

Extra-Housepit Excavation 17—Summary of Excavation

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Extra-Housepit Excavation 17 is a circular depression covering an area of approximately two square meters (**Fig. 1**). It is located on the upper terrace, west of HP 104, and south of EHPE 18 and 19 (Vol. III, Preface, **Fig. 2**). The purpose of the excavation was to determine its function, and if possible, to also determine its age (by artifact association). A trench was excavated in the center of the depression (measuring 150 cm north-south, 50 cm east-west—separated into 50 x 50 cm subsquares). As well as an additional subsquare, which was excavated on the east wall of this trench, there were three separate strata encountered during this excavation.

Stratigraphy

Stratum I: This stratum consisted of loose soil with less than 5% gravel, and included few if any cultural artifacts.

Stratum II: This stratum was a basin-shaped charcoal deposit approximately 48 cm east-west and 50 cm north-south. This charcoal deposit was surrounded by fire-cracked rock, which occurred within the deposit. The charcoal deposit contained the remains of a deer (fragments of antler, phalanges, and other pieces of bone), as well as a large number of small chert and trachydacite flakes. Beneath the bone, there were several pieces of charred bark (both pine and birch). Underneath Stratum II, I encountered sterile till, indicating that the bottom of the pit had been reached.

The excavation of this pit indicated fairly conclusively that this feature was a roasting pit. This was evident for several reasons: (1) it was relatively

shallow; (2) there was a large amount of charred bark and FCR, and; (3) there was no indication that the pit was used over an extended period of time (i.e., for storage).

The fact that this feature was shallow seems to indicate that it was made fairly rapidly and was intended for a one-time use. The lack of successive layers (i.e., a stratum containing charcoal, followed by an “unused” stratum, followed by another stratum containing charcoal), also indicate that the pit was only used once, and most likely for roasting food. The large amounts of charred bark and FCR also point to a roasting pit, since both appeared in a definite pattern (of a fire or hearth), and the quantity of charcoal present is much greater than would be found if a fire was set to “clean” the pit (for use as a storage pit).

The FCR which appeared in the charcoal deposit may have fallen in after the pit was used, while the remaining rocks (on the outside of the charcoal deposit), were probably used initially to contain the fire. The flakes which were found within the deposit may have been fragments of those used to butcher the deer before it was placed in the roasting pit.

Figures

Figure 1: Cross-section profile of EHPE 17, a small meat roasting pit.

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