

## AN UNUSUAL BLUE STAR BEAD

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The historic Oneida Iroquois sites near Munnsville, New York, have produced many types of glass trade beads. Among these various types, some are very rare and some are quite abundant. The bead illustrated on Plate 16 as Figure 1 is closely related in color and shape to a common type known as the blue star bead. These beads ( Plate 16, Fig. 2 ) have been reported from the following historic Oneida sites:

- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) Camerons - Ond 8 | (2) Beechers ( Blowers) Ond 1 |
| (3) Thurston - Msv 1 | (4) Wilsons Ond 9             |

Plate 16, Figure 1, illustrates a rare large blue star bead from the Marshall site ( Msv- 7 ) called the Munnsville site by MacNeish in 1952. This site is within the time range of the other mentioned sites but has shown no small blue star beads, to date.

Fortunately, in the half recovered, nearly all of the characteristics of a whole bead can be determined. With a length of 40 mm and a diameter of 26.7 mm, its size compared to a standard bead is easily seen. ( Plate 16, Fig. 2 ) It would have had twelve lighter blue stripes where the apex of the white chevrons shows through. Also at each end a grinding or polishing of six bevels or facets is noted.

In local collections of Oneida Indian artifacts, no other like bead has been reported. Mr. John Stillman, who has the largest assemblage of accurately recorded Oneida trade beads, notes that this large blue star type is lacking from all Oneida bead collections with which he is familiar. ( Stillman, 1974 ) So, while the small blue star bead is well documented for the Oneida region, the existence of at least one large bead shows that extremes of this type can be expected.

Standard size Oneida blue star beads were shown in color by Pratt in 1961 and by Kidd in 1970. Large size Oneida blue star beads were not illustrated in either reference but Kidd does make mention of them as being known with ground ends in order to bring out the color effects.

In a communication with Theodore Whitney on October 23, 1962, Mr. Kidd replies to an inquiry about this bead, " The specimen is unusual in several respects- in size and in the manner of bevelling. Such large beads are not often encountered, but they are known, and often as in this case, broken..... I suspect that star beads

like some others, were sometimes modified by the Indians after they got them. Your bead could possibly have been ground to the bevel shape by Indians, but, perhaps, there is no means of determining this now. "

Mr. Kidd, also, mentions a comparable bead reported from as far away as Florida in 1877. The blue star bead has also been found even farther away at the mouth of the Amazon in South America. ( Meggers, Evans, 1957 ) Mr. John Stillman feels that beads of this type are more commonly known on the historic sites of the St. Lawrence valley.

And, so, is this a stray from far distant areas, a lost heirloom, one of a kind brought from the St. Lawrence, a trade item from other Iroquois to the east or west? Is there a concentration of this distinctive bead anywhere? Do other like beads exist with exact site locations in an unknown collection from the Oneida country ? We can only hope that the future will help to unravel these questions. And, if it does, we are one more step toward the solving of the history and village movements of the early historic Oneida Iroquois..

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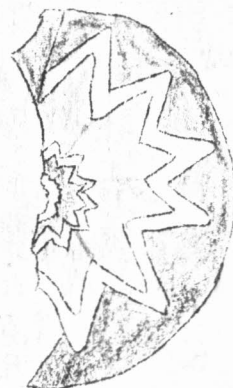
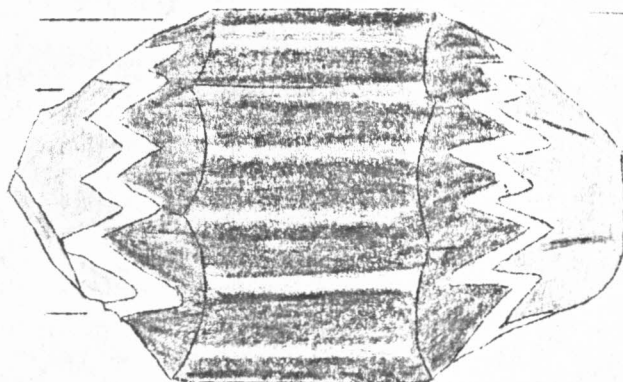
Stillman, John, Personal Communication, Jan. 12, 1974

III m \*

Blue

Red

White



White

Clear

Red

Blue

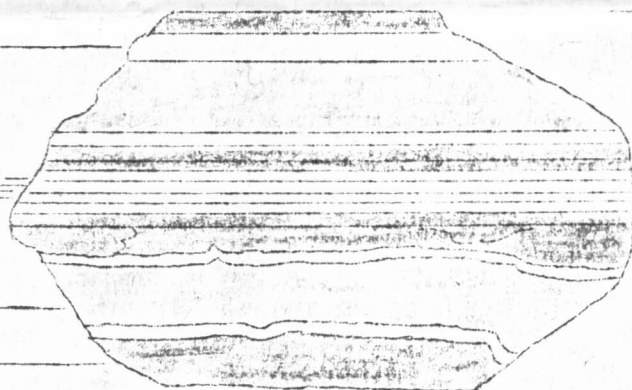


Figure 1

Scale 2:1

Blue  
Red



White

Figure 2 Common Type Blue Star Bead

Scale 2:1

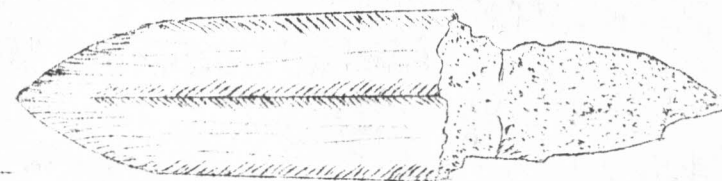
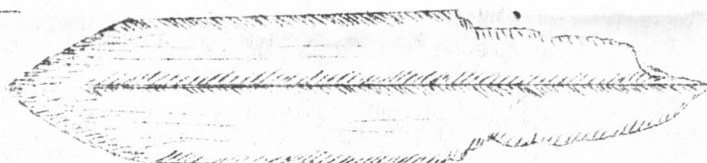


Figure 3

Bayonet Slate Fragment

Scale 1:1