



Mrs. Isabel B. Wasson

606 Thatcher Avenue - River Forest, Illinois
60305

April 28, 1969

Dear Miss Austin,

Here is a copy of Dr. Van Stouren's excellent report on the Canadian Trade Silver.

In thinking over the best way to label the material, it seemed to me that a sheet could be written which would tell about the silver ornaments as a whole, where they came from, how they were made, & how dated & identified.

Therefore I wrote page 1 enclosed - I will talk with you about

The second sheet is on the five groups of ornaments:

specially - I think this too could be kept on one sheet, perhaps mounted on cardboard that the viewer could pick & read -

Then the only labels necessary inside the case would be very brief ones as, "wristbands", "armbands", "brooches", etc. "gorgets" & "earrings".

This would use the minimum space inside the case & allow much material to be shown -

I will phone you about 1 PM on Wednesday & if you have had time to look over this material, I will come on & we can talk about the best way to proceed -

Sincerely you
Isabel B. Wasson

When it could be displayed

CANADIAN TRADE SILVER FROM INDIAN GRAVES IN NORTHERN ILLINOIS

by

James W. VanStone

Field Museum of Natural History

The archaeological specimens which form the basis of this paper were excavated in the early years of the present century from Indian burial mounds in Forest Home Cemetery on the banks of the Desplaines River. Today the cemetery is in Forest Park, a western suburb of Chicago. Although details are lacking, the burial mounds were apparently leveled to fill in a swampy area of the cemetery and at least thirteen skeletons were uncovered along with a quantity of artifacts. These materials, stored for many years in the cemetery office, were eventually turned over to the Forest Park Library where I examined them in October, 1968.¹

The collection includes a variety of laminated sheet silver trade ornaments, most of which are reasonably well preserved. Some have identifying marks that make dating within fairly narrow limits possible. Such ornaments were made for use in the fur trade by silversmiths in Canada, England, and the United States and are considered to be the best criterion for dating archaeological sites in the western Great Lakes area between 1760 and 1820 (Quimby 1966:91). Although there is a considerable literature on various aspects of Indian trade silver, relatively few collections of known provenience have been described and illustrated in detail; none at all from the northern Illinois area.

The collection to be described here was not excavated under controlled conditions and it has been impossible to obtain more data concerning provenience than the scanty information noted above. Nevertheless, these ornaments reveal interesting details about the spread of

¹ I would like to express appreciation to Mrs. Isabel B. Wasson of River Forest, Illinois for calling my attention to the silver ornaments described in this paper. Thanks are also due to Miss Josephine Austin, Librarian of the Forest Park Library, for permission to remove the artifacts to Field Museum of Natural History for study. Mr. John E. Langdon of Toronto read an early draft of this paper and offered several valuable suggestions.

trade silver into Illinois and its use by the Indians.

Because of the considerable movements of people into and out of northern Illinois during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is difficult to determine with certainty the specific Indian tribe represented by these graves on the banks of the Desplaines River. It is known, however, that the Potawatomi began moving into northeastern Illinois from the Green Bay region early in the eighteenth century, and by 1800 there were sizeable settlements of these Indians in the Chicago area. Many of the Potawatomi villages contained numbers of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians who were closely related to the former both linguistically and culturally (Bauxar 1959:54; Blasingham 1961:166-169). It is very likely, therefore, that the occupants of the graves, those who wore the ornaments about to be described, were members of one of these tribes. The major Potawatomi withdrawal from Illinois began in 1832 and had been virtually completed four years later (Bauxar 1959:54).

The silver ornaments from graves in the Forest Home Cemetery can most conveniently be considered under five headings which correspond, for the most part, to the areas of the body where they were worn; wristbands, armbands, brooches, gorgets and earrings. All of these objects, when first examined by the author, were covered with a heavy green patination. This was caused by the copper alloy in the silver, a substance that resulted in the preservation of a number of textile fragments with which the silver had been in close contact. Prior to study, as many of the ornaments as possible were cleaned by means of a glass bead blasting technique.

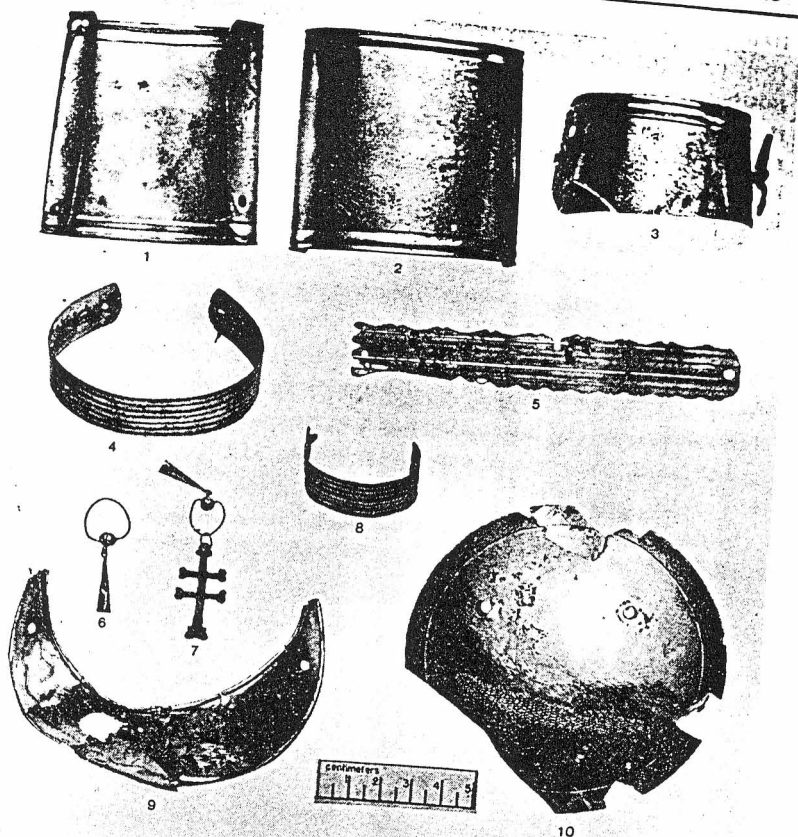
WRISTBANDS are, for the most part, remarkably uniform in appearance. Out of a total of ten specimens, seven have straight edges and parallel ridges on the outer surface (Pl. 1, 4). All of these are approximately 16 cm long and 2 cm wide. They are drilled at either end for the insertion of thongs by which the bands were held and adjusted to the size of the wearer's wrist. On four specimens the thongs are still in place. A single wristband is approximately the same size as the others, but has scallop edges as well as parallel surface ridges (Pl. 1, 5). Two specimens are quite distinctive and appear to have been cut from armbands. Both exhibit, along one side, the longitudinal border ridges characteristic of armbands; they are roughly cut along the other side (Pl. 1, 3). Fragments of thongs are attached to the perforations on both these specimens.

In addition to the typical wristbands with parallel ridges just described, there are two virtually identical bands that are much shorter and narrower (Pl. 1, 8). These do not seem to have been cut down from full sized wristbands. They were probably worn by small children.

FPPL - ARTIFACTS DISPLAY

Canadian Trade Silver

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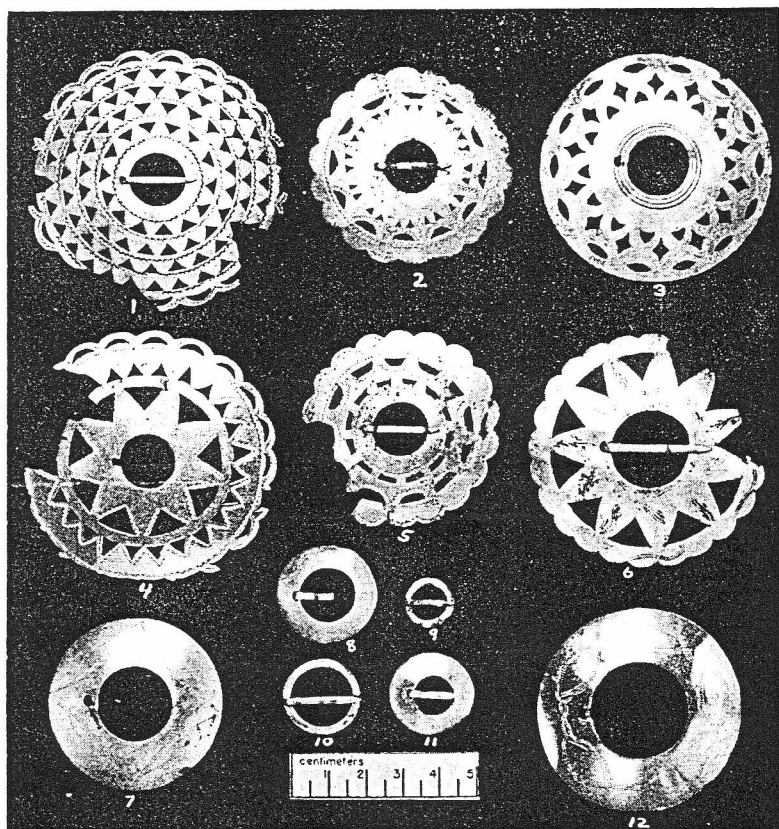
Wristbands from sites in Michigan similar to those in the Forest Home Cemetery collection are described and illustrated by Quimby (1958:317, fig. 1, 1) and Herrick (1958:11, fig. 29). Such bands were apparently worn more frequently by women than by men (Quimby 1966:92).

There are five ARMBANDS in the collection, all of which were apparently modified to some extent by their Indian owners. Four are virtually identical, being approximately 7 cm wide, bordered by longitudinal ridges, and from 12 to 14 cm in length. They are decorated with designs, engraved with a small burin or engraving tool, which reveal an interesting characteristic of the armbands. In each case the designs are at one end of the specimen and cut off, suggesting that the Indians cut the original bands in order to make a larger number of small ones. These bands, which presumably were worn just above the elbow by men (see Quimby 1966: fig. 32), originally circled the arm. But cutting the

original band in half, only the outer side of the arm would be covered (Pl. 1-2). Paired perforations at either end served for the insertion of thongs which stretched around the unexposed side of the arm. Two of these smaller armbands appear to have been made from the same full sized one since the engraved design, a long necked bird, is continuous on the two specimens. Another band also has part of a long necked bird while a fourth shows the rear half of some four footed animal.

The fifth armband in the collection is fragmentary but appears not to have been reworked in the manner of those just described. The specimen, which is approximately 25 cm long and was at least 10 cm wide, closely resembles one from Michigan illustrated by Quimby (1958: fig. 1, 2). It has longitudinal ridges along the edges and an engraved central design showing a seated human figure facing a seated animal, probably a dog. Only the lower halves of these figures are visible.

The most abundant ornaments in the Forest Home Cemetery collection are BROOCHES of which there are four types. These belong-



ing to type 1, five in number, are concavo-convex disks with central circular openings. On two specimens a hinged pin for fastening the brooch to the garment lies across the opening. These brooches, four of which are illustrated (Pl. 2, 7-8, 11-12), show a variety of sizes and simple engraved decorations. Type 1 brooches are illustrated in nearly every published collection of Indian trade silver (see Quimby 1958:fig. 1, 7; fig. 2, row 2; Alberts 1953: Pl. 3, j).

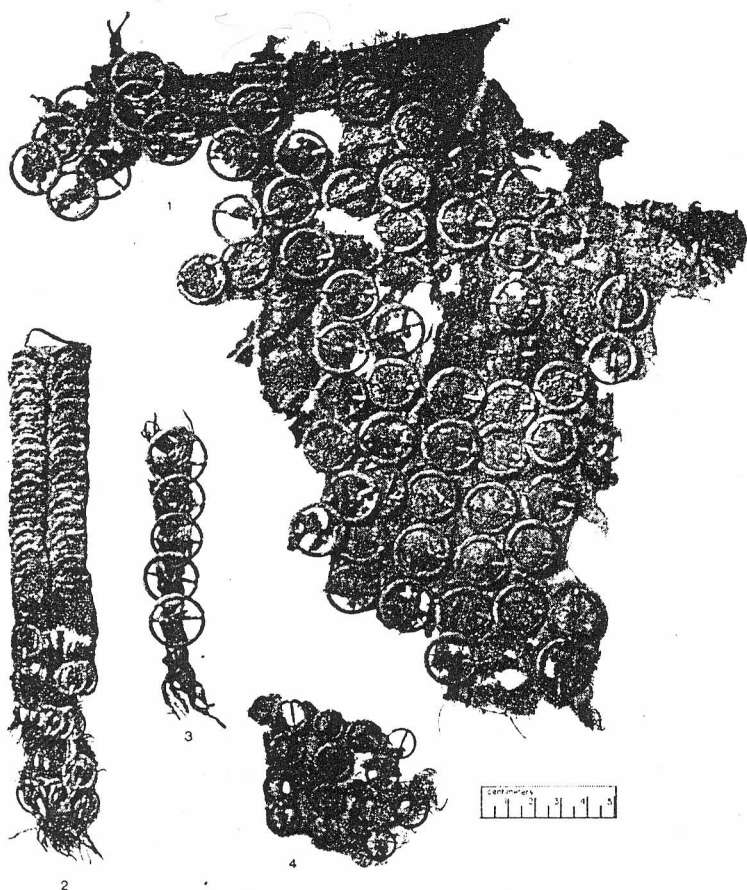
Type 2 brooches are similar in shape to those just described but tend to be larger and are much more ornate. All are ornamented with a symmetrical arrangement of oval, triangular, diamond shaped and semi-lunar perforations in combination with engraved designs. To show the range in size and decoration, four specimens are illustrated (Pl. 2, 1-3, 5). Like those of type 1, the type 2 brooches have also been widely described and illustrated (see Quimby 1937: fig. 2, first row; 1958: fig. 1, 5-6; 1966: fig. 20, lower left; Alberts 1953: Pl. 3, e, Pl. 1, r, e-f; Herrick 1958: Pl. 3, figs. 30-31).

There are two specimens belonging to type 3, the so-called "Star brooch" (Quimby 1966:93). Like the others that have been described, these brooches are concavo-convex in cross section with round openings in the center. One has a nine-pointed star design enclosed by a narrow rim and a symmetrical arrangement of triangular and semi-lunar perforations (Pl. 2, 4). The other has an eleven-pointed star enclosed by a narrow scalloped border (Pl. 2, 6). There is some engraving on both specimens. Star brooches would appear to be relatively common in collections of Indian trade silver as they are present in most of the sources mentioned above.

By far the most common brooches in the collection are those belonging to type 4. These are plain, circular rings of silver, empty in the middle except for the cross pins which fasten them to garments. Although they vary somewhat in diameter, there are two general sizes; a large variety that is approximately 2 cm in diameter (Pl. 2, 10), and a smaller one with a diameter of 1.2 cm (Pl. 2, 9). The large form occurs in greater abundance with 64 loose specimens and more than 225 attached in clusters to garment fragments. In addition there are eleven attached to braids of human hair (Pl. 3, 3). A similar use for such brooches has been reported from a burial at the Ada site, Kent County, Michigan (Herrick 1958:6). Eighty-three of the small brooches are attached to textile fragments and there are six loose specimens.

Of considerable interest are these garment fragments with clusters of type 4 brooches worn as decoration (Pl. 3, 1, 4).²

² For assistance in identifying the garment fragments, I wish to thank Mr. Harold B. Burnham, Textile Department, Royal Ontario Museum.



The greatest number of brooches, both of the large and small variety, are attached to seven fragments of wood block printed cotton. Materials of this type were produced in many parts of France and, to a lesser extent, in England and Scotland. At least three of these fragments appear to have been part of a one-piece, straight cut garment, with separate attached collar, probably a woman's dress. An interesting feature of this dress, as shown on one large fragment, is a false shoulder seam sewn on with two-ply linen thread. This seam may have been of a different color than the rest of the garment.

A smaller number of large type 4 brooches were fastened to a fragment of napped woolen flannel, slightly full, of average quality. The best materials of this type were always of English manufacture with the

average and poorer qualities being either English or French. This fragment is probably part of a blanket, perhaps worn thrown over the shoulder. Brooches attached in clusters to garments frequently are shown in contemporary portraits of Indians, but they are not often found in an archaeological context.

Thirty-one small brooches are fastened to a narrow strip of leather with a tassel of worsted ribbon at one end (Pl. 3, 2). A few brooches were apparently attached to this ribbon as well. The object may have been a dangle intended for wear as decoration on some garment.

Two types of GORGETS are recognized by students of Indian trade silver and there is one specimen of each type in the Forest Home Cemetery collection. A crescent-shaped gorget is concavo-convex in cross section with suspension holes at the points of the crescent. The convex surface of this specimen is engraved with small dots in two parallel, wavy lines (Pl. 1, 9). According to Quimby (1966:92), such ornaments were an adaptation of gorgets worn by British army officers. This specimen is very simple and plain when compared to many illustrated specimens in other collections (See Woodward 1945:Fig 3; Quimby 1958: fig. 1, 3; Barbeau 1942:12, upper left hand corner, bottom).

A fragmentary round gorget is also concavo-convex in cross section (Pl. 1, 10). It has an engraving of a fox or similar animal in the center

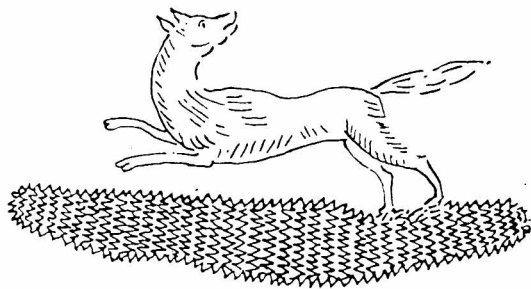


Figure 1

(fig. 1) and an engraved border on the concave side. There are two suspension holes. Quimby (1966:93) believes that the round gorget had its origin in the aboriginal shell gorget of the Indians.

There are two types of earrings in the collection. Three specimens have a double-barred cross in combination with a small cone-shaped pendant suspended on a thin piece of silver wire (Pl. 1, 7). The second type, of which there are ten specimens, is simply a cone-shaped pendant suspended from a circular piece of wire (Pl. 6). Similar earrings are illustrated by Quimby (1958: fig. 1, 10), Herrick (1958:P 1. 3, 21) and Alberts (1953: Pl. 9, e).

Silversmiths who produced ornaments for the Indian trade frequently stamped their wares with their individual mark. Thirteen specimens from Forest Home Cemetery are punch marked in this manner and all marks are those of Canadian craftsmen. Three brooches, two bracelets and one armband are stamped with the roman letters "PH" separated by a pellet and in an oblong cartouche (see Quimby 1966: fig. 21, 3). This is the punch mark of Pierre Hugué dit Latour (1749-1817), a Montreal silversmith and merchant, and his son (1771-1829). The elder Hugué sold large quantities of trade silver to North West Company traders in 1797 and 1798 (Langdon 1966:94). Two bracelets with the Hugué mark also have the word "Montreal" in a long, rectangular cartouche, while a single bracelet without maker's initials is similarly marked.

There are three armbands which have punch marks consisting of the roman letters "IS" in an oval cartouche (see Quimby 1966: fig. 21, m). This is the mark of the Quebec silversmith Joseph Schindler and, after his death, his wife. Schindler was living in Quebec City as a silversmith at least as early as 1767 and worked there until his death in 1786. The Widow Schindler, as she was called, moved to Montreal and provided Indian trade silver from 1797 until she died in 1802. According to Langdon (1966:125-126), it is not clear from the records whether she actually made silver or simply acted as an agent. Traquair (1938:5) suggests that she may have carried out her work as a kind of home industry (Alberts 1953:28; Barbeau 1940:33; Quimby 1966:199).

An important figure in the silver trade in Montreal was Narcisse Roy (1765-1814). His punch mark, which occurs on one bracelet, consists of the script letters "NR" in a trapezoidal cartouche (see Quimby 1966: fig. 21, h). Roy, who was apprenticed to the famous craftsman Robert Cruickshank, made and sold silver to the Northwest Company, Outfit 1799-1803 (Langdon 1966:121).

The Montreal silversmith Charles Arnoldi (1779-1817) is represented by a single brooch (Pl. 2, 8). His punch mark consists of the letters "CA" in script capitals separated by a pellet (see Quimby 1966: fig. 21, g), and documentary evidence dates his work from at least 1784 to 1810 (Alberts 1953:26-27; Langdon 1966:42; Quimby 1966:198). Barbeau (1942:13) illustrates a fine double-barred cross by Arnoldi which is now in the American Museum of Natural History.

The final marked specimen to be discussed here is a bracelet with the roman letters "PM" in a rectangular cartouche (see Langdon 1966: 103). This punch mark is probably that of Paul Morand (1775-1886). He was apprenticed to Pierre Hugué dit Latour in 1802.

On the basis of the information presented above, it can be said with reasonable certainty that the graves in Forest Home Cemetery date be-

tween approximately 1780 and 1820. During that period, the fur trade was becoming increasingly important to the economy of Canada and a large number of traders, including such well known names as McTavish, Fraser and McGillivray, were closely associated with the North West Company and its struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company for control of the trade. These Montreal-based traders, many of whom traded in the western Great Lakes region, tended to patronize local silversmiths to a greater extent than did those of the Hudson's Bay Company who generally ordered their supplies from England (Langdon 1966:17-20).

In spite of considerable efforts made by the Americans to secure the support of Indians in the Great Lakes area during the Revolutionary War, most of the native peoples of this region favored the British. The intensive activities of Canadian traders were at least partly responsible for this situation and English influence continued to be felt until after the War of 1812. In northern Illinois and contiguous areas the Chipewa, Ottawa and Potawatomi were all British allies. Quimby (1937:18, 20) believes that this explains the large proportion of Canadian silver ornaments found in the area. It probably also explains why the trading contacts of Indians buried in Forest Home Cemetery were primarily, if not exclusively, with Canadian traders.

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