

EDITOR  
R. N. De Armond

BOARD OF EDITORIAL ADVISORS

Evangeline Atwood  
Anchorage  
Herb Hilscher  
Anchorage  
Robert A. Frederick  
Professor of History,  
Alaska Methodist University  
Anchorage  
Justin J. Stauter  
Lecturer in History,  
Alaska Methodist University  
Anchorage  
William Jorgenson  
Juneau  
Claus-M. Naske  
Asst. Prof. of History, University of Alaska  
College  
Paul H. McCarthy  
Archivist-Curator of Manuscripts  
University of Alaska  
College  
Alexander Doll  
South Laguna, California

PUBLISHER  
Bob Henning

ART EDITOR  
Roselyn Pape

SPECIAL PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECTS

Richard W. Montague

GENERAL OFFICES

Box 4-EEE, Anchorage, Alaska 99509

EDITOR'S OFFICE

422 Calhoun, Juneau, Alaska 99801

CIRCULATION OFFICES

130 Second Avenue South  
Edmonds, Washington 98020

Published Quarterly by Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, Juneau, Alaska. Printed in U.S.A. Yearly subscription prices \$8, to American post offices, \$9 other countries; four issues, \$6 to members of Alaska Historical Society (membership dues \$5), per-copy price \$2. Available only by subscription or from Alaska and Yukon newsstands and book stores.

All rights reserved. Copyright 1972 by Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, "The Alaska Journal."

Articles and photos of Alaskan and Northern Canadian historic subjects are solicited. A limited amount of art material will also be used—paintings, photos of various arts and crafts—in both black and white and color. No fiction or poetry. History articles should include appropriate bibliographic references or other documentation. Payment will be made upon publication, varying from a few dollars a picture and for short items on up. The return of unsolicited material if not accompanied by return postage is not guaranteed.

Postmaster: Send form 3579 to  
The Alaska Journal  
130 Second Avenue South  
Edmonds, Washington 98020  
(206) 774-4111

*The*  
**Alaska Journal**  
*History and Arts of the North—Quarterly*

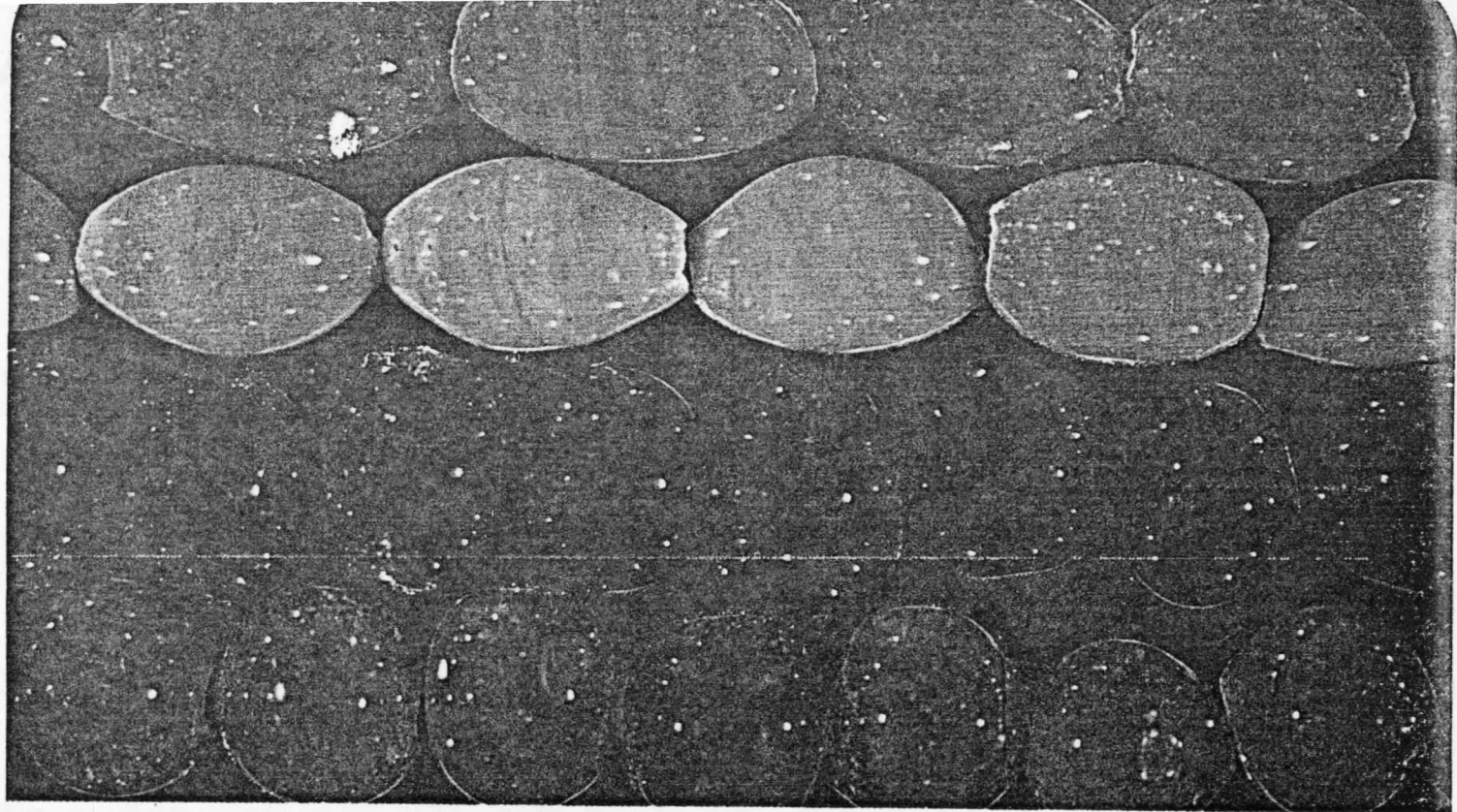
SUMMER—1972

Volume 2, No. 3

- 2 RAILS ACROSS THE TUNDRA . . . building and operating a railroad on Seward Peninsula, from start to finish.  
by Alice Osborne
- 13 GRAVINA . . . the history of a sawmill town that stood on the site of the new Ketchikan International Airport.  
by Patricia Roppel
- 16 OVER THE CHILKOOT PASS IN 1893 . . . a trip from Dyea to Forty Mile, three years before George Carmack's discovery.  
by Frederick Funston
- 25 SAM McCLAIN'S RUSSIAN CHURCHES . . . a project to preserve a portion of Alaska's disappearing heritage.  
Color photographs by Richard Montague
- ✓ 31 GLASS TRADE BEADS IN ALASKA . . . something about the beads that were introduced early and are collectors' items today.  
by Michael R. Jenkins
- 40 ALASKA'S RUSSIAN GOVERNORS: ROSENBERG, RUDAKOV and VOEVODSKII . . . more Chief Managers of the Russian-American Company.  
by Richard A. Pierce
- 49 NUSHAGAK . . . a Russian trading post in Southwestern Alaska that became a fisheries center and is now a ghost town.  
by James W. VanStone
- 54 SCRIMSHAW: ALASKAN OR WHALER ART? . . . a survey of this unique art form that dates from early times.  
by Ruth E. Tordoff
- 57 COMMONWEALTH: AN HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE . . . a look back at a little-considered alternative to statehood for Alaska.  
by Claus-M. Naske
- 60 NOTES
- 62 BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES
- 64 AUTHORS' ROUNDUP

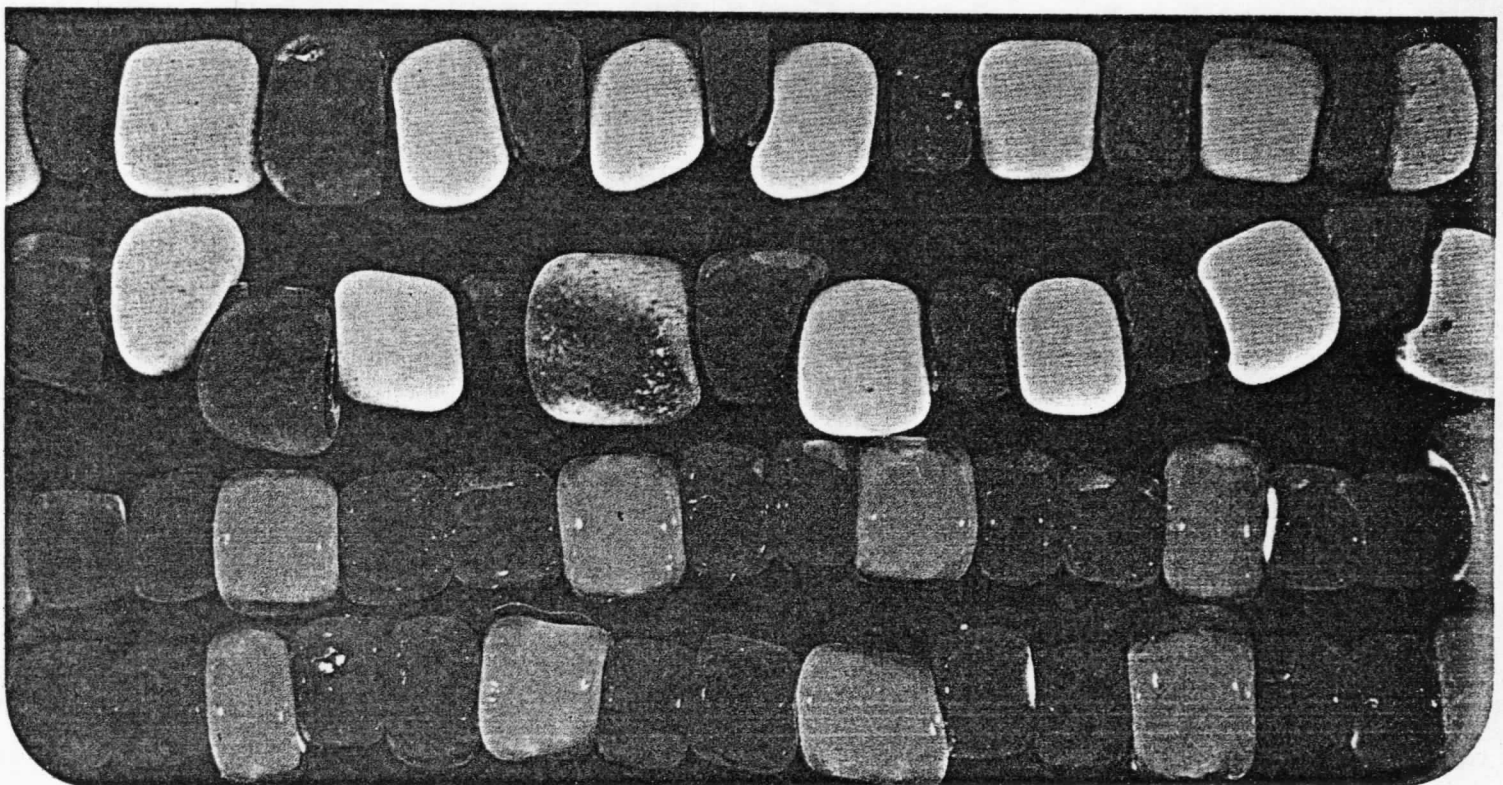
pp. 31-39

all colour illustrations



# TRADE ● BEADS

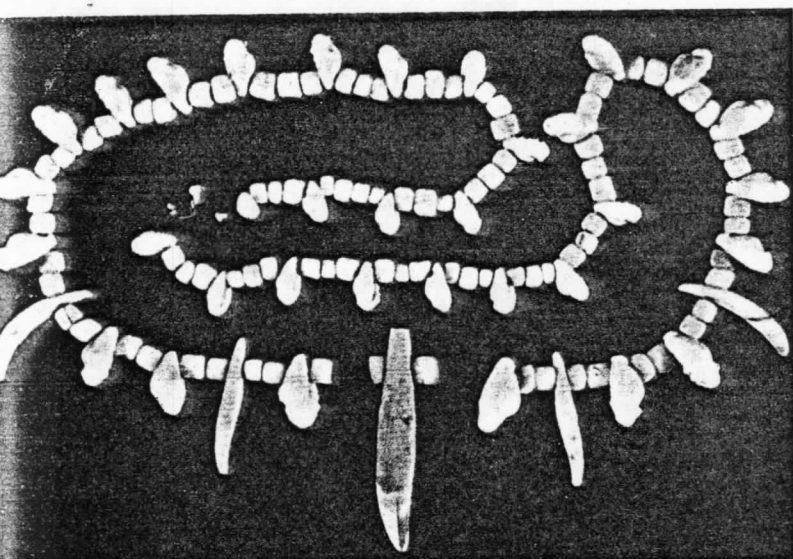
in Alaska



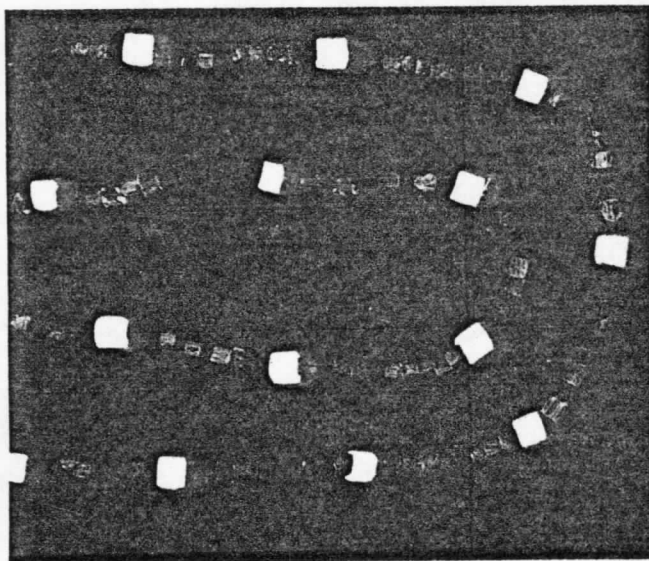
*Above—A close-up of "Peking" glass beads. In the green beads, the tiny air bubbles are common to "Peking" glass. In some the swirl from the mandrel winding shows clearly.*

*Below—Here is a close-up of the brick red coralline d'aleppo, the white porcelain paste or quartz beads, with translucent reds with white centers and translucent yellows with white centers.*

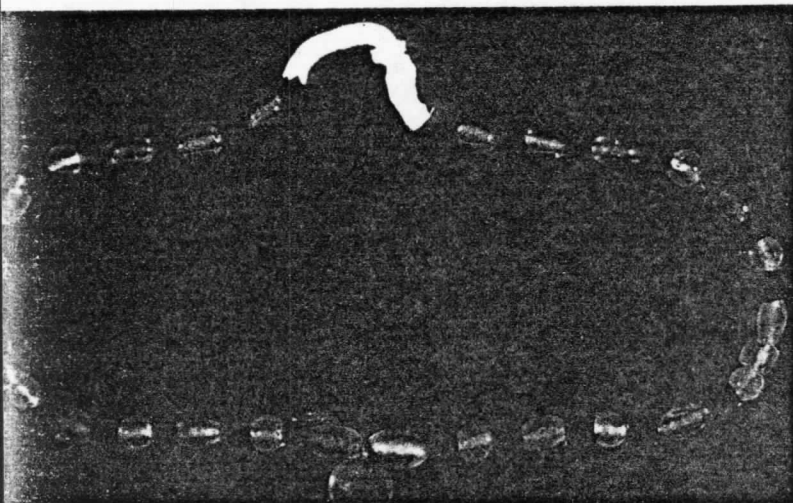




1.



2.



3.



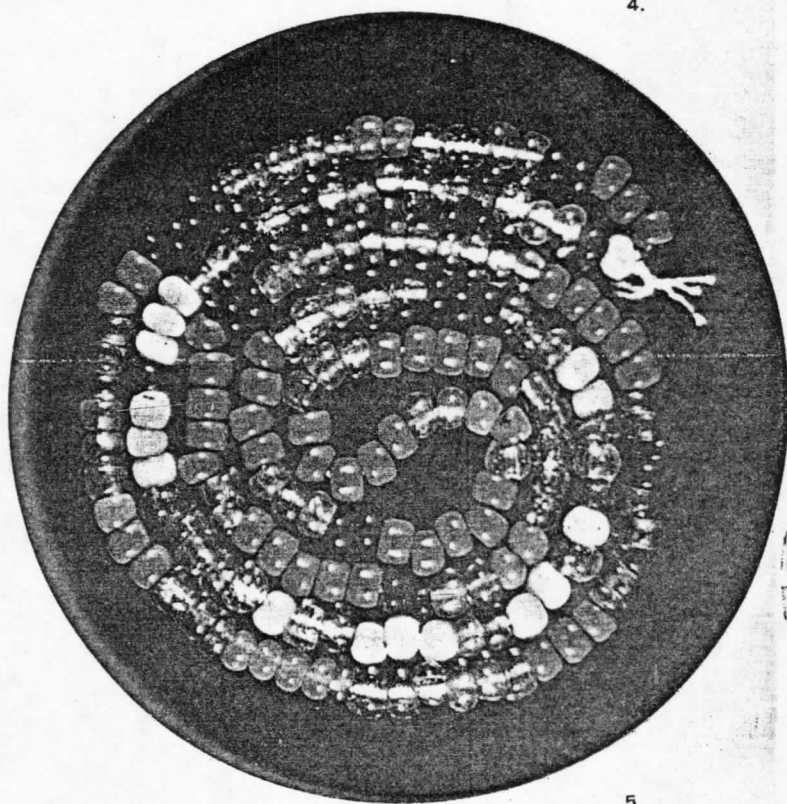
4.

By MICHAEL R. JENKINS

Photography by Richard W. Montague

**N**obody knows just when glass trade beads first came to Alaska. Vitus Bering, working for the Czar of Russia, touched briefly on these shores in 1741 but he made no contact with the Natives and distributed no beads. But beads may have arrived here ahead of him. Columbus is reported to have brought beads to the New World in 1492.<sup>1</sup> Even then trade routes undoubtedly criss-crossed the continent. A couple of hundred years after Columbus, French explorers occasionally found sea otter pelts among Great Lakes Indians and were told that they had originated "eight tribes to the west." If Pacific Coast pelts could move east over the trade routes, beads could move west.

Trade beads were definitely reported in Alaska not too many years after Bering. Captain Nathaniel Portlock, an English trader who had made his first visit to Alaska with Captain Cook, was at Cook Inlet in 1786 and wrote: "One of the Indians in the large canoe had a very good Nankin frock, and



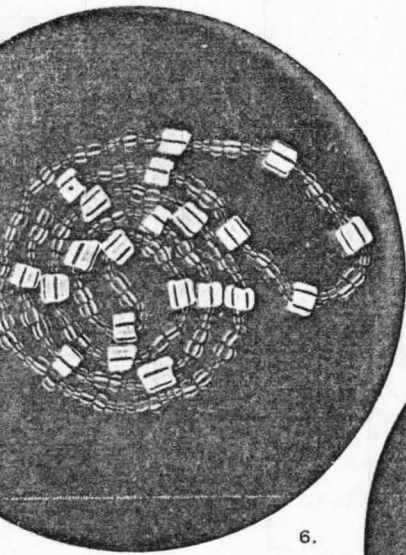
5.

another a blue frock, which they wanted to sell: several of them had a number of small blue glass beads, which they seemed very fond of."<sup>2</sup>

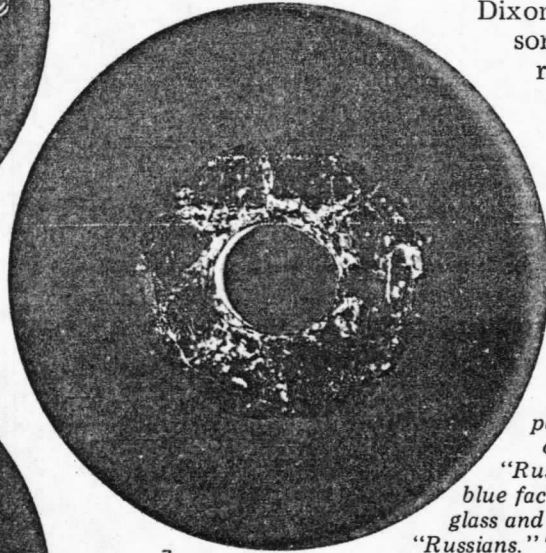
Accompanying Portlock in another ship was George Dixon and he reported that at Cook Inlet in July, 1786, a small canoe had come alongside, with one man in it, "But brought nothing except a little dried salmon, which we bought for a few beads."<sup>3</sup> The next day several canoes came out to

Dixon's ship: "They brought us skins of various sorts, such as land and sea otters, bears, racoons, marmotts, &c., for which they took toes and blue beads, but the toes are held in greatest estimation, a middling sized toe fetching the best otter skin they had got."<sup>4</sup>

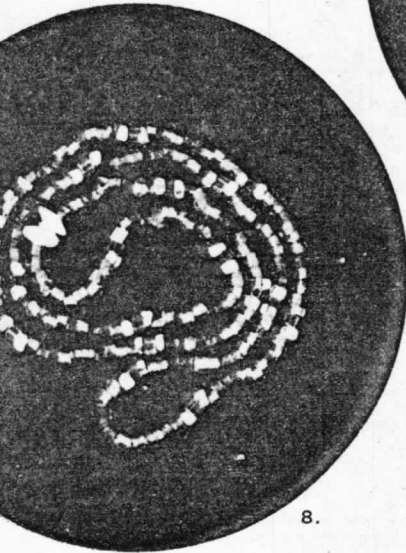
A "toe" was a piece of strap or hoop iron, six to fourteen inches long and sharpened at one end like a chisel. The Indians quickly substituted "toes" for the stone blades in their hand adzes.



6.



7.



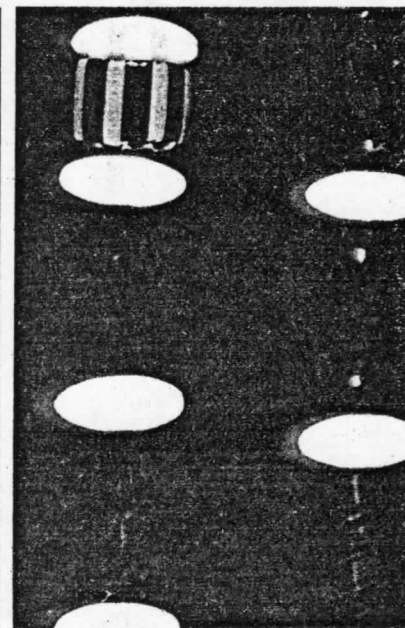
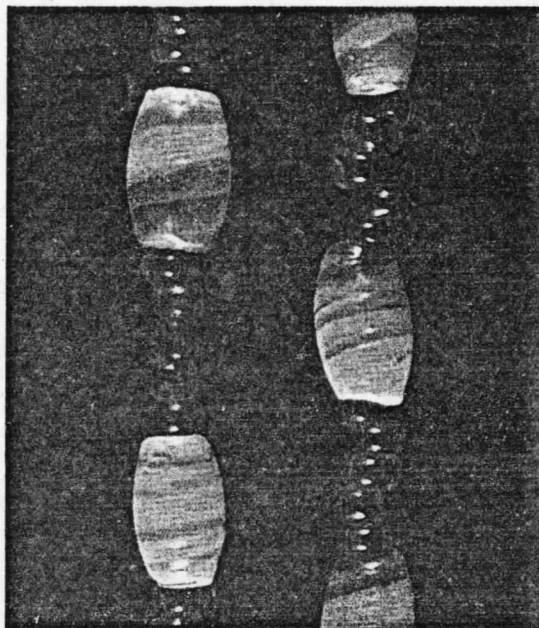
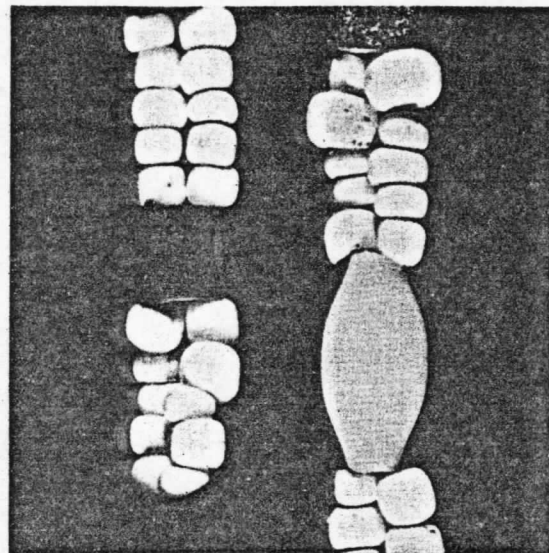
8.

1. This original necklace shows the use of wolf's teeth, bear's teeth, cowrie shells, and porcelain paste beads. 2. This necklace has the blue "Russians" of varying degrees of color, offset by the milk white "Russians." Middle 1800's. 3. This Alaskan find of deep blue faceted "Russian" beads with the oblong red "Peking" glass and includes the old brass button and two of the amber "Russians." The white tubes are of mollusk origin. 4. This white and green faceted "Russian" bead necklace also incorporates U. S. pennies of 1826, 1832, 1837, and 1847, as well as an early brass button. 5. This conglomerate of transparent, opaque, and translucent mandrel wound beads of either Bohemian or Czechoslovakian manufacture shows types common to the late 1800's and early 1900's. 6. Another Alaskan necklace composed of "candy stripe" beads which are a rarity in most western areas of the country. They are frequently found on the East Coast and in Canada and are usually in sites dating in the 1600's. They can, however, range from early to quite recent dates. The older types are usually richer in color and have two or more colors. 7. End and side views of translucent amber faceted bead. Ends show a high degree of fracture from a cremation fire. This find came from northern California but is of the same type as found in Alaska coastal regions. Early to mid-1800's.

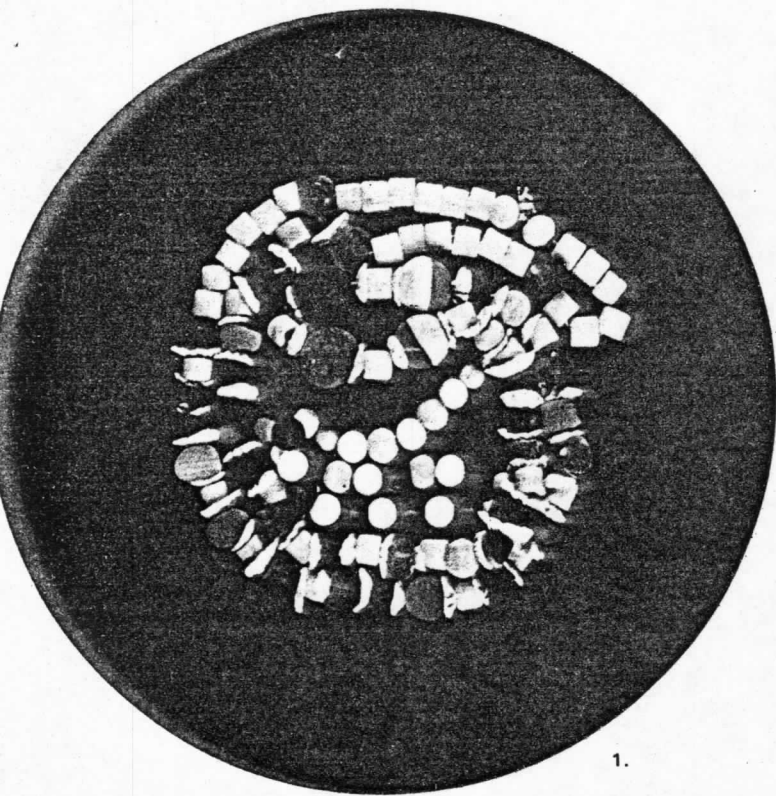
8. The translucent amber mandrel wound beads and old candy stripes are of the size known as "pony" beads. They were used for clothing decorations. 9. In the center is a rare white blown glass oblong bead. Due to the fragility of the thin-shelled blown glass, few of this kind have survived through the years. 9.

10. This strand of graduated Venetian art glass beads shows the mandrel wound body with layers of red glass applied over this body. These polychromes are found over a large area of the continent. 11. Yellow-and-black striped chevron beads, with old buttons and blue mandrel beads. 10.

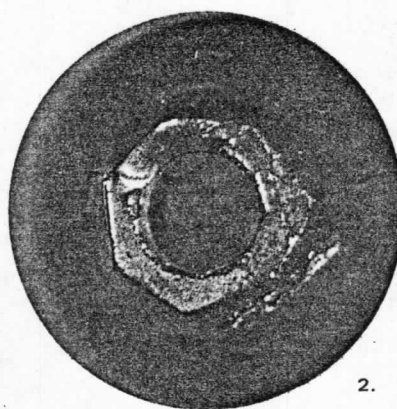
11.



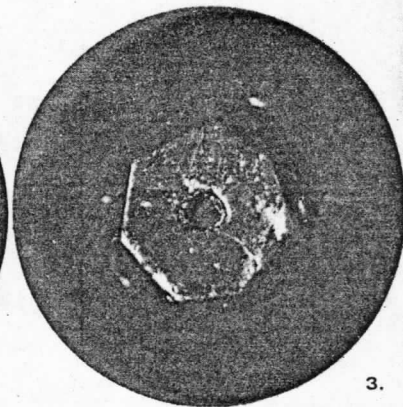




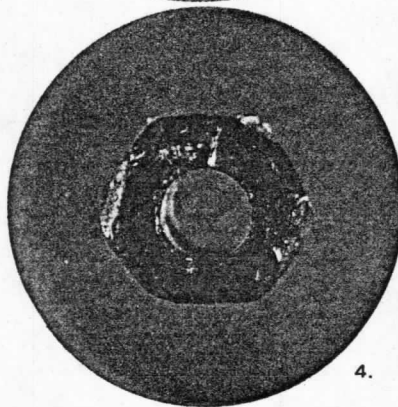
1.



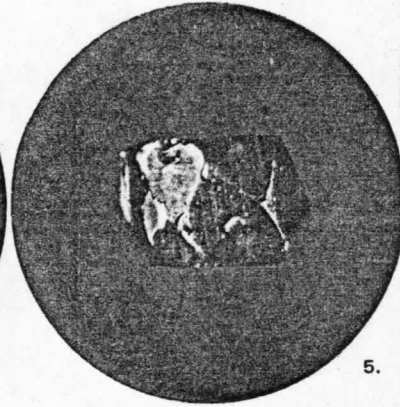
2.



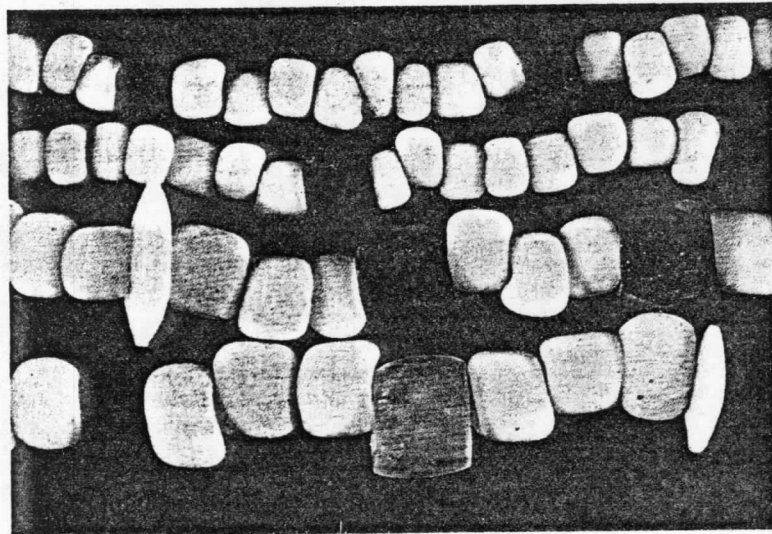
3.



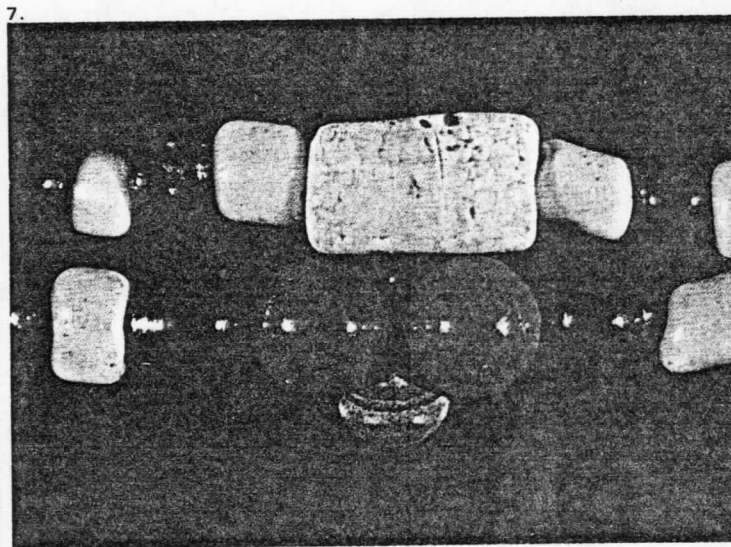
4.



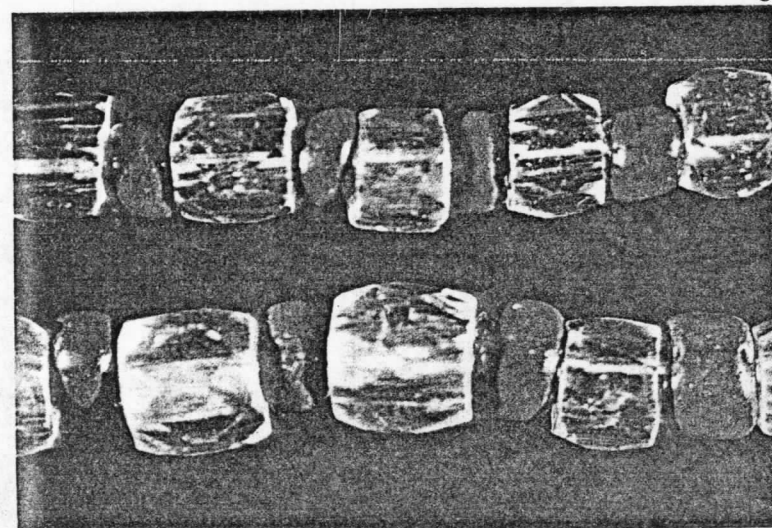
5.



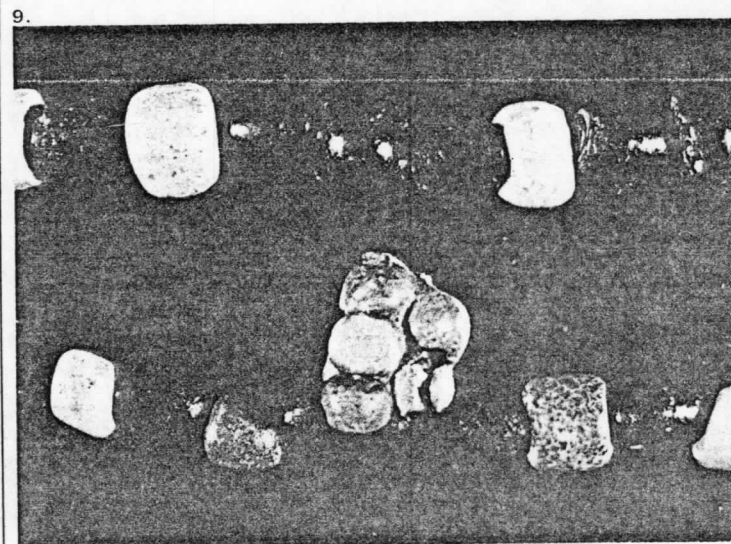
6.



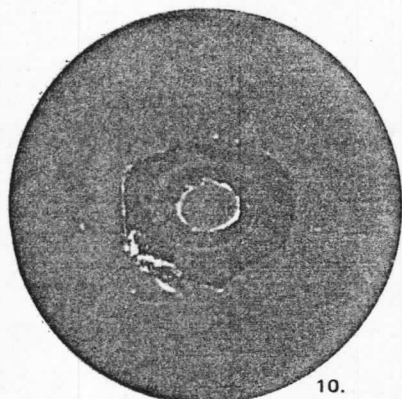
7.



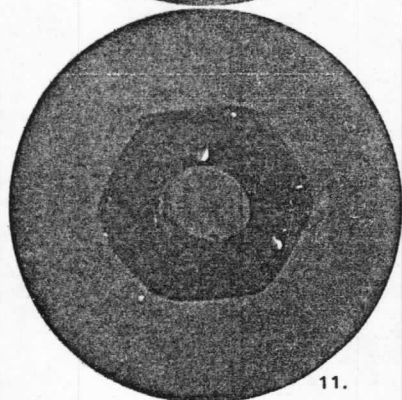
8.



9.



10.



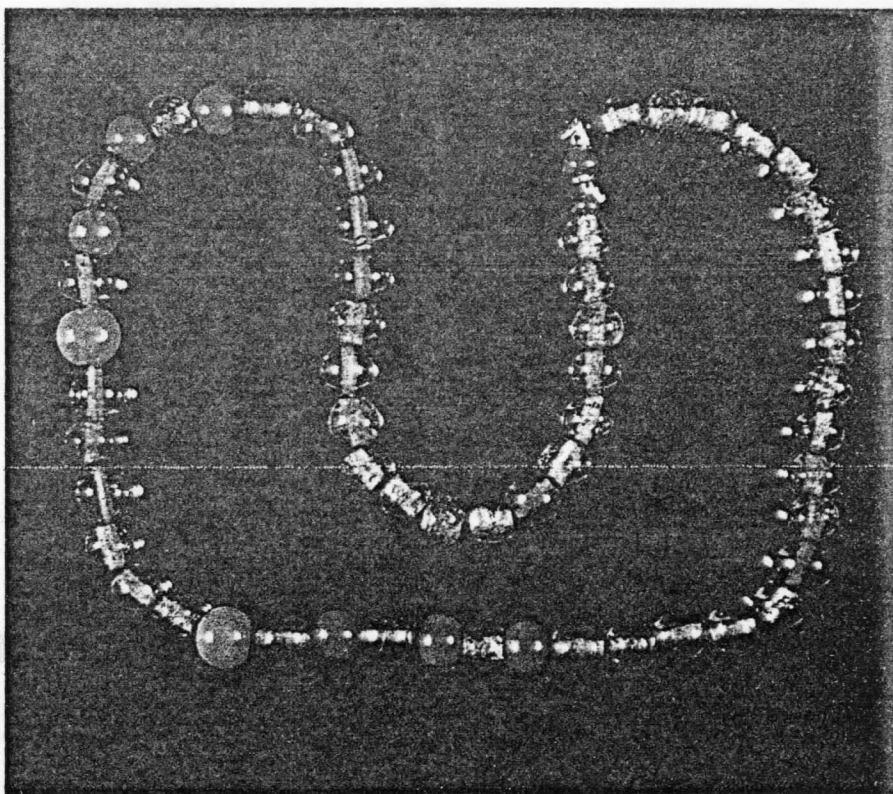
11.

The trading value of beads at that time and place was reported by Dixon: "They also brought us great plenty of excellent fresh salmon, which we bought very cheap, giving a single bead for a large fish."<sup>5</sup>

Dixon said of the Cook Inlet Natives, "Their noses and ears are ornamented with beads, or teeth," but he found them choosy about the beads: "The trade these people are fondest of for their skins, is toes, and light blue beads, scarcely any other sort (though we had a very great variety) being taken any notice of."<sup>6</sup>

Captain Dixon was again on this coast in the summer of 1787 and at Yakutat Bay he reported that the Natives "showed us plenty of beads, and the same kind of knives and spears we had seen in Prince William Sound." He added: "These people supplied us very plentifully with halibut, which we bought of them for beads and small toes."<sup>7</sup>

But at what is now Sitka Sound he found beads a drug on the market: "Toes are the article of traffic held in the first estimation at this place; but they always refused small ones, wanting them in general from



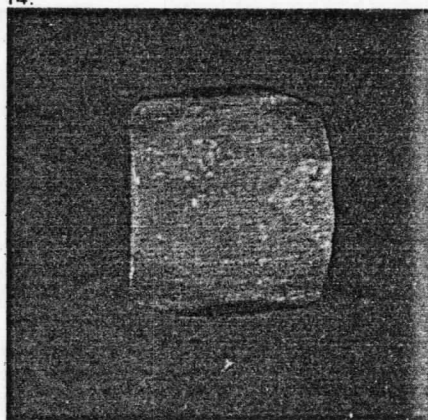
12.

Opposite page: 1. This Alaskan necklace is a conglomerate of the types of beads found in the state. The short white bugles are referred to by some Athabascan Indians as "Hudson's Bay" beads. Also included are some "Peking" glass beads and some polychromes.

Photos 2-5 and 11 are faceted, hexagonal tube drawn beads of the mid-1800's, showing the various color variations: milk white, copper patina, amethysts, crystal, marine blue, turquoise blue. There is also a cranberry red that is not shown here. 6. This multi-strand necklace of porcelain paste "quartz" beads mixed with faceted "Russians" and old buttons is from the Chitina River area of Alaska. 7. The large bead is a rare opaque mandrel wound cylinder, dating from the late 1700's or early 1800's in the Northwest Coast area. There are also two large old style "Peking" glass red mandrel wound beads, with an old brass button. 8. A section of transparent crystal faceted "Russian" beads spaced by cornaline d'aleppos. 9. This shows the effect of cremation fire on glass beads. These came from northern California and the string also has the faceted "Russian" milk glass and some cornaline d'aleppo. 10. This is a cut, faceted, composite cane drawn bead, a transparent deep blue over a lighter translucent blue core. Commonly referred to as the "Russian" bead, it is probably of Venetian origin and was used by the Russian-American Company in the early to mid-1800's. 12. This multicolored string of "Peking" glass beads is of the type used in trade in the mid-1800's. Common along the Pacific Coast. 13. This crudely cut, faceted compound "Russian" type is something of a mystery to the author. The main body of the bead is of translucent green, covered by a brick-red or copper patina. It has been found from Alaska as far south as the Fort Ross area of northern California. The author believes it would date from the mid- to late 1700's. 14. Another faceted, hexagonal tube drawn bead of the mid-1800's.



13.



14.



eight to fourteen inches long. Besides these, we traded with pewter basons, hatchets, howels, buckles, rings, &c. Of these the basons were best liked; for though the hatchets and howels were obviously the most useful tools these people could possibly have, yet they were only taken in exchange for furs of inferior value. Beads of every sort were constantly refused with contempt, when offered by way of barter, and would scarcely be accepted as presents."<sup>8</sup> A howel, for those who cannot find it in the dictionary, is a small cooper's plane.

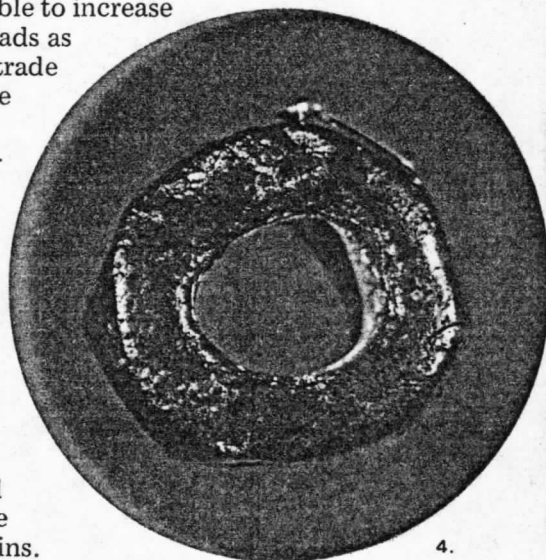
Two years later, in 1789, another English trader, James Colnett, outfitting for the Northwest Coast, listed his trade goods as: "Bar and Sheet Copper, China Cash, Copper Buckles, Bar Iron worked up in Chizzels, Clasp and Stag knives, China Buttons, Tailor's Thimbles, Scissors, Brass Rings with Stones, Copper Tea kettles, and Beads of different kinds, Saws, Hatchets, Striped Flannel, and Red baize."<sup>9</sup> A footnote in the published journal pointed out that the thimbles were not for use but for adornment, they were suspended by strings to the edges of the Indians' ceremonial robes and gave a musical accompaniment to the wearer's movements.

Still another trader, an American named Richard Cleveland who outfitted in China for the Northwest Coast trade in 1799, listed his goods: "Our barter consisted of blue cloth, great coats, blankets, Chinese trunks; with beads, China cash,

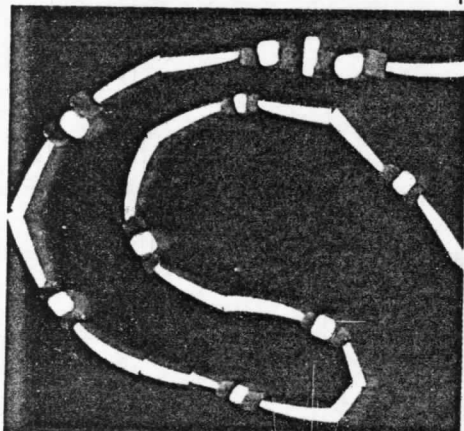
and knives, as presents."<sup>10</sup> Cleveland did his first trading at Sitka Sound, and that was the same year the Russian-American Company received its first charter from the Czar and the year Alexander Baranov founded Old Sitka. These events marked the beginning of the end for the independent traders, the "Boston" men and the "King George" men. In most of Alaska the Russian-American Company held an absolute trade monopoly; and in Southeastern Alaska after a few years the only serious rival was the great Hudson's Bay Company.

By reason of its monopoly, the Russian company was able to increase the price of beads as well as other trade goods at the expense of the Natives. At Norton Sound the rate of exchange was based on a "deer" (caribou) skin, and a pair of flawless matched greenish-blue beads was equal in value to three or four deer skins.

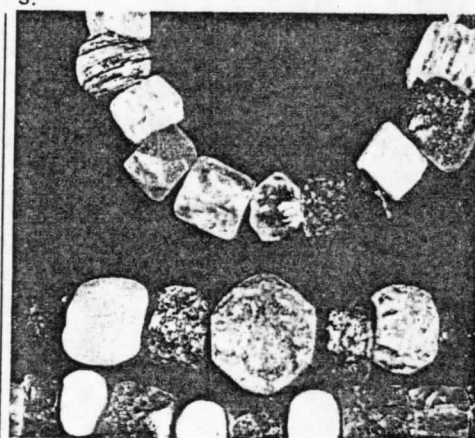
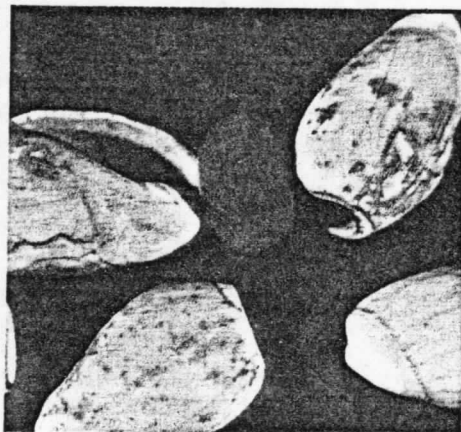
In the valley of the Kuskokwim and



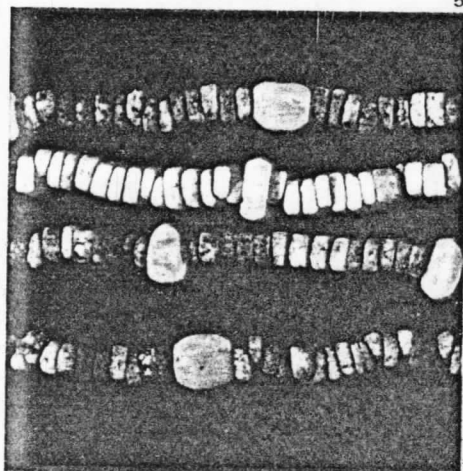
4.



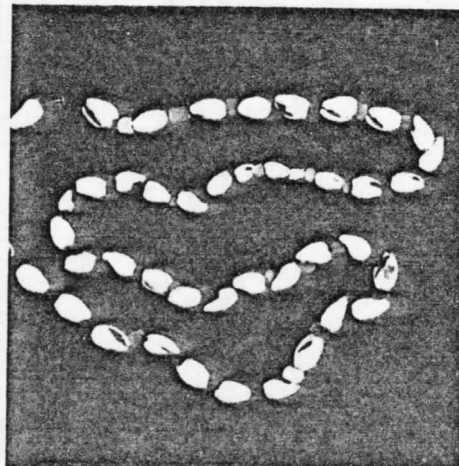
1. 2.



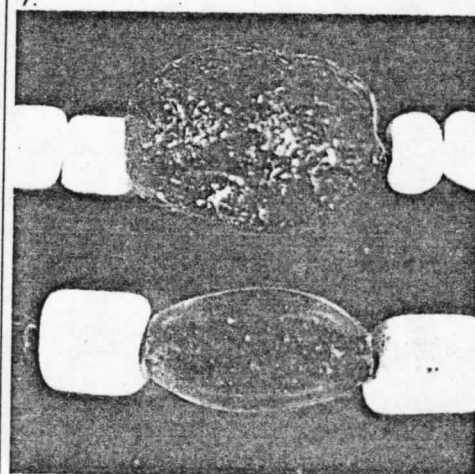
3.



5.



6.



7.

Yukon Rivers the beaver pelt was the measure of wealth. Three beaver pelts were reckoned equal to one prime deer skin, or nine beaver pelts for the two beads previously mentioned. In some areas one large bearded seal was equal to three beaver pelts, and a seal bladder or poke of beluga fat might be equal to from four to fifteen beaver pelts, depending upon the size of the poke and the quality of the oil.

Farther south, where there was competition from the Hudson's Bay Company, the Natives got a better deal. The Hudson's Bay price was from a

quarter pound to a pound of beads for one beaver pelt.

Just how long did the trade beads remain an item of currency? It is difficult to say with any degree of precision, and the time undoubtedly varied, depending upon the availability of other mediums of exchange. But in Southeastern Alaska they were still inventoried, if not used, at the time of the transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States in 1867. The Russian-American Company sold its inventory of trade goods at Sitka to

Hayward M. Hutchinson and Abraham Hirsch of San Francisco. The bill of sale lists

more than 300 kinds of goods, ranging from Diamonds to

Laurel leaves, from Harpoons to Scythes, from

Brimstone to Ink Nuts, and very close to the

head of the list is the item, "Glass Beads."

When I lecture on glass trade beads, some

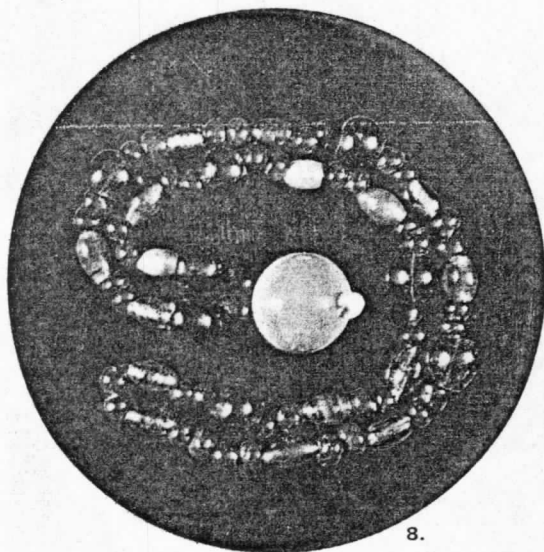
questions come up repeatedly. People want

to know when and how I became interested in

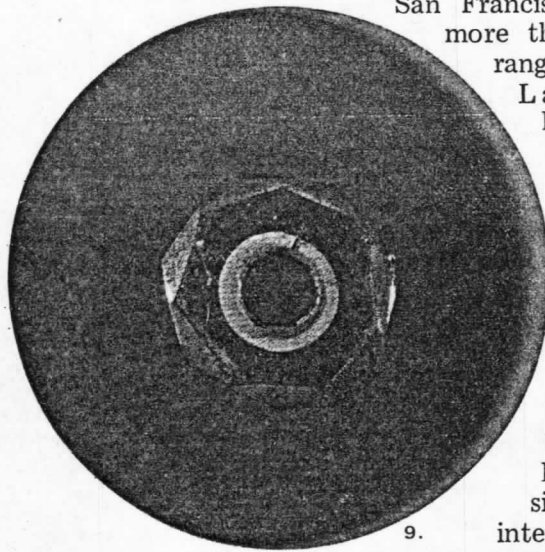
beads. In reply to that, I can only say that

since boyhood I have been interested in Indian lore. It

was author and collector Cloyd

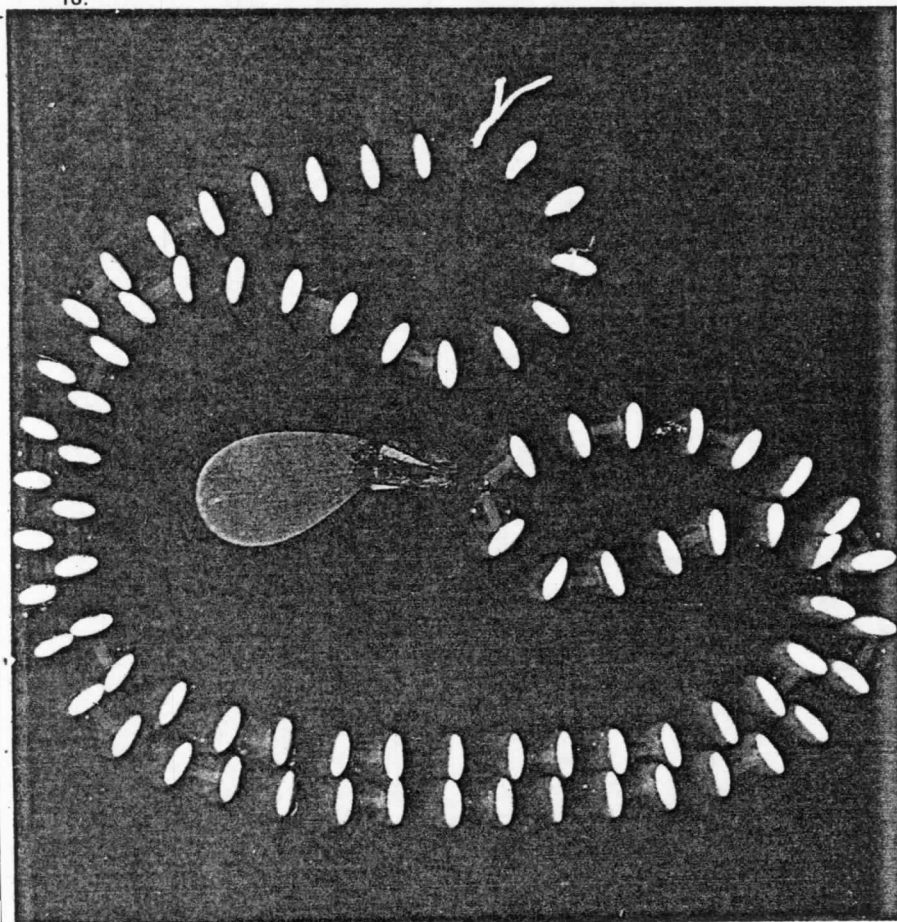


8.



9.

10.



1. This simple single string of dentalium shells and cornaline d'aleppo beads is an example of "Iroquois money," as it was called in the mid-1880's. The dentalium or tusk shell was valued from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and was regarded as money by most Indian tribes. 2. A close-up of Marginella and Olivella shells, with a rare bead of lavender color. This is a British Columbia find and dates from the mid-1800's. 3. This string from the Pacific Coast shows many of the faceted "Russian" types, but the large center bead is typical of Czechoslovakian manufacture. 4. This deep blue transparent "Russian" faceted type shows the crude, large center. This type probably predates the faceted type with a lighter ring in the center. Northwest Coast trade from late 1700's to mid-1800's. 5. This Alaskan stranded necklace comprises hand cut Pacific coral and small stone beads of copper ore, jade, and small, old mandrel wound beads. It is a very old piece. 6. The Marginella and Olivella snail shells, with the smaller mandrel wound beads, were used in intertribal trade and often traveled hundreds of miles. 7. The large beads of "Peking" glass are often referred to as chief's beads. They rarely are found as large as the largest of these, which came from a Pacific Northwest site dating around the mid-1800's. 8. These "Peking" glass beads are a later type used in trade in the late 1800's and are common along the Northwest Coast. 9. This opalescent white faceted bead is another color variation. Late 1800's. 10. This necklace is deep blue "Russians" spaced by a red "Peking" glass and antique buttons, with a large blue "Peking" glass pendant.



Sorensen who turned my attention to trade beads and made them the focal point of my studies.

I am also asked about the history of glass beads. That goes back to about 1100 B.C. when, according to archaeologists, complex decorated glass beads were used by the Egyptians as ornaments and decorations on mummy cases.

Most of the glass beads used in trade in America from the late 1500's until the early 1700's were manufactured on the island of Murano in the Lagoon of Venice. The Venetians had been making beads since the 11th century A.D., but the business was on the decline by the late 1600's. At one time there were almost 300 glass factories in and around Venice; by 1735 fewer than twenty per cent of them remained.

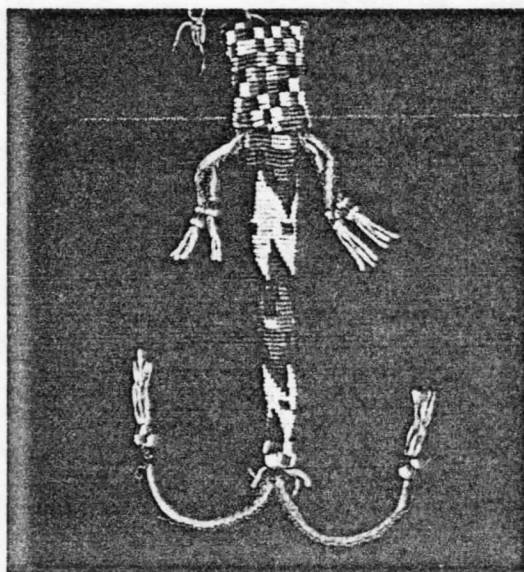
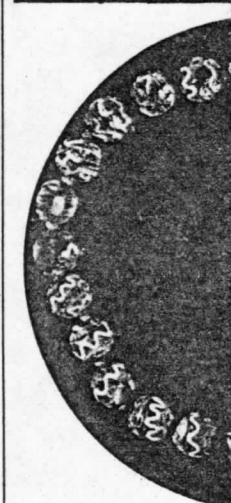
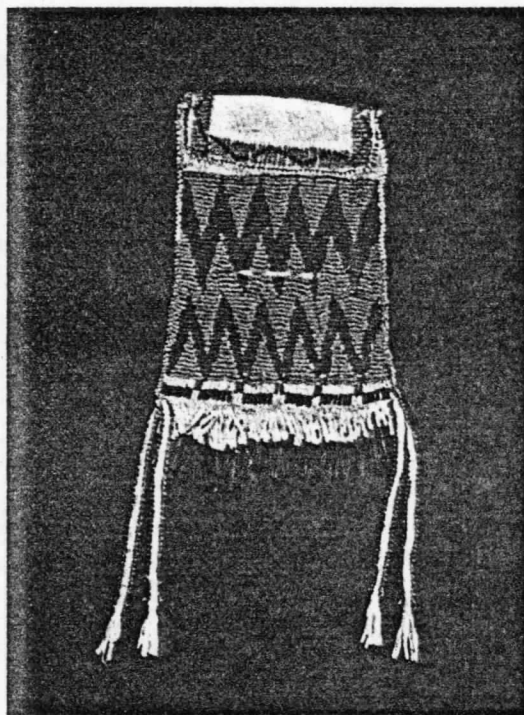
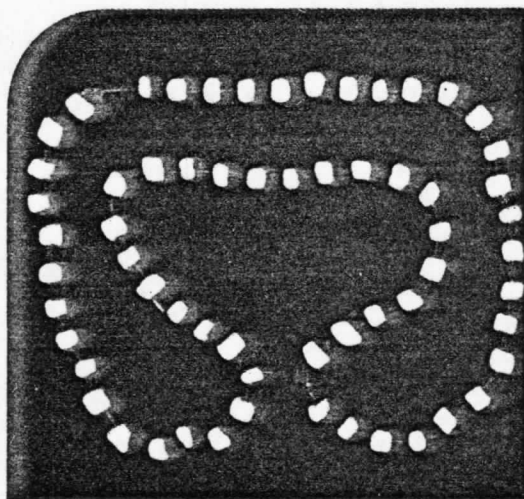
In the New World, a glass industry had been established by 1542 in New Spain, in the present State of Puebla, Mexico, and Spanish glass craftsmen produced single beads to supply the demands of the explorers. In the early 1600's glass factories were also established in France, Spain, Sweden and Holland. The first glass factory in what is now the United States was established in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1609. The beads it produced were simple and crude by comparison to those made in Venice and it was a short-lived enterprise.

In the years since the white man first came to America, literally tons of glass beads have been distributed here. Today many of them are in museums or private collections, or are owned by people who use them as ornaments or just like to have them around. Many beads have undoubtedly been destroyed in one way and another or lost beyond recovery. But thousands of pounds of beads, while presently "lost," are recoverable: from shallow burials, in attics, closets and basements and other such places where small objects disappear from view.

There are four basic methods of manufacturing beads: drawing out long tubes of glass and cutting or breaking off the beads; winding molten glass around a bar or mandrel; blowing bubbles of glass; and shaping bits of molten glass on a marver, which is a slab of heat-resistant material.

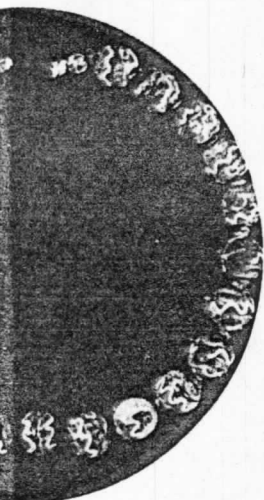
Beads have been known by many names: Russian beads, seed beads, pound beads, pony beads, and so forth, for a variety of reasons; sometimes because of the people who used them in trade, or because of size or physical characteristics, or because of the means used to transport them. As anyone knows who has collected and studied glass beads, there is no universal system of classification. This lack was somewhat remedied a couple of years ago by Kenneth E. and Martha Ann Kidd, who published a very comprehensive paper on the subject.<sup>11</sup>

Bead collecting is an absorbing hobby, and they are a fascinating subject for study. Good luck!





4.



5.



6.

1. Very rare cranberry red faceted "Russian" beads with porcelain paste or quartz beads. This color of "Russian" is extremely rare and highly prized. 2. This old pouch is trimmed with tin tinkler bells. 3. An Apache awl or needle case. 4. A pipe bag. The beads are attached by old sinew thread. 5. This string of old and badly worn Venetian polychromes clearly shows the raised glass applied in layers to the transparent body. This type of fancy beads was usually decorated by hand at the homes of Venetian craftsmen. 6. A child's moccasins, sinew sewn and beaded. 7. This floral motif came into vogue about 1870. Prior to that a more geometric pattern was used. The pony bead was used in these geometric designs from about 1800; the tiny seed beads came into the plains area about 1840 but it was another twenty years before they became popular. 8. This is an Athabascan beaded wedding veil and is very old. The beads are porcelain paste or quartz. The large oblong white mandrel wound beads are extremely rare, as are the oblong red-over-white cornaline d'aleppos. The border is of dentalium shells and smaller cornaline d'aleppos. The author highly prizes this and is grateful to Princess Wanessee Red Rock, an Athabascan, for it. 9. This Bear Claw necklace shows a large center bead known to collectors as the chevron or star bead. Not found in Alaska to the author's knowledge but various types of chevrons have been unearthed in Canada.

#### NOTES

1. Sorensen, Cloyd, "The Enduring Intrigue of Glass Trade Beads," *Arizona Highways*, July, 1971, p. 10.

2. Portlock, Nathaniel, "A Voyage Round the World," London, 1789, p. 115.

3. Dixon, George, "A Voyage Round the World," London, 1789, p. 62.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

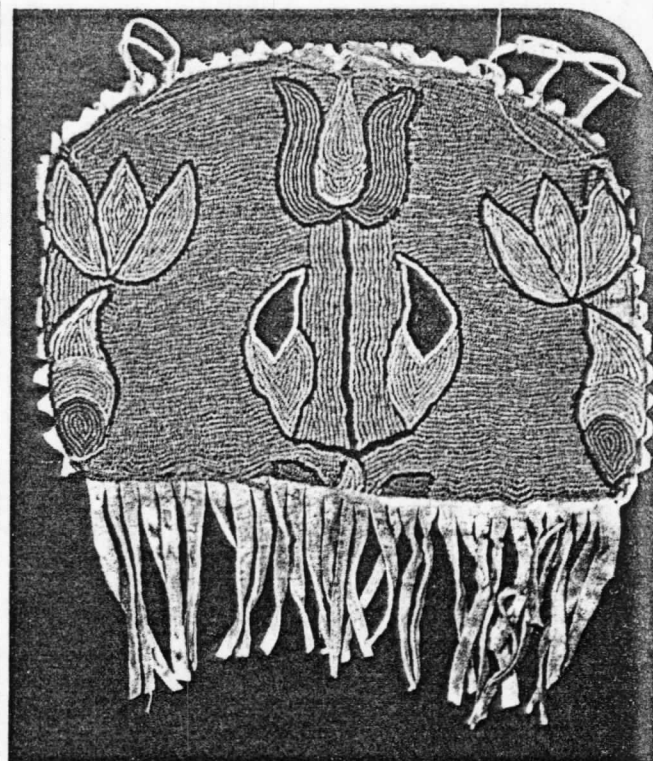
7. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

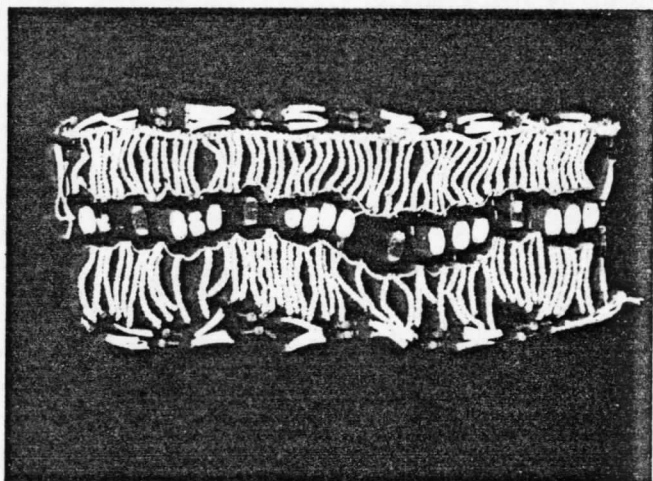
9. Colnett, James, "Journal Aboard the *Argonaut*," The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1940, p. 179.

10. Cleveland, Richard J., "In the Forecastle," Hurst & Co., N.Y., no date, p. 92.

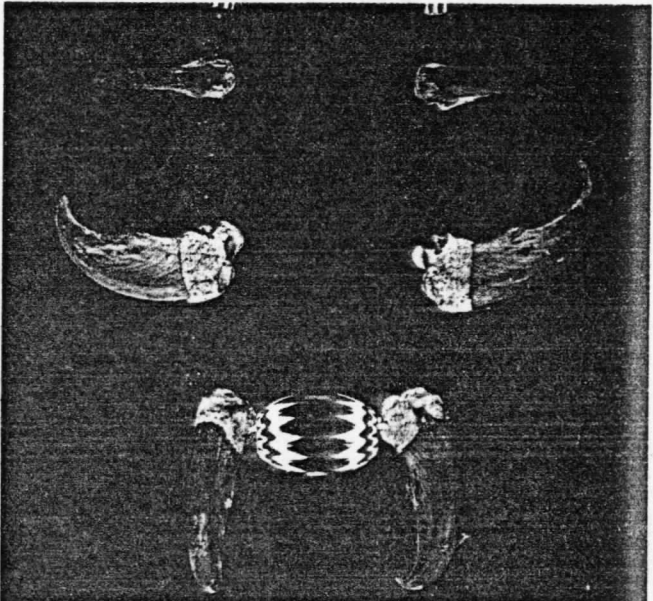
11. Kidd, Kenneth E. and Martha Ann, "A Classification System for Glass Beads for the Use of Field Archaeologists," *Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History*, No. 1, National Historic Sites Service, National and Historic Parks Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa 1970.



7.



8.



9.