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Facts and Comments

(A section devoted to short and informal Articles)



Barter Objects

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Caucasian Trade Objects representing commercial relations between the Indians and White Settlers are rare in some sections of the Mississippi Valley. Animosity, lack of contact, and other reasons could be responsible for this; but, villages and adjacent mound groups being minus of any suggests they were pre-Columbian occupations or ante dating exploration of these valley sections by the Whites.

During a period of some forty odd years the writer has explored and studied villages and mound groups in an eight County area of East Central Illinois. In all this work only four objects have been found which he felt sure were trade articles made by white men. Three of these were copper spheroids - identical in size, shape, and construction. All were found in Jersey County, Illinois, singly with burials and several miles apart. These had evidently been designed for decorative purposes as all were the central or front ornament of necklaces found in position. Perhaps one can best describe these as resembling a double pointed goose egg, both ends being symmetrical. Made in two sections extending long way of sphere, one section telescoping the edges of the other about one-fourth inch. One half possessed an interior chime, the other an exterior rise or ridge which slipped into the chime two halves were pressed together.

A perforation in both ends of about one-fourth inch permitted a cord to pass through lengthwise. It appeared that all had been shaped in the same mold from very thin rolled or beaten copper. Not being prepared to take care of an artifact so fragile it was impossible to keep them from disintegrating--oxidization having reduced them to verdigris. The first one was on what is known as the Dinsmore Farm, four miles up Illinois River from Grafton, Illinois. Included with it on necklace were some excellent specimens of perforated bear teeth. Also with this burial was one Late Jersey Bluff vessel of cocanut type - which was half full of seed hulls resembling smart-weed seed. Burial was about thirty inches deep and in top of rather large mound.

About ten years later another was found with a burial on Redmond Farm located two miles south of Rosedale, Ill. Included with it on a necklace were twelve *Anculosa* beads. A rather small shell bead common with late burials near the junction of Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. No other Artifacts were with this burial, but with another burial about three feet away - on the same level - was found a cocanut type pottery vessel. About five years later the Third was found on Larby Farm, one mile northwest of Grafton, in a slab rock vault which possessed a slab floor, sides and covering over the burial. In conjunction with this spheroid were four disc-beads about the size of a five cent piece, two on

each side. Other artifacts were a gray granite discoidal about four inches in diameter and a gray granite axe in poor condition weighing nearly three pounds. Study of evidence in conjunction with these spheroids indicate that two belonged to late Jersey Bluff individuals and one to a Mississippian buried in a rock vault. This being contrary to the belief of some that these rock vault burials occurred prior to the arrival of white men, however, this appears to be substantial evidence some were late.

Several years ago a burial was uncovered in Calhoun County which had a single glass bead on a necklace of beads made from a large marine shell. The burial being flexed and resting on right side had let the necklace shift toward the right shoulder, so the exact position this bead occupied when being worn by the owner is unknown but it is surmised to have been on the chest. This bead of solid glass possesses two colors - bright red and jet black, is globular in shape, and nine-sixteenths of an inch in diameter. There is little doubt the process for its manufacture was abutting glass rods of the two colors while at a waxy consistency, thus obtaining a union which was irregular but firmly attached. Perforation passes through both red and black halves directly opposing what appears to be a pontil mark where colors meet. Contrast of colors in this bauble are rather pleasing to the eye and no doubt the Indian who bartered for it considered it a super decoration. The burial with which this bead was found proved to be intrusive, about one-half of it protruding into base of mound and other half outside its limits. Complete exploration disclosed a basin like cavity had been scooped out to a depth of about twenty-four inches. In covering burial two feet of top soil and limestone slabs were first,

over this soil from mound or identical to it to a depth of nearly ten inches. Artifacts contained with burial were one small spear of common type, glass bead and marine shell beads (about one inch long by one-half inch in diameter.) These last being split and badly decayed only four specimens were retained of the lot.

Byron W. Knoblock's report in his volume Banner Stones of North American Indians states one jet bead was found in the second Red Ochre mound explored by Hemphill Brothers in Brown County, Ill. However, some doubt seems to exist that this bead occurred with one of the burials, as he states "If it be true, probably many more were thrown out by careless digging". Several facts must be taken into consideration with this Hemphill find. First: a major objective of explorers of mounds is to find all artifacts. Excavators seldom throw anything away unknowingly. Second: our history of the introduction of glass to America though meager tells us its barter value with the Indian was more carefully guarded from depreciation in the sixteenth century than is our present monetary system. Later the situation seems to have gotten out of hand and it took a necklace of glass beads to purchase what one bead had bought in earlier days. From this history - if it be authentic - we should grant an earlier date to a one bead possession found with a burial than a find of several. Early Venetian glass makers at Jamestown were hard traders, as also were the early explorers and fur traders, compelled to limit quantities to travel light.

In a personal interview a few years ago with one of the Hemphill brothers I was given the story of both Red Ochre finds: His account of both mound explorations rang true of

sincerity and truthfulness. Voluntary acknowledgment that the glass bead was not seen in situ with the burial, gave credence to his story. However, his account of explorations established the fact no study of burial stratification was made, excepting a separation was noted between the two red ochre covered burials and those above minus the pigment, one of had no doubt worn the jet colored bauble centuries after these two Red Ochre people had been laid to rest. I am inclined to believe both Mr. Knoblock's bead and mine represent the early period when barter value was high. How they reached the Illinois Valley is anyone's guess.

VILLAGE SITE EXPLORATION NEAR MOSIER, ILLINOIS By William G. Fecht

Several years ago I became interested in a Hopewellian Village Site in Calhoun County near Mosier. The site is located upon an extending ridge, running parallel with the Mississippi River for a half mile, and ending on the banks of Fox Creek. The property on which the site is located is owned by Mr. Chester A. Knight and a few rods south by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Ansell. A group of 26 mounds occupy three high ridges, overlooking the village. These have been thoroughly investigated by Dr. P. F. Titterton of St. Louis, Mo. and Walter L. Wadlow of Dow, Ill.

The Hopewellian's were probably the first people to occupy the village and during the last years of their occupancy, the decorating of pottery was abandoned. Pottery fragments of the following cultures are identified at the site. They are: Woodland, Miss., Hopewell, Maple Mills, Spoon River, and Jersey Bluff.

On September 1, 1951, Mr. Robert Colbert of Alton, Ill. and I obtained

permission to excavate from Mrs. Ansell. Several pits produced little or nothing of importance. Colbert found a burial in an extended position. A badly crushed pot was located near the head. Nothing else accompanied the burial. The pot belongs to the Mississippi Culture and I presume the Indian did too. It has a globular body, a corrugated surface, shell tempered with two handles on either side.

Later the same day another burial was discovered. This one was also extended. Near the ears were eight shell beads, four on each side. They measure an inch long by half that in diameter. The shell was obtained from the column of a conch shell which is commonly found at the Gulf of Mexico. Beneath the skull were found two pointed fragments of a broken awl or hairpin measuring about eight inches long. A small flint hatchet about 4 inches by 2 inches wide was found near the ribs. About one inch of the bit on either side was highly polished, indicating excessive use, probably as a digging tool. A Hopewellian type stemmed arrowhead was located near the feet but I do not believe it was associated. This burial is thought to be a male while the other a female.

Both burials were located on the surface of undisturbed soil at the bottom of a refuse pit, 2 1/2 feet deep near the center. The refuse in the pit was Hopewellian and if the burials are Mississippian, it is highly probable that they were buried while the Hopewellians still occupied the village. All of the material found in this dig is available for study in the collection of Dr. James Reed, Quincy, Ill.

South of the Ansell farm and on the fourth ridge overlooking the village, are a group of eight partly explored mounds. After gaining permission to excavate the largest of the group from their owner, Mrs. Jesse Ball, and with the assistance of Mr. Wm. H. Scott of Alton, and myself excavated for four days. A total of 17