

Extra Housepit Excavation 7 Excavation Results

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Location and Description

Extra Housepit Excavation (EHPE) 7 was dug into a small oval cultural depression having a saucer-shaped surficial cross-section. The depression resembles what is commonly regarded as a "cache pit". It is located in the southeastern aspect of the rim of HP 4 (Vol. III, Preface, **Fig. 1**). It measures 3 m north-south, by 2.3 m east-west, by 2.5 m deep on the surface. Three conjoining excavation squares measuring 1 m north-south by 0.75 m east-west were dug out to form a north-south trench whose west wall intersected the center of the surficial depression. The northernmost unit was designated Square A, the middle one Square B, and the unit in the south Square C (**Fig. 1**). The purpose of the investigation was to determine the internal structure of the pit feature, and to test the expectation that subsequent to their initial use, they were sometimes used as refuse receptacles. Excavation was undertaken using 10 cm arbitrary levels below ground surface. Trowels and occasionally square nosed spades were used.

The excavation revealed relatively complex stratigraphy, and 20 separate strata were identified on the western wall profile which intersected the center of the pit. Only the western wall was profiled in detail (**Fig. 1**).

Stratigraphy

Stratum I

Stratum I was present from about 0-10 cm below surface throughout the excavation trench. It was a moderately loose, light gray brown (10 YR

3/2) sandy silt with some (10%) pea gravel. Cultural material included a moderate density of lithic waste flakes, moderate amounts of scattered charcoal, and some FCR (small pieces). Lithic artifacts included a Plateau horizon projectile point from Square C 10 cm below surface, a small endscraper from Square A, and a large core fragment from Square C. There was also a concentration of charcoal chunks in the northwest corner of Square A between 5 -10 cm below surface. This stratum represents fairly natural infilling of the cache pit depression.

Stratum II

Stratum II was an isolated lens of semi-compact, light gray (10 YR 3/3) sandy silt with moderate (30%) amounts of pea gravel and some small pebbles (5%). The northern edge of this stratum was slightly darker than the southern aspect, apparently owing to being at the center of the surficial depression. Cultural materials recovered include a moderate frequency of lithic waste flakes, some FCR, and a piece of bone. It appears to represent the final intentional or unintentional aboriginal depression infilling, probably associated with the build-up of the adjacent HP 4 refuse deposits, or dumping of refuse and matrix from inside the house during cleaning episodes. Other similar infilling episodes are represented by Strata III to VI.

Stratum III

Stratum III was an isolated lens of semi-compact, medium gray-brown (10 YR 3/1) sandy silt with some (15%) pea gravel and a few small pebbles and cobbles (mostly in bottom aspect of the stratum). It occupies the south-central section of the pit between about 10-30 cm below surface, and it is sandwiched between Strata II and IV. Cultural materials consisted of a

charcoal concentration between 20-30 cm below surface, a high frequency of lithic waste flakes (including several large flakes), some small pieces of bone, and a few small pieces of FCR. It represents the second to last intentional pit infilling, and appears to consist of house rim deposits and perhaps refuse and matrices associated with house cleaning episodes that were intentionally dumped in this pit.

Stratum IV

Stratum IV was an isolated lens of semi-compact, light gray (10 YR 4/2) sandy silt with some (10%) pea gravel and a few small pebbles (5%). It occupies the central and northern interior of the pit feature. Cultural materials include scattered charcoal chunks, birch bark rolls, a high frequency of lithic waste flakes, a portion of a probable Plateau/early Kamloops horizon corner-notched point, some small FCR, and a few small pieces of bone. This stratum represents the third intentional episode of pit infilling, probably from HP 4 only a meter or two to the northwest.

Stratum V

Stratum V occupied the southern aspect of the bottom of the originally excavated pit feature. It was a lens measuring about 15 cm thick that extended from about 20-40 cm below surface. It is a loose, medium gray-brown (10 YR 3/1) sandy silt with a low (10%) frequency of small pebbles, and some cobbles (2%). Cultural material included scattered charcoal bits and chunks, small lithic waste flakes, slabs of Douglas fir bark from 36-40 cm below surface, and a few pieces of bone. It represents the second intentional dumping episode into the pit feature, and probably originated from HP 3 to the immediate south.

Stratum VI

Stratum VI was a lens of loose, light gray (10 YR 3/2) sandy silt with low (15%) pea gravel content. It occupied the bottom of the pit feature between about 40-55 cm below surface, and represents the first dumping/intentional infilling episode of the cache pit. Cultural materials include moderate amounts of charcoal chunks, a chalcedony formed uniface, utilized flakes, a moderate amount of lithic waste flakes, birch bark rolls, and a few pieces of bone. Some of these materials, particularly the birch bark and bone, may be related to the initial use of the pit feature as a cache/storage facility.

Stratum VII

Stratum VII was present on either side of the cache pit feature in the northern aspect of Square A, and the southern half of Square C. It is a fairly compact, light gray (10 YR 4/2) sandy silt with moderate (30%) pea gravel content, and low (15%) pebble content. Cultural materials include scattered charcoal and burnt pieces of wood, ponderosa pine bark, many lithic waste flakes (several are quite large), low frequencies of FCR, and a few pieces of bone. A Plateau horizon point was also recovered at 28 cm below surface. This stratum is typical of rim deposits noted elsewhere at the site. It likely relates to construction/refurbishing of HP 4 to the north and/or HP 3 to the south. It was deposited prior to the construction and use of the cache pit.

Stratum VIII

Stratum VIII lay in the northern half of Square A between ca. 10-35 cm below surface. It consists of a loose, light gray-brown (10 YR 3/3) sandy silt with moderate pea gravel (35%), and rare (2%) small pebbles. Cultural materials include charcoal concentrations, three unformed unifaces, many lithic waste flakes, and some FCR. This stratum represents rim spoil deposits from HP 4.

Stratum IX

Stratum IX lay at the northern end of Square A between ca. 30-40 cm below surface. It consists of a very loose, light gray (10 YR 4/2) sandy silt with low (5%) pea gravel content and moderate amounts of scattered organics, particularly charcoal. It represents house rim deposits from HP 4.

Stratum X

Stratum X also occupies the north edge of Square A, and lay between ca. 40-55 cm below surface. It consists of a very loose, light gray-brown (10 YR 3/3) sandy silt with very high (70%) organic content, consisting of charcoal, burnt wood, birch bark rolls, etc. It represents rim spoil or possibly roof edge deposits related to an occupation of HP 4.

Stratum XI

Stratum XI lay in the north half of Square A, and consisted of a very loose, light gray (10 YR 4/2) silt with some organic content, including scattered bits of charcoal and burnt wood. It appears to be rim spoil associated with HP 4.

Stratum XII

Stratum XII also lay in the north half of Square A between ca. 60-70 cm below surface. It was a fairly loose, dark gray-black (10 YR 2/1) sandy silt with very high organic content (70%), including scattered charcoal bits and chunks, and fine particles. This deposit appears to represent floor edge deposits related to HP 4.

Stratum XIII

Stratum XIII is a large stratum extending throughout the excavation squares between ca. 60-100 cm below surface. It was a moderately loose, light yellowish gray (10 YR 5/3) sandy silt with moderate (35%) pea gravel content, and the occasional small pebble. Cultural materials include randomly scattered chunks and bits of charcoal and burnt wood, some FCR and bits of bark, a moderate amount of lithic waste flakes, several lithic tools including two Plateau horizon points from Square A, another from Square B, and the occasional piece of bone (salmon and mammal). This stratum is typical of rim spoil deposits, and likely relate to HP 4 to the north, and/or HP 3 to the south.

Stratum XIV

Stratum XIV was located in the southern edge of Square C, between ca. 55-70 cm below surface. It consisted of a very loose, light yellow-gray (10 YR 5/4) sandy silt with very high pea gravel content (70%), and the occasional small pebble. It represents sterile deposits removed during the refurbishing of HP 3 to the south.

Stratum XV

Stratum XV was also confined to the southern half of Square C, between ca. 70-80 cm below surface. It was a loose, medium gray-brown (10 YR 4/3) silt with no gravel. Cultural material included a few flakes and scattered bits of charcoal. It represents the "A" horizon of a buried paleosol. It has been removed (or perhaps is less distinct) in the northern half of the unit.

Stratum XVI

Stratum XVI extended throughout the southern three-quarters of Square B, and all of Square A, between ca. 75-85 cm below surface. It is relatively horizontally disposed, and contained very little cultural material. It represents a buried "B" horizon on the paleosol. It consists of a moderately compact, light gray (10 YR 6/2) aeolian silt with no gravel.

Stratum XVII

Stratum XVII was a fairly compact, light gray-brown (10 YR 4/2) silt with low (15%) small pebble content. It is culturally sterile and appears to represent the "C" horizon of the buried paleosol. It appears to consist of glacial till deposits.

Stratum XVIII

Confined primarily to the central aspect of Square B between 80-90 cm below surface, Stratum XVIII was similar to XVII but had a much higher (70%) small pebble and pea gravel content. It also represents the "C" horizon of the paleosol, and was culturally sterile.

Stratum XIX

Stratum XIX was contained within all of Square A, and the northern edge of Square B, between ca. 110-150 cm below surface. It was a thick stratum of fairly loose, light gray (10 YR 4/2) sandy silt with moderate (40%) pea gravel content and low (15%) small pebble content. It fills a large pit feature excavated into the paleosol, and may be the southwest edge of a housepit, which is no longer evident on the ground surface. A large quantity of cultural material was recovered, and the matrix resembles typical heavily disturbed rim spoil. A Plateau horizon point was associated at about 115 cm below surface.

Stratum XX

Sterile deposits, typical basement glacial till deposits consisting of light gray, very compact clayey silt with pea gravel and lots of pebbles.

Summary and Conclusions

Extra-Housepit Excavation 7 revealed that this surficially evident oval cultural depression was a cache pit feature, which probably functioned as a food storage pit. Its original dimensions are estimated to be about 180 cm north-south, and ca. 150 cm east-west, by 55 cm deep, suggesting that it had an initial capacity of approximately 0.55m³. It has a somewhat V-shaped cross section, and the bottom contained birch bark rolls, which may have lined the bottom. Some mammal bone was also recovered from the very lower reaches of the pit.

The pit was excavated into rim spoil deposits (Strata VII and VIII) relating to HP's 3 and 4 to the south and north respectively. The presence of

plateau horizon points from within and outside the pit indicate that it was constructed and used during this time, which is commensurate with the main occupations represented in HP 4.

After its use as a storage pit, the feature seems to have been used as a refuse disposal facility for debris removed from inside adjacent housepits. These dumping episodes are most probably related to the buildup of the HP 4 rim deposits, via refuse disposal. Strata II-VI appear to have been accumulated in this fashion.

The northern edge of Square A intersected the southeast edge of HP 4, and also revealed what may be the southeast edge of a buried housepit between ca. 110-150 cm below surface, which also dates to the Plateau horizon.

The paleosol which intersected between ca. 100-130 cm below surface in Squares B and C may predate the remaining Plateau horizon deposits contained above, however, no diagnostics were recovered from the upper aspect of the paleosol.

Figures

Figure 1: West wall profile of EHPE 7.

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