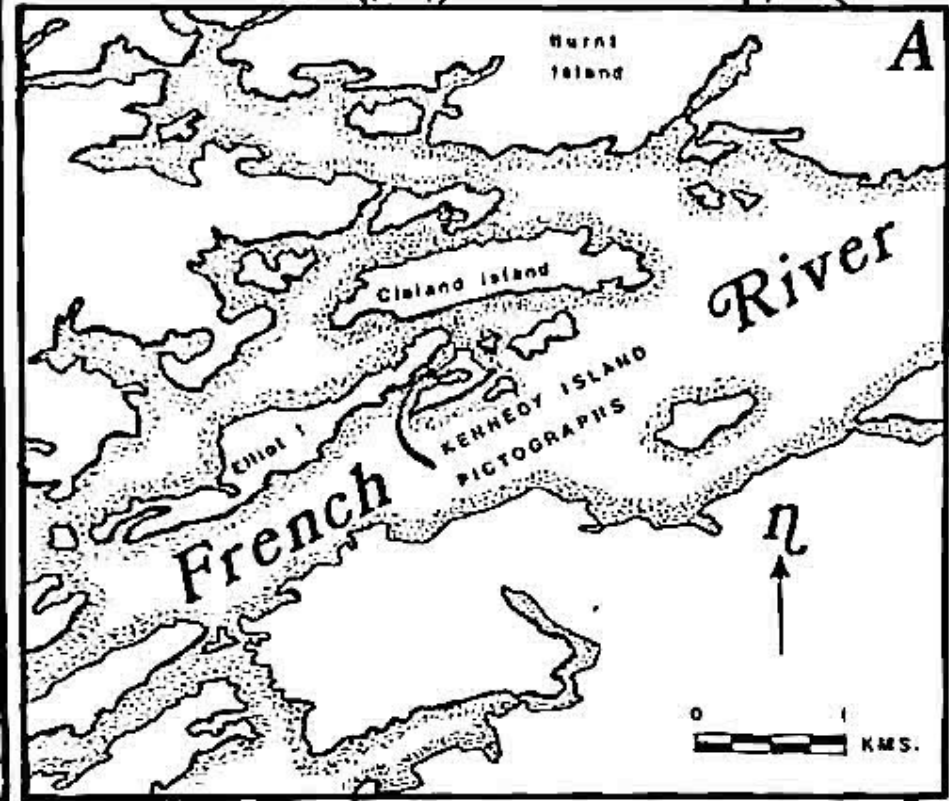
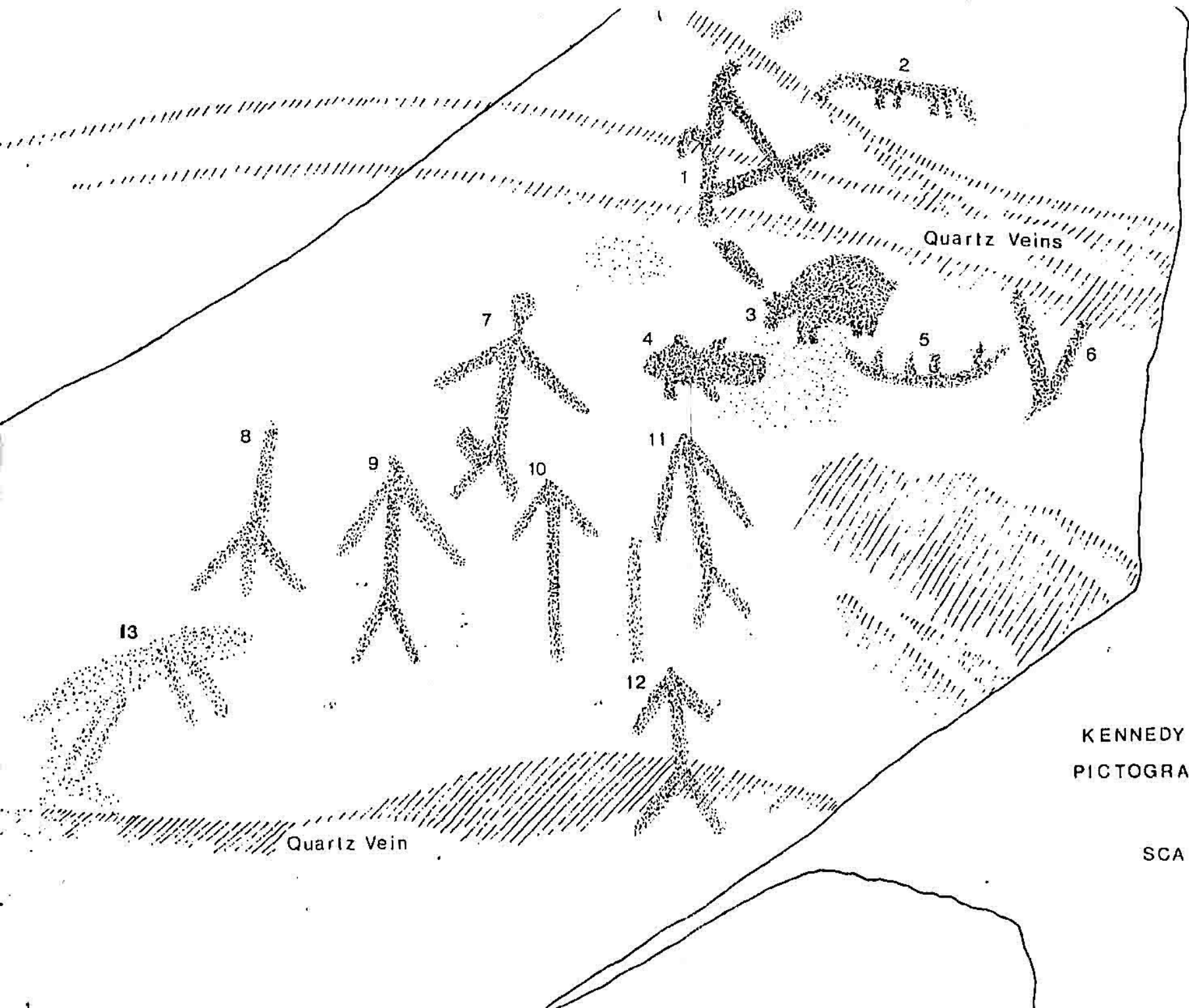


*The Kennedy Island
Pictograph Site
on the
French River*

By

*Nick Adams
Field Archaeologist
Ontario Ministry
of
Culture and Recreation*





KENNEDY ISLAND
PICTOGRAPH SITE

SCALE 1:3

Fig 2.

ABSTRACT

A small, well preserved Pictograph site on the French River, northeastern Ontario is described. Inferences about differential weathering of Pictographs due to climatic and locational considerations are drawn based on observations of the site under different conditions.

INTRODUCTION

The Kennedy Island Pictograph Site (CbGx-0) is located on a northwest facing granite outcrop on Kennedy Island; a small island lying approximately six miles downstream from where the outflowing French River leaves Lake Nipissing (see Figure 1). The site can easily be reached, either by traversing Lake Nipissing from North Bay or by boating upstream from Dokis Harbour. Its location in a heavily cottaged and easily accessible area means that it is a well known, and frequently visited local curiosity. The fact that as yet it has not received the attention of vandals is probably more due to the vigilant guardianship afforded by the Kurtz family who's ^{Painted} ~~Pictograph~~ 'Rock' cottage lies immediately opposite, than to its inaccessibility. It may well be one of the more frequently viewed pictograph sites in Ontario. Ironically the pictographs are not the only visual attraction on the northeast side of the island. A large metal plaque commemorating the member of the Kennedy family after whom the island is named, shares the rock outcrop with the pictographs. As far as can be ascertained the erection of the plaque had no detrimental effects on the prehistoric paintings.

The area covered by the paintings is quite small. They extend over an area no more than five feet square yet within that small space are crowded thirteen clear morphs and one large area of indistinguishable under painting (Figure 2).

THE KENNEDY ISLAND PICTOGRAPHS

The thirteen clearly discernable morphs are as follows-

1. Thunderbird

This is the most striking of the sites morphs. It is located near to the top of the group of paintings facing to the left and looking down. It is executed in a strictly linear style. The body is formed by two lines which cross to form the tail. They enclose a triangular unpainted space. Where the body lines join the wing lines, the wing lines change angle abruptly to give the impression of flight. The head and neck are formed of a single line.

Part of the upper wing is obscured by lichen and part of the lower wing is missing where a small spall of rock has become detached from the face.

The paint is particularly well preserved over most of the morph.

2. Inverted Canoe

This unusual painting appears to be an inverted version of those commonly described as canoes. It is quite close in shape and form to one lying directly below (Morph 5). The juxtapositioning of these two morphs is probably not fortuitous.

The two ends of this painting are somewhat difficult to determine with any accuracy. Pointing down from the centre section of the painting are five small projections.

3. Bear

A bear image lies just below and to the right of the Thunderbird. It is rendered in a semi-naturalistic style with the head pointing to the left. The low position of the head, the stubby tail and the massive body clearly identify this as a bear.

4. Beaver

Below and to the left of the bear is what appears to be a beaver. This morph is shown in plan whereas the bear is shown from the side. The smoothly curved thick body and wide spatulate tail suggest a beavers form. The widely spread legs may indicate that the symbol is that of a beaver pelt rather than that of a living animal.

5. Canoe

Below the bear, and to its right is a morph that is best interpreted as a canoe. It lies directly below Morph number 2. Four vertical marks extend upwards from its curved base line.

It may be relevant to note that the previous four morphs are all rendered in strong unworn pigment while the paint of morph number 5 appears to be more worn.

6. Y-shaped mark

A Y shaped morph lies to the right of Morph number 5. Like 5 it is not as clearly painted as the previous four paintings.

7-12. Stick Men

A group of six stick men lie to the left and below the previously described paintings. Three are shown with both arms and legs that point down. One is shown with three legs while another has arms only. The highest figure of the group has a clearly defined round head, outstretched arms and legs and a prominent erect phallus extending to the left.

All these morphs are less clear than the previously described non-human morphs.

13. Dog Figure

A faded and difficult to interpret morph may be a representation of a dog facing to the right.

Under painting

A large area of under painting lies between the bear and the beaver morphs. No recognizable forms are discernable within it.

A second indistinct area of under painting lies above and to the left of the beaver.

A possible faint stick man lies between figures 10 and 11.

DISCUSSION

Three clear and distinct groupings can be noticed within the Kennedy Island Pictographs. The vividly coloured Thunderbird, Bear and Beaver form a triad connected both by the vitality of their colouration and also by their close grouping.

It may be relevant to note that these three figures may be representative of the elements air, land and water. Their hierarchy on the rock face does suggest this arrangement. A similar situation has been noticed at a site to the northeast of Sudbury, where a vertical panel, split into three separate sections, displayed groupings of ungulates, thunderbirds and on the lowest panel fish or water serpent symbols.

A second group may consist of the canoe, an inverted canoe, and the Y shaped figure, although they may also be seen as part of the first group. These do not have the bright colours of the previous group nor do they depict clearly animalistic forms. Significantly the two canoe forms oppose each other across a thick distinct band of quartz. Observations about the arrangement of morphs in relation to quartz veins have been made at a number of sites. The arrangement of these two figures across a vein, and that the Thunderbird appears to be flying between two prominent quartz bands, may not be accidental.

The relationship that exists between individual morphs and visible phenomena on the host rock is one which promises to be a developing theme in future rock art research. Significant relationships between quartz veins and pictographs have been noted at a number of sites in Northeastern Ontario, notably the Fairy Point site and at Agawa on Lake Superior (Conway 1980). Clearly there is far more to the spacial arrangement of morphs on any particular pictograph site than was at first thought.

A third group of morphs is represented by the six stick men, and possibly the dog figure. These are all rather faint. The difference in colour vitality between this group of morphs and the more animalistic ones may represent a chronological disparity, although it is equally possible that this group are more subject to the erosive effects of weathering. They are nearer to the water and less protected than the other morphs.

WEATHERING

The pictographs were recorded on acetate sheet using acrylic paints colour matched to the pigments of the paintings. This work was conducted under bright sunlight in June.

A day later the weather had deteriorated considerably and rain began to fall steadily from 6 AM onwards. By 11 AM the rain was still falling hard but it was noticed that while the rest of the rock outcrop was soaked and streamlets of water were running down its surface, the small area which contains the pictographs was entirely dry. Unfortunately we were not able to stay to witness how long it took for the pictographs to become wet but clearly their location on the rock face affords them some considerable protection from the elements. Perhaps this factor can account at least in part for the fine state of preservation of some of the morphs.

Local opinion has it that there used to be more pictographs at Kennedy Island but that scouring by ice during the winter has removed them. No traces of this were noticed at the site, however, and it seemed that all the pictographs now visible were above the high water mark.

Observations of other sites under different climatic conditions may help to determine why some sites seem well preserved while others have become seriously weathered.

In some ways the Kennedy Island Pictograph site is in a fortunate position. It does not seem to be too adversely affected by weathering, compared to many pictograph sites in northeastern Ontario and the proximity of the Kurtz cottage clearly discourages would be vandals from paying any attention to the site. Another nearby Pictograph site in a more

isolated position has not been so fortunate and many of the paintings there have been over painted with recent graffiti.

Despite being located close to a major population centre the Kennedy Island site survives remarkably well, and hopefully will continue to do so.

The Kennedy Island Pictograph Site

List of Figures

- Figure 1 Map showing the location of the Kennedy Island pictograph site.
- Figure 2 Detail of pictographs.

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