

DRAFT

Proposed Return of 12 Wampum Belts
to the Onondaga Nation

An Invitation for Comment

On June 14, 1989, the Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York voted to authorize its staff to pursue a return of custody of 12 wampum belts from the New York State Museum to the Council of Chiefs of the Onondaga Nation.

The 12 belts entered the custody of the Board of Regents, who are the trustees of the New York State Museum, at various times between 1898 and 1949. After receiving a renewed request for return of the belts, staff began several years ago to review the history of the belts and the legal and museological issues involved in repatriation. Preliminary negotiations were undertaken with the Onondaga Council of Chiefs, with encouragement from the Commissioner of Education and Governor Mario M. Cuomo.

In 1987 the Board of Regents adopted the International Council of Museums Code of Ethics as a governance policy of the New York State Museum. Extended discussion of the provisions of the ICOM Code that deal with restitution of cultural property has led the Board of Regents to the conclusion that returning custody of the wampum belts is in the mutual interest of the Onondaga Nation and the people of the State of New York. If a satisfactory agreement on preservation and care of the belts can be reached with the Onondaga Council of Chiefs, the Regents expect that the belts will be returned to a designated wampum-keeper at the Onondaga Nation.

These 12 wampum belts were all in Onondaga hands before they came to the State Museum. The Museum holds 14 other belts from Seneca, Mohawk, Penobscot and other sources. No change is proposed for the custody of those belts.

The grounds for returning custody are explained in the attached disposition plan. The key points are as follows:

1. These 12 belts can be proven to have been in the custody of the Onondaga Nation, which acted as wampum-keeper for the Iroquois Confederacy. They were considered to be communal property.
2. The available documentation suggests strongly that the belts were given up by Onondaga tribal members either without proper authority or in an expectation that the belts were to be held in safekeeping and that they could be returned upon demand. Even though money changed hands, the tribal members may not have intended or understood that they were

surrendering all claim to legal title.

3. The present leadership of the Onondaga Nation at its reservation near Nedrow, New York has been recognized as legitimate successors to the Onondaga Nation as it existed in 1898, when the Regents accepted election to the former Onondaga role as wampum-keeper for the Confederacy.
4. The Onondaga Nation has requested the return of the belts.
5. Continued preservation and care of the belts will be the responsibility of the Onondaga Council of Chiefs, subject to a binding legal agreement. The Regents and the New York State Museum seek a continuing collaboration with the Onondaga Nation and all the people of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy in interpreting the historical and cultural significance of the belts and in presenting an accurate and informed view of the native peoples of New York through museum exhibits and programs.

Interested parties are invited to comment before final action is taken by the Onondaga Council of Chiefs and the Board of Regents to conclude the proposed agreement. Comments may be addressed to:

Thomas E. Sheldon
Executive Deputy Commissioner
State Education Department
Albany, NY 12234

Comments should be received before ^{September 1} ~~July 14~~, 1989, in order to assure that they receive full consideration by the Board of Regents.

Thomas Sobol
Commissioner of Education

Attachment

6/20/89

Return of Custody of Twelve Wampum Belts to the Onondaga Nation

1. Summary of Proposal

The Board of Regents is considering the return of custody of twelve historic wampum belts to the Onondaga Nation. The twelve belts, all of Onondaga origin, are as follows:

<u>N.Y.S.M. Cat. #</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Acquired From</u>	<u>Date</u>
37309	Hiawatha	Mrs. Thacher	1927
37310	Washington Covenant	Mrs. Thacher	1927
37311	First Palefaces	Mrs. Thacher	1927
37312	Champlain	Mrs. Thacher	1927
37418	Caughnawaga	Onondaga Nation	1898
37420	Wing (or Dust Fan)	Rev. Beauchamp	1898
37421	Treaty	Onondaga Nation	1898
37422	Alliance	Onondaga Nation	1898
37423	Remembrance	Onondaga Nation	1898
37428	Tatodaho	Rev. Beauchamp	1898
37433	Council Summons	Onondaga Nation	1898
50033	Beauchamp "Path"	Rev. Beauchamp	1949

2. Principles for Repatriation

- A. The belts are communal property
- B. The Onondaga claim is legitimate
- C. The proposed action is prudent

A. Wampum Belts as Communal Property. (1) History of the belts. Four of the twelve belts were bequeathed to the State Museum in 1927 by the widow of John Boyd Thacher. Five were purchased directly by the Regents from Onondaga chiefs in 1898. Two were purchased by the Regents indirectly, through the work of Rev. William Beauchamp, also in 1898. One came from Beauchamp's estate in 1949. While the circumstances of each transaction were different, it appears that the Onondaga participants did not intend to surrender title in the full legal sense or, at a minimum, did not understand that they had surrendered title.

The Thacher belts (Hiawatha, Washington Covenant, First Palefaces, and Champlain) are among the most historically significant. They were first sold in 1891 by Thomas Webster, an Onondaga wampum-keeper, to General Henry Carrington. The price was \$75, and Carrington apparently persuaded Webster that he was taking the belts in order to assure that they would be preserved in the U.S. National Museum (Smithsonian Institution) in Washington. The Federal government had not authorized Carrington's action and did not reimburse him. He then resold the belts within a few months to a Boston collector for \$350. In 1893, Mayor John Boyd Thacher of Albany bought the belts for \$500. The Onondaga chiefs sued for recovery of the belts in 1897 and were joined in the suit in 1898 by the Board of Regents. The suit was dismissed and the belts remained in the Thacher family until 1927, when Emma

Treadwell Thacher, the mayor's widow, bequeathed them to the Museum.

Five belts came directly from the Onondaga Nation, apparently in response to concern over Webster's sale to Carrington. Mrs. Harriet Maxwell Converse, an honorary curator of the Indian Collection in the State Museum, persuaded the Onondaga Nation to give her power of attorney, which was used to initiate the Thacher lawsuit. In company with other civic leaders who argued that the Onondaga chiefs could strengthen their case by enlisting a prestigious ally, she led a move to have the Onondaga Council designate the University of the State of New York as its wampum-keeper.

On February 26, 1898, the Onondaga chiefs passed two resolutions, one naming the University as wampum-keeper and one transferring "their vested interest in any belts, strings or other forms of wampum." Five belts (Caughnawaga, Treaty, Alliance, Remembrance, and Council Summons) were handed over in exchange for \$500.

The remaining three belts (Wing or Dust Fan, Tatodaho, and Path) came through the efforts of Rev. William Beauchamp, an Episcopal priest who ministered at the Onondaga Reservation for many decades. Beauchamp seems to have been widely regarded by contemporaries as well-informed, judicious and knowledgeable. He obtained the Wing and Tatodaho belts for \$25 in 1898, apparently to assure that they would be preserved and that the Regents would not have to initiate legal action to get them. The Path belt was probably given to Beauchamp at some later date, and is less historic than the others.

(2) A transfer of title was not intended. Most of the Onondaga leaders, including Thomas Webster, spoke very little English and were not familiar with the intricacies of Anglo-American civil law. Their descendants believe that the old chiefs meant merely to loan the belts for safekeeping, and that the exchange of money was intended as a token of respect and gratitude for the trust being placed in the hands of the new custodians. This argument gains considerable strength from a letter written by Rev. Beauchamp on February 19, 1900, to F.J.H. Merrill, director of the State Museum. Among other things, the letter says:

"On the wampum belt question I was never directly consulted, & my general opinion was adverse to much of what was done. . . (General Carrington's) fault was in making them believe that they were to go to Washington & be safely kept in the Nat. Museum. I was glad of this, & so were the more intelligent of the Indians, who wanted them preserved. Safely in his hands I suppose Mr. C. saw he could make money from them in other ways, hence their after history. Perhaps he may have some excuse or other statement, but my present view is that his action was not strictly honorable. . .

As to ownership I do not think the Onondaga chiefs had strictly a right to dispose of them [the Carrington/Thacher belts] if they were Six Nations belts. . .

The State has not purchased any confederate official belts, but holds these as the duly appointed custodian. Other belts which

did not belong to the League it has by purchase from the actual owners. . . In getting a receipt on the payment of \$25 for the possession - not ownership - of the two fine belts I procured, I was careful to guard this point. . ."

Beauchamp was on the scene at Onondaga during the whole period, so his recollection deserves respect. Furthermore, oral tradition within the Onondaga Nation, as passed down from the old chiefs and recalled by those currently in office, affirms that they transferred custody, not title. Finally, Dr. William N. Fenton, a distinguished anthropologist who has studied the history of the transactions, notes that Mrs. Converse and her associates played the central role in persuading the Onondaga chiefs to turn over wampum to the Regents in 1898. The Regents did not initiate that action; neither did the Onondaga chiefs. The move was well-intentioned, to be sure, but it was also explained to the chiefs by people who would be expected to stress the virtue of preservation, not the legal implications of a sale.

A ceremonial transfer, arranged by Mrs. Converse, occurred at Albany in 1898. Forty-four representatives of Iroquois communities came by train to participate in a program at the Capitol. The pageantry of the ceremony further suggests an emphasis on changing custody, rather than executing a sale.

A subsequent law of New York State (Chapter 153, Laws of 1899) confirmed the transfer and gave the University broad power to "secure by purchase, suit, or otherwise any wampums which have ever been in the possession of any of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, or any preceding wampum-keeper." This power of confiscation has been the target of criticism in recent decades. However, it should be noted that the law does not use the terms "title" or "ownership." It says that the University "accepted the custody of the wampums as formally transferred."

B. Legitimacy of the Onondaga Claim and Claimants

The Haudenosaunee Grand Council of Chiefs issued a communique at Onondaga Nation on February 2, 1986, stating, among other concerns:

"The continued possession of the sacred Haudenosaunee Wampums by the State of New York Museum in Albany, the Museum of the American Indian in New York City, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and various other private museums, historical societies, and private collections of individuals are a violation of our human rights; a violation of our group rights; a violation of our religious freedom; and an infringement on our sovereignty. . .

"The legal issues of repatriation revolve around the status of title. Law favors title, title is absolute ownership against the world. The national cultural treasures of the Haudenosaunee are the property of today's generation of people and the governing body of chiefs who represent them. Possession does not run against the sovereign without his consent. Therefore, title remains with the Haudenosaunee."

The State of New York has recognized the legitimacy of the Onondaga Nation as wampum-keeper for the Haudenosaunee in present times. A law enacted in 1971 would have returned possession to the Onondaga Nation of the five belts directly transferred to the Regents in 1898 (Caughnawaga, Treaty, Alliance, Remembrance, and Council Summons) upon certification by the New York State Council on the Arts that an acceptable fireproof storage facility be available at Onondaga. The transfer never occurred, and the law has lapsed.

New York State has recognized the legitimacy of the Onondaga Council of Chiefs by seeking their continuing participation in the framing of State policy on Native American affairs. No other claimants have contested the right of the Council of Chiefs to represent the Onondaga Nation in seeking return of custody of the belts.

C. Prudence of the Proposed Action

It seems obvious that the action of Onondaga chiefs in 1898 to transfer wampum belts to the Regents was prompted by two motives:

(1) A need to bolster the legal standing of the Onondaga Nation in the suit seeking return of the four Thatcher belts; and

(2) A recognition by all parties that the belts were in danger of being dismantled, lost or stolen if measures were not taken to assure that they would be preserved intact.

The Regents and the State Museum became wampum-keeper because they had the resources to assure preservation of the belts. They have discharged this custodial obligation for nine decades, and have reason to expect a similar commitment to preservation by the Onondaga Nation.

The proposed preservation agreement is guided by the following considerations.

(1) The belts were made to be used. For many decades they were handled, transported, repaired and restrung by the Onondaga people. Wampum belts have always been functional rather than decorative, and will continue to be used.

(2) They are both wampum, and belts. Individual wampum beads may be strung in many ways, used for various purposes, broken up and reused. The belts are strung in a particular way to give a precise reading of important occurrences. The belts in question have remained intact at least since the early nineteenth century; thus, it must have been important to the Onondaga people to keep them intact while the belts were in their own custody.

(3) Scholars agree that the belts constitute an invaluable record of the affairs of the Iroquois Confederacy and its dealings with Euroamericans. If read accurately, in the words of William Fenton, they "speak to the whole history of Indian and white relations from colonial days to the present."

Thus, all New Yorkers have at least a collateral interest in seeing the belts preserved and interpreted.

(4) As communal property, the belts may never be sold or otherwise transferred outside the custody of the Onondaga Nation.

(5) The Council of Chiefs has been invited to choose a new wampum-keeper who will assume day-to-day responsibility for the care of the belts.

(6) The belts must be stored in a secure fireproof vault whenever they are not in use.

(7) The belts must be kept intact. They may not be destroyed, dismantled, or restrung in a way that would change their meaning.

THE WAMPUM BELT COLLECTION OF THE NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM

By NOAH T. CLARKE

Archeologist, New York State Museum

The majority of the wampum belts in the New York State Museum collection were obtained through the action of the Onondaga Nation, who were the former keepers of the wampum belts of the Iroquois Confederacy. In 1898 they elected The University of the State of New York the keeper of the wampum and the wampum records of the Onondaga Nation, the Five Nations and the Six Nations of the Confederacy. They, at the same time, sold and conveyed to the State these symbolic documents which recall early laws, alliances and other important events of historical interest. Thus the State of New York is charged with the duty and right to keep, hold and recover all the wampums of said nations as follows:

§ 27 **Custody of wampums.** The University of the State of New York, which was duly elected to the office of wampum-keeper by the Onondaga nation on February twenty-sixth, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, and which by unanimous action of its Regents on March twenty-second, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, accepted such election as authorized to do by law, and which accepted the custody of the wampums as formally transferred to the Chancellor as part of the exercises and with the unanimous approval, both of the election and transfer, by the council of the Five Nations held in the senate chamber of the capitol at Albany on June twenty-second, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, by duly chosen representatives of all the original nations of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, shall hereafter be recognized in all courts and places, as having every power which has ever, at any time, been exercised by any wampum-keeper of the Onondaga nation, or of any of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, otherwise known as the Five Nations, or the Six Nations, or the Iroquois, and shall keep such wampums in a fire-proof building, as public records, forever, and is hereby authorized to secure by purchase, suit, or otherwise, any wampums which have ever been in the possession of any of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, or any preceding wampum-keeper, and which are now owned by any of them or to which any of them is entitled, or to which it is entitled, in law or in equity, and to maintain and carry on suit to recover any of such wampums in its own name or in the name of the Onondaga nation at any time notwithstanding that the cause of action may have accrued more than six years, or any time, before the commencement of any such suit.

The provisions of this section shall not apply to the subject matter of any litigation pending on March twenty-seventh, eighteen hundred and ninety-nine, in any court of this State.

[*New York State Indian Law*]

Altogether the State Museum collection consists of 25 belts, including two of the largest known, the George Washington Covenant Belt, and the "Wing or Dust Fan Belt," both of which are examples of exquisite workmanship. Another very large belt is known as the "Presidentia," a chain type which was to have always been kept bright in friendship. The Hiawatha Belt is one of outstanding merit as it commemorates the establishment of the Iroquois Confederacy.

The name "wampum" is a term which the early New England colonists derived from the Algonkian name "wampomeag," meaning "a string" (of shell beads). Indians were attracted to the use of shells in their personal adornment by their natural beauty. On account of their thin, sharp edges, shells were brought into service as implements and utensils such as cups, spoons, scrapers, digging tools and knives.

Shell beads were the handiwork of the woman, whose skilful hands were accustomed to the delicate and tedious operation of their manufacture. Wampum beads are small cylindrical shell beads which measure about a quarter of an inch in length and one-eighth of an inch in diameter. They were wrought from various species of shells, but those made in the eastern section of the United States were cut from those found along the Atlantic sea coast, such as the common hard-shell clam, *Venus mercenaria*; the periwinkle, *Pyrgula carica* and *P. canaliculata*; the whelk, *Buccinum undatum*; and fresh-water shells of the genus *Unio* (Hodge, '10, 904). These afforded the manufacture of two color varieties—the white, which was formed from the thicker portion of the shell, and the dark, or purple bead, cut from the purple spot in the clam shell.

In trade, wampum was used either in strings or loose. When loose, they were counted out and six beads equalled in value three of the dark ones or, according to one authority, the amount of one penny. By the string, they were measured into strands of 360 white and 180 dark beads. These were known as "fathoms" and each "fathom" was valued at 60 cents in trade.

Shell beads, or wampum, besides their use as necklaces and for purposes of exchange, were used in strings in public transactions of various nature and significance. Strung in different order or color combinations, they conveyed or recorded a definite idea or thought, which could be interpreted without confusion. White beads used alone in ritual or ceremonies conveyed the idea of peace, health and harmony; the dark or purple beads used alone in ceremonies denoted the idea of sorrow, death, mourning and hostility.

White beads were sometimes used of war, or used as an invitation

The wampum belt was another shell beads. In ancient times threads made from the inner b into mats or belts. A variety of in the manufacture of these belts events, in the ratification of treat proposals made by one people to

Lewis H. Morgan ('52, p. 72) pum belts, as follows:

The most common width was the length ranging from 2 to 6 simple process, eight strands c twisted from filaments of slippe size; after which they are pass separate them at equal distances A splint is then sprung in the f of the several strings is secured, in tension, like warp threads in these making the intended width thread by means of a needle, and angles, so as to bring one bead the one next in position. The t upper side of the cords, and so that each bead is held firmly in one passing under and one above continued until the belt reaches its in cords are tied, the end of the be with ribbons. In ancient times were of sinew.

Hiawatha

(Figure
(Museum Catalogue)

Size: length, 21½ inches; width,

Acquired: May 24, 1927, by be of Albany, N. Y.

Description: This is in the f symbolic design in white beads h consisting of two hollow square heart (tree?) which occupies the

It is one of the most important belts in existence and is considered

of 25 belts, including the Washington Covenant which are examples of a belt is known as the "peace belt" and has always been kept as one of the outstanding features of the Iroquois

White beads were sometimes dyed red to signify the declaration of war, or used as an invitation to friends to join them in war.

The wampum belt was another product of these white and purple shell beads. In ancient times these beads were strung on twisted threads made from the inner bark of the elm tree and fashioned into mats or belts. A variety of symbolic designs were incorporated in the manufacture of these belts as a means of recording important events, in the ratification of treaties and, in some cases, to guarantee proposals made by one people to another.

Lewis H. Morgan ('52, p. 72) gives an account of making wampum belts, as follows:

The most common width was 3 fingers or the width of 7 beads, the length ranging from 2 to 6 feet. In belt-making, which is a simple process, eight strands or cords of bark thread are first twisted from filaments of slippery elm, of the requisite length and size; after which they are passed through a strip of deerskin to separate them at equal distances from each other in parallel lines. A splint is then sprung in the form of a bow, to which each end of the several strings is secured, and by which all of them are held in tension, like warp threads in a weaving machine. Seven beads, these making the intended width of the belts, are then run upon a thread by means of a needle, and are passed under the cords at right angles, so as to bring one bead lengthwise between each cord and the one next in position. The thread is then passed back along the upper side of the cords, and again through each of the beads; so that each bead is held firmly in its place by means of two threads, one passing under and one above the cords. This process is continued until the belt reaches its intended length, when the ends of the cords are tied, the end of the belt covered and afterwards trimmed with ribbons. In ancient times both the cords and the threads were of sinew.

Hiawatha Belt

(Figure 19)

(Museum Catalog No. 37309)

Size: length, 21½ inches; width, 10½ inches; rows wide, 38.

Acquired: May 24, 1927, by bequest of Emma Treadwell Thacher of Albany, N. Y.

Description: This is in the form of a beaded mat on which a symbolic design in white beads has been worked in along its length, consisting of two hollow squares on either side of a figure of a heart (tree?) which occupies the center.

It is one of the most important and valuable Iroquoian wampum belts in existence and is considered the original record of the forma-

ly New England "mpomeag," meant to attract to the use of natural beauty. On being brought into service as scrapers, digging

in, whose skilful operation of the operation of cylindrical shell beads and one-eighth of an inch in various species in the United States on a coast, such as the riwinkle, *cinum undatum*; (10, 904). These are the white, which is, and the dark, shell.

is loose. When it is in value three amount of one strands of 360 "fathoms" and

sklaces and for public transactions in different order or definite idea or confusion. White idea of peace, alone in ceremony and hostility.

tion of the Iroquois League when representatives sat at the great council to ratify the union of the Five Nations. The exact age of this belt is unknown, but General Carrington has said that (Beauchamp, '01, p. 411) it is "the official memorial of the organization of the Iroquois Confederacy, relating back to the middle of the 16th century." It is referred to (New York State Supreme Court, '00, p. 11) as a "belt of dark wampum beads representing the Confederation organization of the Five Nations under Hiawatha." General John S. Clark, a witness for the plaintiffs in the Thatcher case, is quoted as saying (New York State Supreme Court, '00, p. 59) "That it was made at the formation of the League representing the Five Nations united together by white lines through the central part of the Nations." The "reading" of this belt was made by Daniel and Thomas La Forte at Onondaga Castle, July 19 and August 1, 1898, as follows: (Beauchamp '01, p. 420) "One heart of the Five Nations—that if any hurt of any one animal would pierce that heart then they would all feel it—all of the Five Nations. This was in Hiawatha's belt. That they are a united people. This is the original Hiawatha belt—a record of the first agreement to make the League."

Under section 60 of the original Iroquois Code (Emblematical Union Compact) of the Great Binding Law, (Parker, '16, p. 47) reference is made to the interpretation of the designs on this belt:

The first of the squares on the left represents the Mohawk Nation and its territory; the second square on the left and the one near the heart, represents the Oneida Nation and its territory; the white heart in the middle represents the Onondaga Nation and its territory; and also means that the heart of the Five Nations is single in its loyalty to the Great Peace, that the Great Peace is lodged in the heart (meaning the Onondaga Confederate Lords), and that the Council Fire is to burn there for the Five Nations, and further, it means that the authority is given to advance the cause of peace whereby hostile nations out of the Confederacy shall cease warfare; the white square to the right of the heart represents the Cayuga Nation and its territory and the fourth and last square represents the Seneca Nation and its territory.

White shall here symbolize that no evil or jealous thoughts shall creep into the minds of the Lords while in council under the Great Peace. White the emblem of peace, love, charity and equity surrounds and guards the Five Nations.

In reversing the belt, the figure of the "heart" in the center assumes the appearance of a tree and at the same time brings the

geographical position of the Five Nations. A figure of a tree in the center of the belt represents the Nation as the Onondagas were the first to meet and it was under the Great Tree Council.

Re

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229, (third belt fig. 252; Holmes, '83, p. 252-53, pl. '09, p. 231, 254 (CI), pl. fac. p. 208; pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't of

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Size: length, 6 feet $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; a total of about 10,000 beads.

Acquired: May 24, 1927, Thatcher of Albany, N. Y.

Description: The symbolic figures of arms and clasped hands, extend from a figure of a house, from the center, a shelter for the man standing on the roof, be considered to be the Keepers of the Peace, respectively, of the Iroquoian Long Ears. The open door of the effigy of the Capitol Building. The other 13 original colonies, are joined in the designs are woven in the dark beaded field which denotes peace.

It is reputed as being unsupervised construction and it was the belt made by the keepers of the Onondaga Nation. The fact that during the presidency of Andrew Jackson as a covenant of peace between the United States and the Six Nations of the North was presented and the Six Nations of the North. A New York attorney, says (Beauchamp, '01, p. 411) as "the First Treaty of 1789 which is the basis of the treaties.

The above belt is referred to (Beauchamp, '00, p. 11) as "the First Treaty of 1789 and Gen. George Washington, p

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geographical position of the Five Nations in the correct order on the belt. A figure of a tree might well represent the Onondaga Nation as the Onondagas were designated to keep the Council Fire and it was under the Great Tree of Light that the nations met in council.

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229, (third belt); '01, p. 411-12, 416-17, 420, pl. 22, fig. 252; Holmes, '83, p. 252-53, pl. XL; Parker, '16, p. 11-12, 47; Reynolds, '09, p. 231, 254 (CI), pl. fac. p. 208; N. Y. State Supreme Court, p. 11, 53-59, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 471-72, pl. fac. p. 472.

Washington Covenant Belt

(Figure 20)

(Museum Catalog No. 37310)

Size: length, 6 feet 3½ inches; width, 5¼ inches; rows wide, 15; a total of about 10,000 beads.

Acquired: May 24, 1927, by bequest of Emma Treadwell Thacher of Albany, N. Y.

Description: The symbolic figures of 15 men with outstretched arms and clasped hands, extend along its length. In the center is a figure of a house, from the roof of which extends a protecting shelter for the man standing on either side. These two figures may be considered to be the Keepers of the East and West Doors, respectively, of the Iroquoian Long House and to be acting as guards to the open door of the effigy of the pale face house, or the National Capitol Building. The other remaining 13 figures, signifying the 13 original colonies, are joined in unity by the clasped hands. The designs are woven in the dark or purple beads on a solid white beaded field which denotes peace and friendship.

It is reputed as being unsurpassed in the excellence of its construction and it was the belt most highly prized by the wampum keepers of the Onondaga Nation. It is so called by reason of the fact that during the presidency of George Washington it was used as a covenant of peace between the 13 original states which he represented and the Six Nations of the Iroquois. Edward W. Paige, a New York attorney, says (Beauchamp, '01, p. 422) that this was the treaty of 1789 which is printed among the United States treaties.

The above belt is referred to (New York State Supreme Court, '00, p. 11) as "the First Treaty stipulated between the Six Nations and Gen. George Washington, picturing in wampum bead work the

Council House, General George Washington, the O-do-ta-ho, or President of the tribes, and 13 representatives of the Colonies." Again (op. cit., p. 60), General John S. Clark is quoted thus: "This was represented to be the belt that was made at the first treaty of the Five Nations with the general government at the time of the Revolutionary War, in which the 13 states are represented by human figures and the Five Nations are represented in the center. The 13 states represented as holding hands and connected with the central figure, who is To-do-da-ho, I suppose." A letter from Mr Thacher to Melvil Dewey, Secretary to the Board of Regents, written December 26, 1896 (op. cit., p. 5, 6) acknowledges that "the Washington belt is most interesting although far inferior in historical interest to the Hiawatha Belt" (Cat. No. 37309).

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229 (sixth belt); '01, p. 413, 422, pl. 22, fig. 248; Converse, '08, p. 143, pl. 10; Holmes, '83, p. 253, pl. XLII; N. Y. State Supreme Court, p. 5, 6, 11, 60, 75, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 471, 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Belt To Mark the Sight of the First Pale Faces

(Figure 21)

(Museum Catalog No. 37311)

Size: length, 28 inches; width, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; rows wide, 13.

Acquired: May 24, 1927, by bequest of Emma Treadwell Thacher of Albany, N. Y.

Description: It is woven on buckskin thongs with a purple background bearing four groups of three white-beaded diagonal lines. It was made by the Iroquois to commemorate "the first coming of the people with white faces" (Beauchamp, '01, p. 423). We do not know whether this refers to the first sight of Spaniards, French or Dutch. John Buck, who was an Onondaga chief and once wampum keeper, remarked that diagonal stripes across a belt were symbols of agreement that the tribe giving the belt would help the Six Nations in war. These were props, or supports, for the Long House; the symbol of the Confederacy. In this sense the diagonal lines may be considered to signify the willingness of support to the whites by the Indians.

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 230 (11th belt); '01, p. 415, 423, pl. 22, fig. 249; Holmes, '83, p. 253; Reynolds, '09, p. 231, 254 (B2); N. Y. State Supreme Court, p. 60, 81, 82, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

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Size: length, $39\frac{1}{2}$ inches; w

Acquired: May 24, 1927, by of Albany, N. Y.

Description: This belt is Parker Belt (37434) in the S are woven with purple-beaded hexagons equally spaced along i of an inch, are alternating row only apparent difference betwe the latter has three white strips four. The "reading," as give (Beauchamp, '01, p. 419) at C 1, 1898, is as follows: "Repr Nations. If a misfortune happ and one killed—to consider w misfortune—a tooth for a tooth watha belt. This belt is used v A label on this belt states that Samuel Champlain into the coun

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Beauchamp, '08, p. 229 (first belt) '83, p. 251-52, pl. XXXIX, fig. 2; State Supreme Court, p. 60, 81, pls. p. 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Penobscot

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Size: length, $22\frac{1}{2}$ inches; w

Acquired: by purchase in 19 York City.

Description: This is a dark p carries six double white diagon At the center is a small white s four white lines to form an X-sl It is reputed to have been mad sion of Penobscot Indians at Ol p. 109) believes the "X" in the c

Champlain Belt

(Figure 22)

(Museum catalog No. 37312)

Size: length, 39½ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 7.*Acquired:* May 24, 1927, by bequest of Emma Treadwell Thacher of Albany, N. Y.

Description: This belt is practically a duplicate of the Eli S. Parker Belt (37434) in the State Museum collection. Both belts are woven with purple-beaded backgrounds carrying five white hexagons equally spaced along its length. At each end, for the length of an inch, are alternating rows of white and purple beads, and the only apparent difference between this and the Parker Belt is that the latter has three white stripes at each end, while this one carries four. The "reading," as given by Daniel and Thomas La Forte (Beauchamp, '01, p. 419) at Onondaga Castle, July 19 and August 1, 1898, is as follows: "Represents a sorrow meeting of the Five Nations. If a misfortune happen: if little boys and girls were taken and one killed—to consider what should be done for remedy that misfortune—a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye. This is a Hiawatha belt. This belt is used when meeting of that kind is called." A label on this belt states that it commemorates the excursion of Samuel Champlain into the country of the Iroquois in 1609.

References

Beauchamp, '08, p. 229 (first belt); '01, p. 414, 419, pl. 22, fig. 251; Holmes, '83, p. 251-52, pl. XXXIX, fig. 2; Reynolds, '09, p. 231, 254 (B3); N. Y. State Supreme Court, p. 60, 81, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Penobscot Council Belt

(Figure 23)

(Museum catalog No. 37416)

Size: length, 22½ inches; width, 2½ inches; rows wide, 8.*Acquired:* by purchase in 1907 from Mr W. C. Hill of New York City.

Description: This is a dark purple belt made on hemp thread and carries six double white diagonal bars distributed along its length. At the center is a small white square, the corners of which radiate four white lines to form an X-shaped figure.

It is reputed to have been made by the Iroquois and in the possession of Penobscot Indians at Oldtown, Maine. A. C. Parker ('08, p. 109) believes the "X" in the center signifies that "it is a command

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and summons to a condolence council at Onondaga." The dark background may place it as originally used for condolences ceremonies.

References

Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Parker, '08, p. 108-9, pl. 49, fig. 1.

Fort Stanwix Treaty Belt

(Figure 24)

(Catalog No. 37415)

Size: length, 15½ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 7.

Acquired: donated to the Museum in 1918 by Mrs Abraham Lansing (Catherine Gansevoort Lansing) of Albany, N. Y.

Description: This belt bears six diagonal purple bars, or braces, arranged in pairs on a white background. White denotes peace and friendship while the diagonal bars are supports to the Long House, the symbol for the Confederacy of the Six Nations. It is made on buckskin thongs.

When the peace treaty between the Six Nations of the Iroquois and the United States was signed on October 22, 1784, at Fort Stanwix (site of Rome, N. Y.) this belt was made and used to record that event. It was once the property of General Peter Gansevoort and was presented to the Museum by his granddaughter, Mrs Abraham Lansing.

Reference

Parker, '19, p. 102.

Small Wampum of Unknown Origin

(Figure 25)

(Catalog No. 36514)

Size: length, 6½ inches; width, 2½ inches; rows wide, 7.

Description: Two purple circles on a white beaded field; woven on buckskin thongs.

Ransom Belt

(Figure 32)

(Catalog No. 37417)

Size: length, 24¾ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 6.

Acquired: through Mrs Harriet M. Converse.

Description: A partly mutilated purple beaded belt woven on thread and buckskin thongs. It carries five white diagonal stripes, one at each end and two at the center. On each side of the latter is a white open hexagon.

It was offered as a sign of r a condemned prisoner or murd when Mrs Converse obtained i by the youngest unmarried fen p. 428). Lewis H. Morgan re strings was the value of a life for the wampum was rather s crime with a petition for forg blood." It was the symbol f to intercede on behalf of pris

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Beauchamp, '01, p. 428, pl. 21, fig '08, p. 132-33; Parker, '08, pl. 30,

Lewis H

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Size: length, 27¾ inches; w

Acquired: in 1852, through J

Description: A comparative threads and bound at each end l condition and carries nine whit its length, with a small white o

This belt was made at Tona Morgan purchased (in October ada, from the daughter of J celebrated Mohawk war chief A. C. Parker remarks that it is clans and villages"; but its pri bears to the names of Brant an

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Beauchamp, '01, p. 386, pl. 21, fig '83, p. 251 (not accurate), pl. XXX p. 72 (not accurate), pl. 1, fig. 1 (n

Council

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Size: length, 25½ inches; v

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Description: This belt cons figures worked in purple on a

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It was offered as a sign of ransom by women to release and adopt a condemned prisoner or murderer. According to the title attached when Mrs Converse obtained it, this "could save a life if presented by the youngest unmarried female in the family" (Beauchamp, '01, p. 428). Lewis H. Morgan remarked that among the Iroquois "six strings was the value of a life, or the quantity sent in condonation, for the wampum was rather sent as a regretful confession of the crime with a petition for forgiveness, than as the actual price of blood." It was the symbol for the authority invested in women to intercede on behalf of prisoners.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 428, pl. 21, fig. 247; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, p. 132-33; Parker, '08, pl. 30, fig. 1.

Lewis H. Morgan Belt

(Figure 33)

(Catalog No. 37419)

Size: length, 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 7.

Acquired: in 1852, through Lewis H. Morgan.

Description: A comparatively recent dark purple belt made on threads and bound at each end by ribbon. This wampum is in perfect condition and carries nine white open diamond-shaped figures along its length, with a small white open square at one end.

This belt was made at Tonawanda, N. Y., from beads which Mr Morgan purchased (in October 1850) at Grand River, Ontario, Canada, from the daughter of Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea), the celebrated Mohawk war chief, to whom they formerly belonged. A. C. Parker remarks that it is "said to symbolize the peace between clans and villages"; but its principal value lies in the association it bears to the names of Brant and Morgan.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 386, pl. 21, fig. 241; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Holmes, '83, p. 251 (not accurate), pl. XXXVIII, fig. 1 (not accurate); Morgan, '52, p. 72 (not accurate), pl. 1, fig. 1 (not accurate); Parker, '08, pl. 30, fig. 2.

Council Summons Belt

(Figure 26)

(Catalog No. 37433)

Size: length, 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 7.

Acquired: June 29, 1898, through council action of the Onondaga Nation.

Description: This belt consists of four pairs of diamond-shaped figures worked in purple on a white beaded background. Near one

end is a purple rectangular patch 22 beads long, on which is figured a small white cross. The other end is somewhat mutilated but it partly reveals a purple diamond containing a white cross. The belt is made on buckskin thongs.

Doctor Beauchamp remarks there should be five pairs of diamond-shaped figures if it is to be considered an alliance belt given at a treaty between the Seven Nations of Canada and the Five Nations of the Iroquois before 1600, as stated by Thomas Donaldson. He records it as a recent belt, by reason of the fact that wampum of this nature was unknown in inland New York at so early a date. Thomas Webster, O-ya-ta-je-wah, the Onondaga wampum keeper in 1888, referred to it as an Iroquois League Admission Belt. Daniel and Thomas La Fort, Onondaga Indians, gave the following interpretation (Beauchamp: '01, p. 422) on July 19 and August 1, 1898, to E. W. Paige. "This belt was used to call a meeting of the Five Nations, at which should be read all the laws. This was made when Hi-a-wat-ha was traveling and distributing the clans, and this belt made to represent the nations were divided into clans, and were to remain strictly so—that there could be no intermarriage."

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229 (eighth belt); '01, p. 415, 422, pl. 20, fig. 239; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 1; Holmes, '83, p. 251-52; Parker, '08, pl. 22, fig. 1, pl. 24, fig. 2; '16, pl. 7, fig. 1; N. Y. State Supreme Court, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Treaty Belt

(Figure 27)

(Catalog No. 37421)

Size: length, 27 inches; width, $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches; rows wide, 6.

Acquired: June 29, 1898, through council action of the Onondaga Nation.

Description: A white Onondaga belt woven on twine. It carries four diagonal purple bars distributed along its length. These bars are formed by a series of six small purple rectangles which touch at opposite diagonal corners. Each rectangle is composed of ten purple beads which are half the length of the white beads. The belt originally had five diagonal bars when first seen by Doctor Beauchamp, who says ('01, p. 414) that it was then perfect and probably referred to the Five Nations of the Iroquois. The interpretation, as given by Thomas Donaldson when it had but the four bars, was: "A treaty when but four of the Six Nations were represented." In 1886 the Onondaga wampum keeper, Thomas Webster, said that it rep-

resented "the submission of a confederacy." Again, in 1898, the Onondaga Nation related that the Indians were accepted for membership by the Five Nations by diagonal bars on the belt representing the nations to keep it from falling (the "League of the Iroquois"). It is mutual among the nations.

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Beauchamp, '01, p. 414, 423, pl. 20, fig. 239; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 1; Parker, State Supreme Court, pl. fac. p. 57, p. 472.

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(Catalog No. 37421)

Size: length, $40\frac{3}{8}$ inches; width, $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

Acquired: June 29, 1898, through council action of the Onondaga Nation.

Description: A long narrow belt is strung on fine white thread. It is in perfect condition.

The traditional description does not mention that it carries the figure of the Confederacy at one end. It is other by a long single ribbon of purple beads (Beauchamp, '01, p. 414) of strangers to the councils of the Five Nations. The figure of a man before an open fire is the representation of an Indian.

The cross was sometimes used in referring to French Canada. It is more likely to have been made by the Moravians and the Onondagas.

Arthur C. Parker believes that the French missionary at Onondaga was the army from Canada and memorized the Five Nations. At the same time he was a French religion." As Doctor B.

resented "the submission of each tribe when they joined the Confederacy." Again, in 1898, Daniel and Thomas La Fort of the Onondaga Nation related that the belt was made when the St Regis Indians were accepted for membership in the League, and that the diagonal bars on the belt represented braces, or supports, to a house to keep it from falling (the "house" meaning the Long House, or the League of the Iroquois). In other words, the support would be mutual among the nations.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 414, 423, pl. 20, fig. 238; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 2; Parker, '08, pl. 22, fig. 2; '16, pl. 7, fig. 2; N. Y. State Supreme Court, pl. fac. p. 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Remembrance Belt

(Figure 28)

(Catalog No. 37423)

Size: length, 40 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; width, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; rows wide, 7.

Acquired: June 29, 1898, through council action of the Onondaga Nation.

Description: A long narrow purple pictographic belt. The beads are strung on fine white thread and woven over buckskin thongs. It is in perfect condition.

The traditional description does not seem to be appropriate in that it mentions that it carries the figure of a "Long House" (the symbol of the Confederacy) at one end, which is connected to a cross at the other by a long single ribbon of white beads. Donaldson's interpretation (Beauchamp, '01, p. 414) is more apt: "the guarded approach of strangers to the councils of the Five Nations" is shown by the figure of a man before an open diamond-shaped figure which could be the representation of an Indian Castle.

The cross was sometimes used to symbolize Canada, but instead of its referring to French Canada, Doctor Beauchamp thought "it is more likely to have been Moravian," as the Moravian Indians produced a somewhat similar belt in 1775 at the Grand Council of the Delawares and there was more or less intercourse between the Moravians and the Onondagas.

Arthur C. Parker believes the belt "records the treachery of a French missionary at Onondaga who sought to summon the French army from Canada" and memorizes the French invasion against the Five Nations. At the same time "it is an admonition against the French religion." As Doctor Beauchamp related, however, "the sole

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reason for the missionary theory is found in the cross terminating the white line which reaches the man's head toward the other end."

Thomas Webster's interpretation and record (Beauchamp, '01, p. 422) (inaccurate, but interesting) given at Onondaga in 1886 follows: "The priest told the Onondagas that a building right by the mission house—and told them that there were goods there stored for the Onondagas, but he could not open them until the king came, and a white boy who had been captured had been told by the priest that it was full of arms—and when the king came they would annihilate the Onondagas. The boy told the chief, and they held a council and resolved to open the building. The priest tried to keep them from it, but they opened the door in spite of him, and found the building full of arms. They heated an ax red hot, and hung it upon the priest's heart, and it burnt his heart out. The French did come, and the Onondagas met them at Camden, and defeated them in a great battle, and then the Onondagas all renounced Catholicism. It was between Pompey and Jamesville, about this side of Pompey Hill. Cross means Canada. The white line a road from Canada to the Onondagas and the village at the other end."

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229, (seventh belt); '01, p. 413-14, 422, pl. 20, fig. 237; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 3; Holmes, '83, p. 231-52, pl. XXXIX, fig. 3; Parker, '08, pl. 22, fig. 3, pl. 23, fig. 1; '16, pl. 7, fig. 3; N. Y. State Supreme Court, p. 54, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Caughnawaga Belt

(Figure 29)

(Catalog No. 37418)

Size: length, $31\frac{3}{8}$ inches; width, $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches; rows wide, 7.

Acquired: June 29, 1898, through council action of the Onondaga Nation.

Description: This is a white belt strung on twine thongs. It carries a series of seven purple crosses along its length with a purple zigzag pattern at one end.

Donaldson alluded to this belt in 1890 (Beauchamp, '01, p. 415) as embodying "the pledge of seven Canadian 'Christianized' nations to abandon their crooked ways and keep an honest peace." In 1886 Thomas Webster (Beauchamp, '01, p. 415) called it a "St Regis tribe belt, given to mark their submission to the power of the Six Nations, with a promise of peace." According to A. C. Parker, it records the secession of the St Regis and Caughnawaga Indians from the League and their removal to Canada; interpreting it as meaning,

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"Their path is not straight, they to the land of the cross."

Refer

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229 (fifth belt); '01, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 7, fig. 4; N. Y. State Supreme Court, p. 54, pl. fac. p. 472.

Seneca Cond

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(Catalog N

Size: length, 40 inches; width,

Acquired: through Mrs Harriet

Description: A dark purple belt bears the designs of two white diamond figure in white at one end.

Dark wampum belts were used ceremony of "raising up" new name place. The custom in these ceremonies do the mourning, while the opposite may be represented by the diamond figure may signify the spreading of "authority" or "power."

Mrs Harriet M. Converse, w Museum, said it once was held by Blacksnake.

Refer

Beauchamp, '01, p. 427-28, pl. 20, fig. 7, fig. 5; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 5; Parker, '08

Huron Allie

(Figure

(Catalog N

Size: length, $31\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width,

Acquired: through Mrs Harriet from Chief John Buck, Grand Ri

Description: A perfect white There are three diagonal purple bars. Each bar consists of three hollow corner.

Chief John Buck, Skan-a-wah-ti, Grand River Reservation (Ontario)

"Their path is not straight, they have forsaken the law and gone to the land of the cross."

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229 (fifth belt); '01, p. 415, 422, pl. 20, fig. 236; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 4; Parker, '08, pl. 22, fig. 4; '16, pl. 7, fig. 4; N. Y. State Supreme Court, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, pl. fac. p. 472.

Seneca Condolence Belt

(Figure 30)

(Catalog No. 37431)

Size: length, 40 inches; width, $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches; rows wide, 7.

Acquired: through Mrs Harriet M. Converse.

Description: A dark purple belt woven on buckskin thongs. It bears the designs of two white diamonds and a horizontal V-shaped figure in white at one end.

Dark wampum belts were used in mourning councils when the ceremony of "raising up" new names and sachems (hoyaneh) took place. The custom in these ceremonies dictated that one clan should do the mourning, while the opposite clan condoled. These two clans may be represented by the diamond figures, while the V-shaped figure may signify the spreading antlers or "horns," the emblem for "authority" or "power."

Mrs Harriet M. Converse, who procured this belt for the Museum, said it once was held by the well-known Seneca, Chief Blacksnake.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 427-28, pl. 20, fig. 235; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 5; Parker, '08, pl. 22, fig. 5, pl. 23, fig. 2; '16, pl. 7, fig. 5.

Huron Alliance Belt

(Figure 31)

(Catalog No. 37430)

Size: length, $31\frac{1}{2}$ inches; width, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; rows wide, 10.

Acquired: through Mrs Harriet M. Converse, who purchased it from Chief John Buck, Grand River, Canada.

Description: A perfect white belt woven on buckskin thongs. There are three diagonal purple bars distributed along the length. Each bar consists of three hollow purple squares placed corner to corner.

Chief John Buck, Skan-a-wah-ti, who was wampum keeper of the Grand River Reservation (Ontario, Canada) when Mrs Converse

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purchased this belt for the Museum, related that it had originally belonged to the Seneca Nation and since the American Revolution it had been removed to Canada. Mrs Converse believed "this belt may have been an affiliation between the Huron and some of their neighbors, the Wyandots, Quatoghies, Neuters, Ka-kwas or others." In 1650 the Hurons were overthrown by the Iroquois, and on this account it was at one time thought that these diagonal bars or "braces" may have referred to some such alliance previous to that date, but Doctor Beauchamp points to the fact that the Hurons seldom employed treaty belts at that time, and says "the belt, if Huron, may be assigned to their later days."

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 427, pl. 20, fig. 234; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. 9, fig. 6; Parker, '08, pl. 22, fig. 6; '16, pl. 7, fig. 6.

Wing, or Dust Fan of Council President

(Figure 34)

(Catalog No. 37420)

Size: length, 31½ inches; width, 14½ inches; rows wide, 50.

Acquired: 1898, through Rev. William M. Beauchamp.

Description: It is an Onondaga National Belt woven on buckskin thongs and is the widest wampum belt known. The design is composed of a series of ten connecting purple hexagon-shaped figures, on a white background; both of which are edged with a white and a purple line of beads.

Doctor Beauchamp has stated that the pattern and design are quite modern and that "it seems to represent an alliance, actual or proposed, and to be of the variety termed chain belts." It has been variously referred to as the "Wing," or "Dust Fan of the President of the Council" of the Six Nations; the "Wing Mat" used by the head man to shield him from the dust while presiding at the council; the "Second Belt used by the Principal Chief of the Six Nations." A. C. Parker refers to the design as representing "The Ever-growing Tree" which was the symbol of permanence of the Iroquois Confederacy, and says "It was displayed in confederate councils and was therefore sometimes called the 'Wing of the Chief Royaneh,' It was to protect the council and to keep the eyes of the 50 civil rulers free from dust. It was displayed whenever the League Constitution was recited."

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229 (fourth belt); '01, p. 412, 420, pl. 21, fig. 244; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, p. 141; Holmes, '83, p. 253; Parker, '08, pl. 25; '16, pl. 2; N. Y. State Supreme Court, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 471, 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

To-ta-da

(Figure 35)

(Catalog No. 37421)

Size: length, 27 inches; width, 14 inches.

Acquired: 1898, through Rev. William M. Beauchamp.

Description: A remarkably wide belt woven on buckskin thongs. This belt has a close appearance to the "Wing," or "Dust Fan," but may be contemporaneous, if not identical. The design consists of a series of large white circles on a dark background, which are regularly arranged over the length of the belt. It appears a chain of 14 small white circles on a dark background is made in white beads.

This is an Onondaga belt and son of the "Wing" belt. It is known to have been longer at one time, as at present. The design is represented as signifying a covenant between the Six Nations, "to be kept bright." The belt was used at the meetings of the Six Nations and, (Beauchamp, '01, p. 412) it was "the belt of the chief" at such meetings. It was placed in the hands of the Onondaga wampum keeper at Onondaga and is a comparatively modern belt.

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229, (second belt); '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. p. 141; Parker, '08, pl. 26; N. Y. State Supreme Court, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 471, 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Alliance

(Figure 36)

(Catalog No. 37422)

Size: length, 28 inches; width, 3 inches.

Acquired: June 29, 1898, through Rev. William M. Beauchamp, Onondaga Nation.

Description: A white beaded necklace containing six purple diagonal bars. The necklace is somewhat mutilated and when first shown at Auburn, N. Y., it contained several more bars. It may have contained a greater number of bars. A photograph of it then showed it to have been a necklace.

It has been incorrectly explained as the "Alliance" of the Tuscarora Nation into the Iroquois.

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'83, p. 253; Parker,
p. 56, 57, 104; U. S.

To-ta-da-ho Belt

(Figure 35)

(Catalog No. 37428)

Size: length, 27 inches; width, 14 inches; rows wide, 45.

Acquired: 1898, through Rev. William M. Beauchamp.

Description: A remarkably wide belt (the second widest known) woven on buckskin thongs. This belt is somewhat similar in general appearance to the "Wing," or "Dust Fan Belt" (cat. no. 37420) and may be contemporaneous, if not made by the same person. The design consists of a series of large overlapping purple triangles which are regularly arranged over the length. Along its central axis appears a chain of 14 small white open diamond-shaped figures. The background is made in white beads.

This is an Onondaga belt and sometimes termed the "Presidentia." It is known to have been longer at one time and bore 16, instead of 14, diamonds, as at present. The chain of diamonds has been represented as signifying a covenant, or a chain of friendship, always "to be kept bright." The belt was employed during council meetings of the Six Nations and, according to Thomas Webster, (Beauchamp, '01, p. 412) it was "the first belt used by the principal chief" at such meetings. It was placed in the custody of the Onondaga wampum keeper at Onondaga in 1847 and is considered a comparatively modern belt.

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 229, (second belt); '01, p. 412-13, pl. 19, fig. 232; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Converse, '08, pl. p. 119; Holmes, '83, p. 253, pl. XLI; Parker, '08, pl. 26; N. Y. State Supreme Court, p. 82, pl. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 471, 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Alliance Belt

(Figure 36)

(Catalog No. 37422)

Size: length, 28 inches; width, $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches; rows wide, 12.

Acquired: June 29, 1898, through council action of the Onondaga Nation.

Description: A white beaded national belt of the Onondagas, containing six purple diagonal bars, or braces, along its length. It is somewhat mutilated and when first seen by General John S. Clark of Auburn, N. Y., it contained seven of these diagonal bars, and it may have contained a greater number once, for General Clark's photograph of it then showed it to have been mutilated at both ends.

It has been incorrectly explained as commemorating the entrance of the Tuscarora Nation into the League of the Iroquois in 1713.

As the belt once bore seven bars, this interpretation may be eliminated for the reason that the Tuscaroras were the sixth nation to enter the League.

The use of diagonal bars on a belt signified support to the Long House, the symbol for the League.

References

Beauchamp, '80, p. 230 (ninth belt); '01, p. 414, 422, pl. 21, fig. 240; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Parker, '08, pl. 27, fig. 2; '16, pl. 8, fig. 2; N. Y. State Supreme Court, pls. fac. p. 56, 57, 104; U. S. Dep't Interior, p. 472, pl. fac. p. 472.

Wolf Belt

(Figure 37)

(Catalog No. 37429)

Size: length, 32½ inches; width, 4¾ inches; rows wide, 14.

Acquired: July 24, 1898, by Mrs Harriet M. Converse from a St Regis Indian.

Description: This is a pictographic National Belt of the Mohawks. In the center are two human figures joined by clasped hands. Near and facing each end is the effigy of a wolf and at the extreme ends are seven short purple horizontal stripes which alternate with seven white stripes. These stripes are practically eliminated at one end by partial mutilation. The belt is made on buckskin thongs.

The seven purple stripes, according to Mrs Harriet M. Converse, represent seven nations. The central figures denote friendly relationship between the white man and Indian; the white beaded background indicates peace, while the wolves are an insinuation of guardianship of this peace and friendship. It has been mentioned that wolves symbolize the keepers of the east and west door of the Long House, but Beauchamp infers some doubt as to this by taking issue with John Buck's statement that "the hereditary keeper of the eastern door of the Long House was a wolf."

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 427, pl. 19, fig. 229; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Parker, '08, pl. 27, fig. 1; '16, pl. 8, fig. 1.

Five Nations Alliance Belt

(Figure 38)

(Catalog No. 37424)

Size: length, 16¼ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 7.

Acquired: through Mrs Harriet M. Converse, who obtained it on June 23, 1899, from the heirs of Mary Jemison (the white captive of the Senecas), who once held this belt in her custody.

Description: This is a dark purple thongs which are double along the open white diamond-shaped figures.

The name given this belt was diamond-shaped figures. Doctor thought that he had seen the remainder measured 24 inches in length I thought (Beauchamp, '01, p. 40, "according to the old law" for present or important captive. She tionally rare and has no duplicate was "used to signify the voice of national affair" and that the removal from the belt was caused by the Confederacy to some proposal add

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 406-7, pl. 21, Parker, '08, pl. 29, fig. 1.

Gyantwaka

(Figure 39)

(Catalog No. 37425)

Size: length, 7¼ inches; width, 2 inches.

Acquired: on the Cornplanter through the efforts of Mrs Harriet Converse.

Description: A short fragment woven solely in purple beads.

This is a portion of the belt given to the Senecas (Gyantwaka) when the treaty of 1764 was consummated. At the time of the Seneca war was divided among his heirs and taken into burial and council strings and Mrs Converse said of it: "This remnant of the treaty, and is a record of the Cornplanter's name and mark head the the treaty and belt were given to the Senecas."

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 407-8, pl. 21, Parker, '08, pl. 29, fig. 2.

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Description: This is a dark purple belt woven on fine buckskin thongs which are double along the edges. It has a series of three open white diamond-shaped figures.

The name given this belt was applied when it contained five diamond-shaped figures. Doctor Beauchamp related ('01, p. 406) that he had seen the remainder of this belt and estimated that it measured 24 inches in length before mutilation. Mrs Converse thought (Beauchamp, '01, p. 407) that the belt had been divided "according to the old law" for purposes of ransoming some prominent or important captive. She remarked that "this belt is exceptionally rare and has no duplicate." A. C. Parker believes that it was "used to signify the voice of the Confederacy in some international affair" and that the removal of the two diamond figures from the belt was caused by the dissension of two nations of the Confederacy to some proposal advanced in a council meeting.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 406-7, pl. 21, fig. 243; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Parker, '08, pl. 29, fig. 1.

Gyantwaka Treaty Belt

(Figure 39)

(Catalog No. 37432)

Size: length, $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches; width, $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches; rows wide, 10.

Acquired: on the Cornplanter Reservation (Pa.) in June 1899, through the efforts of Mrs Harriet M. Converse.

Description: A short fragment made on buckskin thongs and woven solely in purple beads.

This is a portion of the belt given to the civil chief, Cornplanter (Gyantwaka) when the treaty of the Cornplanter Reservation was consummated. At the time of Cornplanter's death in 1836, the belt was divided among his heirs and these portions have been broken up into burial and council strings and variously scattered. Mrs Converse said of it: "This remnant has never been separated from the treaty, and is a record of the history of the Five Nations. Cornplanter's name and mark head the list of the chiefs who signed, and the treaty and belt were given to him to preserve for his people."

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 407-8, pl. 21, fig. 245; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Parker, '08, pl. 29, fig. 2.

Cornplanter Condolence Belt

(Figure 40)

(Catalog No. 37426)

Size: length, 36½ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 7.*Acquired:* through Mrs Harriet M. Converse.

Description: A long, narrow, somewhat mutilated belt made entirely of purple beads strung on fine buckskin thongs which are double and twisted along the edges. It once may have carried five white designs of some nature in the now regularly distributed gaps along its length.

It was the personal belt of the once noted Seneca civil chief, Cornplanter. The demonstration of sorrow was portrayed by dark wampum and was conveyed by this belt when exhibited during the ritualistic ceremonies performed for deceased sachems.

In obedience to a dream, Cornplanter destroyed all of his personal effects except this belt and a tomahawk (also in the State Museum). He resigned his title in favor of an Indian by the name of Canada who resided on the Tonowanda Reservation and when this successor was installed in office he received these two tokens.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 406, pl. 19, fig. 230; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 16; Parker, Arthur C., '08, pl. 29, fig. 3; Parker, Eli S., '51, p. 100-1.

General Eli S. Parker Belt

(Figure 41)

(Catalog No. 37434)

Size: length, 37¾ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 7.*Acquired:* In 1899, through Mrs Harriet M. Converse.

Description: This fine belt is woven with a purple beaded background bearing five white open hexagons equally spaced along its length. At each end there are three short white stripes. It is almost identical with the Onondaga belt (cat. no. 37312) received from the Thacher estate, except that the latter carries four short white horizontal stripes at each end. It is made on buckskin thongs which are twisted double on the edges.

The five white hexagons have reference to the Five Nations; and from the notes and comments concerning this belt written by Mrs Converse at the time when she obtained it for the State in 1899, we learn that it is a "Five council fires, or death belt of the Five Iroquois Nations, or the confederacy of the Iroquois." "This belt," she continues, "I value perhaps more than any other in the possession of

the State, inasmuch as the de keepers of the east and west one was always held by the Do door, the Seneca Nation, who the watcher and army guard of the east door should have its death or war against some of sent to the east door, the Hud war of each of the nations, C and Mohawks, till returned by war must begin at once. It mination, or absorption by ad whichever they decided on. T decorated at the time of its jou

"In 1845 the Senecas aban one surviving portion of the bo the actual proprietors of the d Donehogawah, General Eli S. to his daughter. By the conser the State. To the Tonawanda have been at peace for more quished their title to it when t pum to The University of the precious relic will now forever request that the name of Gener in his memory, not only as the but as the last 'keeper of the Iroquois."

In this connection, it may Parker, as military secretary to engrossed the terms on which

Beauchamp, '01, p. 404-5, pl. 19, '08, pl. 29, fig. 4.

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Size: length, 24¼ inches;

Acquired: through Mrs H 1882 from Martha Hemlock, : had then had it for 60 years.

the State, inasmuch as the death belts were in the custody of the keepers of the east and west doors of the Ho-de-ne-sau-neh. This one was always held by the Do-ne-ho-ga-wah, the keeper of the west door, the Seneca Nation, who were the guardian of the west door, the watcher and army guard of the confederacy. The Mohawks of the east door should have its mate in Canada. This belt signified death or war against some other nation or nations. When it was sent to the east door, the Hudson river, it was held in the council of war of each of the nations, Cayugas, Oneidas, Onondagas, Senecas and Mohawks, till returned by the latter, which signal was that the war must begin at once. It represented death or absolute extermination, or absorption by adding to the numbers of the Iroquois, whichever they decided on. The red paint, with which it was always decorated at the time of its journeys may be seen on it now."

"In 1845 the Senecas abandoned the tribal government, and the one surviving portion of the body—the Tonawanda Senecas—became the actual proprietors of the death belt. During the lifetime of the Donehogawah, General Eli S. Parker, he held it, and bequeathed it to his daughter. By the consent of his widow I have procured it for the State. To the Tonawandas it was of no material value, as they have been at peace for more than a century; therefore they relinquished their title to it when they ratified the transfer of the wampum to The University of the State of New York last June. This precious relic will now forever remain with the State, and it is my request that the name of General Eli S. Parker shall be attached to it in his memory, not only as the most distinguished of his later people, but as the last 'keeper of the west door' of the confederacy of the Iroquois."

In this connection, it may be interesting to note that General Parker, as military secretary to General Grant during the Civil War, engrossed the terms on which General Lee surrendered.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 404-5, pl. 19, fig. 231; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Parker, '08, pl. 29, fig. 4.

Nomination Belt

(Figure 42)

(Catalog No. 37427)

Size: length, 24¼ inches; width, 3 inches; rows wide, 9.

Acquired: through Mrs Harriet M. Converse, who obtained it in 1882 from Martha Hemlock, an old Cattaraugus Seneca Indian, who had then had it for 60 years.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Description: It is a pictographic Seneca National Belt woven with a white beaded background on buckskin thongs. Six purple beaded human figures, joined by extended arms, are distributed along its length. Between the two central figures is a purple square, to denote the council fire.

This Nomination Belt is so called because it was the document of authorization to Iroquois women giving them the right to choose, nominate and confirm the "raising up" of the 50 sachems, or civil chiefs (Ho-di-ya-ne-sho-onh) of the Confederacy.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 428, pl. 21, fig. 246; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Parker, '08, pl. 28, fig. 1; '16, pl. 4, fig. 1.

Hospitality, or Welcome Belt

(Figure 43)

(Catalog No. 37425)

Size: length, 22 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches; width, 2 inches; rows wide, 6.

Acquired: through Mrs Harriet M. Converse, who obtained it in 1898 on the Grand River Reservation, Ontario, Canada.

Description: This is a Canadian Mohawk belt made on thread and buckskin thongs. It has three diagonal purple beaded bars, or "braces," distributed equidistantly over its white beaded background. The central portion has been partly mutilated.

The "braces" infer an extension of friendship by the presiding officer to visiting delegates to the League Councils.

References

Beauchamp, '01, p. 428, pl. 21, fig. 242; Clarke, '16, pl. fac. p. 10; Parker, '08, pl. 28, fig. 2; '16, pl. 4, fig. 2.

The Museum of the American Indian has 37 belts in its collection. The New York State Museum collection consists of 25 belts with much more complete information concerning them, which correspondingly enhances to a greater extent their historical value. The United States National Museum regards the New York State Museum collection with "preeminence" in comparison to the three belts in its collection. Now, with the recent bequest of the Thacher estate of four valuable belts, the New York State Museum collection of wampums may be considered to excel any other of this nature.

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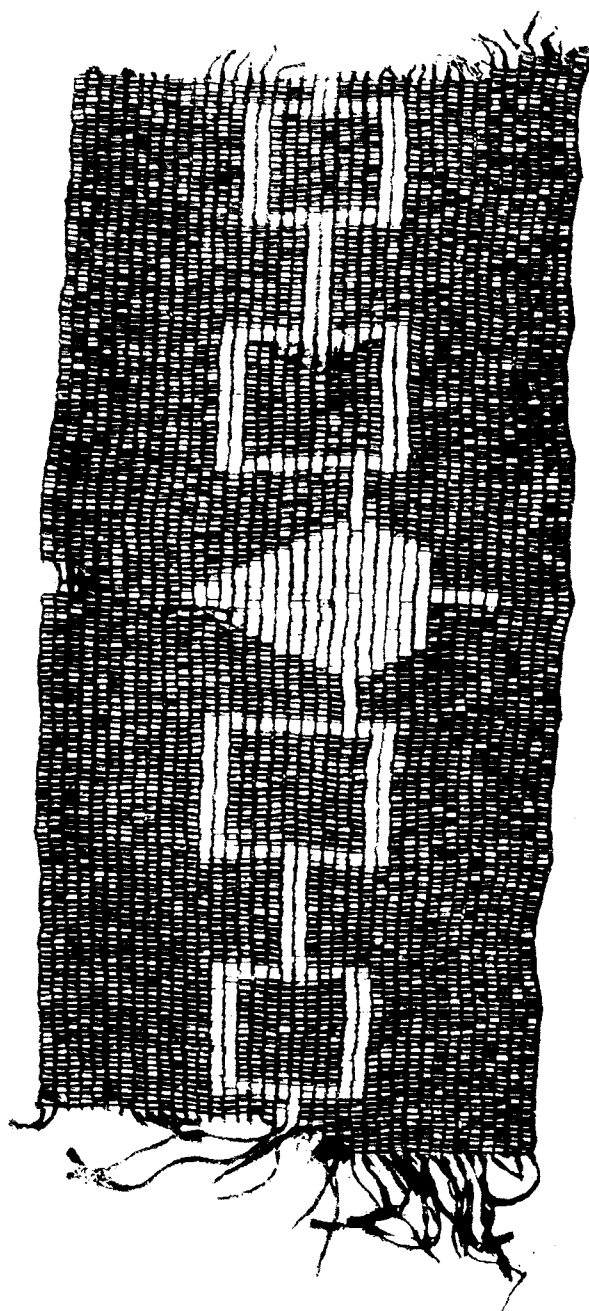


FIGURE 19 The Hiawatha Belt. Considered the original record of the formation of the Iroquois League of the Five Nations.
It is one of the most important and valuable wampum belts in existence.

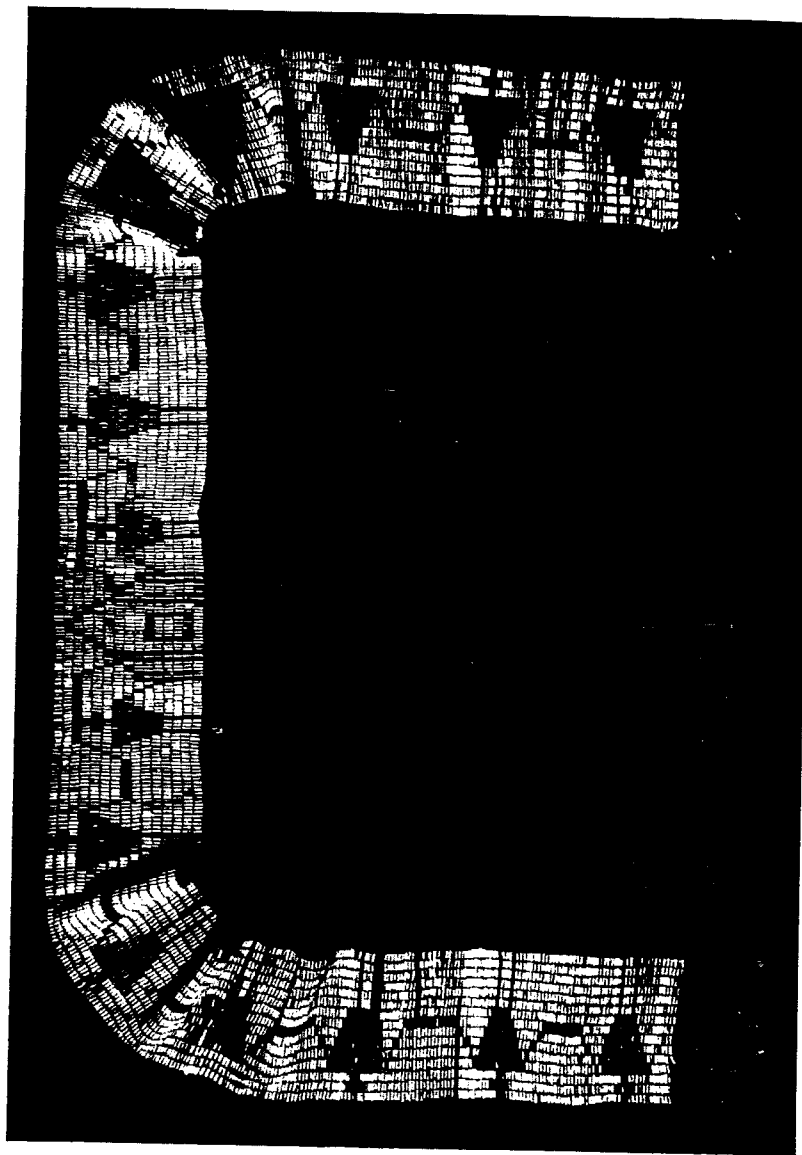


FIGURE 20 The Washington Covenant Belt. Used during the Presidency of George Washington as a covenant of peace between the 13 original colonies and the Six Nations of the Iroquois. This is one of the finest examples of workmanship of this nature.

FIGURE 20 The Washington Covenant Belt. Used during the Presidency of George Washington as a covenant of peace between the 13 original colonies and the Six Nations of the Iroquois. This is one of the finest examples of workmanship of this nature.

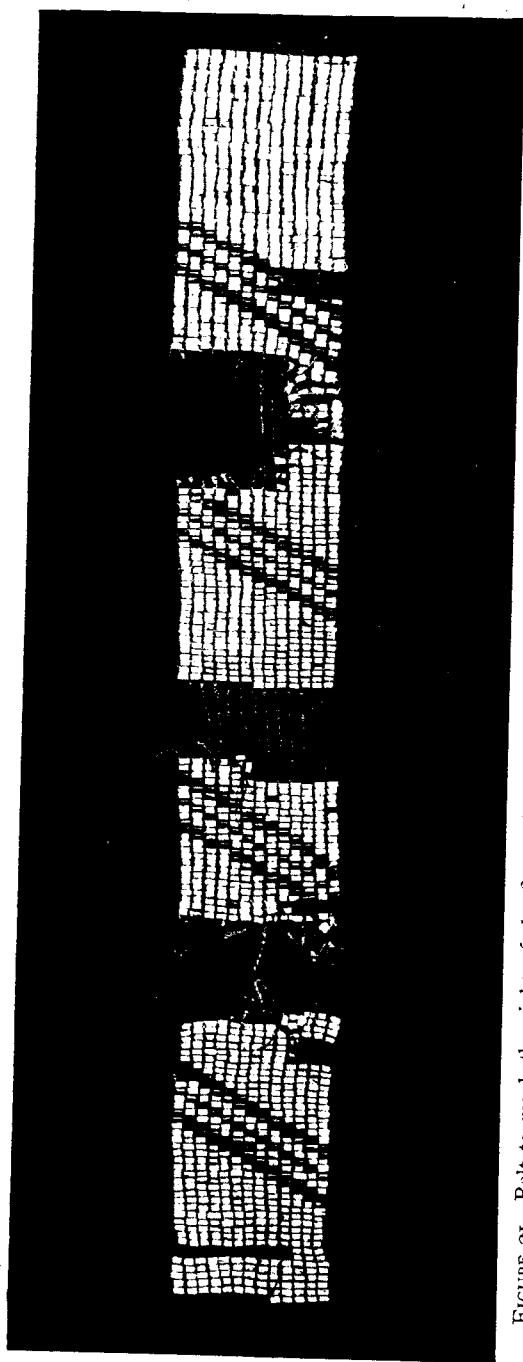


FIGURE 21 Belt to mark the sight of the first pale faces. The purple diagonal lines were used to signify agreement and were symbols of props, or supports, to the Long House of the Iroquois.

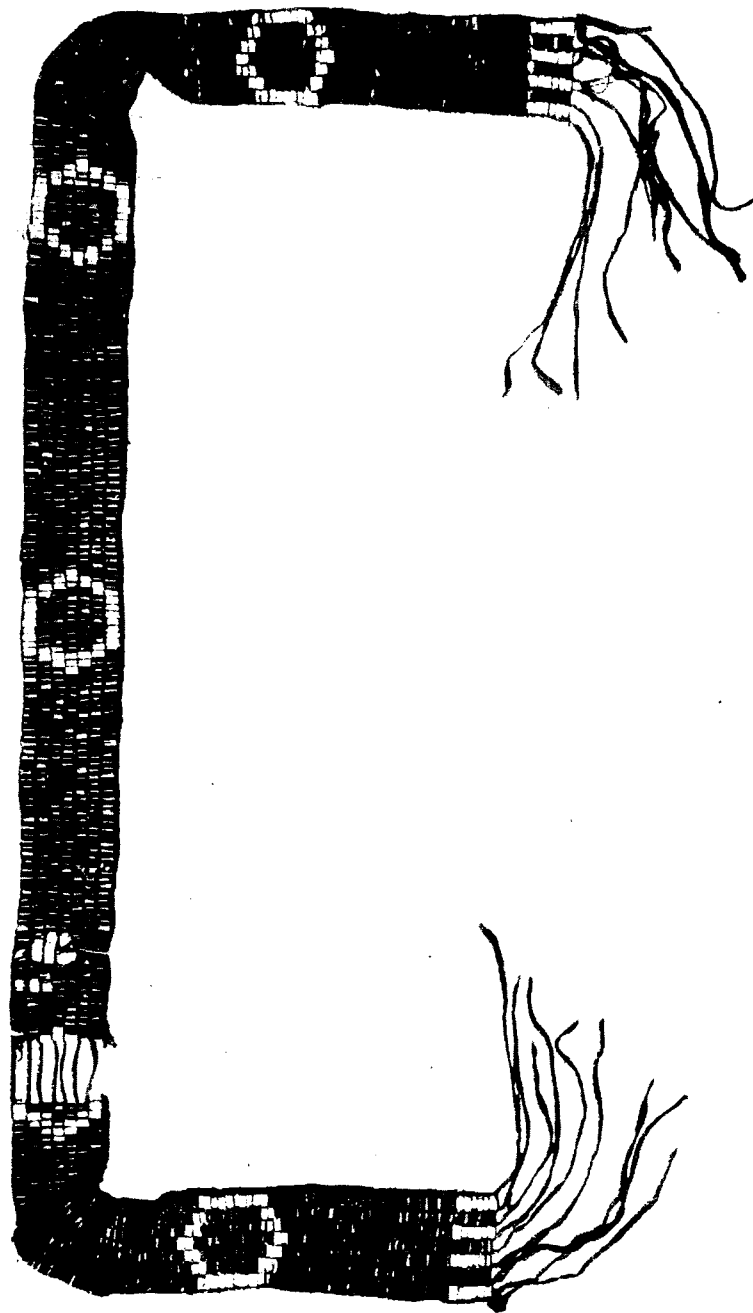


FIGURE 22 The Champlain Belt. The five white circles symbolized the Five Nations of the Iroquois into whose country Champlain penetrated in 1609.

FIGURE 22 The Champlain Belt. The five white circles symbolized the Five Nations of the Iroquois into whose country Champlain penetrated in 1609.

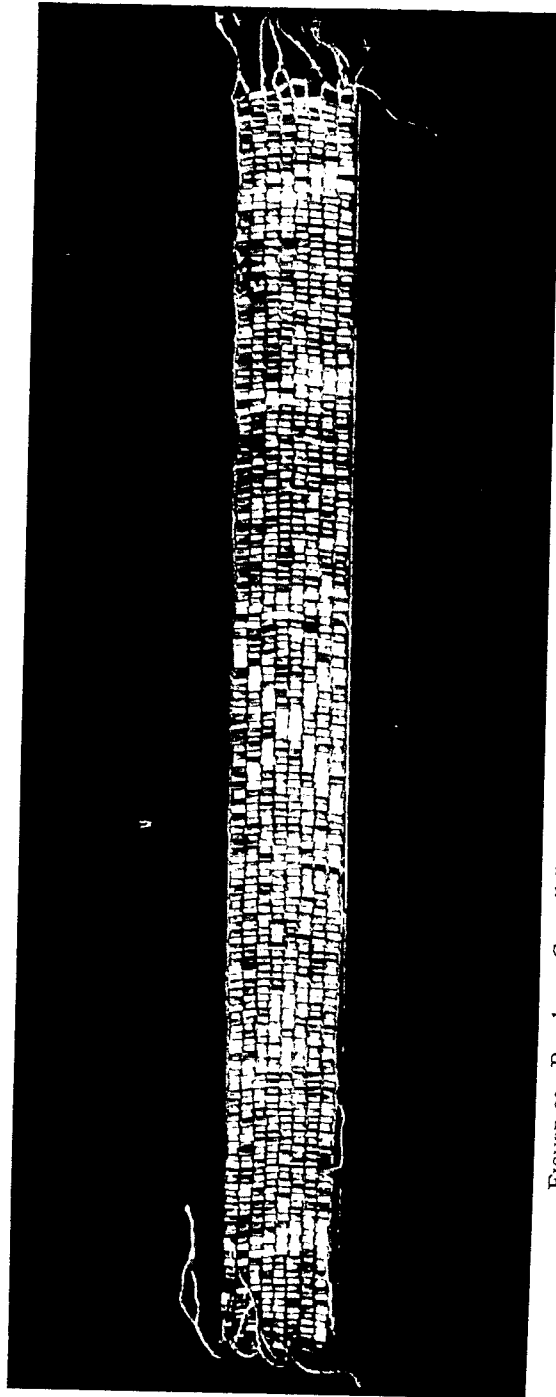
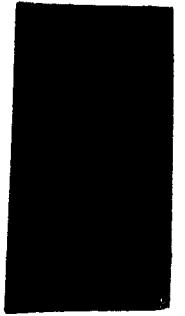


FIGURE 23 Penobscot Council Belt. Used to symbolize the authority for the council's action.



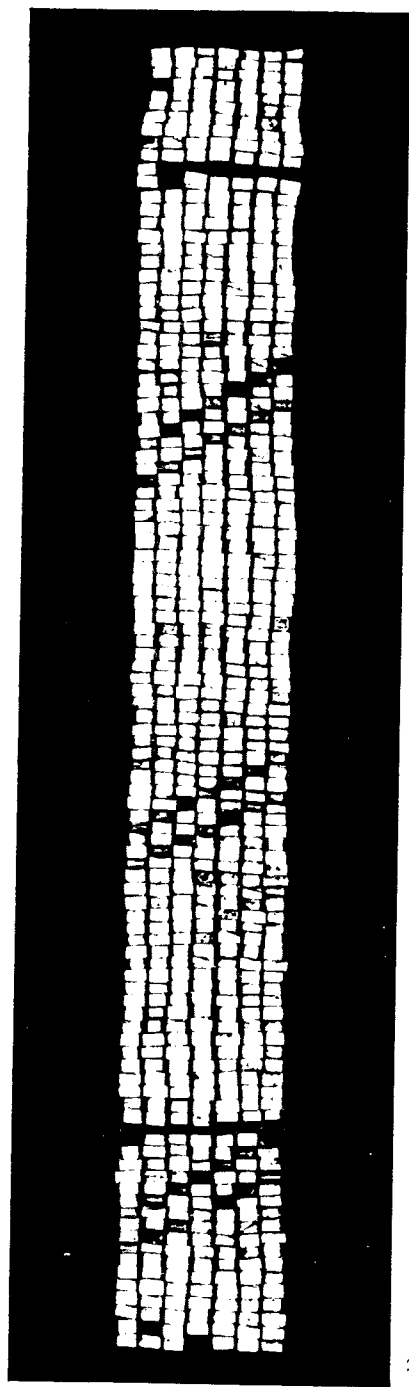
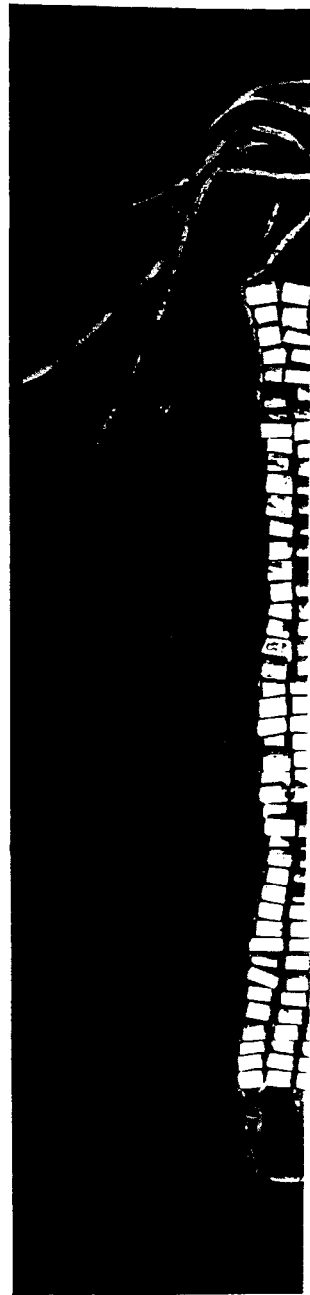


FIGURE 24. Fort Stanwix Treaty Belt. Passed at the signing of the treaty between the Six Nations and the United States at Fort Stanwix on October 22, 1784. Presented to the Museum by Catherine Gansevoort (Mrs Abraham Lansing) of Albany in 1918.



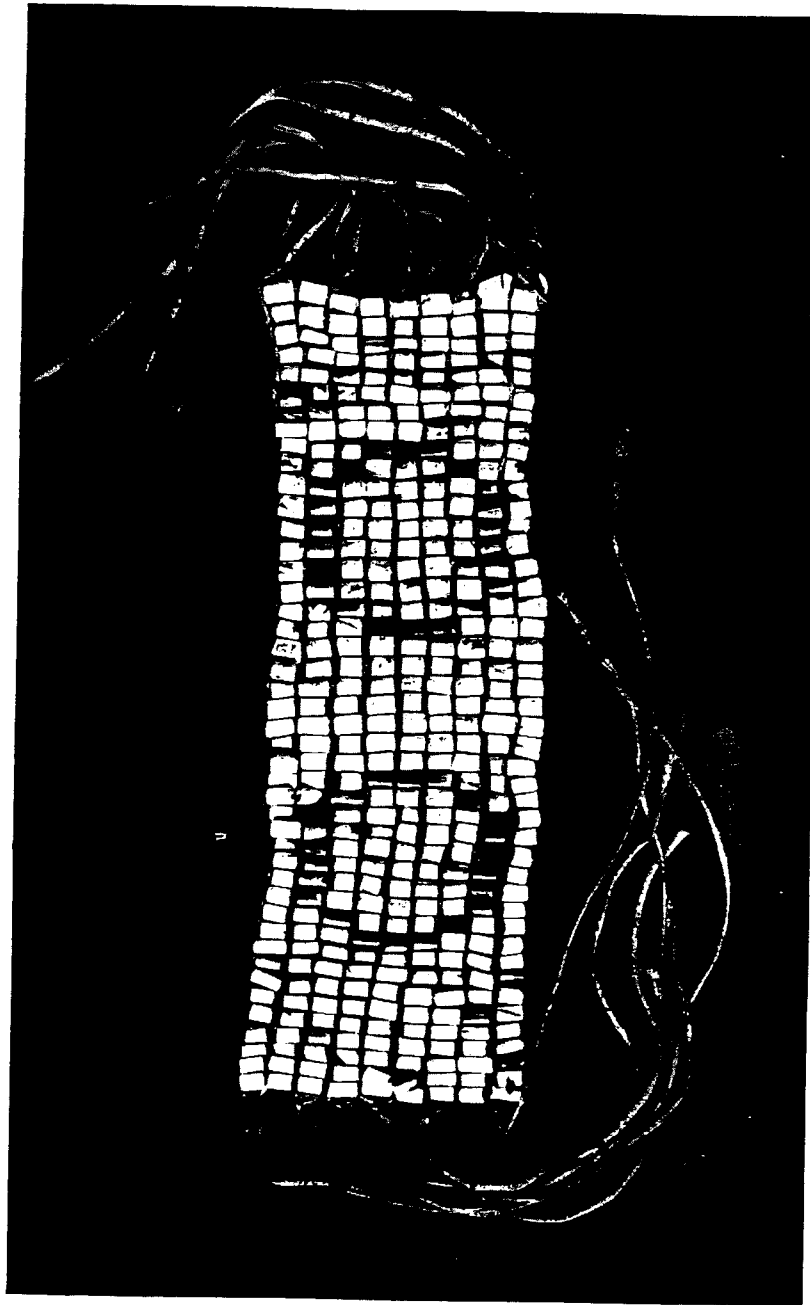


FIGURE 25 Small wampum of unknown origin.

- FIGURE 26 Council Summons Belt. Used in calling a meeting of various clans. It has been referred to as an alliance between the Iroquois and the Seven Nations of Canada.
- FIGURE 27 Treaty Belt. Signifying "friendship" by its white background, and "support" by the diagonal bars, of which it originally had five.
- FIGURE 28 Remembrance Belt. Various interpreted as signifying some treachery. The cross was used, on occasion, to signify French Canada. In this instance it possibly denotes a guarded path to the council fire.
- FIGURE 29 Caughnawaga Belt. To commemorate the event of these Indians joining the St Regis Indians on a Christian basis, leaving forever their crooked path for that of the cross.
- FIGURE 30 Seneca Condolence Belt. Dark-beaded belts conveyed the idea of sorrow. This was used in mourning councils by the Senecas when new names and sachems were "raised up."
- FIGURE 31 Huron Alliance Belt. Commemorating an affiliation with a neighboring tribe. It became a Seneca belt in 1650 and was removed to Canada after the American Revolution.

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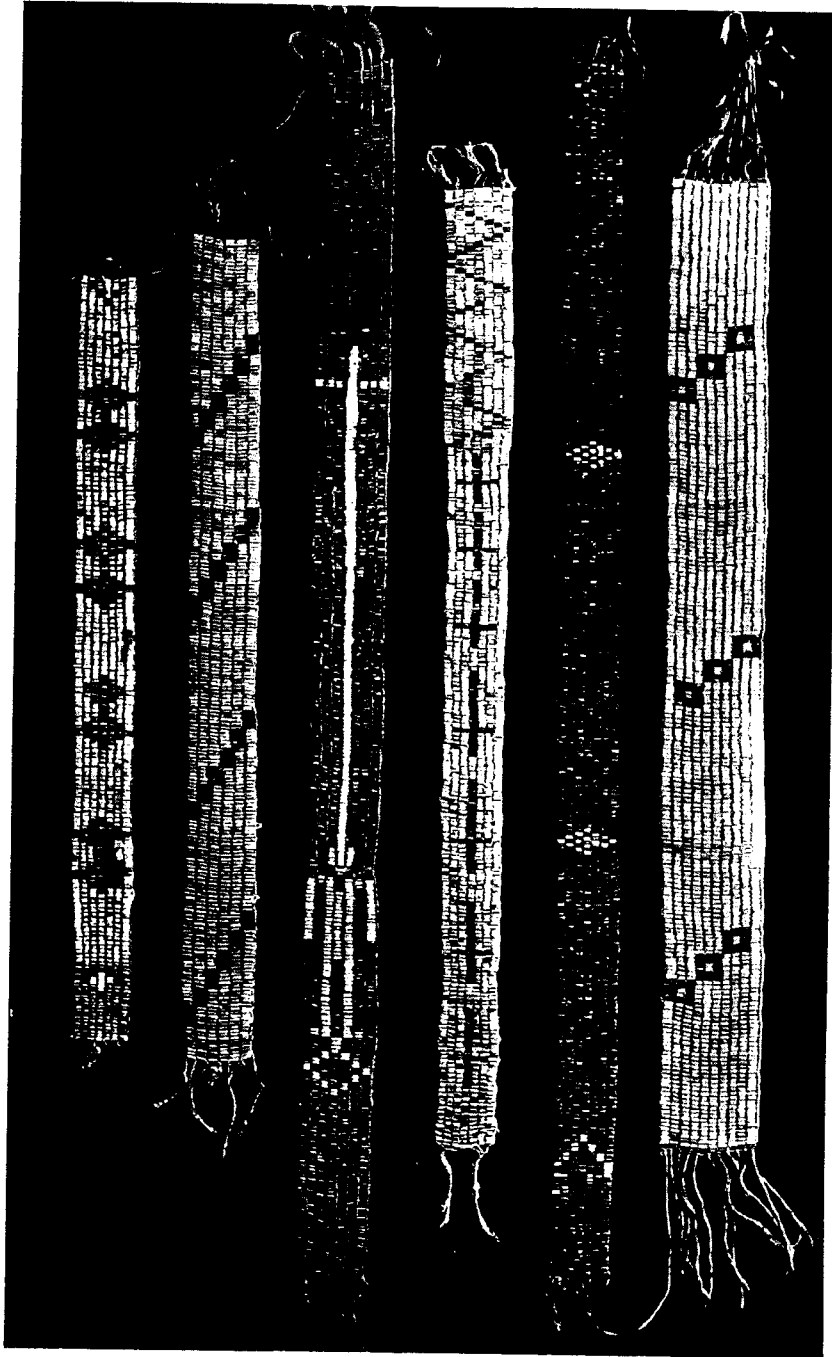
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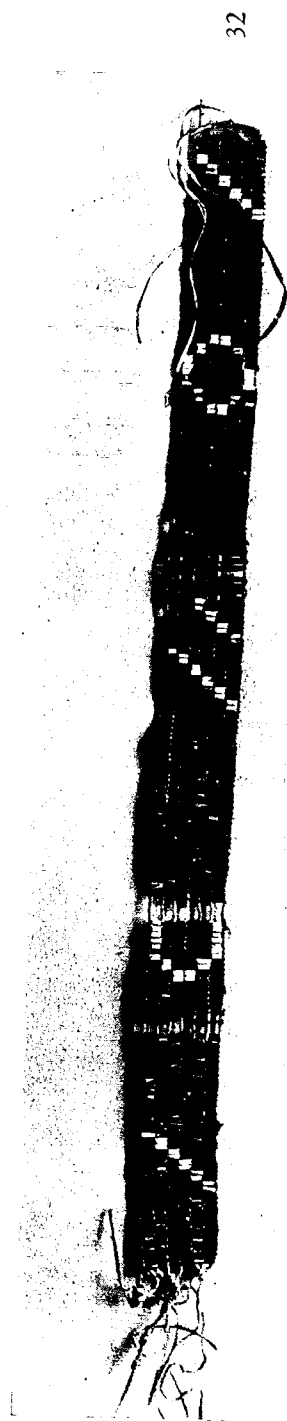
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FIGURE 32 Ransom Belt. It was a symbol for the authority invested in women to intercede on behalf of prisoners.
FIGURE 33 Lewis H. Morgan Belt. Made in 1850 from beads once in the possession of the celebrated Mohawk war chief, Joseph Brant.

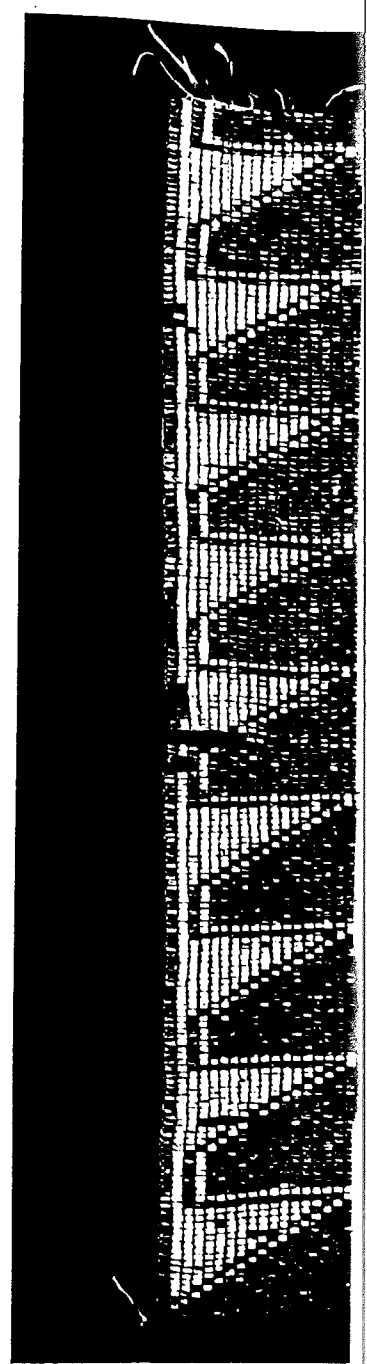


FIGURE 32 Ransom Belt. It was a symbol for the authority invested in women to intercede on behalf of prisoners.
 FIGURE 33 Lewis H. Morgan Belt. Made in 1850 from beads once in the possession of the celebrated Mohawk war chief, Joseph Brant.

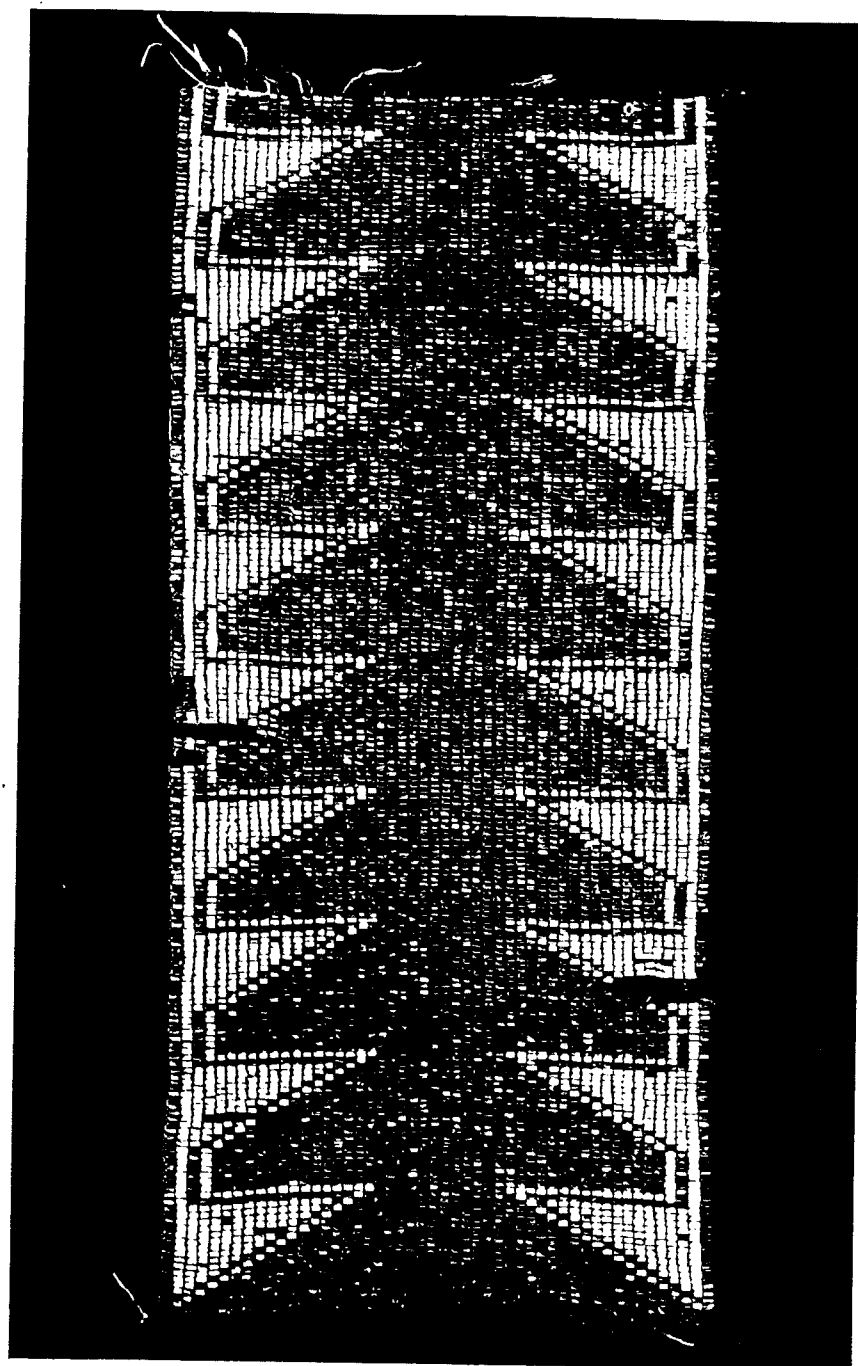


FIGURE 34 Wing, or Dust Fan of Council President. The Ever-growing Tree which was displayed whenever the constitution of the Six Nations was recited. The widest belt known to exist.

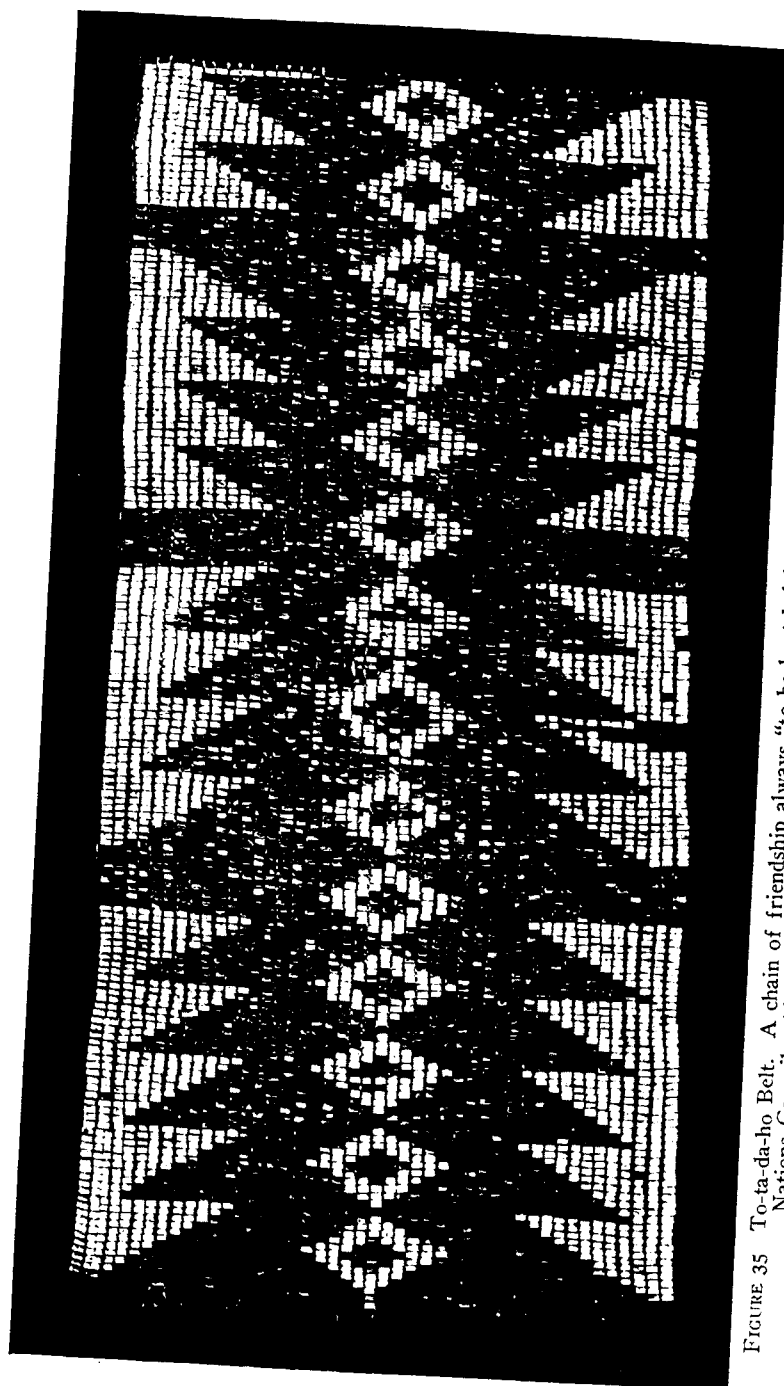


FIGURE 35 To-ta-da-ho Belt. A chain of friendship always "to be kept bright." Displayed by the principal chief at the Six Nations Council. Also called the Presidentia and is the second widest belt known to exist.

FIGURE 35 To-ta-da-ho Belt. A chain of friendship always "to be kept bright." Displayed by the principal chief at the Six Nations Council. Also called the Presidentia and is the second widest belt known to exist.

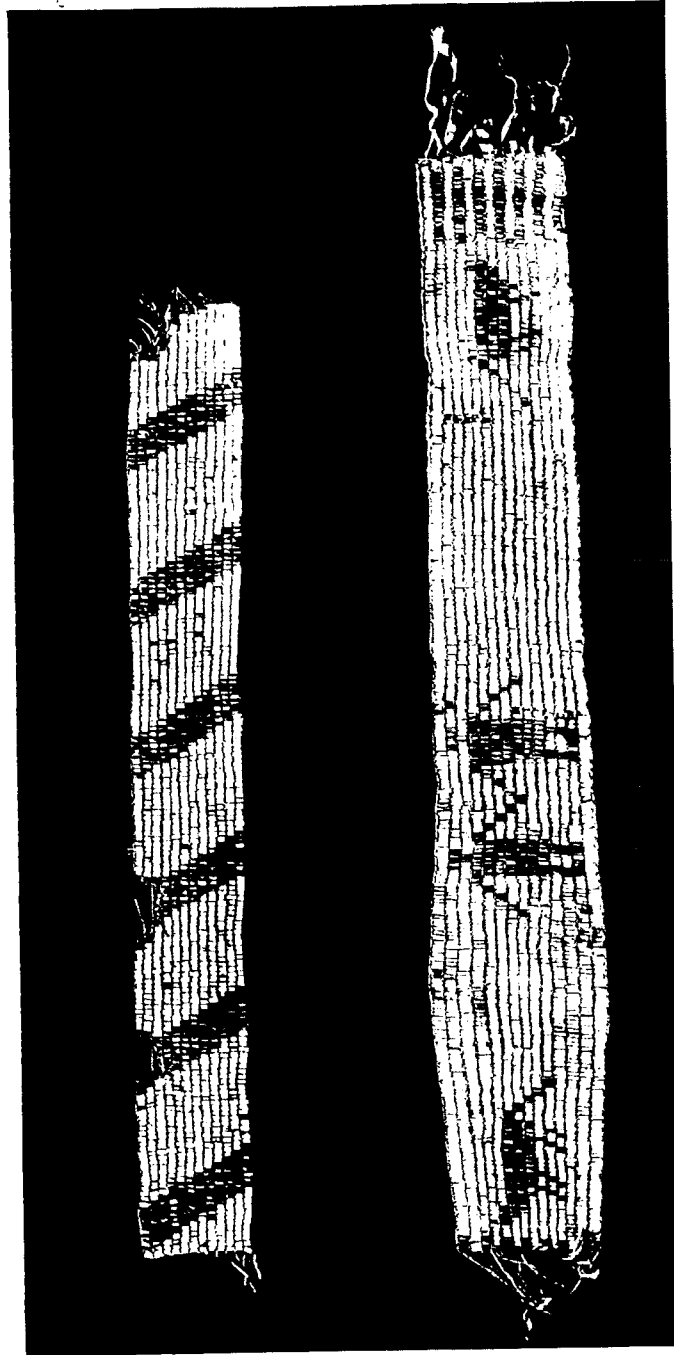


FIGURE 36 Alliance Belt. Once thought to have marked the admittance of the Tuscaroras in 1713 to the League of the Five Nations. It, however, originally contained seven diagonal bars instead of six.

FIGURE 37 Wolf Belt. A Mohawk National Belt. The white background and central figures denote peace and friendship; guarded by wolves at either end.

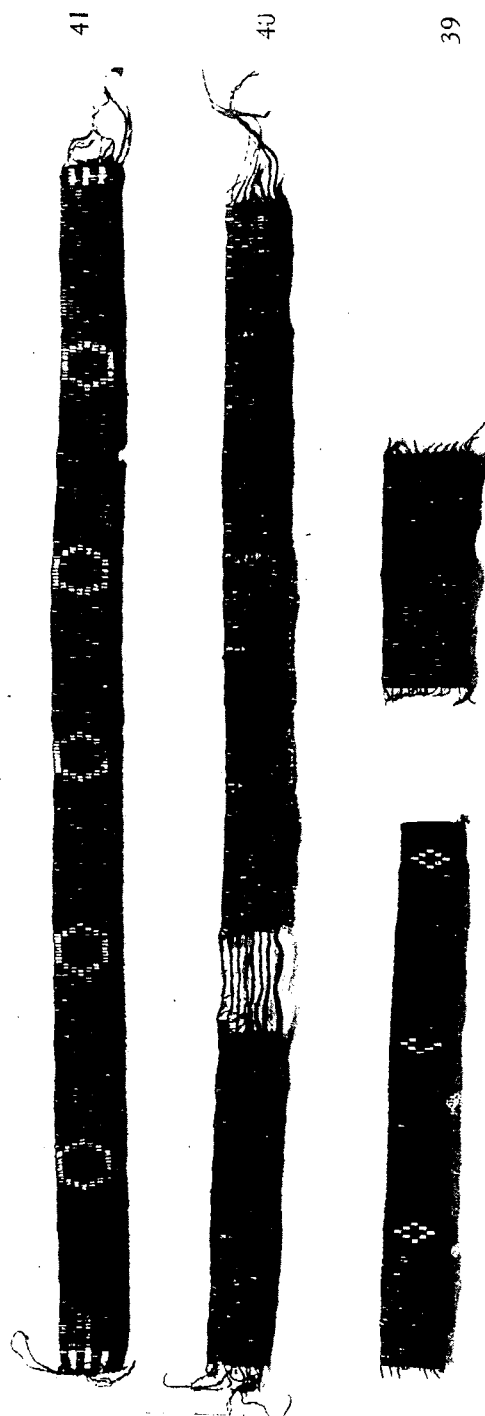


FIGURE 38 Five Nations Alliance Belt. Said to have been in the custody of Mary Jemison (the white captive of the Senecas). Originally had five diamond-shaped figures and possibly divided because of the nonagreement of two nations at a council meeting.

FIGURE 39 Gyantwaka Treaty Belt. A portion of a much longer belt which was given to the Seneca chief Cornplanter, when the treaty of the Cornplanter Reservation was consummated.

FIGURE 40 Cornplanter Condolence Belt. Personal belt of the noted Seneca civil chief Cornplanter. Mourning was indicated by purple beads and such a belt was exhibited at ceremonial rites for deceased sachems.

FIGURE 41 General Eli S. Parker Belt. Held by the Keeper of the West Door, or Do-ne-ho-ga-wa, of the Long House.

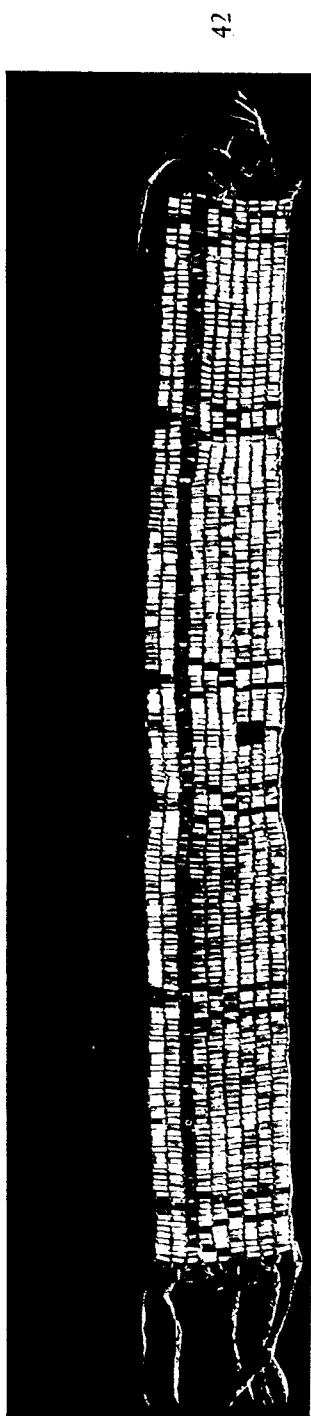


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FIGURE 42 Nomination Belt. Used by Seneca women in their power to choose, nominate and confirm the "raising up" of civil chiefs.

FIGURE 43 Hospitality, or Welcome Belt. Reputed to be a Canadian Mohawk belt used by the presiding officer in welcoming visiting delegates to the council.

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Curator of Fossil Fishes
Curator of Ornithology
Curator of Minerals

New York State Museum Bulletin

Published by The University of the State of New York

Hudson

Appointments

Assistant Geologist
Assistant Geologist
Assistant Geologist
Assistant Geologist
Assistant Geologist
Assistant Zoologist
Assistant Botanist
Assistant Historian

No. 288

ALBANY, N. Y.

July 1931

NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM

CHARLES C. ADAMS, *Director*

TWENTY-FOURTH REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE DIVISION OF SCIENCE AND THE STATE MUSEUM

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State Museum may return wampum

By Kyle Hughes

Capitol bureau

ALBANY — The State Museum moved a step closer Tuesday to returning a priceless collection of 12 wampum belts to the Onondaga Indian nation near Syracuse, a historic decision that would end a trusteeship dating back to 1898.

"If it happens, it will be the most significant return of communal (Indian) property that has occurred in the museum world nationally," Museum Director Martin Sullivan said.

On Tuesday, Education Commissioner Thomas Sobel and Sullivan met with Onondaga tribal leaders to negotiate the return of the purple and white beaded belts venerated as mystical objects by the Iroquois.

If all goes as planned, the belts could be back in Onondaga hands as early as September. A final decision on returning the belts, given over by the Indians for safe-keeping beginning in 1898, is expected to be made by the Board of Regents then.

The museum's wampum collection — 26 woven belts

Regents to decide fate

made from tiny purple and white seashells — is considered to be the finest in the world in terms of quantity and quality. Beside the Onondaga belts, the museum has 14 other wampum belts. The other belts will remain in the museum's vaults.

The state is planning to return the Onondaga belts because their ownership is clear and evidence is strong the tribe never intended to give up the belts.

Additionally, the Onondaga tribal government is very stable, ensuring the belts will be properly cared for. The Onondagas have an undisputed tribal council, compared to multiple factions that compete for the leadership of other tribes.

The belts that will be returned to the Onondagas will be kept in a vault and preserved. Another condition of the return calls for them to be available to researchers.

★★THE TIMES UNION

Wednesday
July 12, 1989

belts to Onondaga nation

of priceless collection

Four of the 12 belts were bequeathed to the state in 1927 by the widow of Albany Mayor John Boyd Thacher, who had purchased them for \$500 in 1893. The Thacher belts were originally given by an Onondaga wampum-keeper to an Army general who had promised to bring them to a museum in Washington, D.C., for safe-keeping.

Instead, the general sold the belts to a Boston collector for \$350, according to a history compiled by the State Museum.

Five of the belts were obtained by the Board of Regents from Onondaga chiefs in 1898 for a token payment. Three others came into state possession through the work of the Rev. William Beauchamp, an Episcopal clergyman who ministered on the Onondaga reservation.

The museum has prepared a paper on the proposed return and has given interested parties until August to comment on the plan.

"The available documentation suggests strongly that a

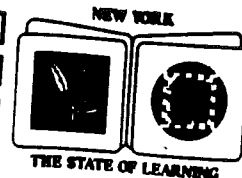
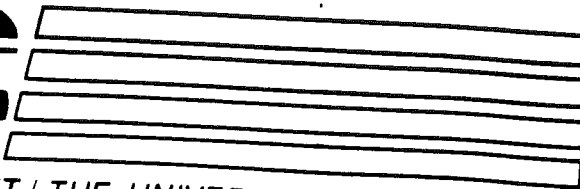
number of these belts were given up by the Onondaga tribal members either without proper authority or in an expectation that the belts were to be held in safekeeping and that they could be returned upon demand," the paper said.

Most of the belts in the museum's collection are believed to have been made by tribes in the latter half of the 18th century. Dutch merchants introduced the practice of using wampum beads for money, but the Indians who prized the objects used them for ceremonial and religious purposes.

The belts can be read to tell a story. At times, they have been publicly displayed at the State Museum. "They have not in recent years because of respect for the tribal groups," Sullivan said.

Tribal leaders have tried for years to secure return of the wampum. In 1986, the Haudenosaunee — the Iroquois council of chiefs — said the possession of wampum by the museum was violation of religious freedom and an infringement on tribal sovereignty.

Beside the State Museum, the Museum of the American Indian in New York City, the Smithsonian Institution and other museums were criticized for holding wampum belts.



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JUN 22 1989

**ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
FOR THE
STATE MUSEUM**

For Further Information, Contact:
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, JUNE 16, 1989

**REGENTS TAKE INITIAL STEPS TO RETURN
12 WAMPUM BELTS TO ONONDAGA NATION**

The Regents today authorized New York State Museum staff to pursue the return of 12 wampum belts to the Council of Chiefs of the Onondaga Nation.

The Museum acquired the belts, which are the foundation documents of Iroquois life and comparable to our Declaration of Independence and Constitution, at various times between 1898 and 1949.

Museum staff began reviewing the history of the belts and the issues involved in their return several years ago at the request of the Onondaga Council of Chiefs.

Negotiations for return of the belts began between Museum staff and the Chiefs in 1985 with encouragement from the Commissioner of Education and Governor Mario M. Cuomo.

Both the Regents and the Onondaga Council of Chiefs must give final approval to the return agreement before it can be concluded.

(more)