

A GUIDE TO

ARTIFACTS
OF COLONIAL
AMERICA

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1970

NEW YORK

§ BEADS

From the first years of colonization onward, beads played a major role in trade between settlers and Indians. It is worth noting, however, that Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (Supplement, 1753) mentions only that they were used in the African trade. It has long been supposed that virtually all imported colored beads found on American sites were made on the island of Murano, the seat of Venetian glassmaking. It has now been determined that large quantities of beads similar to the Venetian were made at Amsterdam from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. It has also been widely supposed that the glasshouse near Jamestown manufactured beads, but although there is documentary proof of the intention there is no archaeological evidence that so much as a single bead was actually made there. Until evidence to the contrary is forthcoming, it is reasonable to suppose that all beads found on American sites dating at least as late as the second quarter of the nineteenth century are likely to have been imported.

Most easily recognizable of the seventeenth-century types are those known as *millefiori* or chevron beads, which were made from layers of red, yellow, white, and blue glass, this last usually being on the outside. Sometimes such beads were left as square-sectioned rods with the various colors protruding only from the ends, but at other times they were ground and polished in spheres or lozenge shapes with the outer layers partially removed to expose those beneath. These beads were still being made as recently as the present century as African trade goods. However, they are rare on American sites after the mid-eighteenth century, while their period of greatest popularity seems to have been in the first half of the seventeenth century. Beads of this type were also known as "paternosters" because they were much used in strings used by Roman Catholics. In France, according to Chambers, the makers, stringers, and sellers of beads were known by the same name: *patenostriers*.

Opaque pale-blue glass beads are frequently found on seventeenth-century sites, many of them of extremely small size; also recovered in similar contexts are many dull-red examples usually in long or short cylinders which, when the ends are examined, are found to possess a green or white core. This type continued in use from the seventeenth at least into the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Glass beads, by and large, are extremely hard to date, and the vast majority possess no distinguishing features, being roughly globular in form with holes of varying sizes in glass ranging from bottle green, through straw and amber, to deep red, purple, and various hues of blue that end in black. In the journals of Lewis and Clark one discovers that among the Indians of the Columbia River "blue beads, which are called *tia commashuck*, or chief beads, hold the first rank in their ideas of relative value. The most inferior kind are esteemed beyond the finest wampum, and are temptations which can always seduce them to part with their most valuable effects."⁶

Wampum or beads of shell also included the so-called "porcelain" beads, which were in fact made from the money cowry shell, *C. moneta*, that was found in both the East and West Indies and which served as currency among the aboriginal peoples of both hemispheres. True porcelainous beads did not appear until the nineteenth century.

The most common beads of the first half of the nineteenth century were made from pieces of glass tube, generally shorter than their diameter and refined by careful faceting. These facets are restricted, on the smaller beads, to an average of seven facets cut around each end leaving the central sections untouched, but larger examples, usually in ultramarine blue, have many more. These faceted beads are known in the Northwest as "Russian" beads on the evidence of their having been found on Russian sites in Alaska. However, they are much more widely distributed and have been found in large quantities on a site on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, where they were associated with spoiled examples sometimes attached to sandever and waste glass of similar colors. The obvious explanation that the beads were made on the site has not yet been

⁶ *History of the Expedition Under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* (New York, 1922; reprint of 1814 edn.); quoted in Arthur Woodward: *Indian Trade Goods*, Oregon Archaeological Society Publications, No. 2 (1956), p. 16.

substantiated by excavation or by the surface recovery of other essential glasshouse refuse. Also dating from the early nineteenth century, though going back into the second half of the eighteenth, are a broad class of beads loosely known as "fancy beads," which vary through tubular, lozenge, and globular shapes and which are made in a semblance of the ancient *millefiori* technique; but instead of the glass being laminated, colored threads are wrapped around a central core of white, black, blue, or red, in random patterns of swirls and dots.

GREGORY, HIRAM A., and CLARENCE H. WEBB: "European Trade Beads from Six Sites in the Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana," *The Florida Anthropologist*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Pt. 2 (September 1965), pp. 15-44. Covers the period 1714-1820.

PRATT, PETER P.: *Oneida Iroquois Glass Trade Bead Sequence, 1585-1745*. Fort Stanwix Museum publication (Rome, N.Y.). Syracuse, N.Y., 1961.

§ BELLARMINES

Bellarmines are a type of Rhenish stoneware bottle manufactured predominantly in factories in and around Frechen, are ornamented with a human or semihuman face sprig-molded onto the neck, and generally have one or more armorial or pseudo-armorial medallions on the body. The bottles varied in capacity from a pint to about five gallons and were made from a gray-bodied stoneware coated with an iron-oxide slip that broke into a brown mottle when fired in a saltglaze kiln—thus earning them the inaccurate descriptive term of "tigerware." Equally inaccurate is the *Bellarmino* association, allegedly based on the belief that the molded faces on the necks were caricatures of the hated Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino applied by Protestant potters. The body medallions, however, were frequently dated, and the earliest-known is marked 1550, when Bellarmino was only eight years old.

The earliest molded masks took the form of satyrs, from which the human face developed in the mid-sixteenth century. The latter