

Housepit 1 Rim

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During the 1987 investigations the rim deposits of HP 1 (Vol. III, Preface, **Fig. 1**) were excavated as part of the project's research aimed at the analysis of housepit rim formation and to obtain a larger and better controlled sample of exotic lithics associated with the full occupation range of this housepit.

Excavation was limited to two units of 0.5 x 2.0 m. The units were set into the south rim of the housepit as a continuation of the cross-section trench begun during the 1986 excavations. Vertically, the units reached approximately 1.40 m BS at the deepest point, under the apex of the housepit rim (**Fig. 1**).

The deposition sequence for HP 1 is similar to that observed during the earlier excavation of HP's 5 and 7. A thin layer of dark gray/brown sand and relatively fine gravels overlie alternating deposits of hard (compact), yellow, till-like material containing angular gravels, and significantly looser layers of dark brown soil rich in organics. Unlike HP 7 and HP 5 however, the lower deposits increase in gravel content and take on a reddish coloration possibly derived from the underlying sterile deposit, which is red/brown in color and comprised of mixed sands and angular gravels.

The upper, gravel layer (XIIIa) appears to be derived from pithouse roof cover. The deposit is shallow near the apex of the housepit rim becoming significantly deeper towards the outer edge. On the inside of the rim (towards the interior of the housepit), the roof deposit becomes less distinct as it mixes with other materials apparently associated with the collapse of the structure.

The roof collapse deposits dramatically mark the truncation of the alternating strata described above. The collapsed material appears to have filled a portion off the interior of the pithouse that was excavated by the aboriginal builders into the rim deposits. This area may have functioned as a shelf set into the gravel walls of the housepit.

The alternating compact and loose strata suggest several things about the construction and re-construction of the housepit. The occupation floor of the housepit was excavated into the sterile till which was then redeposited as rim material. The number of compact till-like layers in the rim deposits may relate directly to re-building episodes. Since these materials would be deposited on a slope whose angle is theoretically related to the angle of the housepit roof (**Fig. 2**; compare with **Fig. 1**), they may also be used to derive the roof angle and height of the structure. In addition, the truncation of these strata indicate that the final housepit was larger than that of the previous occupation (or minimally, that the structure was shifted slightly to the south).

Few diagnostic artifacts were recovered from the rim excavations. Two corner-notched Plateau projectile points as well as several generalized biface fragments were recovered.

Several artifacts were recovered from a cache buried in the outer (southern) edge of the rim deposits. Again, a truncation of the alternating compact and loose strata indicate aboriginal excavation of the rim deposits. The excavated area contained the artifact cache and was filled with gravels continuous with the roof cover deposits, suggesting that it is related to the final occupation of HP 1 (**Fig. 1**).

The artifacts from this cache include a poorly preserved deer or elk antler billet, approximately 25 cm in length, with a beveled base section. This artifact may have served additionally as a heavy pestle as suggested by an associated artifact, although no pigments were detected on the piece. The antler section overlay one corner of a fine-grained siltstone pigment palette whose upper (smooth ground) surface exhibits dark red (ochre) staining. The palette measures approximately 17 cm x 14 cm (Chapter 1, Fig. 40).

The other artifacts were discovered resting on the palette, the first is believed to be a deer ulna approximately 10 cm in length. This piece was stained with reddish pigment on the wide (proximal) articulation, suggesting use as a pestle. This piece may have served additionally (or alternately) as a pressure flaker. The last artifact found resting on the pigment palette was a 12 cm long, sandstone shaft smoother. A narrow (approximately 1.5 cm wide, 0.5 cm deep) groove runs the length of the flat (working) surface; the opposite side is convex and fits comfortably in the palm (Chapter 1, Fig 41).

In addition, several small fragments of birch bark were found covering the cache, suggesting that the cache may have been wrapped with this material. Three fragments of muscovite and an unworked deer tooth were also found near the cache. The exact provenience of the tooth is unknown.

Figures

Figure 1: Profile of HP 1 rim deposits, showing orientation of strata, and location of artifact cache.

Figure 2: General orientation of HP 1 rim deposits.

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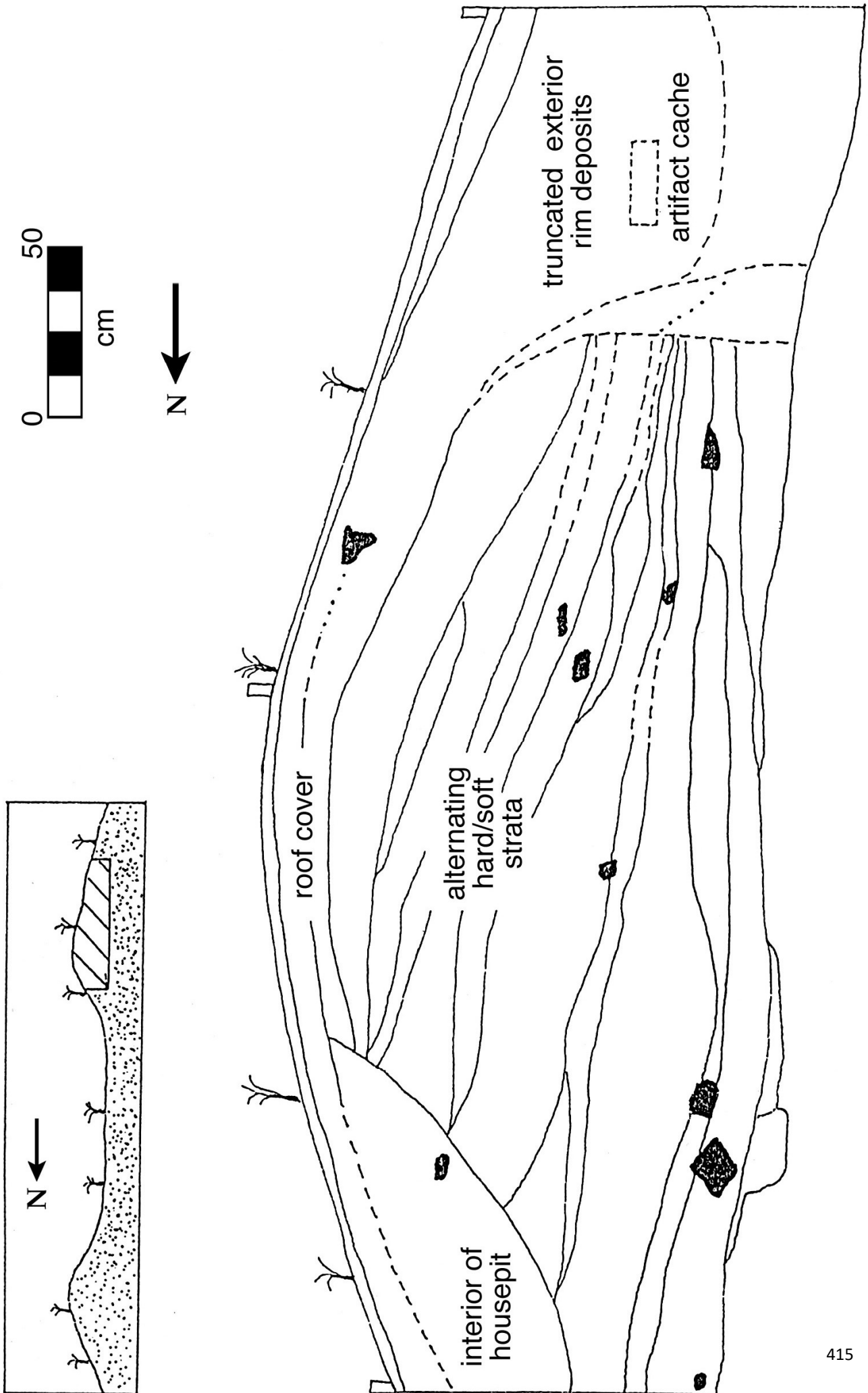


Figure 2. General orientation of HP 1 rim deposits.

Schematic Pithouse Rim Profile
Keatley Creek (Eerl 7) Pithouse 5

