



**THE OZETTE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
EXPEDITION**

*a cooperative project of*

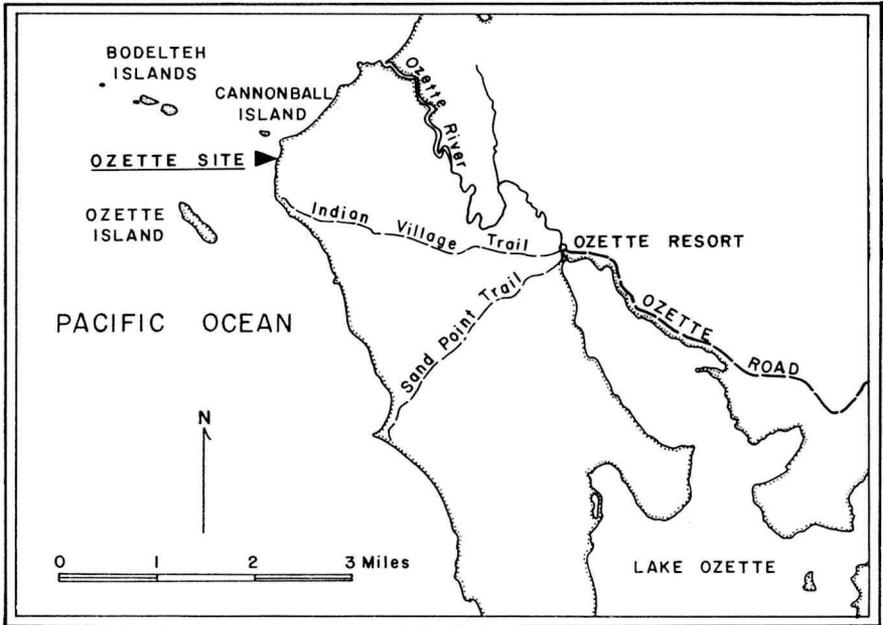
MAKAH NATION

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS



The Ozette archaeological site, located on the northern Washington coast, is one of the most significant sites ever discovered in the Western Hemisphere. Archaeological sites are labeled as being important for a variety of reasons, but no reason is more important than the completeness of the cultural record that has been preserved in the ground. In this respect, the Ozette site is unique for here are preserved not only the usual artifacts made of stone and bone, but also an almost complete inventory of the normally perishable items.

Ozette, which was one of the five main villages of the Makah people at the time the earliest European explorers reached the area, has been occupied for at least several thousand years. Because of its close proximity to the route of the migrating herds of fur seals, this was the principal sea mammal hunting village along the Washington coast. Each spring the resident population would be greatly increased by families moving to Ozette from other villages to hunt seals and whales.

In the early part of the present century, most of the Ozette families moved to Neah Bay because of the lack of a school at Ozette. The village continued to be occupied at least seasonally, however, until the early 1930's.

Current archaeological interest in Ozette goes back to the Fall of 1947. I visited the site briefly in December while conducting an archaeological reconnaissance of the entire Washington coast for the purpose of locating and evaluating all of the archaeological sites in this area. Ozette clearly was the largest and richest site along the Washington coast.

In 1961, while I was directing the excavation of the White Rock Village site located approximately two miles south of Ozette I had the opportunity to examine the Ozette site in greater detail. It was then that I resolved to excavate at Ozette Village whenever the time and funding could be arranged.

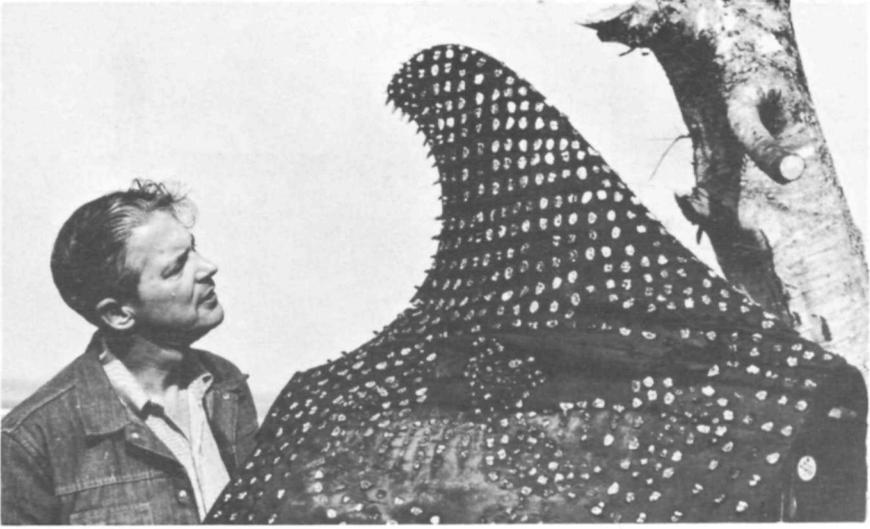
It was not until 1966, however, that I returned to Ozette to begin large scale excavations, this time with geologist the late Dr. Roald Fryxell, zoologist Dr. Carl Gustafson, staff archaeologist Harvey S. Rice, and a crew of students. With support from the National Science Foundation, multidisciplinary studies involving archaeology, geology, zoology, and botany were carried out during the summers of 1966 and 1967. At the end of the 1967 summer field season the first of the buried Ozette houses was located.

But the unexpected discovery of 10,000 year old remains of man in eastern Washington, at another site we had been excavating called Marmes Rockshelter, took our team away from Ozette for the next two seasons.



—Photo Courtesy of Washington Historical Society

*Ozette Village. Photo taken around 1900.*

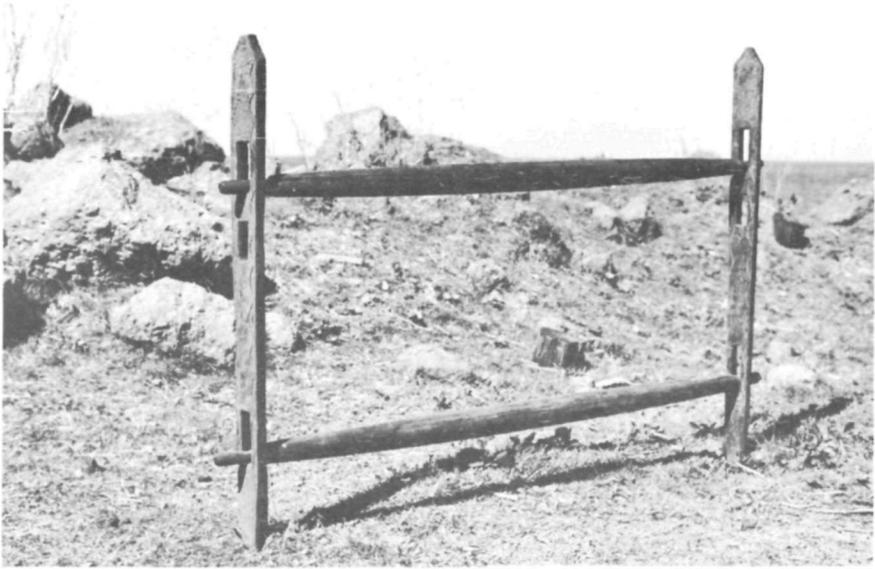


—Photo by H. S. Rice

*Dr. Richard D. Daugherty, director of the Ozette expedition, examines an effigy of dorsal fin of a whale carved in cedar and inlaid with over 700 sea otter teeth. These objects were used in the ceremonies connected with whale hunting. Recovered in excavation of Ozette house.*

In the winter of 1970, high tides and large waves undermined the bank in the central part of the abandoned Ozette village causing a section of the deposits to slump away and exposing planks and timbers of a house that had been buried by a mud slide hundreds of years ago. By spring of that year I had returned with a crew of undergraduate and graduate students to salvage what remained of the buried houses. Excavations have been continuing on an uninterrupted basis since that time. During the first year of this work, support for the expedition was provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but in recent years support has come primarily from the National Park Service.

The inhabitants of Ozette, and the other Makah villages as well, were a strong people, widely respected by other native American groups with whom they came in contact. The size of their population, the wealth of their economy, the elaborateness of their culture, the complexity of their social and ceremonial life, and the strategic locations of their villages at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, made them one of the ranking groups along the coast of Northwestern America.



—Photo by H. S. Rice

*Loom excavated from Ozette house set up to show how it would have looked when in use. Six such looms have been recovered.*



—Photo by H. S. Rice

*Carved wooden club used in killing seals after they had been harpooned and brought up next to the canoes. More than two dozen such clubs have been found in the excavations at Ozette.*



—Photo by H. S. Rice

*Carved head of ceremonial club made of whale bone.*

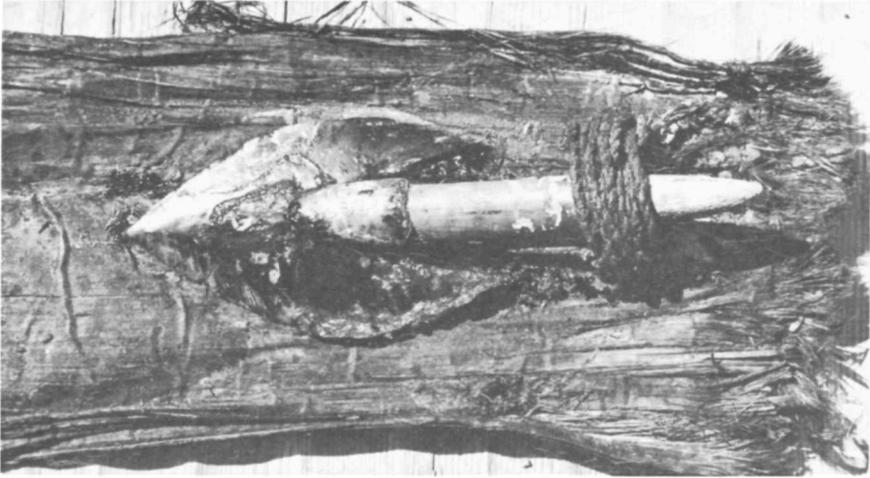
The hunting of whales and seals from large ocean-going canoes was one of the most important activities of Ozette economic life. A rich ceremonialism was attached to their sea mammal hunting, particularly to the hunting of whales. Related to this ceremonialism was a rich and elaborate artistic tradition. Art permeated every facet of life of the Ozette people.

The Ozette of prehistoric as well as historic times lived in a bountiful environment that provided them with a rich and dependable food supply and a wealth of raw materials from which to manufacture their houses and personal possessions. These resources enabled them to live in large, permanent villages, with houses 35 feet wide and nearly 70 feet long. Within these houses were carved wooden boxes filled with personal items, baskets containing tool kits, and baskets filled with stored food. The tools and weapons, often elaborately carved and inlaid with shell or teeth, were suspended from the walls



—Photo by H. S. Rice

*Carved wooden food dishes from Ozette house. A number of carved dishes of different shapes and styles were recovered.*

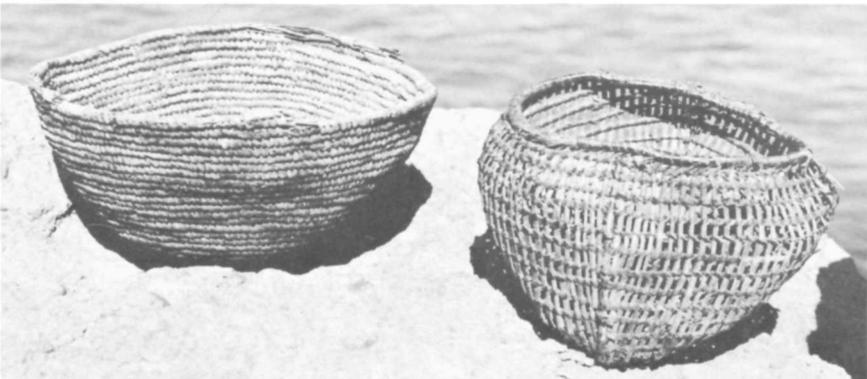


—Photo by H. S. Rice

*Whale harpoon head with mussel shell blade and barbs made from elk bone. A large number of these have been found in the excavations of the Ozette houses, usually in their folded cedar bark containers.*

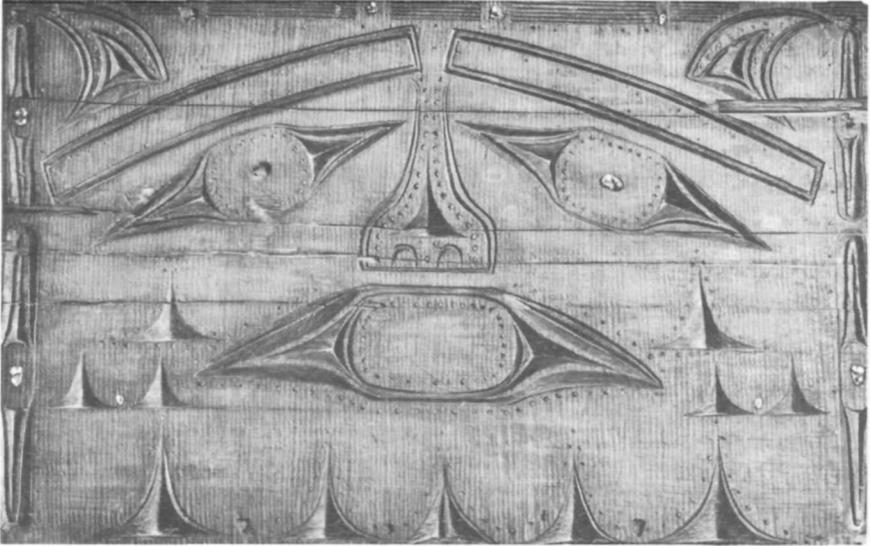
or placed near the sleeping platforms. These implements included whale harpoons, seal harpoons, lances, bows and arrows, knives and adzes.

Looms, carved and inlaid with teeth, were set up near the family living areas. These large houses, constructed from cedar planks and logs, were multifamily affairs, each house containing from twenty to forty people.



—Photo by H. S. Rice

*More than four hundred and fifty complete baskets have been recovered to date from the excavation of the buried Ozette houses.*



—Photo by H. S. Rice

*The carved side of a large wooden box. This box had been painted and inlaid with the teeth of sea otters. Many boxes, large and small, have been found in the Ozette house.*

To fully appreciate the archaeological problems at Ozette, it is necessary to understand that for thousands of years the occupants of this village, as with people everywhere, had been depositing layer upon layer of cultural refuse which archaeologists call "midden." At Ozette, this midden can be seen as layers of mixed shell, fish bones, mammal bones, charcoal, and fire-cracked rock which were laid down in sequence. The oldest things are found at the bottom of the deposits and the most recent at the top. As the culture of the villagers slowly changed through time, so did the types of artifacts that were lost or discarded in the layers of midden.

In the central part of the Ozette site, this gradual accumulation of midden was interrupted a number of times by mud flows and slides emanating from a small canyon in back of the village. The most massive of these slides occurred between 300 and 500 years ago, smashing into and burying a number of houses. The rare accident of these slides has entombed the houses and their contents in a thick layer of clay, virtually stopping all bacterial action and oxidation, and preserving the houses, the tools, weapons, containers, and the magnificent art work as if this tragic event had occurred only yesterday. Excavations have been nearly completed on two of the four prehistoric houses known to have been hit by the slide. Over 40,000

artifacts have been recovered to date, constituting the most complete archaeological record of Northwest Coast Indian culture ever found. Because of the unique nature of the events that brought about the preservation of the houses and their contents, it is unlikely that anything like this will ever again be found.

Traditionally, archaeologists use shovels and trowels and brushes to carefully expose the treasures of the past. But at Ozette, since the artifacts within the buried houses are covered by a thick layer of damp, unyielding clay, a different technique has been employed. If an archaeologist were to use a shovel or a trowel to remove the clay, he could easily slice through a basket or a finely carved wooden bowl before he would even know it was there. I decided, therefore, that the only safe way to excavate was to use water; large hoses to excavate the massive clay deposits, and small hoses with a fine spray to expose, clean, and remove the artifacts and house remains. This system has worked exceptionally well with virtually no destruction of the artifacts, no displacement of these objects from their proper stratigraphic position in the deposits, and with a great



—Photo by H. S. Rice

*Unloading U. S. Marine Corps helicopter at Ozette site. The Marine Corps detachment at Whidbey Island Naval Air Station has provided essential logistic support for the Ozette expedition.*

saving of time. During the summer months when the surf is calm, a battery of pumps provides sea water for the excavations. During the stormy winter months, however, excavation water comes from a small fresh water reservoir constructed for this purpose.

Although the natural preservation of the artifacts and house remains has been excellent, as soon as the objects are excavated and exposed to air they promptly begin to deteriorate unless given special treatment. One of the most important activities of the Ozette Expedition is the program of artifact preservation which is handled by the expedition Conservator, Gerald Grosso, assisted by his wife Jan. When an artifact of a perishable nature is found, usually anything made of wood, grass, or any type of plant fiber, it is sent to the field laboratory where it is cleaned and catalogued, and it is then put into a solution of polyethylene glycol. As soon as it is safe for the artifacts to be moved, they are transported by U. S. Marine helicopter from the field laboratory at Ozette where they have received temporary treatment, to the main laboratory at Neah Bay. This laboratory was built for the expedition by the Makah Nation. Here the specimens undergo more intensive care than can be given them in the field. The process is far more complicated than can be reported here, but without this treatment, the objects would dry, warp, crack, and soon lose any resemblance to their original appearance.



— Photo by H. S. Rice

*Removing artifacts from the basket in which they were found.*

A unique concept has emerged from the archaeological excavations at Ozette. It is customary that archaeological collections are removed to museums or universities, often remote from the location of their discovery. Because of the importance and richness of the material from Ozette, it is believed that it should remain at Neah Bay for the appreciation of the people whose cultural history it represents. Therefore, the more than 40,000 artifacts already recovered from the excavations, plus two or three times that number which can be expected to be discovered by the expedition during the next few years, will remain at Neah Bay where they will be of continuing value to the Makah people as a constant reminder of the richness of their past. These collections, properly displayed and interpreted, will be of inestimable worth in educating the succeeding generations of young Makah in their priceless cultural heritage. To this end, The Makah Nation, with a grant from the Economic Development Administration, is constructing a superb cultural and research center at Neah Bay which will contain museum galleries, archives, storage facilities and research laboratories.

Makahs trained in museology at the Thomas Burke Museum at the University of Washington under the direction of George Quimby and James Nason and by Jean Andre of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, will manage the operation of the new facility.

The Ozette Archaeological Expedition has from the beginning enjoyed the complete cooperation of the Makah Nation. Makah students have worked on the excavation crews and in the laboratory, and the Makah Tribal Council has provided facilities and financial support for the project. In a very real sense, the Makah have been full participants in the efforts to recover their past.

Many thousands of visitors each year take the three and one half mile hike through the Olympic National Park coastal strip to the magnificent beaches of the Washington coast and to the Ozette Archaeological Site. In addition to the interested public, visitors include students from junior high schools, high schools, colleges, and universities who come to Ozette on school-organized field trips. The members of the Ozette archaeological field and laboratory crews welcome you to Ozette.

RICHARD D. DAUGHERTY, Ph.D., Director



—Photo by H. S. Rice

*A carving of an owl on the end of a wooden club or wand,  
probably used by a shaman. Found in the first  
house to be excavated at Ozette.*

## PROJECT PERSONNEL

DIRECTOR ..... Richard D. Daugherty, Ph.D.  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ..... Paul Gleeson, M.A. (June 1972 - Aug. 1973)  
Jeffrey Mauger, M.A. (Sept. 1973 - Aug. 1974)  
Marion Fiskén, (Sept. 1974 - June 1977)  
Paul Gleeson, M.A. (June 1977 - .....)  
CONSERVATOR ..... Gerald Grosso  
(Neah Bay Laboratory)  
ASSISTANT CONSERVATOR ..... Jan Grosso  
(Neah Bay Laboratory)  
FIELD LABORATORY  
SUPERVISOR ..... Meri Flynn

## SPECIAL STUDIES

DALE CROES, Ph.D. .... Basketry, matting, cordage, weaving  
MARION FISKÉN ..... Identification of whale bones  
Whale butchering techniques  
Whale features in the site  
Use of whale bone in the manufacture of artifacts  
EDWARD FRIEDMAN, Ph.D. .. An archaeological survey of Makah territory  
The identification of sea mammal bones (other  
than whales)  
Identification of bird bones  
Coordination of fauna identification studies  
JANET FRIEDMAN, Ph.D. .... Identification of types of wood used in manufac-  
turing different categories of artifacts  
MADGE GLEESON, M.F.A. .... Stratigraphy of Ozette site deposits  
PAUL GLEESON, M.A. .... Ozette wood technology  
GERALD GROSSO ..... Studies in conservation techniques  
DAVID HUELSBECK ..... Identification of fish remains  
SUSAN KENT, M.A. .... Study of Ozette combs  
JENNIFER KOCH, M.A. .... Study of Ozette toys and miniatures  
JEFFREY MAUGER, M.A. .... Study of Ozette house architecture, methods of  
construction and interior arrangement  
STEVE SAMUELS, M.A. .... Development of three dimensional computer map-  
ping techniques and their application to  
Ozette stratigraphic surfaces. Study of  
Ozette stratigraphy and features.

