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THE WASHINGTON ARCHAEOLOGIST

WASHINGTON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, WASHINGTON STATE MUSEUM, SEATTLE 5, WN.

NEXT MEETING: Seattle Chapter - February 8, 1961 - 8:00 P.M.

MEETING PLACE: Washington State Museum
4037 15th Avenue N. E.
Seattle 5, Washington

TOPIC: "Camano Island - Succession of Occupation from Prehistoric to Present Time"
The speaker will be Mr. John Osmundson.

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RECENT ACTIVITIES OF MEMBERS

The Gifford Nickersons and the Chuck Nelsons made a survey looking for sites on a part of the former Fort Casey area now belonging to Seattle Pacific College, but unfortunately no sites were found on this property. While in the area they called at the Sherwood home and were shown his collection. They also visited a recorded site in the vicinity.

Howard Myrick, Jack Thomson, Dick Gent, and Ted Weld have spent some time recording sites in Snohomish County and collecting soil samples for Dr. Earl Swanson and Bob Butler at Idaho State College. Mr. Butler has since written suggesting that complete soil samples be taken and recorded on all W.A.S. digs for possible future analysis at Idaho State College.

Charlie Heller, Chuck Nelson, Del Nordquist, and Ted Weld have had several meetings with Dr. Thieme and Dr. Greengo of the University of Washington and have turned out a proposed bill on the subject of archaeology in the State of Washington. This bill combines features of separate proposals that had been prepared by the W.A.S. and by Dr. Greengo, in collaboration with Dr. Daugherty of Washington State University.

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CHIPPED SHELL SCRAPERS
from the
FISH TOWN SITE, 45SK33

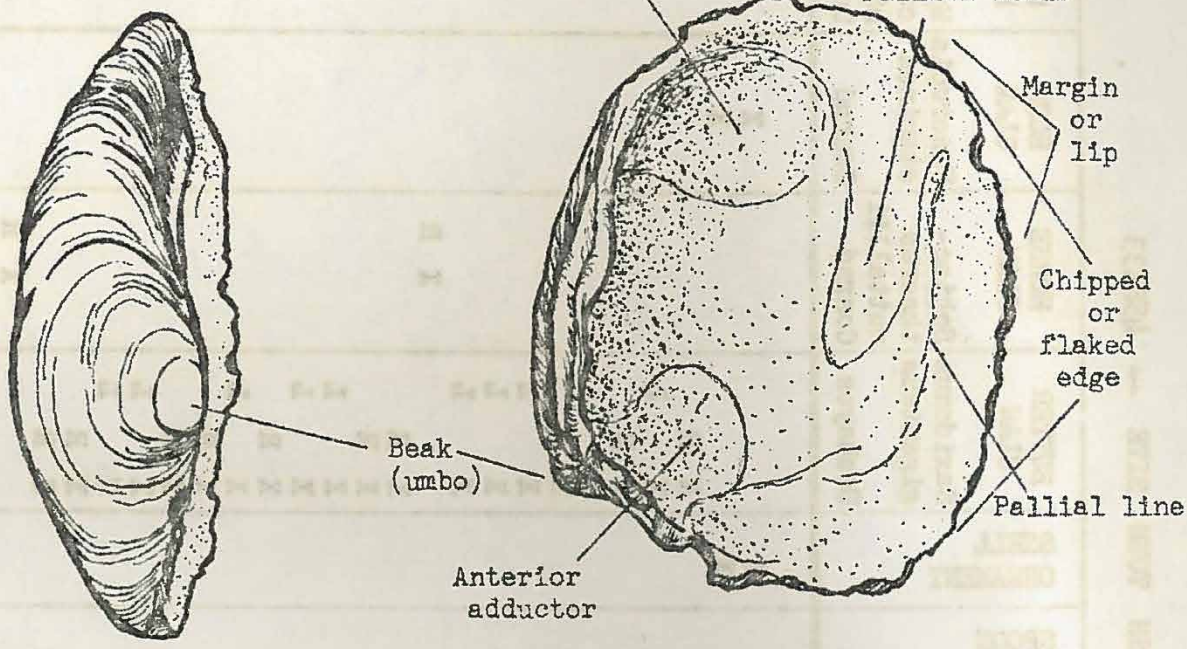
C. G. Nelson

Since work started at 45SK33 in June of 1959, some thirty-six squares have been excavated, 227 artifacts cataloged, and brief reports made in the Washington Archaeologist, Vol. III, No's 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. Before continuing work at this site, the field notes, profiles, level bags, artifacts and related data have been reviewed in order to evaluate the work which has been done and to plan the work for the 1961 season. A tabulation of the catalog shows the recovery of artifacts listed by general catagories:

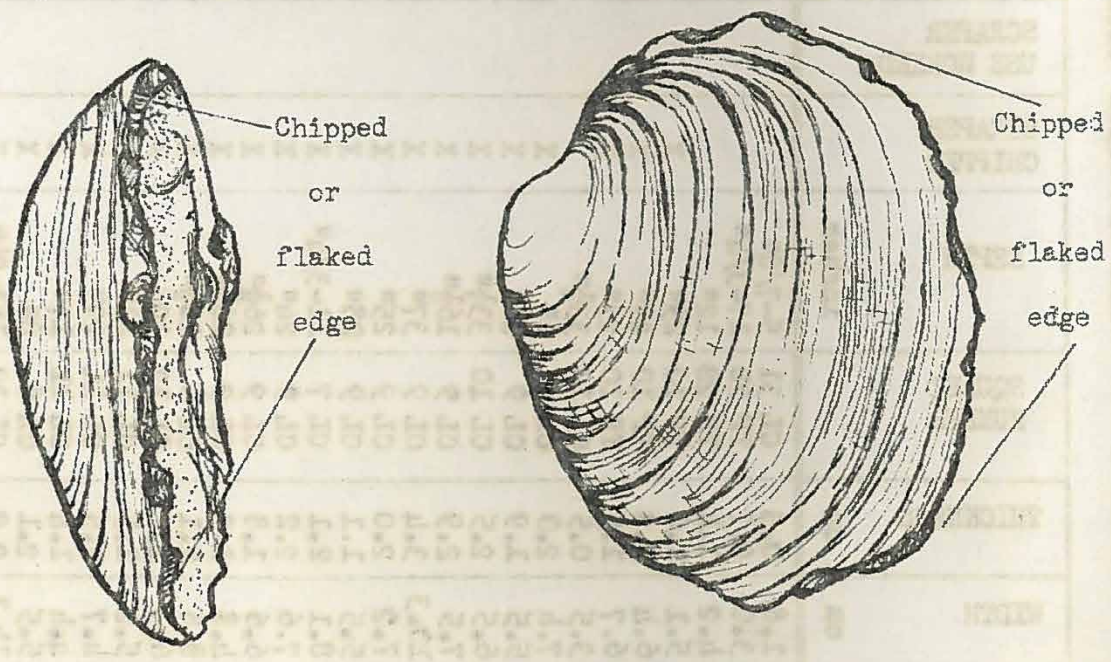
Type	No.	%
Stone	50	22.0%
Bone	92	40.5%
Shell	84	37.0%
Wood	1	0.5%
Total	227	100.0%

Table 1, Shell Artifacts from the Fish Town Site, 45SK33, lists that portion of the catalog information which is related to the problem under discussion. The 38 chipped shell scrapers, which represent 45.3% of the shell artifacts and approximately 17% of the total assemblage, are important to the site because of their number and distribution.

Of the 38 chipped shell scrapers recovered 35 have been made from the butter clam, Saxidomus giganteus Deshayes, and 3 from the horse clam, Schizothaerus nuttallii Conrad. Since there is some question that the scrapers made from the horse clam may not represent the same thing as those made from the butter clam, the description and discussion will be confined to the scrapers manufactured from the butter clam. Within the group of 35 scrapers there is a series of artifacts which range from shortly after initial manufacture to final usefullness as a tool. The working edge of the scraper is produced by chipping or flaking the lip or margin of the shell. Flaking is apparently done by applying pressure to the inner part of the shell by the means of some tool, either bone or stone, so as to produce a flake originating in the interior of the shell. The scraping edge is created by the intersection of the flake and the inner ostracum. In no case was the scraping edge formed at some other point or area on the shell. The final working surface lies between the periostracum and the pallial line, and is formed as fragments of the shell are removed with usage. Another factor to consider is that when flaking shell, the nacreous or laminated layer (hypostracum) has a conchoidal fracture while the prismatic layer (ostracum) will tend to cleave more than fracture. Hence it would be highly impractical to produce a scraping surface



REAR ELEVATION INTERIOR VIEW



FRONT ELEVATION EXTERIOR VIEW

PLATE I -- CHIPPED SHELL SCRAPER 45SK33/135

Saxidomus giganteus Deshayes

TABLE 1 — SHELL ARTIFACTS from THE FISH TOWN SITE — 45SK33

ARTIFACT NUMBER 45SK33	LENGTH cm	WIDTH cm	THICKNESS cm	SQUARE NUMBER	DEPTH inches	SCRAPER CHIPPED	SCRAPER USE WORKED	GROUND SHELL TOOL FRAGMENT	SPOON FRAGMENT	SHELL ORNAMENT	BUTTER CLAM Saxidomus giganteus Deshayes	HORSE CLAM Schizothaerus nuttallii Conrad	ROCK CLAM Venerupis staminea Conrad	CALIF. MUSSEL Mytilus californicus Conrad
/62	3.7	1.8	0.3	CL 31	5-7/8"			X						X (?)
/80	2.5	3.0	0.7	TP 2B	17-3/4"					X			X	
/81	4.0	4.2	1.4	TP 2B	12"					X			X	
/102	4.8	5.1	1.6	TP 10	29"	X					X R			
/103	5.9	6.4	1.3	TP 10	29"	X					X L			
/104	5.4	6.7	1.5	TP 10	29"	X					X R			
/117	4.2	3.5	0.5	CL 10	33¼"			X						X
/135	6.1	7.4	2.0	CL 8	4"	X					X R			
/136	5.1	5.5	1.9	CL 9	28"	X					X L			
/137	6.2	6.5	2.5	CL 10	33½"	X					X L			
/138	6.3	7.5	2.9	CL 9	16½"	X					X L			
/139	8.2	10.3	3.4	CL 9	37"	X						X R		
/140	6.4	7.2	2.0	CL 9	25"	X					X R			
/141	4.7	5.5	1.1	CL 9	28"	X					X R			
/142	7.2	8.1	2.1	CL 7	11-3/4"	X					X L			
/143	5.9	7.6	2.2	CL 9	24"	X					X L			
/144	5.1	6.6	1.8	CL 9	26½"	X					X R			
/145	4.1	4.8	1.3	CL 9	26½"	X					X L			
/146	7.4	8.8	2.1	CL 8	10½"	X					X R			
/165	4.5	6.0	1.5	CL 12	10"	X					X R			
/166	4.7	5.2	1.5	CL 11	22"	X					X L			
/167	4.2	4.7	1.5	CL 11	27"	X					X L			
/168	5.0	4.4	1.4	CL 11	17"	X					X R			
/171	7.3	5.5	2.1	CL 8	8"	X					X R			
/174	8.8	14.1	2.9	CL 39	18"-24"	X						X R		
/175	5.5	6.4	2.2	TP 2A	12"-18"	X					X R			

TABLE 1

/178	10.7	13.7	3.2	TP 10	30"-36"	X						X L		
/179	6.4	7.4	1.8	TP 10	30"-36"	X					X L			
/180	6.5	7.4	2.3	TP 10	30"-36"	X					X R			
/181	4.8	2.0	0.4	TP 2A	12"-18"				X					X
/183	10.0	5.0	1.6	CL 33	6"-12"				X					X
/188	4.4	5.8	1.8		12"-18"	X					X R			
/190	5.2	6.0	1.6	CL 10	12"-18"	X					X L			
/191	5.0	6.5	1.6	CL 10	12"-18"	X					X L			
/192	6.5	8.8	2.6	CL 10	12"-18"	X					X R			
/193	2.2	2.0	0.2	TP 4A	0 -6"					X		X (?)		
/195	4.8	2.4	1.7	TP 9	12"-24"				X					X
/198	5.3	7.2	1.9	TP 2B	18"-24"		X				X R			
/199	6.2	7.5	1.6	CL 12	18"-24"	X					X L			
/202	5.0	7.0	1.3	CL 7	18"-24"		X				X R			
/203	5.5	6.9	1.2	CL 13		X					X L			
/212	6.0	5.7	2.5	CL 11	12"-18"	X					X L			
/215	3.6	4.8	1.0	CL 7	12"-18"		X				X R			
/216	4.4	5.7	1.3	CL 7	12"-18"		X				X R			
/218	5.8	7.0	1.7	CL 9	18"-24"	X					X R			
/219	5.8	8.2	2.1	CL 9	6"-12"	X					X R			
/220	4.0	2.4	1.6	CL 9	6"-12"					X	Thais lamellosa Gmelin Rock Purple			
/221	5.1	5.2	1.4	CL 8	0 -6"	X					x R			
/222	3.6	3.8	1.3	CL 8	6"-12"			X						X
/224	4.7	5.0	1.3	CL 7	0 -6"	X					X L			
/225	4.6	6.0	1.3	CL 7	0 -6"	X					X L			
/226	6.2	6.1	1.8	CL 7	0 -6"	X					X L			
TOTALS:											18 L 21 R			
52 Dentalium Beads not listed					32	38	4	3	3	4	39	4 1(T)	2	6
Total 84 -- PERCENTAGES:					38.1%	45.3%	4.7%	3.6%	3.6%	4.7%	46.4%	4.7%-1.2%	2.4%	7.1%
Recorded in situ					32	20	0	2	0	2	Total 56	-- 66.7%		
From level bags					0	18	4	0	4	2	Total 28	-- 33.3%		

which would be at the intersection of the flake and the outer ostracum. The tool is resharpened until the scraping edge reaches the pallial sinus at which point the prismatic layer is so much thicker than the laminated layer that the scraping edge is inferior and at this point the tool is expended. Plate I illustrates one of the more typical chipped shell artifacts recovered.

We can only speculate about the material on which this tool was used. A number of the artifacts have a light brown to amber coating on a portion of the shell suggestive of an organic residue perhaps from the material being scraped. It has been reported that the Nootka scraped the flesh side of skins with a large mussel in former days (Drucker, 1951, p. 103). Much farther to the north at St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, one ground mussel shell scraper is reported, and its use is probably that of a fat scraper (Geist and Rainey, 1936, p. 383). Carlson reports ground mussel shell from the San Juans (Carlson, 1954, Tables 1, 3, 7, 8, and 9). While the search of the literature is not complete, we can state conditionally that the chipped shell scraper is a relatively new item of material culture the use of which is problematical at this time. It could have been used in the preparation of skins or food. The suggestion has also been made that this was a wood working tool since vegetable fibers have been found in association. These are some of the possibilities.

In regard to the manner in which the scraper was used, several of the artifacts show polish on the interior of the shell below the teeth or beak (umbo) suggesting that the main grip of the thumb was at this point. The thumb would then be parallel to the ligamental groove. This seems to be true for both the right and left hand shells. There may have been a dextral and sinistral preference for these artifacts made from right and left hand shells but to say which is which would not be prudent. We did observe that the smaller artifacts would be limited to a single mode of use while the larger shell artifacts could easily be used ambidextrously. The range in size is considerable, 45SK33/145 being 4.1 cm. x 4.8 cm. as compared to 45SK33/146 which measures 7.4 cm. x 8.8 cm.

Another fact which emerges from Table 1 is that of the 38 scrapers recovered 20 were found and recorded in situ while 18 were recovered from the level bags. While it would be imprudent for a professional to admit or reveal such a situation, a revelation of this sort is the basis for a higher degree of training for the amateur. The difficulty that some of the excavators experienced in recognizing these shells as having been worked suggests the possibility of their having been overlooked in other sites. The thoroughness in recovering the detritus materials on the part of excavators supports the opinion that all or nearly all of the chipped shell scrapers have been recovered. It would seem appropriate to quote Mr. Boekelman's comments in this regard: "The study of the use of unworked shells by extant races should prove one of the most fruitful fields to ethnologists. Such information should prove of unestimable value to archaeologists, in defining the possible use which may have been made of many unworked shells continually found during the course of excavations. Due to their apparent lack of workmanship they are only too often dismissed without serious consideration as representing shells originally collected to extract the animal for food." (Geist and Rainey, 1936, p. 380).

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Carlson, Roy Lincoln: Archaeological Investigation in the San Juan Islands. Masters Thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 1954.

Drucker, Philip: The Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 144, Washington, 1951.

Geist, Otto William and Rainey, Froelich G.: Archaeological Excavations at Kukulik, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. Volume II of the Miscellaneous Publications of the University of Alaska, Washington, 1936.

Holmes, William H.: Art in Shell of the Ancient Americans. Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1880-1881, Washington, 1893.

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1961 COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

At the Board of Directors Meeting, held January 8th, 1961, the following committees were established and chairmen appointed:

ACTIVITIES	Ted Weld
PROGRAM	Delmar Nordquist & Kay Nelson
MEMBERSHIP	Tom Beddall
SURVEY	Jack Thomson
SOCIAL	Willi Weld
PUBLICITY	Dick Gent & Ragnar Svendsen
LIBRARIAN	Kay Nelson
PUBLICATIONS	C. G. Nelson, Editor, Washington Archaeologist
	Mona Beddall, Co-Editor, " "

The call is out for members to man these committees. A word to any of the committee chairmen will be sufficient for a start.

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