

Investigations

RE:

Cannons Discovered at
Little Whale River,
Southeastern Hudson Bay

Prepared by:

Ian Badgley
Resident Archaeologist
Avataq Cultural Institute

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Acknowledgments

We wish to express our appreciation to Mr. George Horonowitsch of the Arctic Biological Station, McGill University, for reporting his discovery of the cannons. Too, our sincere gratitude to Mr. Myva Niviaxie, Mayor of Kuujjuarapik, and Mrs. Heather Joly, Secretary-Treasurer of the municipality, who provided much information and, as well, arranged transportation to Little Whale River. Thanks are also due to Mrs. Caroline Weetaltuk Sr., who graciously accommodated the Avataq archaeologist during his stay in Kuujjuarapik and to Mr. Noah Inukpuk, Mayor of Umiujaq, for his warm welcome in the village and interest in the project. Finally, our special thanks to Mr. Charles Martijn of the ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec for his efforts to locate the cannons and, additionally, for his full concerns regarding the preservation of Northern Quebec Inuit cultural heritage resources.

Funds for field logistics were apportioned from the ministère des Affaires culturelles grant to Avataq for archaeological research on the consent of the ministry.

The Avataq Cultural Institute gratefully acknowledges the contributions of each of these individuals and of the ministry to the present investigations.

1.0 Introduction

The present report outlines joint efforts carried out by Avataq and the ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec to retrieve 2 cannon barrels discovered this summer in the mouth of the Little Whale River, southeastern Hudson Bay. This discovery was reported in August to Mr. Myva Niviaxie, Mayor of Kuujjurarapik, by Mr. George Horonowitsch of the Arctic Biological Station, McGill University. Mr. Horonowitsch and his crew then were conducting whale studies at the mouth of the river.

In early September Mr. Ian Badgley, Resident Archaeologist of Avataq, was dispatched by the Institute to Little Whale River to recover the cannons. Mr. Serge Goriatchkine of the ministère des Affaires culturelles also inspected the locality at that time. These visits, carried out approximately one week after the departure of the Arctic Biological Station crew from the site, failed to produce any traces of the cannons. Additional investigations conducted by Mr. Charles Martijn during and following the field trips also yielded no evidence of the guns. The information accumulated to date tends to suggest that both cannons were removed from the site by unknown persons, and, also, suggests certain avenues for further investigations.

2.0 Sequence of Events

Monday, August 19

- Mr. George Hornowitsch radios Kuujjuarapik that 2 cannon barrels have been discovered in the mouth of the Little Whale River. As subsequently related by Mr. Hornowitsch, the cannons were found at low tide in a shallow, sandy-bottomed depression in the bedrock on the north side of the river mouth. The guns, each with trunions, are described as being approximately 5 feet in length and roughly 300 lbs in weight.
- Mr. Myva Niviaxie informs the Avataq head office at Inukjuak of the discovery and requests that the cannons be recovered.

Tuesday, August 20

- Mr. Barrie Gunn, Cultural Development Officer of Avataq, contacts Mr. Ian Badgley and instructs him to proceed to the Little Whale River following completion of work in Ungava Bay.

Monday, August 26

- departure of the Arctic Biological Station research crew from Little Whale River. Prior to departure, the cannons are moved to a nearby rock ledge on the north side of the river mouth. An empty 45-gallon drum is set up to indicate the location of the depression where the cannons were discovered.

Wednesday, September 4

- late morning arrival in Kuujjuarapik of Mr. Badgley and afternoon meeting with Mayor Niviaxie and Mrs. Heather Joly, Secretary - Treasurer of the municipality. As arranged by the municipal council, Mr. Joe Angatookalook is hired as guide for canoe transportation to the Little Whale River and Mr. Tommy Weetaltuk, as project assistant. Mr. Weetaltuk had worked with the Arctic Biological Station crew at the river until the end of August and had assisted in moving the cannons to the bedrock ledge.
- Mr. Badgley also is informed of a resolution passed in council resolving that the cannons are the property of the Municipality of Kuujjuarapik and, accordingly, are to be deposited in the village.

- Mr. Daniel Epoo, Executive Director of Avataq, and Mr. Charles Martijn of the ministère des affaires culturelles du Québec are informed by telephone of the resolution. Mr. Martijn advises Mr. Badgley to contact Dr. Charles Hett of the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa concerning procedures for the temporary preservation of the cannons in Kuujjuarapik.
- Dr. Hett, contacted shortly thereafter, explains that the conservation of metal objects long exposed to salt water is a lengthy process and will require, in the present case, a minimum of 2 years. In the interim, he recommends that the cannons be stored this winter in Hudson Bay, the Little Whale River, or the Great Whale River. This recommendation, discussed with Mayor Niviaxie and Mrs. Joly, is rejected on the basis that spring ice-rafting in Hudson Bay and the rivers may result in the permanent loss of the cannons. Informed of these concerns Dr. Hett then suggests that the cannons be stored in a freshwater pond or stream near the community. This suggestion is accepted by Mayor Niviaxie and Mrs. Joly.
- late afternoon radio communication with Mr. Serge Goriatchkine of the ministère des Affaires culturelles. Mr. Goriatchkine, reports that he and Mr. Noah Inukpuk, Mayor of Umiujaq, have travelled today by canoe from Umiujaq to the

Little Whale River. He states that both cannons have disappeared.

Thursday, September 5

- early morning telephone conversations with Mr. Barrie Gunn and Mr. Charles Martijn, both of whom agree that the site should be inspected by Mr. Badgley.
- brief meeting in late morning with Mr. Goriatchkine, then filing a report with the Sureté du Québec at Kuujjuarapik. Mr. Goriatchkine suspects that the cannons may have been stolen and advises Mr. Badgley to contact Mr. Jean-Paul Matte, the S.A.G.M.A.I. manager of the Umiujaq Relocation project, concerning persons known to have been in the vicinity of Little Whale River during the past week.
- departure at 1:30 P.M. of Mr. Badgley, Mr. Angatookalook, and Mr. Weetaltuk from Kuujjuarapik and arrival around 6:30 P.M. at Little Whale River.
- the disappearance of the cannons from the ledge where they had been deposited is confirmed. This ledge is located in a broad niche in a vertical bedrock wall, approximately 600m east of the north point of the river mouth. At low tide, the niche is bordered by a narrow sand beach, roughly 3m in maximum width, extending some distance upriver. The ledge

itself is about 75cm. in width by 2m in length. Its surface, roughly 30cm above high tide mark, slopes away from the river toward the rock wall. Rust-stained scratches resulting from the cannons are noted on the ledge. These scratches, fresh in appearance, are both linear and spiral in configuration.

- on-site investigations carried out included soundings in the low-tide beach and river adjacent to the ledge and a relatively intensive inspection of the general surroundings. The soundings extended some 50m upriver from the ledge while the inspections covered the whole of the north point of the river mouth.
- as these investigations failed to yield any evidence of the cannons, the crew departed Little Whale River for Umiujaq around 8:00 P.M., arriving in the village about 2 hours later. Mayor Inukpuk, met shortly thereafter, states that he believes that the cannons were washed back into the river. He further maintains that they are the property of Umiujuq, the village geographically closest to the river.

Friday, September 6

- morning conversation with Mr. Jean-Paul Matte who provides the following information:

. Mr. Edward Thompson of the McGill University Arctic Biological Station helicoptered from Umiujaq to Kuujjuarapik at the end of August, stopping briefly at the mouth of the Little Whale River. Either Trans-Quebec or Trans-Canada helicopters was hired for this trip.

. Three hydrographic research vessels, contracted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada, carried out depth soundings in Hudson Bay off the mouth of the Little Whale River during the summer.

. Military exercises were carried out in the vicinity by the Canadian Armed Forces militia in August. These exercises involved the use of helicopters.

- brief meeting in late morning with Mayor Inukpuk, who informs Mr. Badgley that he will continue to search for the cannons.
- departure from Umiujaq around noon and arrival at Little Whale River about 1:30 P.M. The site and its surroundings are again inspected.
- departure from the Little Whale River in deteriorating weather around 2:30 P.M. and arrival in Kuujjuarapik at 7:30 P.M. The results of the investigations are briefly reported to Mayor Niviaxie.

Saturday, September 7

- morning meeting with Mayor Niviaxie during which a more complete report of project results is presented and discussed. Mayor Niviaxie states that no storms of sufficient intensity to wash the cannons from the ledge occurred following the departure of the Arctic Biological Station research crew from the site. He notes that the hydrographic research vessels, each about 75 feet in length, included the "Richelles" and the "Topographique" and, additionally, that 2 Inuit families travelled in canoes from Kujjuarapik to Umiujaq on separate occasions between August 26 and September 4. He assures, however, that neither family removed the cannons. It also is noted that a party of tourists including Jude Kirkpatrick, Don Stuart, and Stan Lantz, from Dallas, Texas, canoed in and around Richmond Gulf during July. According to Mayor Niviaxie, Mr. Lantz is an archaeologist with a university at or near Dallas.
- Mr. Daniel Epoo and Mr. Martijn are informed by telephone of the disappearance of the cannons. Mr. Martijn urges Avataq to undertake further investigations immediately and assures that his ministry will inform the appropriate government agencies of the situation.

Monday, September 9

- Mr. Badgley departs Kuujuarapik, arriving in Montreal in late afternoon.

Wednesday, September 11

- Mr. Martijn informs Mr. Badgley that his ministry has officially requested the Sureté du Québec and the R.C.M.P. to investigate the disappearance of the cannons.

Thursday, September 12

- Mr. Horonowitsch, informed by Mr. Badgley of the disappearance of the cannons, reiterates the information provided earlier. He further notes that his crew discovered a single cannon barrel in the mouth of the Little Whale River in 1983. This cannon, exposed at low tide, was left in-place. However, on his return to the site in 1984 he found that this cannon had disappeared. The removal of the latter specimens to a presumably protected location was carried out in order to avoid a similar loss.

This information was subsequently transmitted to the ministère des Affaires culturelles and to the Avataq executive. No further investigations have been undertaken by Avataq since this date.

3.0 Complementary Research

Mr. Charles Martijn carried out several other investigations prior to and following notification of the cannons' disappearance. In the first instance he contacted Mr. André Lepine and Dr. Charles Hett concerning procedures for the preservation of iron objects exposed to salt water. Also, as ships' cannons were speculated, he requested Dr. Toby Morantz, specialist on the fur trading period, to research the relevant archives of the Hudson Bay Company for possible shipwrecks in the vicinity of the Little Whale River. As subsequently reported by Dr. Morantz, the documents researched mention neither shipwrecks nor other historical events which may have resulted in the deposition of the cannons in the river. She quotes, however, the "Fort George Journal" of March 15, 1840: "The Esquimaux who inhabit the Islands opposite to Richmond Gulf...have got possession of a few bolts from some trifling parts of the wreck of a vessel (perhaps the Esquimaux Brigg) driven lately ashore on one of their islands." (B77/a/14: J0,52).

Informed of the results of the field investigations, Mr. Martijn then requested Mr. Richard Lueger, an historical archaeologist living in Moose Factory, Ontario, to enquire about 2 cannons displayed in front of the Hudson Bay store in the village. As related to Mr. Lueger by Mr. Fred Moore, resident of Moose Factory, these guns were found by Inuit from Cape Hope in the 1930's on Trodley Island, a few miles north of Charlton Island, James Bay. Both of the cannons have been painted black a number of times.

Also, in view of Mr. Matte's information, Mr. Martijn contacted Mr. Edward Thompson of the Arctic Biological Station. Mr. Thompson's statement that he did not remove the cannons was corroborated by Mr. Horonowitsch.

Finally, Mr. Martijn learned from Fisheries and Oceans Canada that the hydrographic research vessels were transported by truck from Burlington, Ontario, to Chisasibi, James Bay. The vessels were returned to their home port by the same means of transportation at the end of summer.

4.0 Discussion and Recommendations

Available information suggests that the cannons were removed from the locality by unknown persons sometime between August 26 and September 4. This assumption is based primarily on the absence in the area during this period of storms of sufficient intensity to wash the guns from the ledge. Also, movement of these heavy objects by water action presumably would have involved a repeated lateral rocking motion, producing concentrations of short, linear scratches on the bedrock surface. However, the spiral scratch marks observed on the ledge indicate the alternate shifting of the extremities of the cannons.

Removal of the cannons would have required 2 or more persons with access to boat or air transportation. In this respect, it is stressed that, during the period concerned, the Canadian Armed Forces conducted military exercises in the region using helicopters and that either Trans-Québec or Trans-Canada Helicopters was operating in the area. Also, hydrographic research vessels chartered by Fisheries and Oceans Canada may have been in the vicinity of the Little Whale River at that time.

Presumably, visits to or stop-overs at the mouth of the river would have been recorded in the flight or navigation logs of the military units, the helicopter company, and the research vessels. In addition, it is assumed that the guns, if removed, were eventually transported to a southern destination. Accordingly, the waybills of the relevant Nordair flights from Kuujjuarapik may include reference to shipment of the cannons as cargo.

In view of the above, it is recommended:

- . that the ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec officially request the Sûreté du Québec and the R.C.M.P. to research:
 - the flight and navigation logs of the military units, helicopter company, and research vessels concerned;
 - the pertinent cargo manifests of Nordair flights departing from Kuujjuarapik.

The implementation of this measure will, at best, result in the retrieval of the cannons and, at worse, eliminate possible suspects. The latter also will allow alternate explanations for the cannons' disappearance and, correspondingly, permit other investigations. In this regard, it is recommended:

- . that the Avataq Cultural Institute request the communities of Kuujjuarapik and Umiujaq to periodically monitor the mouth of the Little Whale River (particularly the north shore) during low tide.

5.0 Photographs



Photo 1. Cannon barrel "in situ" at time of discovery (courtesy of G. Horonowitsch).



Photo 2. View of the cannons (courtesy of G. Horonowitsch).



Photo 3. View of the cannons (courtesy of G. Horonowitsch).