butts to sockets we can be certain which antler haft went with each blade.

The dimensions for the ground blades with hafts are as follows: The hafted blade, illustrated in No. 1, Figure 3 (WSM #1-3012 a & b), is 4-5/16 inches long, 1-15/16 inches wide, and 9/16 inch thick. The haft, made of elk antler, is 4-7/16 inches long with maximum diameters of 2-1/8 by 1-1/2 inches. This haft has split, apparently in use, from the blade end to somewhat over half-way back. At 7/16 inch from the blade end of this antler haft there is an excavation across the split. This excavation, 1/2 inch long, 3/16 inch wide, and 3/16 inch deep, may be related in some undetermined manner to the split. The second hafted blade, No. 2, Figure 3, (WSM #1-3013 a & b), is three inches long, 2-5/8 inches wide, and 5/8 inch thick. The haft, again of elk antler, is 3-7/8 inches long, with a maximum diameter of 1-11/16 by 1-1/4 inches.

Each of these hafts show the remains of facets cut around the circumference of the antler at either end. The method of cutting the antler cannot be ascertained but a relatively sharp tool was required to provide the cutting facets which remain. The facets may be related to the severence of the antler or may be an attempt to eliminate sharp corners from the severed pieces. In the rear of each antler haft a socket has been excavated.

The other two ground blades have the following dimensions: No. 3, Figure 3, (WSM #1-3014), 5-1/4 inches long, 1-13/16 inches wide, and 9/16 inch thick, and No. 4, Figure 3, (WSM #1-3015), is 6-1/4 inches long, 2-1/8 inches wide, and 5/8 inch thick. Both of these are made of a green "jadelike" material.

The fifth artifact, No. 5, Figure 3, (WSM #1-3016), is a finely chipped triangular blade of fossil opal, with excurvate sides and incurvate base. The base is not quite square to the axis of the blade. It is 3-1/2 inches long, 1-9/16 inches wide, and 1/4 inch thick.

Elmendorf (Snyder, 1956, p. 29 footnote) reported the use of an antler or wood haft for a stone blade by the Twana on Hood Canal, where the tool is struck with a maul stone. The specimens described here have had some type of handle or shaft inserted into the sockets on the rear of the antler hafts. It is possible that this was a straight handle of wood in which case the tool could have been used as Elmendorf describes. I have the feeling that one should not omit the possibility of a handle in the shape of a "V" with one of the arms cut off short and inserted in the antler haft. This would easily have converted the blades into workable elbow adzes.

It is worthy of note that the two blades which fit the antler hafts are the two shorter blades. The unhafted blades are considerably longer. This suggests the possibility of a "D" type handle for these blades. Through experience in handling of museum objects I have found that it is much easier to mount a longer blade in a "D" type handle than a shorter blade.

CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS

Since this is certainly in the area occupied by the Puyallup in ethnographic times it will be of some interest to draw comparisons with written ethnographic descriptions.

Smith (1940, pp. 201 - 203) speaks of the "Puyallup graveyard" as being located on a point of land between the villages of Commencement Bay and Point Defiance. Disposal appears to have been in canoes or by means of interment. The interment had a superstructure of boards. These superstructures were plank sheds about two and a half feet high. In later days these were replaced with structures of canvas. Smith (1940, p. 202) states that, "The inland informants claimed that such burials were employed by inland or horse Indians." The Nisqually are said to have disinterred their burials for reburial. In both interment and canoe disposal the intimate personal property of the deceased was included. "Such property consisted of gun, bow and arrow, saddle, clothing and ornaments, items of personal use such as spoon and comb and various miscellanies which through constant use or sentimental attachment had become identified with the individual." (Smith, 1940, p. 203) More personal property than could be conveniently included in the burial was burned. "Those items which the culture considered most valuable, i.e., coiled baskets and large canoes, were neither laid with the body nor burned." (Smith, 1940, p. 203)

Assuming the validity of applying the statements presented above to this site we have some measure of information about the regard in which these tools were held. In spite of the considerable amount of labor involved in the manufacture of the ground blades from the tough "jadelike" stones, the personal association was sufficiently strong to cause them to be placed with the deceased. The fact that no trade goods were found with the excavated burial would indicate that the burial possibly dates from pre-contact times.

* The author wishes to express his gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. M. V. Petersen for making their find available, for their hospitality during the investigation, and for their generosity in donating the materials recovered to the Washington State Museum. Mr. B. Robert Butler, of the Department of Anthropology, University of Washington, was more than generous in donating his time and labor to assist in the excavation. Dr. Ian McTaggert Cowan, Department of Zoology, University of British Columbia, graciously examined and identified the antler hafts on two of the specimens. Mr. Whitie Marten, of the Campus Studios, University of Washington, photographed the specimens. Lastly the author owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Gunther and the Washington State Museum for sponsoring this work and then loaning the specimens to the author in order that the report could be prepared.

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