SMALL PRINCESS POINT SITES IN COOTES PARADISE

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ABSTRACT

When first defined, the Princess Point Complex of Southwestern Ontario was thought to exhibit a dichotomized settlement pattern chacracterized by summer macro-band aggegations at the margins of lake and streams and their winter dispersal into small sites on the uplands. Research in the Grand Banks and Cootes Paradise areas suggests that the Princess Point Complex settlement system was actually much more complex. Our ability to ellucidate this complexity will only be possible with careful study of "small" Princess Point sites.

RÉSUMÉ

Une des caractéristiques du complexe Princess Point, qui fut soulignée lors de la définition de cette entité archéologique, était son schème d'établissement. Celui-ci se distinguait par des agglomérations estivales en bordure des lacs et le long des rivières. L'hiver se passait en petits groupes à l'intérieur des terres. Nos recherches dans la région de Grand Banks ainsi qu'à Cootes Paradise indiquent qu'en réalité les schèmes d'établissement du complexe Princess Point étaient beaucoup plus complexes. En effet, notre capacité de cerner cette complexité est conséquente à notre volonté d'étudier les "petits" gisements du complexe Princess Point.

INTRODUCTION

Small sites in Ontario archaeology often get "small" attention. We all have to deal with them, and some of us may even get excited about them for "small" periods of time, but somehow the notion that "bigger is better" seems to permeate our thinking about artifact yields and settlement patterns. Yet, as is attested by the focus of this symposium, sites that are not acres in size, that do not produce thousands of diagnostic artifacts, can contribute "large" to our understanding of what happened in the past. In fact, without investigation of small sites, our understanding of past societies will necessarily be incomplete. In this paper, we will briefly examine what "small" means within the context of Princess Point, and then present the results of our work on small sites at Cootes Paradise.

PRINCESS POINT SETTLEMENT PATTERN

David Stothers (1977) defined the Princess Point Complex as an archaeological culture that covered much of southwestern and southcentral Ontario, dating between A.D. 600 and

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900. He argued that Princess Point was transitional between Middle and Late Woodland, and that Princess Point societies introduced maize horticulture to southern Ontario. He also proposed that Princess Point communities followed a seasonal round that incorporated macro-band aggregations at riverine/lacustrine locations in the late spring and summer (producing "large" sites), and micro-band dispersal to upland environments during the fall through to early spring (producing "small" sites). More recently, Fox (1990) modified Princess Point by limiting it spatially to the region illustrated in Figure 1, and changed the chronology to between A.D. 700 and 900, but essentially he agreed with Stothers' model of a two-tiered seasonal settlement pattern. Since 1993, Gary Crawford and I have continued the investigation of Princess Point; one of our key objectives is a more detailed examination of Princess Point settlement patterns (Smith and Crawford 1995). We agree with Fox's spatial distribution, but we extend the chronology of Princess Point back to A.D. 500 on the basis of AMS radiocarbon dates on maize (Crawford and Smith 1996; Crawford, Smith and Bowyer 1997).

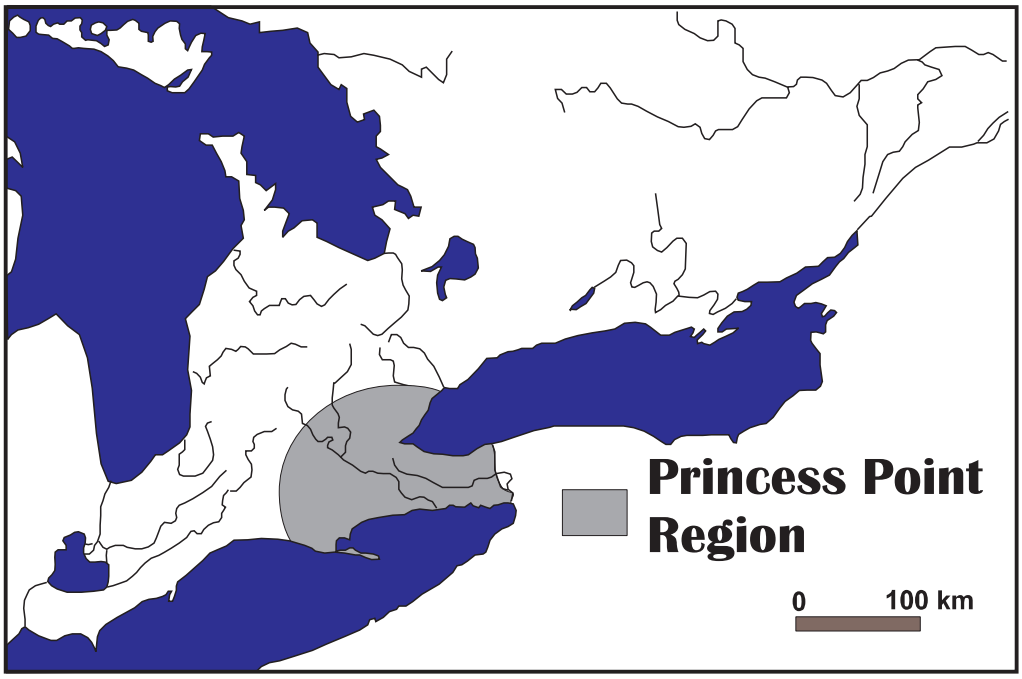

Figure 1 Location of the Princess Point region.

Approximately eighty Princess Point sites have been identified so far. Unfortunately, detailed settlement information is available for only a few of these sites. After considering the evidence as it stands, we are now of the opinion that Princess Point settlement/subsistence practices were more fluid and complex than proposed in Stothers' model. This evidence is summarized in Figure 2, a chart which shows site location on one axis and inferred site size on the other. Our definition of a small site is less than 500 square metres. We have supplied two examples of sites for each category, where available.

Two significant observations can be made on the basis of this chart. First, there are indeed large sites in riverine and wetland locations that might fit Stothers' notion of late-spring and summer congregations. There is, however, no solid evidence that any of the large sites in this chart are seasonal late spring-summer macro-band encampments. In fact, our detailed work on

	RIVERINE	LACUSTRINE	WETLAND	UPLAND
LARGE	GRAND BANKS CAYUGA BRIDGE	?	PRINCESS POINT SASSAFRAS POINT	PORTEOUS LONE PINE
SMALL	YOUNG 1 MEYER	VARDEN SELKIRK #5	BULL'S POINT BULL'S COVE	RAMSAY ALDER CREEK

Figure 2 Princess Point settlement/subsistence practices.

site formation at Grand Banks over the past four years documents that this site could have been occupied year round (Crawford and Smith 1996). In addition, both the Porteous and Lone Pine sites, which fill the Large-Upland category, are most likely semi-permanent villages dating to either late in the Princess Point sequence or early in Glen Meyer. The absence of large sites on lake shores may be the result of destruction through erosion and, therefore, should not be considered definitive. Second, and more important for our discussion here, small sites are represented in all four types of locations, and are not limited simply to upland environments. Young 1 and Meyer are on riverine terraces in the Lower Grand River Valley. Varden and Selkirk #5 are on the north shore of Lake Erie. Bull's Point and Bull's Cove are located at the water's edge on Cootes Paradise, and Ramsay and Alder Creek appear to be the only small Princess Point sites situated in upland locations. In the rest of this paper, we will take a closer look at just one of these location types, small sites on wetland margins, showcased by the Bull's Point and Bull's Cove sites at Cootes Paradise.

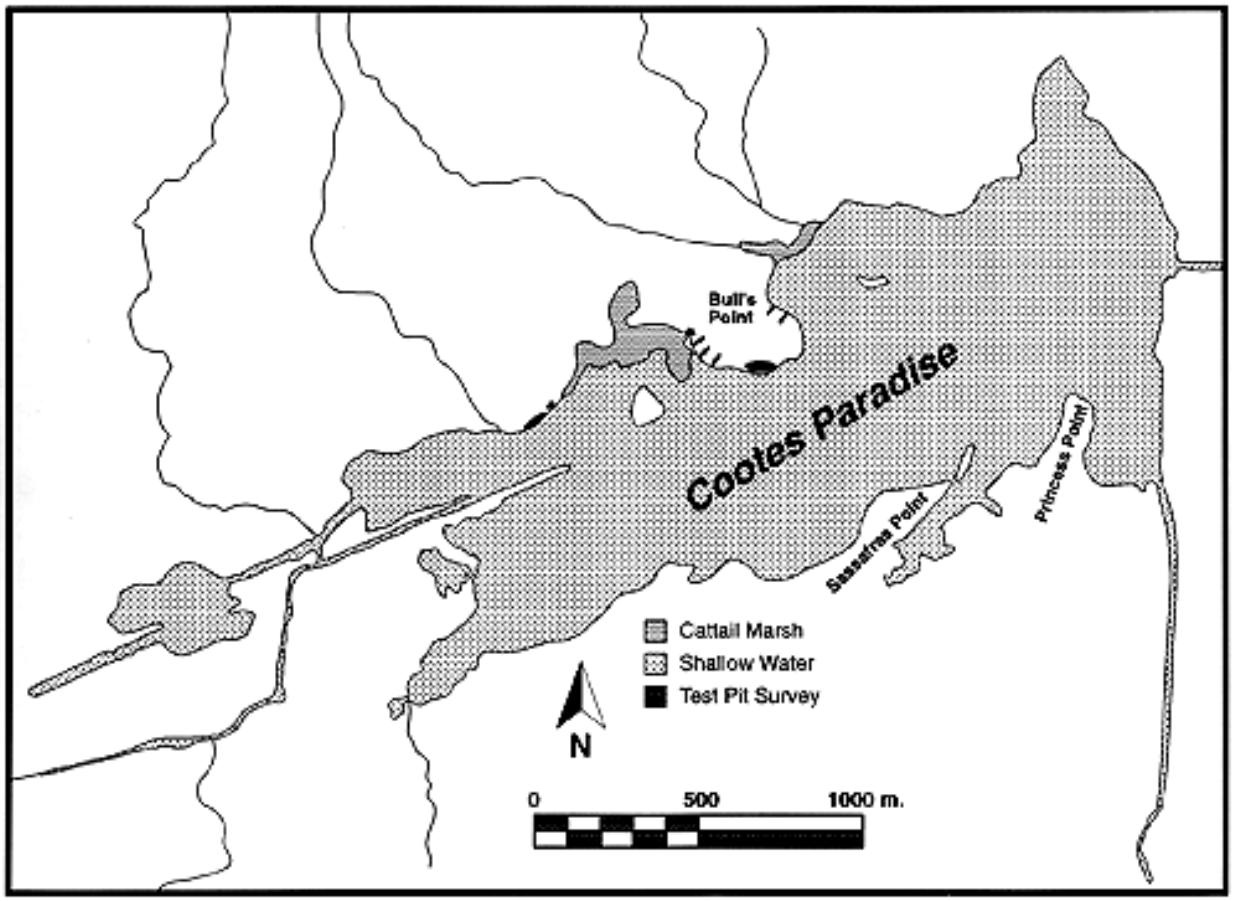

Figure 3 Location of Bull's Point and Bull's Cove sites.

BULL'S POINT AND BULL'S COVE SITES

Cootes Paradise is, at present, characterized mostly by shallow, open water with small sections of cattail marsh, but historical and palynological evidence indicates that until no more than 100 years ago, cattail and sedge were much more predominant. The state of the wetland during Princess Point times over a thousand years ago is an open question, however. Recent limnological research shows that the level of Lake Ontario rose significantly over the past several thousand years (Coakley and Karrow 1994; Duthie *et al.* 1996), but the effect this had on Cootes Paradise is unknown.

There are Princess Point sites at various places around Cootes Paradise, including the Princess Point type site, Sassafras Point, Old Lilac Gardens and Nursery. The Bull's Point and Bull's Cove sites are located on the north shore and southwest side of Bull's Point itself (Figure

Figure 4 Looking up the ravine at Bull's Point.

3). The Bull's Point site was first discovered in 1969 during a survey of Cootes Paradise by David Stothers, but no detailed work was done on it at that time. In 1995 and 1996, field school crews from Erindale College under the supervision of the authors conducted detailed excavation at Bull's Point. Bull's Cove was discovered in 1995 by test pit survey and limited test excavations were conducted at this site in 1996. The following is a summary of the results of our work to date.

Site Locations

One of the most interesting and key features of both the Bull's Point and Bull's Cove sites is their location. They are, quite literally, in the bottoms of ravines (Figures 4 and 5). Examination of the topography of Cootes Paradise makes this setting less surprising. Cootes lies in a basin that is at least 25 metres below the surrounding ground level. Although there are low-lying peninsulas and terraces, such as Princess and Sassafras Points, significant sections of both the north and south shores are characterized by relatively abrupt slopes cut by glacial ravines. The ravines provide the most convenient access from the wetland in this locale. We were initially concerned that the cultural material found in the ravines could have been eroded from the higher ground, but geomorphologic and archaeological evidence demonstrates otherwise. The ravines are glacial features that are not presently being eroded. In addition, we found post moulds and pits *in situ* at Bull's Point.

Figure 5 The ravine at Bull's Cove.

Excavations

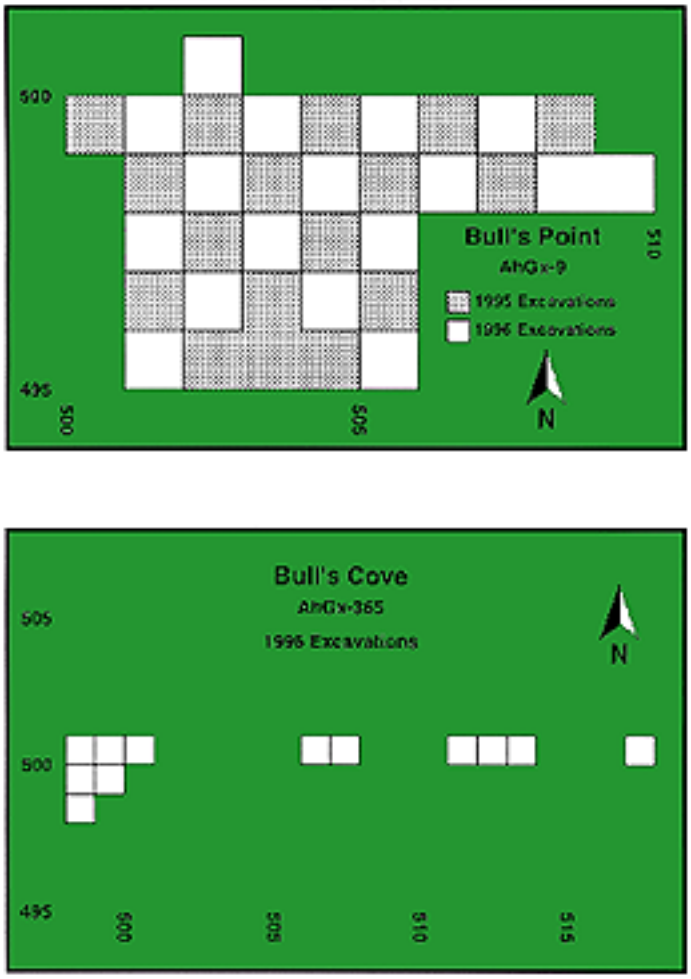

Figure 6 Bull's Cove and Bull's Point excavations.

Our excavation strategy was, first of all, to determine the nature and extent of cultural deposits at both sites. Second, we chose to perform more detailed excavations at Bull's Point to search for settlement data. Figures 6 show the extent of excavations at both sites in 1995 and 1996.

Our work demonstrated that Bull's Cove is less extensive than Bull's Point in both artifact yield and potential for settlement data (*i.e.* Bull's Cove is even "smaller" than Bull's Point). There is no evidence for true midden deposits at either site. The artifacts at Bull's Point are distributed throughout the area excavated, including up the ravine, although there is something of a concentration in the southwest corner of the excavated area. Artifacts at Bull's Cove were deposited more densely closer to the water, in the squares on the left of the bottom portion of Figure 6. Very few artifacts were recovered from the squares further up the Bull's Cove ravine.

Settlement Pattern

One of the more exciting results of our work at Bull's Point was the discovery of a post mould pattern that most likely is the outline of a small structure (Figure 7). It is roughly four by three and a half metres in size, and may have an open end leeward (the prevailing wind sweeps up the ravine from grid west in Figure 7). Three features were uncovered, one of which is located outside the structure. The two that were completely exposed were excavated and turned out to be very shallow: 12 cm and 4 cm respectively. No hearths were found in the area of the site we excavated. This structure, along with several excavated at a site in Brantford this summer by

Archaeological Services Inc., are the first such architectural features definitively identified for Princess Point.

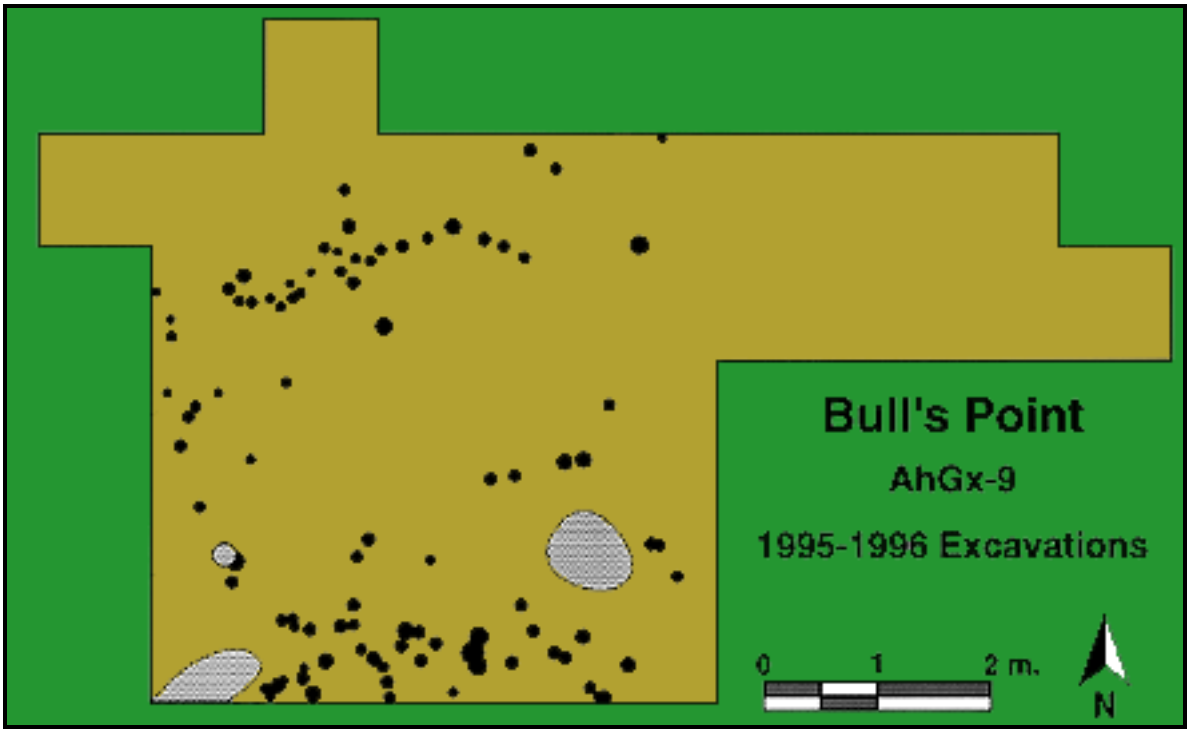

Figure 7 Post moulds and features at Bull's Point.

Material Assemblage

The pottery recovered from Bull's Point is typical of early Princess Point assemblages (Smith 1995; Bekerman 1996), but is far too limited to seriate (Figure 8). The rim decoration is remarkably homogeneous. Band 1 on all vessels is either plain with cord roughening or decorated with oblique cord-wrapped stick, while Band 2 is, in all cases, horizontal cord-wrapped stick; and there are exterior punctates with interior bosses on three of the vessels. The vessels all appear to be relatively small and thin-walled. No pottery manufacturing debris was recovered from either Bull's Point or Bull's Cove.

Figure 8 Ceramics from Bull's Point.

The flaked lithic assemblage from Bull's Point includes all aspects of chipped stone manufacturing (Figure 9). There are cores, shatter, primary flakes, core trimming flakes, biface trimming flakes, informal utilized flakes, as well as a small number of formal tools. The latter include two projectile points, a biface, a drill and two scrapers.

Surprisingly, almost no bone was recovered from either Bull's Point or Bull's Cove, and all that was found could be intrusive. We have not yet checked the soil for acidity.

We collected about 135 ten-litre flotation samples from Bull's Point and 45 from Bull's Cove. Only a few of these have been analyzed, but already it is clear that there is a surprising amount of maize from Bull's Point. As of this week, we have about a dozen kernel fragments (but no cupule fragments). This yield of maize is similar to, or greater than, what we are recovering from the Princess Point component at the Grand Banks site.

Figure 9 Lithic artifacts from Bull's Point.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The evidence from these small sites at Cootes Paradise can be summarized as follows. We have two sites located in glacial ravines at points of access from the wetland. In one of them, at least, there was a small structure with only three shallow pits associated with it, and no hearths. The artifact assemblage consists of a few small pots, chipped lithics representative of each stage of the core reduction sequence and manufacturing process as well as both formal and informal tools, almost no bone and, at least at Bull's Point, a fair quantity of maize kernels. Our current interpretation of these sites is that both Bull's Point and Bull's Cove were warm-weather special-purpose camps for small groups of people, perhaps single families. They were there long enough to erect a temporary structure at Bull's Point, but not long enough to create a midden or to dig substantial pits. They planned to stay for a sufficient duration to bring with them a few portable pots, perhaps containing maize, plus materials for chert tools, which they made and probably used on site. Whatever they were doing at Bull's Point they did not deposit much bone in or around the structure or up the ravine, although they may have gotten rid of it elsewhere; *e.g.* in the water. Our working hypothesis is that these sites were multi-purpose seasonal food

gathering stations, used because of their easy access to wetland resources, and also perhaps in the fall for gathering nuts.

In conclusion, what do Bull's Point and Bull's Cove tell us about Princess Point settlement systems and small sites? To begin with, we can argue that the pattern was most likely more complex than the two-tiered system of large macro-band spring-summer versus small micro-band fall-winter encampments suggested by Stothers, although some variation on this scenario may have been in place during early Princess Point times. At Cootes Paradise, we do not have the evidence to characterize any of the larger sites as semi-sedentary. Bull's Point and Bull's Cove were not permanent, however, and it is unlikely that they were used during the winter. They may have been temporary camps for families from communities based either seasonally or permanently at Princess and/or Sassafras Points. There may be cold-weather special purpose sites or micro-band winter camps elsewhere. We may be seeing a precursor to the Iroquoian pattern of base sites (villages) and special purpose sites. Whatever the case, we certainly have more work to do.

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