

THE SQUIRE SITE, CONSECON

THE REV. BOWEN P. SQUIRE, B. Litt.

Consecon lake is in the Quinte (Kente) district, not far from Trenton, and Belleville. It is a beautiful little lake, about six miles in length by one mile in width, and is much visited in the tourist season by travellers from many parts of the country. who come to catch the fish with which the lake abounds. Consecon lake was not always its present size, but was greatly enlarged after a dam was built in 1806 to impound the waters of the creek that bisects this island county.

Indirectly it was this creek, that, by being ignored led to the discovery of this site. An artist, and illustrator, I was studying local history in search of data to aid me in painting pictures depicting local history. I remarked that in general the Bay of Quinte was accepted as the principal water route from east to west, and vice-versa, across this region. Little or no attention was given to the Creek, even though early cartographers had charted it as navigable water. In my opinion this creek would have made a much safer route than that along the Bay. being protected from squalls by the dense woods that once lined its banks. Journey over it would also have been less liable to open observation. The creek had the same termini as the Bay, viz: the waters connected to Deseronto Reach in the east, and lake Ontario, via Weller's Bay, on the west. Weller's Bay lies across The Carrying Place from the mouth of the Trent river which was one of the chief routes to and from Huronia.

Champlain used that route on his way to attack the Onondaga towns south of Ontario, and returned the same way following his defeat. It is claimed that he spent at least a part of the winter of 1615-16 on or near to The Carrying Place in Prince Edward County.

The Carrying Place is a very historic spot, having once been considered as a site for the capital of Canada. Known to historians as the cross-roads of the country it was traversed as a portage (hence its name). by the Indians since earliest times. Later, the French fur-traders travelled over it. Finally it became the site whereupon was signed the Gunshot Treaty with the Mississauga Indians in 1787. It is now a small wayside village, barely noticed. 'Sic transit gloria munch.'

The Squire site on lake Consecon is situated some seven miles south-east of The Carrying Place, and about two miles from Weller's Bay. It is worth noting that a traveller by canoe from the Deseronto or Napanee region, or from Frontenac, to Lake Ontario in travelling via the Bay would have been under the necessity of portaging across the neck of land that separates the two waters at The Carrying Place, whereas by travelling the creek route this portage could have been avoided.

In Indian times, Lake Consecon was but one half its present width, being simply a very wide, and very deep, section of the creek. Local rumor says that the lake is bottomless. That of course is impossible, but it is certainly a great depth. It is connected with Weller's Bay by a short, narrow stretch of water, in which it is possible that investigation might disclose that fish-traps and weirs had been set in early days.

Following up my theory that the creek was used extensively by the Indians I concluded that there should be traces of more than one village site along its course.

As Waupoos, at its eastern terminus, has long been known as Indian ground, it appeared surprising that nothing comparable had been discovered at the western terminus of the creek which must have formed a place of great strategic importance. A village situated in this place could have controlled traffic over the creek, and, by a very short trail, that over The Carrying Place, at the same time, being far enough removed from the latter to ensure also, privacy, which incidentally, meant safety.

From the high ridge of land that parallels the lake less than one-half mile northwards, one may yet obtain a clear view of Weller's Bay, of The Carrying Place, and of the Trent river to a point well within the Trent hills. Surely no Indian leader would have overlooked such possibilities as these!

Legend says that this lake was known to the red man as a famous fishing spot. The Indians gave it its name, which some say was originally Con-ho-Con, and meant Pickerel lake, or the Place of Many Fish.

I have a theory about this too, which may be as good as any other. My theory is that the name is derived from Khan-ho-kharon, bearing the meaning of an Opening, or a wide open place, for this is the widest and the deepest place along the entire waterway, and is also the opening, or doorway into Lake Ontario.

Looking for the most suitable place for a site, I finally settled on the spot where-upon stands my own home. The house stands on the middle terrace of the ancient glacial bed where was once a promontory surrounded on three sides by swamp and lake, and the tip of which is cut off one-half mile from its extremity by a turbulent little stream, winding between steep banks. Such a position would have been easily defensible.

The soil here is sandy loam suited to the primitive methods of agriculture, and the area is protected on the north and on the west by higher land. Approximately one half-mile distant are old salt-licks where in pioneer days the deer were wont to congregate in large numbers. So it is reported anyway. On the promontory grow dense clumps of wild plum trees. Wild strawberries, and blackberries are abundant. Wild grapevines festoon the trees and fences. Sumac, and Indian hemp are found there.

Other spots also looked like good prospects, but I decided to try out this place first, perhaps on a hunch".

I had lived on this farm for five years by then, most of which time had been devoted, in spare hours, to the search for a suitable location. In 1952 I found my first evidence in the form of sherds. Very small pieces they were, and so weathered that lying among the grass roots they could hardly be distinguished from small stones. It was the following year before test holes disclosed the presence of an ash deposit underlying the surface at a depth of some ten inches, at the spot marked on the chart as a Midden.

My brother and myself trenched this midden and brought to light many pieces of broken pottery, bone awls, fragments of clay pipes, etc. Subsequent testing has shown the presence of numerous places where ash is present sub-surface at varying depths.

Some of these have been excavated by myself, and an amateur archeologist friend from Belleville. The site discovery was reported to Doctor Alcock, Curator of the National Museum, in Ottawa in 1953, and has since been visited by Thomas E. Lee, the very efficient Field Archeologist, also of Ottawa.

Soon after the first discovery, another was made a short distance from it. The soil in one spot over a roughly circular area of about ten feet diameter appeared of a different texture to that surrounding it, being formed of a species of whitish clay mixed with water-worn small pebbles.

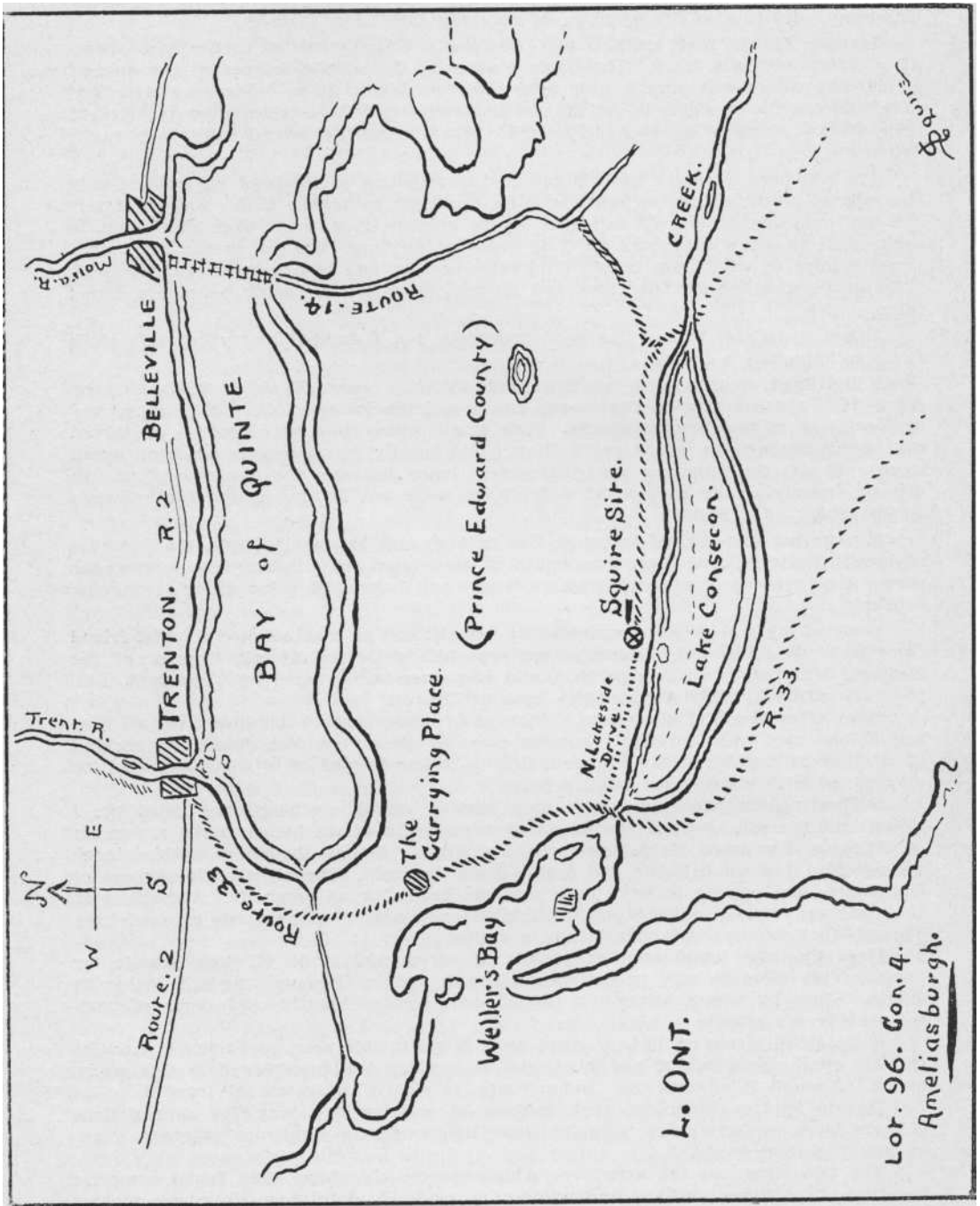
Suspecting that this may have once been a springhole long since dried up, I raked into the soil about it and at an average depth of six inches found a number of artifacts of polished slate, black, red, and green. Among them was a "birdstone" presumably made of catlinite and a thin slate "gorget". The other articles were of small size, and appear to have been used as beads, or as pendants. Also close to this spot we found a quite large "Butterfly" or "Banner" stone made of sandstone. This artifact measures over six inches in width.

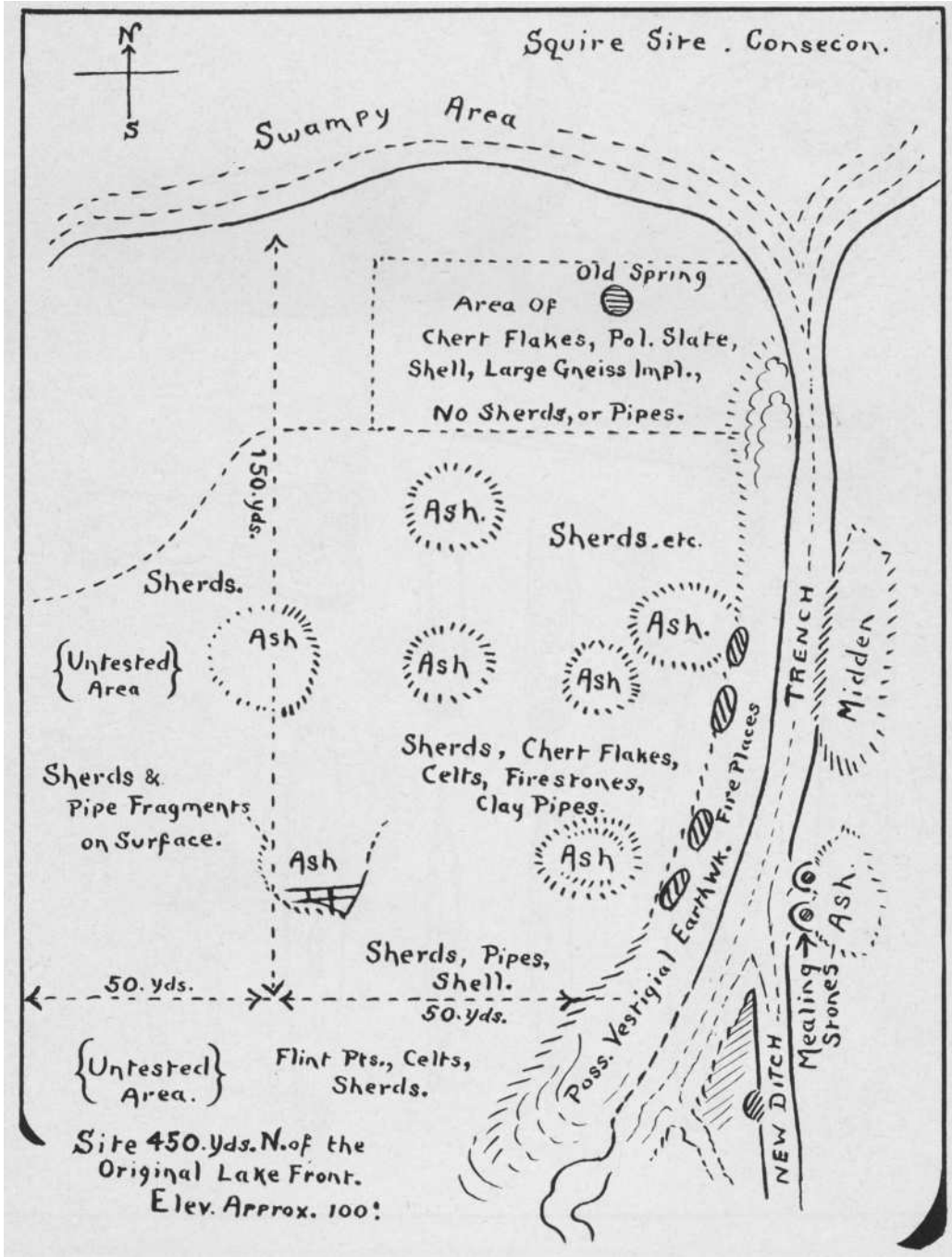
Here too was found another banner or ceremonial stone of grey granite, or gneiss. This piece is oval in outline, flattened, and is five and one-half inches in length. Close by was a hexagonal shaped celt, pointed bluntly, and made of varicoloured brown granite.

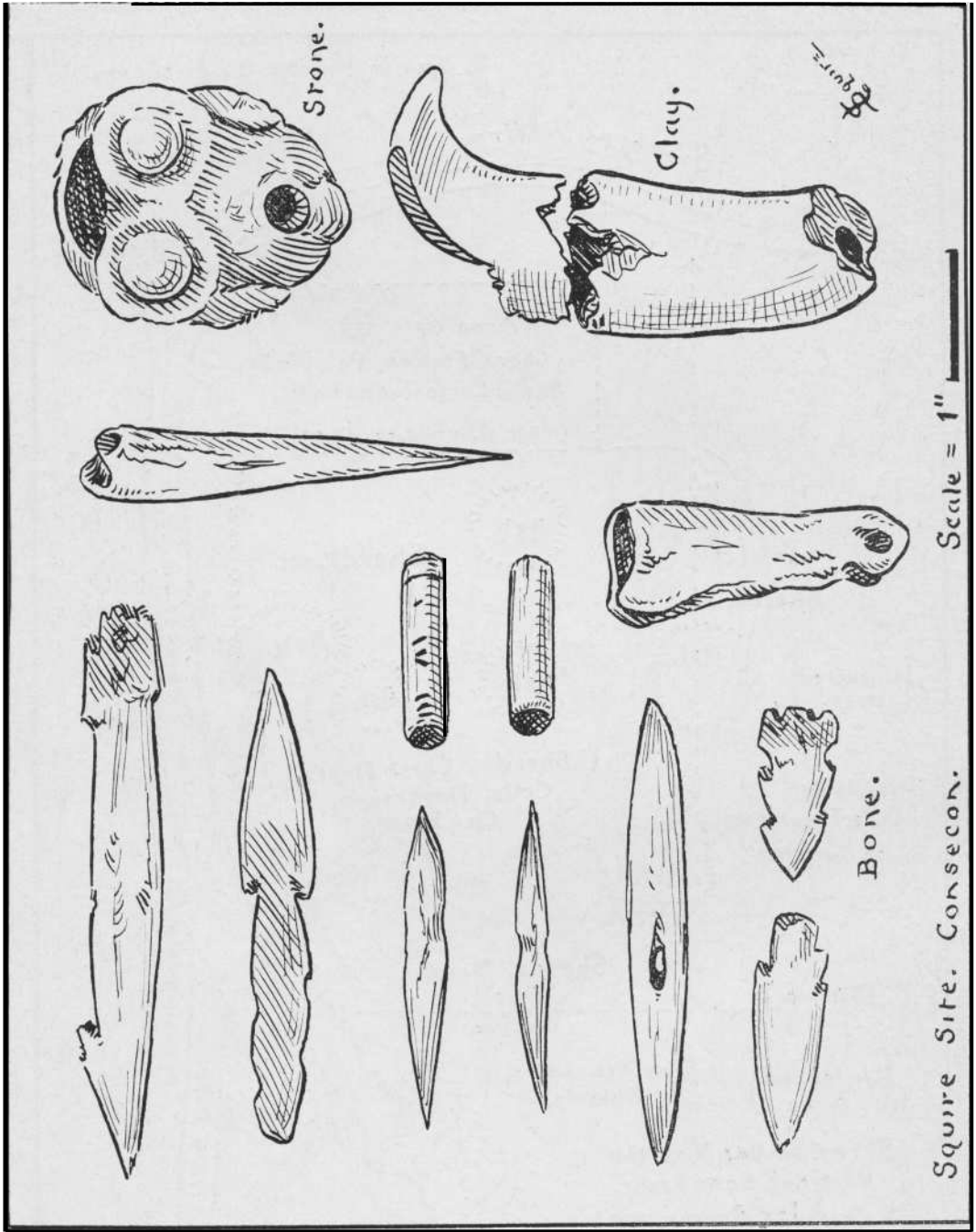
Some small pieces of flint, or chert were found in this area, and minute particles of clam shell. No pipes of any kind, and no pottery has been found in this place, which, although it adjoins the "Indian" site, is clearly disassociated from it.

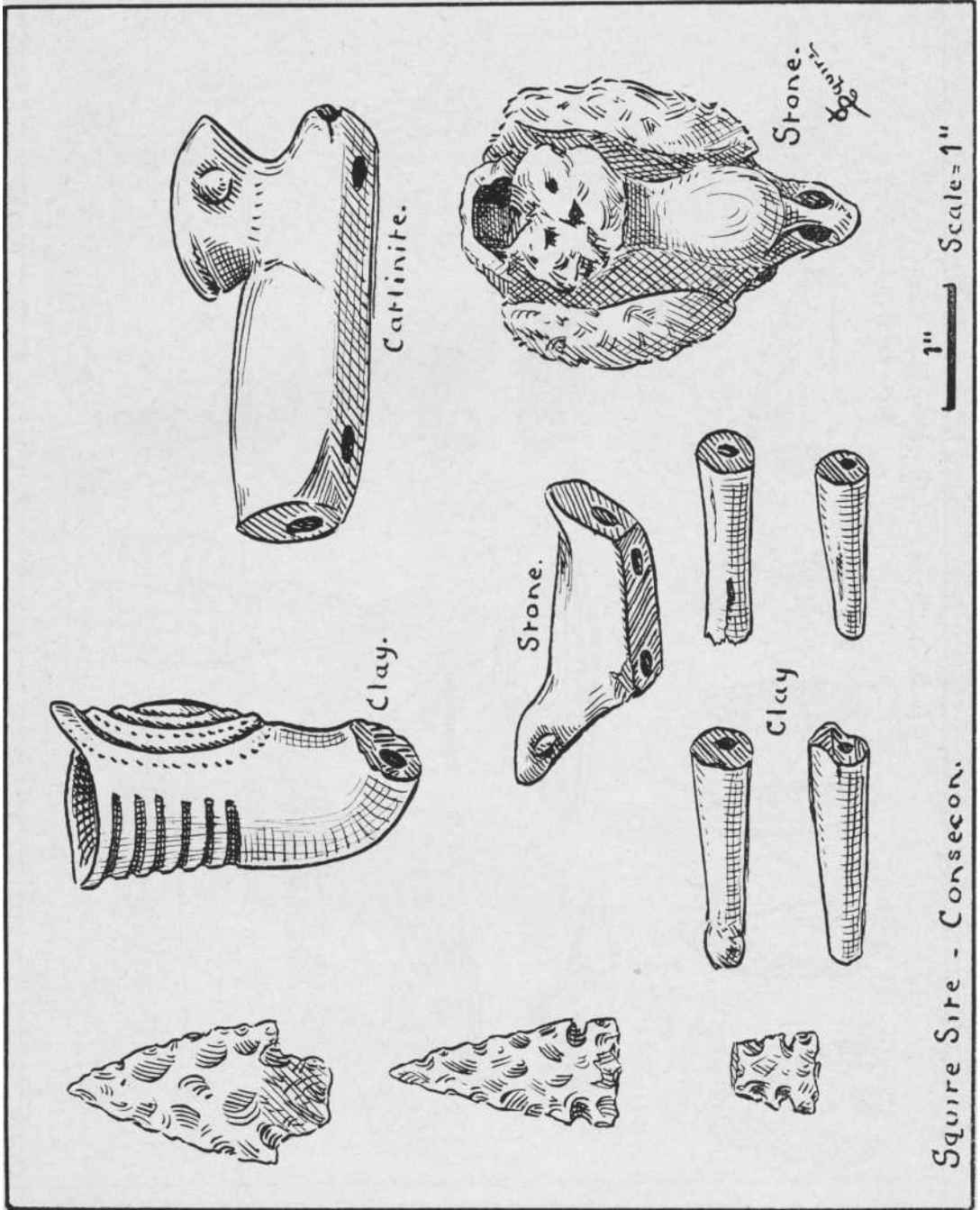
One is led to conjecture that Indians of a later day may for superstitious reasons have preferred not to build their longhouses on the spot where a more ancient race had dwelt.

The two sites and the area over which sherds, etc., have been found comprise together about three, perhaps four acres of ground. To date these sites have yielded a goodly number of specimens. Almost one hundred differing designs have been noted on pottery sherds from the village site.

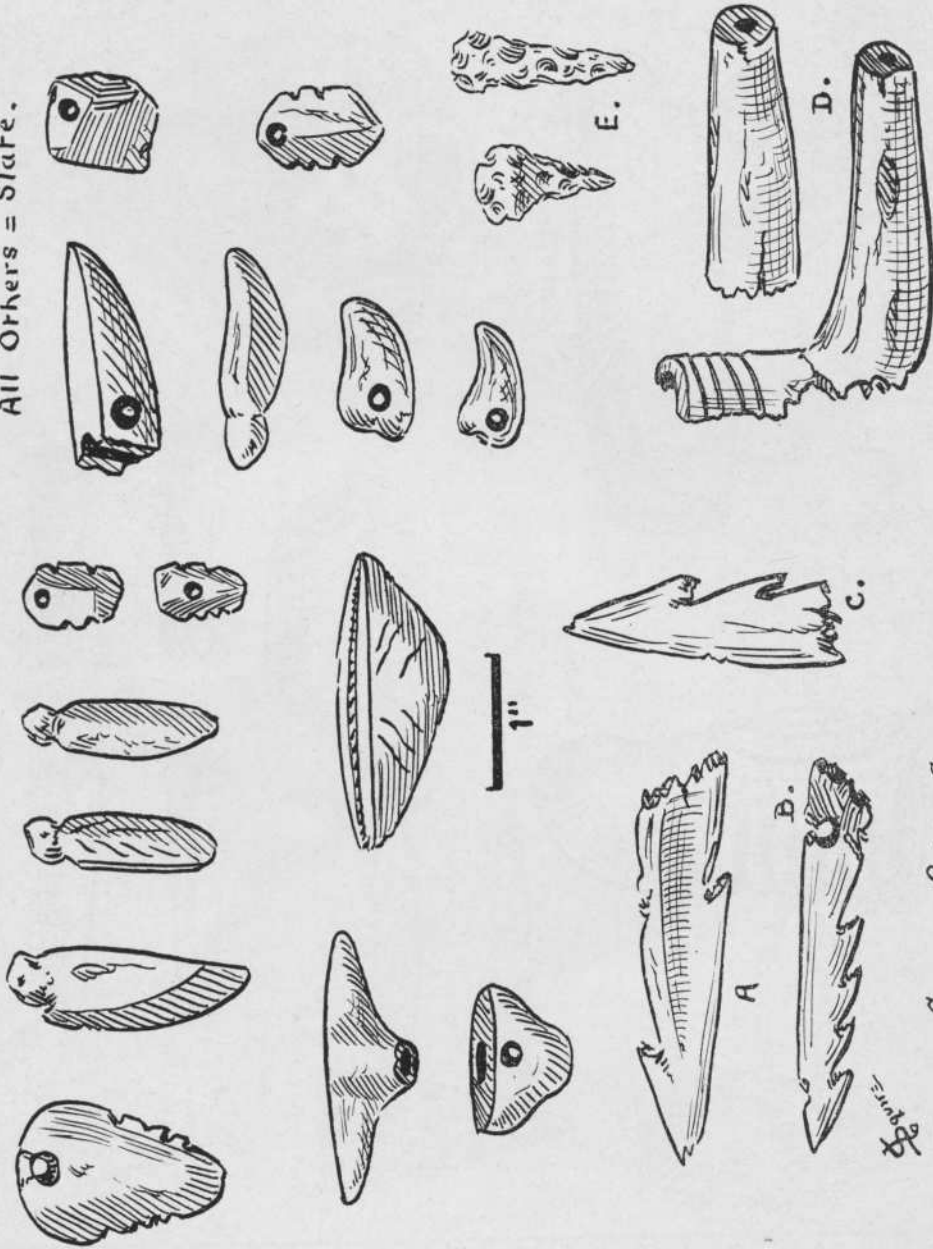




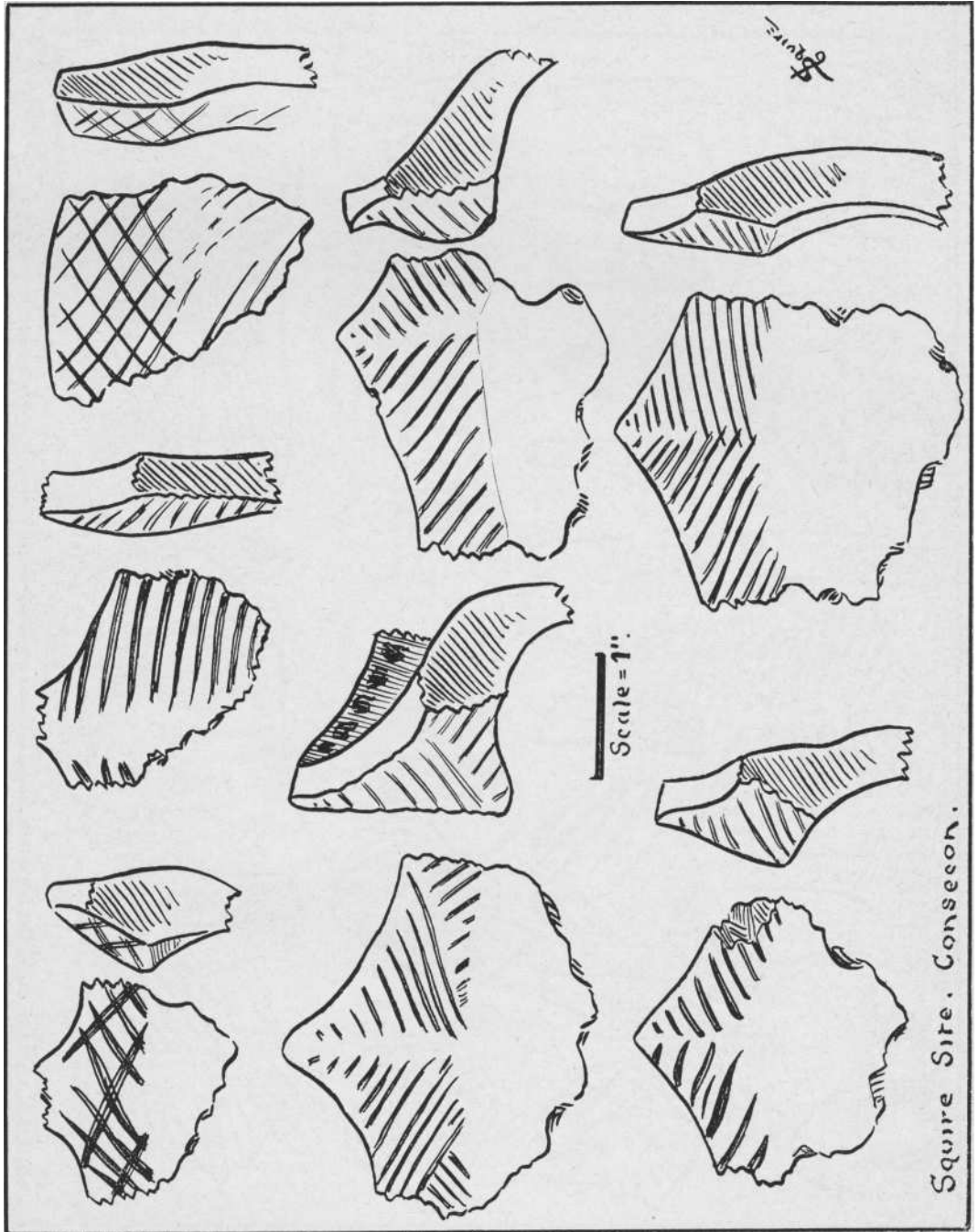


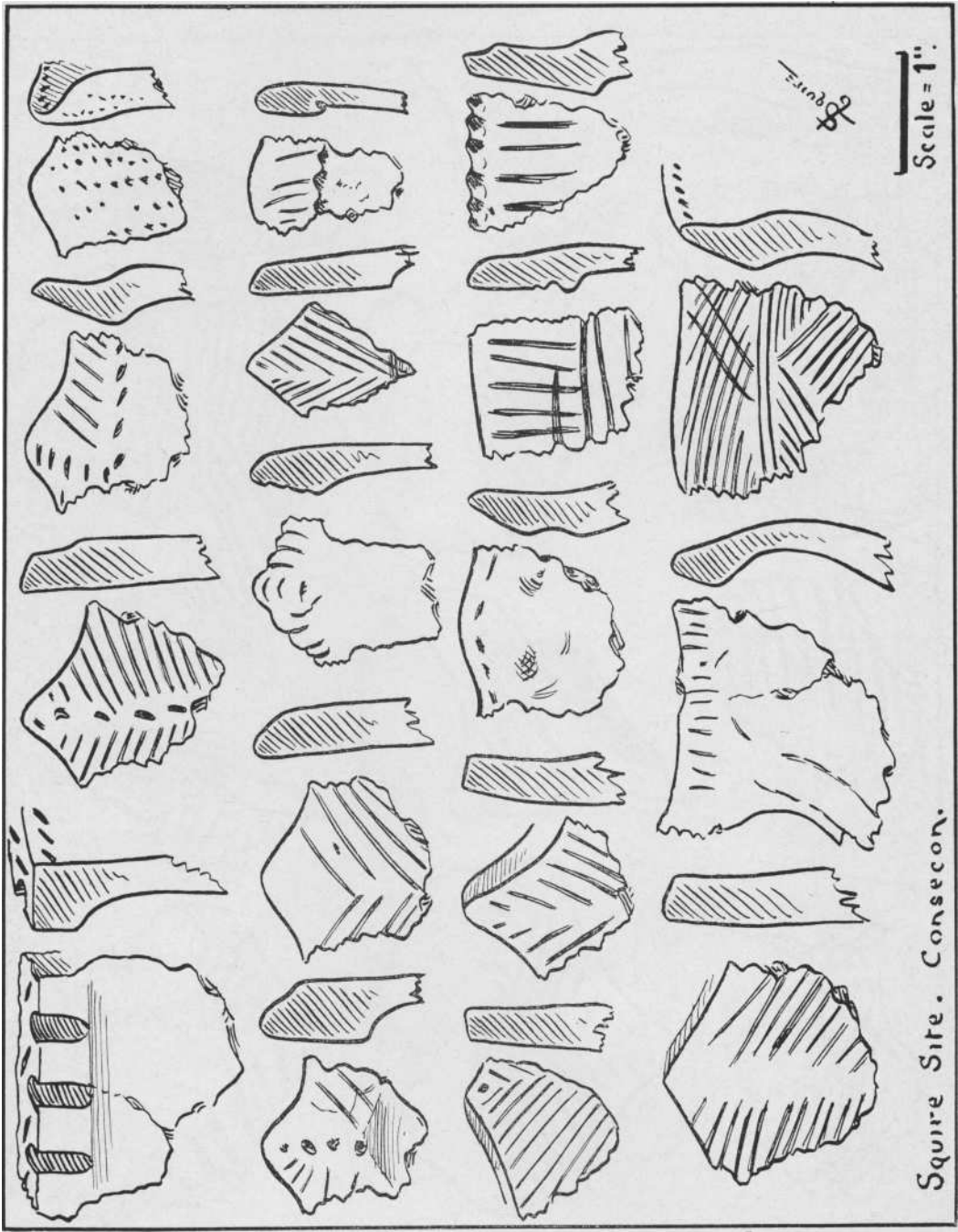


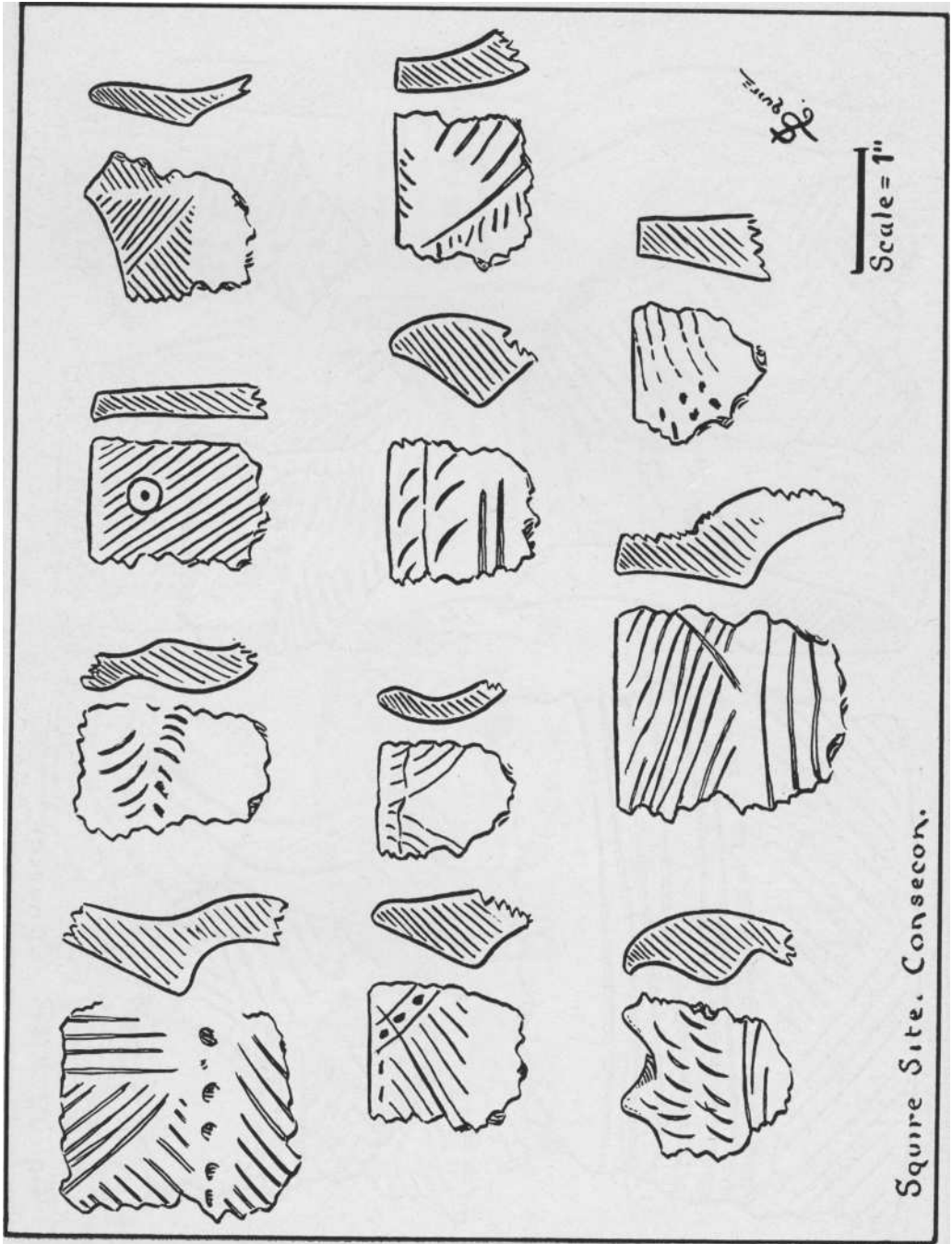
A, B, C = Bone... D = Stone... E = Flint...
 All Others = Slate.

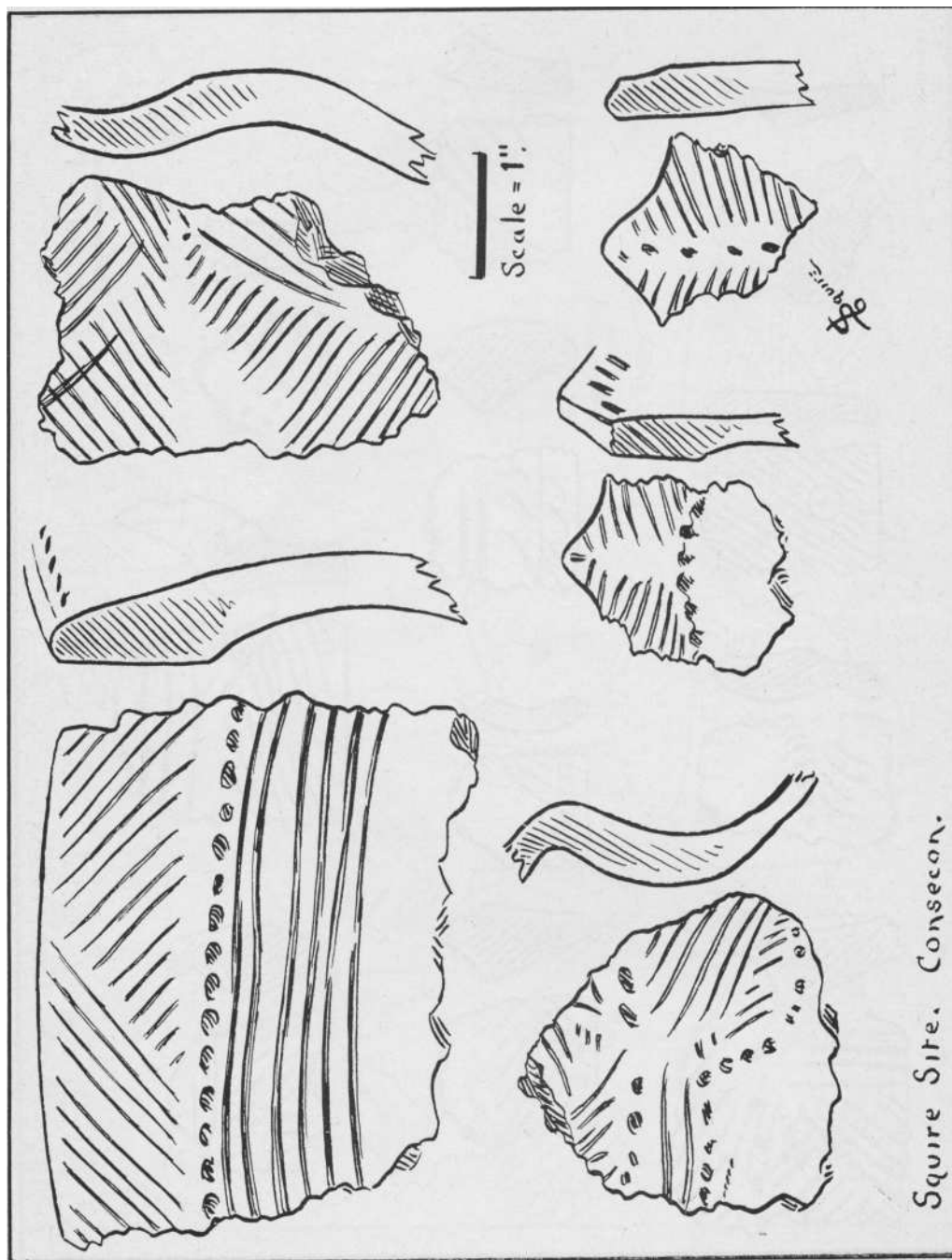


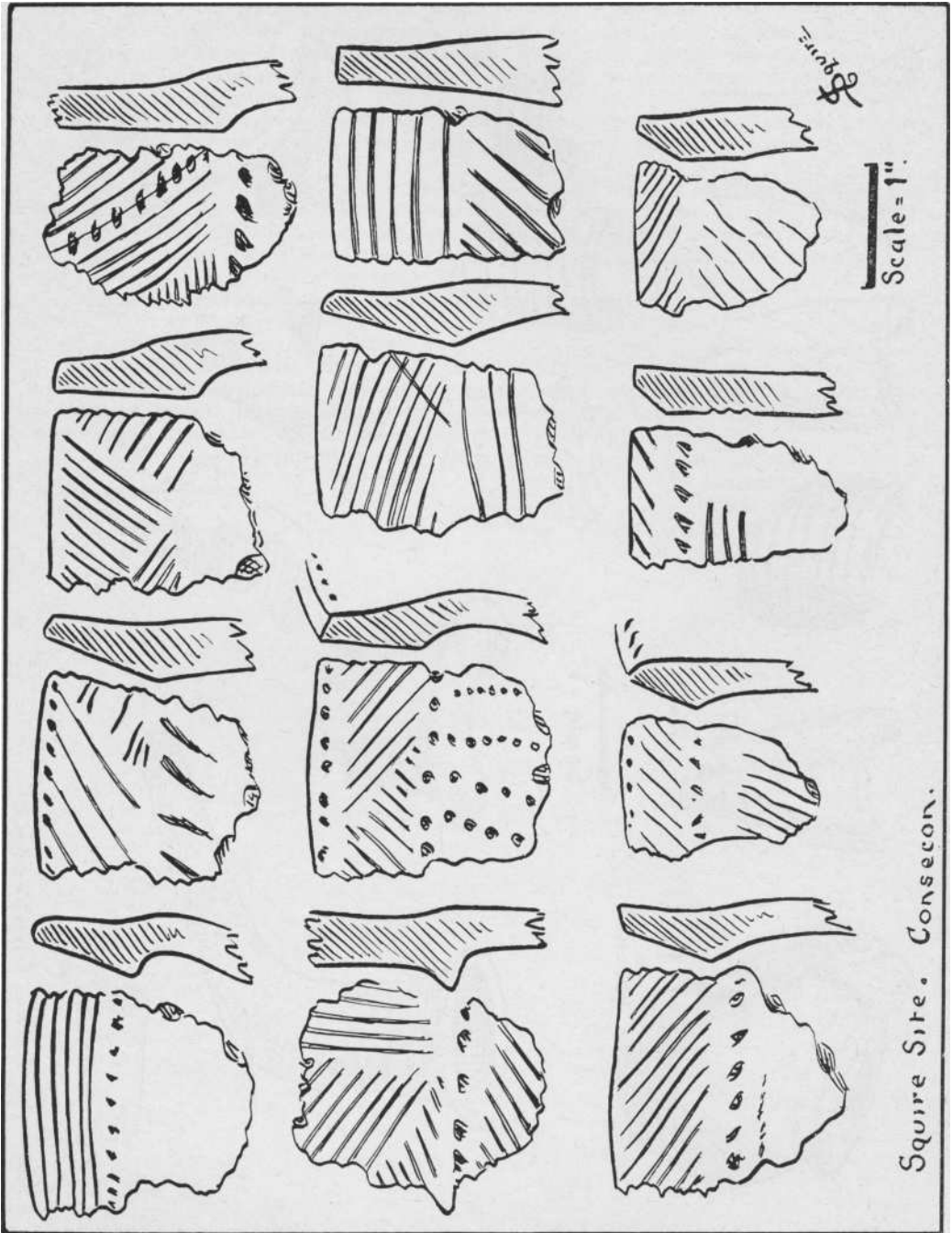
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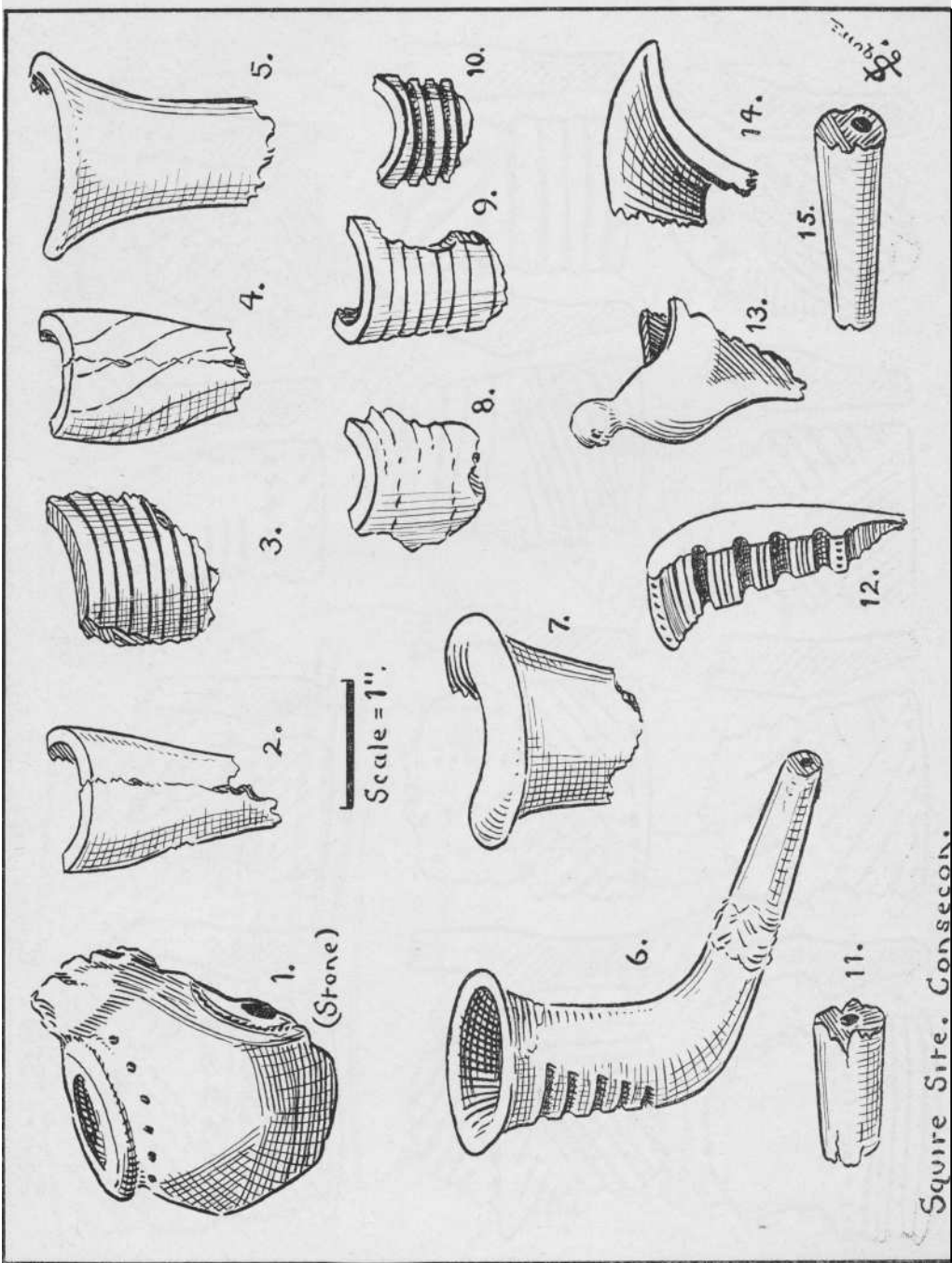












Incidentally, this high ridge of land one-quarter of one mile north of the site has yielded a few fragments of polished slate implements, one celt, one or two flint cores, some flakings of chert, and shell fragments, all being surface finds. No digging has yet been attempted on this ridge which is under alfalfa hay. It was however noticed that when freshly plowed a series of roughly circular spots of sand were visible in straight rows across the top and on the south slope of the hill. There were twenty or more of such spots, each being about three feet in diameter. Whether or not these indicate anything of importance can only be conjectured at present, and may never be determined.

Careful inquiries have shown that this site (or sites) was not known to, nor suspected by anyone in the vicinity since the property was first settled by white people.

A suggestion has been offered that this may be the lost site of the "Iroquois Mission" of Kente visited by D'Urfee in 1668, but as no traces of contact material have been found the suggestion has been negated. It may yet prove to be the place where Champlain stayed in 1615 with friendly Indians, especially if he travelled via the creek from east to The Carrying Place.

The strategic location of the village and its close proximity to the mouth of the Trent, highway to Huronia, suggest this possibility, it being known that the wounded Champlain did rest in this District.

Material found here dates from the Laurentian to approximately the early historic. One stratified ash deposit has been located, with ashes in three strata to a depth of thirteen inches, overlaid by fourteen inches of topsoil. Human bones have been taken from this deposit, which covers a considerable area.

The drawings are illustrative of the type of material found to date. Consecon, Ontario,
April 17, 1957.