

ANTIQUITIES
OF THE
NEW ENGLAND INDIANS

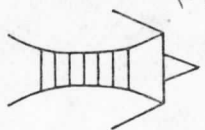
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WITH NOTES
ON THE ANCIENT CULTURES OF THE
ADJACENT TERRITORY

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quarter of the seventeenth century was doubtless adopted from the natives of Long Island, where the traffic had been stimulated through Dutch contact; 5th, The production of purple (mussel shell) and white discoidal beads was greatly stimulated by English traders. In colonial days these seem to have been made at least partially by appliances of European origin, and probably large numbers were produced by the Whites for trade purposes. It is not improbable that a few discoidal shell beads, both purple and white, were made by our New England tribes in prehistoric days, but I have seen no examples which may be definitely assigned to that period.

But few of the large, thin, discoidal beads called runtees have been found in New England, although quite common in New York State. They are usually about one and one half inches in diameter and have two parallel perforations about one fourth of an inch apart running from edge to edge, which serve to keep the beads on the same plane when strung. One side of the bead is usually ornamented with a cross, star, or concentric circles often made up of small circles with a central dot. They were probably made by Europeans for Indian trade. According to Beauchamp (Bulletin of the New York State Museum No. 41) they were first used late in the seventeenth century and were mostly dispersed when silver ornaments came into fashion.

European glass beads were obtained by our Indians at an early date. Verzarzanus, who visited New England in 1524, says the objects which the natives esteemed most highly "of all those which we gave them were bells, crystals of azure color and other toys to hang in their ears and about their necks." There can be no doubt that the fishermen and traders of the latter half of the sixteenth, and the first quarter of the seventeenth centuries furnished the natives with many glass beads of various shapes and colors in exchange for furs. Governor Bradford speaks of the store of English beads brought to Plymouth in 1622 by Captain Jons "which were then good trade."

The importance of glass beads as a medium of exchange with the Virginia tribes is shown by the following:

In 1620 a subscription list was started in Jamestown to erect a factory for the manufacture of beads for trade with the Indians, and in 1621 the London company sent Italian workmen to make them. This plant, which was

situated some distance from Jamestown, escaped the massacre of 1622, and is heard of as late as 1623.¹¹⁶

A few years ago a cache of glass beads was unearthed near Leeds-town, about sixty miles north of Jamestown. I was fortunate in securing about a hundred for the museum at Cambridge. These consisted mostly of the polychrome variety about one-fourth inch in diameter, with blue and white stripes in groups of three on a red ground. There were also monochrome tubular beads, red, white, and gray, about one half inch long, and several more or less oval semi-translucent whitish beads a half inch or more in diameter, and quite crudely fashioned. It is very probable that the beads in this cache were made at the Jamestown factory. There is in the Peabody Museum at Cambridge one of the crude semi translucent beads like those above mentioned from a grave at Gardiner, Maine, which may well have been procured through Plymouth traders whose Kennebec grant included the present site of that town. It was the custom of the English trading vessels to call at New England on their way to and from Virginia.

Many glass beads have been found in New England graves. Among the oldest of these may be mentioned an oval or lenticular form about three eighths of an inch or less in length, having the appearance of white porcelain. These are usually accompanied by a much lesser number of the same shape in dark blue or black. They are found throughout most of the coastal region and were probably obtained from fishing and trading vessels. Sometimes occurring with them are blue or white globular beads of relatively the same diameter (about one eighth of an inch) and occasionally also a few small tubular beads.

Tubular monochrome beads of glass about one half inch in length and varying from one sixteenth to three sixteenths of an inch in diameter, in white, blue, and black, are not uncommon. Other varieties are found with burials, including blue and white oval and globular forms about one eighth to one fourth inch in diameter, also the simpler types of polychrome beads, but these are not common. The well known embroidery beads used in such numbers by the tribes of the West during the century just passed seem to have been practically unknown in this region in early historic times. Only a very few of the larger sizes have been found.

¹¹⁶ N. Hudson Moore, *Old Glass*, pp. 209, 210.