Profile

Philleo Nash (1909-1987): The Toronto Years

Mima Kapches

In 1937 Philleo Nash, a young American anthropologist with a newly minted PhD from the University of Chicago, was appointed a lecturer at the University of Toronto where he was challenged to invigorate the discipline of Ontario archaeology. His appointment at the university held a concurrent position at the Royal Ontario Museum, where he remarked "as Assistant Keeper of the Ethnological Collections in the Royal Ontario Museum of Archeology, for which I received no pay…. I set up their research program for the Museum of Archeology in Canadian archeology" (Nash 1966:37). Nash and his young family spent four years in Toronto (his daughters Maggie and Sally were born there). They returned to Wisconsin in 1941.

The years in Toronto, at the beginning of his career, were his only academic years until his appointment at American University from 1971 to 1976. My focus here is on his years in Toronto, as an archaeologist. His career was, however, long and varied. He was well respected as an applied anthropologist and a policy advisor on race relations to several U.S. Presidents, from Roosevelt and Truman to Kennedy and Johnson. The record of his Toronto years is modest in comparison to his later accomplishments: "it is probably safe to say that he has held both the highest U.S. elective and appointive offices achieved by any member of our (Anthropology) profession" (Landman and Spencer Halpern 1989:v). His legacy for the history of Ontario archaeology was the two young men who trained with him, J. Norman Emerson and Kenneth E. Kidd.

About Nash

Philleo Nash was born October 25, 1909 in Wisconsin Rapids, northern Wisconsin, where his family owned a cranberry business. Anthropology was his major at the University of Wisconsin, not specifically archaeology. He describes the impact that young professor Charlotte Day Gower had on him: "she was really my first contact with an anthropologist who was studying something that was modern, alive and current, not something that was antiquarian" (Nash 1966:19). But

> ...archeology is what is open to you when you are a young student, so I needed a summer job and I got myself a summer job with the Milwaukee Public Museum; and I went out as a digger at three dollars a day and board and room, which is not bad for those days. This was in the thirties. I worked for the Milwaukee Public Museum, and then wrote the material up as my undergraduate dissertation [Nash 1966: 20].

So archaeology paid the bills while he continued his anthropological studies. In 1935 he married Edith Rosenfels (Rosenfels Nash 1989:32) and in 1937 he received his PhD degree from the University of Chicago on the acculturation of the Klamath of Oregon. In those years, jobs in anthropology were scarce: Nash had two offers, one in Knoxville, Tennessee; the other at the University of Toronto. Nash opined that the university and the pay were better in Toronto. Also,

he was "intrigued by the idea of being in another country…" (Nash 1966:36).

Nash was hired at the University of Toronto because he could teach social anthropology as well as archaeology (Figure 1). He and T.F. McIlwraith were the only professors and they taught undergraduate and introductory courses "again and again" (Nash 1980). Their small cadre of graduate students included J. Norman Emerson who commented: "with the arrival of Philleo Nash to the staff in 1937, rather new and exciting developments took place. Philleo Nash was one of the most brilliant men to grace our staff…. He was brusque, energetic and outspoken" (Emerson 1970:15).

Applied anthropology remained of important interest to Nash. One highlight of the Toronto years was the planning of the Yale-Toronto conference of 1939, the first international conference on American Indian welfare. Although war broke out just before the conference, it nevertheless proceeded as planned. Later, Nash wrote that "it lasted two weeks and brought together the major leaders of government programs from both countries and many Indian persons. It was there that I first met many of the government and Indian leaders with whom I maintained cordial relations for the next forty years" (Nash 1980). The second such conference was organized by Nash in 1963 when he was United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

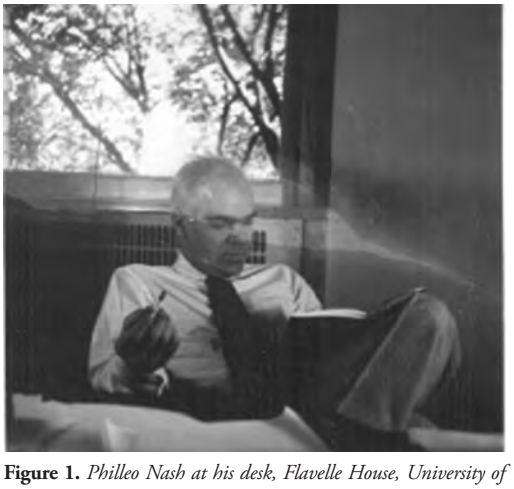

Figure 1. *Philleo Nash at his desk, Flavelle House, University of Toronto (Royal Ontario Museum), 1939. Photograph by Winifred Needler.*

Archaeological Research

To fulfill the archaeological component of his commitment Nash prepared to go into the field in the summer of 1938 on an expedition of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology. A few sites had been singled out for excavation in southwestern Ontario, north of Lake Erie. The crew was to be small: Nash, a student (Emerson), a museum staff person (Kidd), and some locally hired diggers. Nash also invited local avocational archaeologist Peter Marshall Pringle (Ken Kidd, personal communication 1986). Edith Rosenfels Nash and infant Maggie were also present (Figure 2). Edith ran the camp. He asked McKern to send to him some of the Milwaukee Museum recording forms, the feature sheets, skeletal sheets and survey record sheets (Nash 1938). Nearly 40 years later Nash commented "I received my early archeological training with W.C. McKern, who would have recognized even the arrangement of tents at the site. He would have applauded, no doubt, my literal use of his sheets for square and feature notation, which even have his name on them!" (Philleo Nash, 1977).

For Emerson this was his first archaeological field experience and he later observed:

> We were veritable babes in the Ontario archaeological woods. We spent many long weeks excavating plough marks and meticulously recording them according to "the Chicago Method." We believed that they indicated the flooring of an Owasco period longhouse. Late Iroquois studies (quickly revealed) how wrong we were [Emerson 1970:16].

Summers during 1938-39 were spent excavating the Pound site, south of London, Ontario. The result was over 25,000 artifacts. Nash was overwhelmed and in September of 1939 he sent letters to several archaeologists saying: "we have a problem here… with which we need help and I was wondering if you would be good enough to give us some advice" (Nash 1939a). The problem was how to catalogue all these specimens with few staff to do so. In his letter Nash stated, "It has

Figure 2. *The 1938 Pound site crew. Left to right: two unidentified local workman, Peter Marshall Pringle, Edith Nash, J. Norman Emerson, local workman Sydney Vail and Kenneth E. Kidd. Photograph by P. Nash, courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum.*

occurred to some of us that a color dot type of marking which would identify a specimen by mound, square and level would be adequate for all sorting operations." All those who replied to Nash's request for advice suggested that a colour dot system would be interesting, but William Ritchie's comments were quite specific: "The idea of a color symbol rather appeals to me, except that you might run out of colors and get confused on shades or the hue might fade in time" (Ritchie 1939). Indeed, confusion was the end result of this system of coloured dots and bars that were meticulously applied by museum staff. Margaret Tushingham (nee Thomson) remembers using the shaved eraser end of a pencil to apply coloured dots on the pottery sherds from the Pound site at the long table in Nash's office (Tushingham, personal communication 2005). Confusion was the end result because when Nash left Toronto the field notes went with him, including the key. The coloured bars and dots on the Pound site remained an enigma until the field notes were returned to Toronto in 1977. In the end, Ritchie's comments were the most succinct: "Frankly, I know of no easy method to supplant the usual numbering procedure" (Ritchie 1939).

In 1940, Nash did not go into the field—funds were lacking because of the war effort. He had three men he wanted, nevertheless, to find work for: J.N. Emerson "a good field man, and has had two summers' experience with me as a field supervisor;" W.J. Patterson "an ex-geologist from London, Ontario… he knows something about soils, and makes excellent field drawings and notation;" and R.C. Currelly "handled my preparation (field laboratory) during most of last summer…, the son of the director of the museum here" (Nash 1940). McKern replied that he had no funds available and suggested that Nash write other archaeologists such as Emerson Greenman, Glenn A. Black and William Ritchie to see if they needed staff. McKern added:

> If nothing else opens up, how about starting a laboratory project for the purpose of making a thorough analysis of materials and data, which have come to you as a result of past field work? Laboratory technique is now undergoing a rapid development and the analysis of pottery and other materials is just as important as field work [McKern 1940].

McKern gave Nash good advice about setting up a laboratory but Nash was already well on his way to completing the analysis of the Pound site. He had already published a brief statement describing the excavations (Nash 1939b) and had arranged for the analysis of the mammalian, avian, shell and fish remains (Kapches 1977). By

1941 he had completed a preliminary outline of the monograph he intended to write on the excavation. In this outline, he postulated in-situ development:

> Pound is a very simple type of Iroquoian culture, which has strong admixtures of Woodland traits…. It raises the strong possibility that the Iroquoian cultures developed right here in the St Lawrence and Lower Great Lakes region, acquired some southern importations to be sure, but that generally speaking the cultural transition of which we have been speaking was a natural outgrowth of the Woodland cultures which preceded the Iroquoian [Nash 1941b:7].

At this point, Nash left Canada and this report was never completed.

After Toronto

Living in a foreign country wasn't the adventure the Nash family expected. The pay wasn't great—after four years he was making just $2,700—and it was very difficult to buy a *New York Times* on Sunday. There was apprehension as Canada entered the war in 1939 (the United States did not do so until Pearl Harbor was bombed on 7 December 1941). Added to this was the consideration that being outside the United States in a foreign country—even one so close as Canada—for too long would have a serious impact on his career as an American anthropologist (Nash 1966:37; Rosenfels Nash 1989:33). So in 1941 the Nash family moved to Wisconsin Rapids to learn the cranberry business. As Nash wrote McKern, "I have left academic life (temporarily, I hope) in favour of the family business. Under the arrangement I am to have the slack season off every year … for writing and research, and if it works I will be better off in the way of publications and research than at Toronto" (Nash 1941a). During this year he was also an unpaid special lecturer at the University of Wisconsin.

Nash did pursue one archaeological project during this period—the DuBay site. This multi-component site, containing Native evidence for occupations and a fur trading post, was threatened with flooding. Sometime in 1942 a field crew under Nash's direction, consisting of J.N. Emerson and Earle Reynolds, conducted test excavations and Emerson later wrote the report (Emerson n.d.).

In May of 1942 Nash moved to Washington D.C. He took a series of posts in the Federal Government starting in the Office of War Information. He was an assistant to President Truman, 1946-1953, then Commissioner of Indian Affairs under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, 1961-1966. During the hiatus, Nash was active in local Wisconsin politics, serving as Lieutenant Governor during 1959-61. From 1971 to 1977 he was a professor at the American University in Washington, D.C. Upon retirement, he returned to the family cranberry business in northern Wisconsin. In 1986 he was awarded the prestigious Malinowski Award by the Society for Applied Anthropology, in recognition of lifetime commitment to the application of the social sciences to contemporary issues. Nash died in 1987. In 1989 Ruth Landman and Katherine Spencer Halpern co-edited and published *Applied Anthropologist and Public Servant: the Life and Work of Philleo Nash*. This volume of papers is recommended to those wishing to find out more about the man whose career it honours.

Nash's Archaeological Legacy

Norman Emerson got his start in archaeology under Nash and so did Ken Kidd. Emerson wrote glowingly of the impact that Nash had on his career. Nash's influence on Kidd is little known. After working with Nash, Kidd found himself in the summer of 1941 directing the excavations of Ste Marie in Midland. Father Lally of the Martyr's Shrine had approached the Royal Ontario Museum to request that excavations be undertaken. Kidd, being the only person with Ontario archaeological experience on staff, was tasked to direct the project. Kidd wrote McIlwraith:

> I should like to express my appreciation of the opportunity of doing this important task, a task in so many respects beyond

> my previous experience… the excavation of Ste Marie has not been a small task. There has been, moreover, no North American precedent to follow…. We have had to work out our own techniques in many cases, and more important to work on a site which was designed to meet what were at that time novel conditions…. I am delighted that our Museum is at last leading the way in initiating such a type of archaeology in Ontario, i.e. the historical archaeology of our province, and I hope more than words can express that such work will be expanded. There is great scope for it, and unless I am much mistaken, a keen interest in it… [Kidd 1941].

Without the methodical fieldwork practiced at the Pound Village site, directed by Philleo Nash, two Ontario archaeologists, Emerson and Kidd, would not have received instruction in the fundamental elements of archaeological fieldwork and analysis. Ontario archaeology was enriched by Philleo Nash's brief tenure in the province. One can only speculate about the course of Ontario archaeology had Nash remained longer in the province.

Acknowledgements. I considered analyzing the Pound Village site collection for my PhD at the University of Toronto, hence my correspondence with Nash in 1977. At that time the Pound Village field notes were returned to Toronto, a feat that Peter Storck (Royal Ontario Museum) and William Hurley (University of Toronto) facilitated. Starting in 1940, Margaret Thomson Tushingham was secretary to Tom McIlwraith and Philleo Nash and had some wonderful memories to share concerning Nash's Toronto years. John Barker, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia, shared with me a letter Nash wrote to him when he was writing a paper about McIlwraith. He also shared a copy of Emerson's history of the anthropology department, which Emerson had presented at a Canadian Archaeological Association meeting. Maggie Nash Kast and Sally Nash kindly read this paper. Dawn Scher Thomae and Hiba Jaber of the Milwaukee Public Museum provided copies of the Nash-McKern correspondence, 1934-1946. Pat Reed, lately in the Department of Anthropology in the University of Toronto, responded to queries concerning Emerson's career.

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