

EEL RIVER SITES, PLYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS

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Eel River valley shows evidence of an aboriginal thickly populated area in Plymouth township. On both sides of the river, east and west, I have found artifacts in all locations that have been plowed up during the past sixty years. So I feel that it would be best to call attention only to shell sites and burials (Chart 5).

The first shell site (#1), after leaving the mouth of Eel River, was on the Ruth Hathaway land near the ocean cliff. This was a small shell site, but I know of one good pot, and quite a few artifacts that were excavated from it.

The next shell site (#2) was a large one, also on the East side of the river. It extended from Dr. Wild's back yard over to the by-pass, from north to south, and from Charles Strickland's to the Old Hotel Pilgrim Garage, west to east. This shell was in several large deposits varying from 2 inches thick to 4 feet in one of the gullies.

The highest point in this large group of shell deposits had no shell for this was a burial place, from which I helped remove two burials; one a twin. I had heard of two other skeletons that were destroyed, not counting the "Red Paint" burial that I found. This contained a piece of leg bone, and over 30 artifacts, including a platform soapstone pipe, and ten teeth.

There are 3 shell sites (#3,4,5) on the east edge of the Golf Course, one was near the highway, and one at Maple Swamp; this was a large one. There was one heavy deposit of artifacts, (site#6). This was near the spring on the Joe Boutin lot.

Coming back to the river, there was a large shell site (#7) in the old Jim Howard Finney garden. This was all dug out, and used by the Golf Course group — a lot of good artifacts and both soapstone and clay pottery was found on this site.

Across the river on the Langford land, directly opposite from the Jim H. Finney site, is a small shell site (#8). This has never been dug.

The next site (#9) was on the east side of the river on the Crib Browne estate. This was the most prolific site I have ever seen around Plymouth. William W. Whiting and I dug in this site for at least seven years, and each got several hundred artifacts here. I wrote several papers on this site that were published in the Massachusetts Archaeological Society Bulletin.

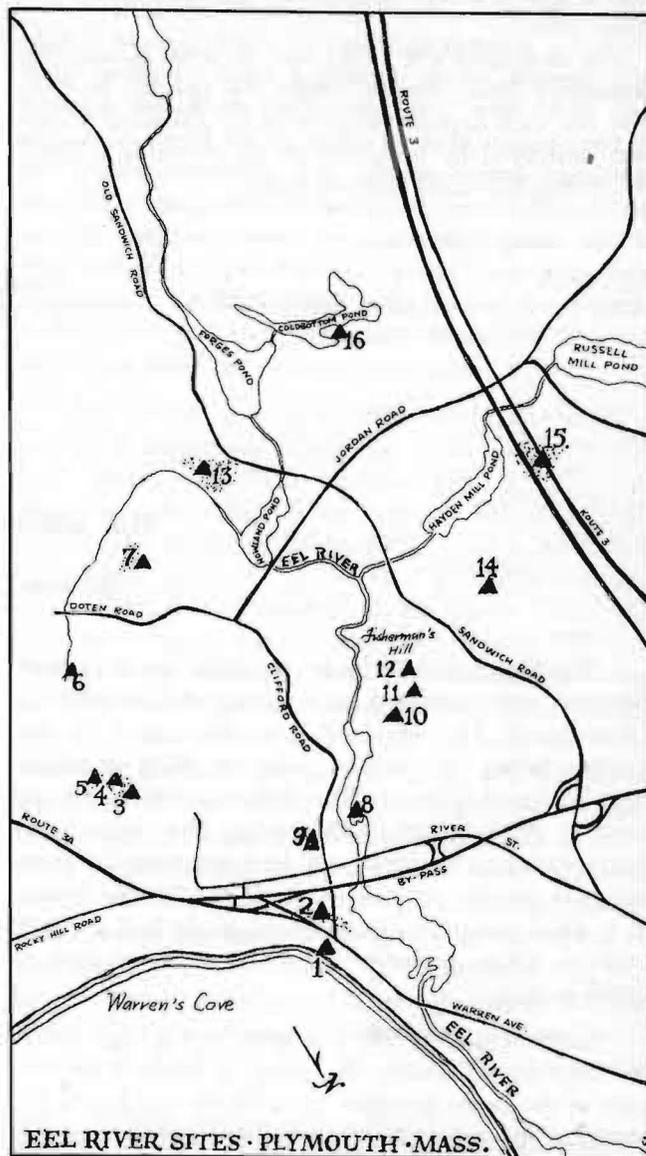


Chart 5.

Almost directly across were 3 shell sites (#10,11, 12), two on the Ben Hodges land near the abandoned cranberry bog, and one at the foot of Fisherman's Hill. These three have been dug out.

Coming back to the East side of the river, there was extra fine surface hunting from the Browne site (#13) east to the Bill Doten Farm at the foot of the Pine Hills, and from there to the springs at the edge of the old John Hadaway swamp. On the top of the ridge between the two Withington houses, there was wonderful surface hunting.

Back to the West side of Eel River, the next deposit of shell (#14) was on the west end of the

Bubbins land. The shell was not too thick here — from 2 to 4 inches. One time when Eben Morton first plowed there, I found 54 whole arrow points and a 5 lb. Full Groved axe. It was the best surface hunt ever.

The next shell site (#15) was on what is now Bill Brewster's land, directly under the present by-pass. The last shell deposit (site#16) in the Eel River Valley was destroyed by bulldozer to get material to flood the Whipple's Cold Bottom Pond.

There still might be other shell sites under wood covered areas, or some under flooded places. However, I believe I have covered about all that have been found. Eel River runs a northerly course, and all the sites described are in an area two miles long and one mile wide.

Plymouth, Mass.
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