

Indian Digging
Shelter Island.
1953

Orient, N. Y.
Feb. 25, 1953

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your letter and check for dues. I am enclosing cards for 1953.

It seems rather strange to see spring coming in without any winter - no snow, no ice. The dandelions have been blowing all winter on our lawn but there has been no frozen ground in grassy places.

The mild weather keeps me out and I have made more trips to the diggings on Shelter Island. I have dug a new trench 44 feet in length and four to six feet wide. I found five deep pits along the trench and have found quite a lot of pottery. Most of the pits apparently were fireplace pits or cooking pits. Plenty of ash in the bottom of the pits and the white clay was brick-red from the fires. In one pit was a large stone with a pestle on it. The stone had evidently been used for an anvil. In another pit was a mortar and a fire had been on one side of it with the remains of fish bones, small blackfish, porgey and sea robin bones. I could identify. Under the shell floor in one spot I found a large chipped axe in the sand. If one lived in the west he could swear that it was of paleolithic origin, this is Long Island so I suppose the specimen is the unfinished stage of some artifact. Those are rare in my experience. With it was the largest soft clam shell I have seen from an Indian site, 5 inches in length, just a single valve. We do get larger shells of this clam today, but it may have been an unusual size at the time this was found and it was cached with the chipped axe for some future use.

Thanks for sending me the clipping about the white-winged crossbills. Mrs. Apur sent me a postal the first day they saw the crossbills there. I have known here a lot of trouble. It happened that the crossbills reached Orient the same day that they did in outclair. I have records all the way from Riverhead to Orient. The cat brought in one which I have skinned for the collection. There are one or two in 1953. It was in 1903 that they were common in Orient before.

Sincerely yours,

Roy

Roy Latham

original in Southold Public Library
Whittaker collection

1971.11.4