

THE TRADE BEADS OF WISCONSIN.

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When Perrot went among the Mascoutin near Princeton on the upper Fox River, about 1665, he threw *rassade*, to the women saying, "these will better adorn your children and girls, than do their usual ornaments." This was a French term for porcelain round glass beads, white or colored. The long tubular beads being called *canons*. The leggings worn by the Indian and hunter in winter as early as 1686 were ornamented with bead designs. The Intendant Begon entered as an item of expense in the wars with the Fox tribe during the years 1715 to 1717, "22,545 porcelain beads at 10 livre the 1,000 beads," equal to the value of \$45.00, present currency; "2 livres of Rassade at 4 livres," equal to \$1.00; "6,466 porcelain beads at 30 livres for 1,000 beads." Louvigny in the same wars, "for buying provisions and for making presents to the savages," had "3,970 porcelain at 30 livres a thousand," equal to \$24.00 current money, or about 30 cents the thousand.

The English "belt," corresponding to the French "collar of porcelain," was made by the Indians of native wampum, fabricated from sea or fresh water shells, bones, copper or stone, or of the glass or porcelain beads of white contact; and by the whites of their trade glass or porcelain beads. These belts were the tribal archives and necessary as the deeds of treaty on every occasion of council either among the aborigines, or between them and the whites. They were given for murder, for wives for territory, or peace. The gravest and most solemn affairs were satisfied by transfer of the eternal wampum belt. When de Langlade was sent by Sinclair to command the tribes in the burning of St. Louis, he carried a number of belts from Sinclair to the plains savages, made with a figure of two men grasping hands. Poor Gorrell left at the moss-

grown picket fort of La Baye, out on the farthest frontier, in the Fox River valley, was greatly embarrassed for lack of beads for belts to give in his councils with the tribes who came to him from many miles about. After buying all the traders possessed and borrowing all he could from the squaws, he caused to be made over, "belts received from the different nations, as pledges of their fidelity," containing 21,800 wampum." These, made into belts, were again given out to the visiting savages with a speech like this: "By these belts, I wipe away all the blood that was spilt and bury all your brothers bones that remain unburied on the face of the earth, that they may grieve you no more, and to open a passage to your hearts, and light a fire of friendship and concord. I also clear a great road from the rising to the setting sun, that all nations may travel freely and safely." When Pemoussa, the great Fox chief, plead for the lives of the women and children at Detroit, he laid down a wampum belt with the remark, "This belt is to pray you to recollect that you are our kindred." The Potawatomi women "put on all the porcelain beads they possess, so that after their fashion they look very well dressed."

A belt of wampum was given to cover the life of a victim of savage murder. Beads, vermillion, feathers and red cloth were the chief articles of savage decoration of both sexes and so continue down to this day. A shock of color would ever attract the aboriginal attention and a handful of beads was worth more than a handful of powder or corn to their improvident senses. The beads of the white man were equal in savage imagination to their firearms and equally cherished as their chief gain by white contact. A trader could purchase the rich furs of the continent with a bag of beads. The wampum belt was the most solemn token at the feast, making for war, and making for peace, remaining the cherished relic of all tribes.

All the literature of the missionary, the voyageur, the *coureurs de bois*, and the discoverer down from those far off romantic days, come to us laden with the merits of a belt of wampum and a string of beads. The conquest of the continent was made with the bloodless arms of a string of beads. Every canoe in every fleet was laden with its bags of beads, as necessary to the success of the voyage of the missionary, trader or discoverer as his salt pork and dry corn. When Ainsce was

sent along the Fox River to renew the English friendship after the war of the Revolution, he had with him the sesame to savage hearts, the belt of wampum for every tribe.

The archeologists searching now among the refuse on the ancient site of trader huts or Indian towns find among the debris the stray lost beads in larger or smaller quantity. On the Doty Island shore of the Fox River just above the log-gery of Governor Doty, in Neenah, down from the old Winnebago village site, in Nicolet cove, there is a bank of lake shore sand and gravel, mixed with shell, where the school boy year after years has picked up quantities of trade beads and named it the "Bead Beach." For many years the boys have dug into this sand with their hands and with much patience picked out the stray beads. In this manner there have been gathered a number of quarts. Others have indulged in the same fascinating pastime. The author has a string of these beads four feet long recovered one by one from these sands.