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To begin with, the date of these pots is obscure. Clay pots' first turn up in the Northeast in Late Archaic-Early Woodland times (ca. 1000 B.C.) bearing the stamped impressions of cord- and fabric-wrapped paddles. As to the source of this primitive ware, most authorities seem inclined to favor a Siberian origin, although at least one scholar has cogently argued for a Scandinavian derivation. More important, for our purposes, are the inclusive dates for these excavated clay pots. We know that they could not have antedated 1000 B.C., and we are fairly confident that their manufacture was discontinued ca. A.D. 1200, approximately the time of the above-mentioned shift in settlement pattern. In their dimensions, the majority of the potsherds come from vessels which measured roughly nine to twelve inches in diameter and depth, with a liquid capacity of anywhere from a half pint to two gallons. We can infer from the relatively few cases of carbonized food on recovered potsherds and the few instances of handles (for hanging pots over an open flame) that the majority of these pots were "chiefly used for boiling food." Soot-covered, fire-cracked stones found associated with pottery fragments seem to confirm this conjecture. At this point, however, a word of caution is in order. There is no assurance that these potters were Micmac; in fact, no one is really sure how far back the Micmac date in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the (Quebec) Gaspé. Assuming, for argument's sake, that they were Micmac who continued their pottery industry well into protohistoric times • assuming, in other words, that our early thirteenth-century cutoff date is several centuries premature • it is barely conceivable that these small, fragile clay pots could have served as the principal cooking vessels. One can imagine how little stew a nine-by-nine inch or even a twelve-by-twelve inch pot would hold, especially if it had to compete with a couple of stones for space. Getting the blistering hot stones into the pot and then extracting them again, all without fracturing the vessel, must have taken considerable skill indeed. Given the fact, too, that houses were probably large--the early historic Micmac, at least, were polygynous, with families numbering anywhere from ten to twenty-four persons • it seems unlikely that the clay pot was sufficient to their culinary needs. Even using several pots, an obvious possibility, Micmac cooks must have found stone boiling a risky and trying business. It is little wonder that these clay pots were phased out in late prehistoric times, seemingly independent of white influence. The only other vessels likely to have been used as cooking pots were tightly-sewn birchbark boxes, although the evidence for this is ambiguous. Denys wrote that the women "made their dishes, large and small, of bark. They sewed them with the Fir roots so well that they held water. They ornamented some of them with quills of Porcupine." Similarly, Lescarbot related that "they (the women) also busy themselves in making dishes of bark to drink out of, and to put their meats in, which are very fine considering the material used." These two sources were probably vague about the purpose of these birchbark containers because by that time they had been replaced, in their function as cooking vessels, at least, by copper pots. Before the introduction of the



copper pot, in prehistoric times, it is entirely possible that they were used for cooking purposes. Yet the same reservation that has been expressed for the clay pots would apply to them: their small capacity would have made them quite inefficient. Surely these prehistoric Micmac had some better, more capacious, way of preparing their food. In his brief Micmac vocabulary, Marc Lescarbot furnished a clue as to what this was. Reading down the list of native words, with their French (English-translated) equivalents, one discovers that Lescarbot made a curious distinction between a "cauldron" and a "platter, or dish." The Micmac word for the former was "aouau, or asti-kov"; the word for "dish" (as in birchbark dish, described above) was "ouragan." What, exactly, was the nature of this cauldron? Silas Rand's celebrated English-Micmac dictionary contains what appears to be a phonetic variant of the noun in its verb form: "A trough, Wolsaktaoo." In translation, "Wolsaktaoo" means "I hew it out forming a trough or a 'dug-out.'" In another context Lescarbot provided a graphic description of this "aoua,u" when he discussed the manner in which he and some Indian companions had an impromptu feast of moose one winter's day. "After the roast we had boiled meat, and broth abundantly, made ready in an instant by a savage, who framed with his hatchet a tub or trough of the trunk of a tree, in which he boiled the flesh. His manner of doing so was a thing which I have admired, and which when I put the question to them, many who think they have good wits could not think out. Yet it is but simple, being to put in the said trough stones made red hot in the fire and to renew them until the meat is boiled." We turn to Nicolas Denys for an ample description of this novel culinary device. "Before speaking of the way they live at present," he advises the reader, "it is necessary to look into the past. Their subsistence was of fish and meat roasted and boiled." Roasting was done either by spitting the meat and exposing it to the flames, or by spitting it in such a way that it slowly rotated before the fire, or by placing the flesh directly in the coals. Fish was either grilled or broiled in the

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