

Cautantowwit's House

*An Indian Burial Ground on the Island of Conanicut
in Narragansett Bay*

WILLIAM SCRANTON SIMMONS

BROWN UNIVERSITY PRESS • PROVIDENCE

1970

064857

NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF CANADA
MUSÉES NATIONAUX DU CANADA
LIBRARY - BIBLIOTHEQUE

TABLE 1

Goods in the Graves of Narragansett Men, Women, and Children

MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN
<i>Burial 1</i>	<i>Burial 3</i>	<i>Burial 2</i>
4 glass beads	brass kettle	5 latten spoons
4 whetstones	iron hoe	3 shell pendants
kaolin pipe	textile	brass ring
piece of iron	<i>Burial 8</i>	iron buckle
shell discs	2 brass kettles	<i>Burial 4</i>
unfinished wampum	3 iron hoes	brass hawk bell
<i>Burial 5</i>	textile	glass beads
glass bead	<i>Burial 13</i>	<i>Burial 6</i>
iron lock, key(?)	copper shred	brass spoon
2 kettles	<i>Burial 18</i>	clay pot
2 knives	brass kettle	<i>Burial 9</i>
2 lead balls	glass beads	brass hawk bells
musket	iron bar	brass thimbles
8 powder flasks	latten spoon	latten spoon
textile, European	pewter measure	shell beads
cloth	<i>Burial 20</i>	textile
unfinished wampum	shell beads	<i>Burial 11</i>
wampum	<i>Burial 41</i>	shell beads
whetstone	2 iron hoes	<i>Burial 16</i>
wooden spoon	textile	brass spoon
wooden trunk	<i>Burial 44</i>	clay balls
<i>Burial 14</i>	ear pendants	clay pot
copper shred	glass beads	<i>Burial 17</i>
copper tube	3 graphite pebbles	clay pot
glass beads	shell beads	<i>Burial 35</i>
<i>Burial 15</i>	<i>Burial 48</i>	iron hatchet
brass fishhook	textile	shell beads
copper tube		<i>Burial 39</i>
iron arrowpoint		iron ax
iron ax heads		iron box
iron hooks		iron knife

MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN
2 iron knives		iron scissors
kaolin pipe		<i>Burial 53</i>
polished pebble		potsherd
<i>Burial 23</i>		
brass arrowhead		
brass bell(?)		
brass belt hook(?)		
iron chisel		
quartzite arrowhead		
unidentified iron piece		
<i>Burial 36</i>		
glass bead		
gunflint		
iron nail		
piece of iron		
shell beads(?)		
wampum drills		
whetstone		

pipes with male burials is consistent with the idea that persons will need their earthly possessions in the next life. Most of the unfinished wampum and one cache of wampum drills were obtained from men's graves. Although men possessed the preponderance of cutting, chopping, and honing tools, women possessed most of the brass kettles and the one pewter measure. Glass and shell beads were found with men, women, and children.

Three, and possibly all five, ceramic pots of native manufacture came from children's graves. Though vessels of European manufacture were available to Indians, they may have preferred traditional clay pots for preparing children's food or medicine. The varied ornamentation on the



39. Burial 1 in situ. Whetstones surround body, pipe is held in fingers, shell discs are near wrists, and beads are below ears.

Burial 1 ♂

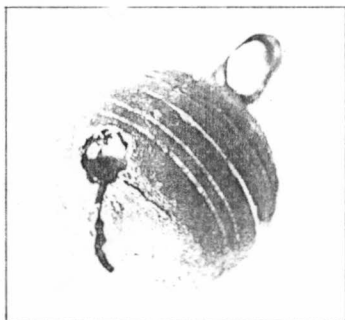
appearance (ill. 39). One of the whetstones was of quartzite and two were of chloritized sandstone; they were well worn, showing that many metal knives, axes, and chisels had been honed on them. The man's hands were crossed under his chin, and his legs, bent at the knees, were loosely flexed.

If grave goods were any measure of the intensity of mourning, this man was surely missed. Below his ear canals four tubular glass beads—two on each side of the head—had been suspended as pendants. Ear ornamentation by Indians of both sexes has been amply attested for the seventeenth century (Lechford 1642, p. 50; Neal 1720, pp. 24–25; Rainey 1956, p. 18). All four beads are longitudinally striped: two with white on black, one with white on blue, and the other with red and white on blue. The latter contains an inner blue core, a medial white layer, and an outer blue surface, upon which the stripes were added. The four ranged from 3.10 cm to 3.80 cm in length and from 0.53 cm to 0.60 cm in diameter. Two beads from the 1660–77 Oneida site of Lemery (Pratt 1961, p. 13) resemble, but do not duplicate, these four.

A faint trace of red beneath the skull and over the surface upon which it rested vouched for the ceremonial use of red paint. A white kaolin pipe was held upside down between the fourth and fifth fingers of the right hand, with the stem pointing toward the chin. The pipe-maker's mark, a spoked impression, was clearly stamped into a round, flat platform beneath the bowl (ills. 40, 41). Similar marks have been found on pipes from seventeenth-century London (Price 1900, p. 232; Atkinson 1962, pp. 182–83), Sussex (Atkinson 1958, p. 118), and Bristol (Pritchard 1923, p. 185). An identical English mark was illustrated by Thursfield (1907, pl. 5), but its date and locale are unknown.

One authority (Omwake 1967) has suggested that the mark is a simplified rendering of the Tudor rose—a stylized version known to have been impressed into pipes of English manufacture. Dutch manufacturers made similar pipes but are not known to have placed this

Burial 4 infant



49.
Brass hawk bell from Burial 4.
 (Photograph by Mildred B. House.)

string of sixty-two identical white glass beads. Bells similar to this—round, with an attached eye, and pierced by two holes connected by a slit—have been seen by the author in the Burr's Hill collection from Warren, Rhode Island, and they have been associated with early and late historic Indian sites as far afield as New York (Hayes 1965, p. 34; Ritchie 1954, p. 34) and Pennsylvania (Kinsey 1960, p. 90).

The beads are flat-ended, with clear glass cores and an opaque white outer surface. One specimen measured 0.22 cm in length and 0.33 cm in diameter. Comparable beads have been found at the Wayland-Smith site, an Oneida (Iroquois) settlement thought to date between 1570 and 1595 (Pratt 1961, p. 6).

BURIAL 5 (A-30)

190 x 138 x 135

Skeleton 1: southwest, left, 55-59 years, male

Skeleton 2: southwest, right?, 0-4 years

Two settlers who came on the *Mayflower*—Edward Winslow and Thomas Morton—recorded many facts about the Indians they met, and they stated that the graves of sachems were especially elaborate (Morton 1883, p. 170; Winslow 1855, p. 490). Roger Williams (1926, pp.

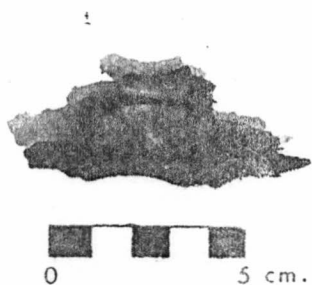


51.
*Carved piece of a trunk from
Burial 5, showing brass tacks and
buckle.*

the cock and lock plate remains to allow speculation about the gun's origin and age. The slender, tapering tail of the lock plate is similar to an early English dog lock believed to date between 1620 and 1640, and to an early Dutch dog lock of 1640 (Hamilton 1960, pp. 10, 116; Mayer 1943, p. 40). The cock resembles an early specimen in the museum of the Tuscarora Academy (Pennsylvania) that is thought to be of Dutch origin (Hamilton 1960, pp. 14, 118), and it is very like the English dog locks of the 1620-40 period. Two lead balls from this grave could be neatly accommodated by a fifty-caliber musket.

Eight cone-shaped, pewter powder flasks, each wrapped in leather with a brass ring attached at the side, were found in a cluster near the man's shoulders (ill. 53). These measure 10.50 cm in length, 3.50 cm in diameter at the slightly convex bottom, and 1.75 cm across the flat top. The smaller end was closed by a removable, thimble-shaped cap.

A large glass melon bead was found under the skull. The opaque blue core of the bead is surrounded first by a layer of white, then, progressing outwardly, successive layers of black, red, black, white, and



54.
Handle fragment of a wooden spoon.
Burial 5.

blue; the outer blue layer is embellished overall by yellow, white, and red stripes. In diameter the bead measures 1.63 cm; in length, 1.53 cm. Beads roughly similar to this specimen have been found in Iroquois sites in New York that date between 1590 and 1637 (Kidd 1954; Pratt 1961).

A large brass kettle buried upside down near the skull had collapsed under the overlying earth. Except for its greater volume, the kettle is similar to others from the site. It measures 38 cm in diameter and exceeds 23 cm in depth.

A portion of a carved wooden spoon (ill. 54) and a shred of silver-colored European cloth were found under the debris of the kettle. Other organic materials preserved by the chemicals of the kettle are several pieces of a tightly plaited textile made in the pattern of over two, under two, and several pieces of a fine, plain, twine-woven textile identical to that from Burial 9. The warps of the fabric are hidden by the tightly drawn wefts that slant downward to the left.

Some two hundred pieces of unfinished purple wampum occurred in a concentrated area immediately to the right of the kettle. Twenty-five finished wampum beads were scattered around the torso; these range between 0.37 cm and 0.43 cm in length and between 0.26 cm and 0.30

Both the English and the Indians practiced beheading in the seventeenth century. Several Pequot captives were beheaded by the English, who also displayed the head of the Narragansett queen Weetamoo on a post in Taun'on, Massachusetts, during King Philip's War—and Philip himself eventually lost his head to them. Among the Indian tribes of southern New England, it was customary to take the scalps, hands, feet, and heads of prisoners of war (Hubbard 1814, p. 107; Rainey 1956, p. 28; Williams 1866, pp. 78, 80).

In the fill of the grave were some charcoal granules, but no burning had taken place in the pit. One metacarpal bore a green stain from a vanished copper item, and a tiny copper shred appeared near the western edge of the pit.

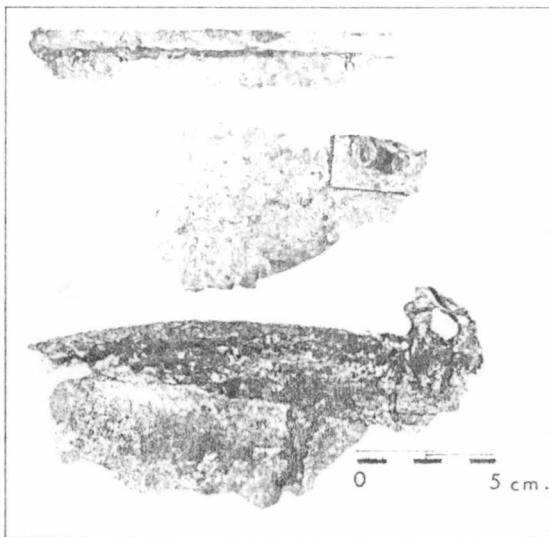
BURIAL 14 (A-31)

195 x 147 x 118

Southwest, right, 40 years plus?, male

In this pit, which was nearly rectangular, a small individual lay with his hands before his face (ill. 72). There remained also a shred of copper and fifty-six beads near his wrists. The source of the copper was not traceable, but the beads are of opaque blue or white glass, without cores, and slightly flattened at the ends. The blue beads range from 0.33 cm to 0.47 cm in length and from 0.40 cm to 0.43 cm in diameter. The white beads range from 0.30 cm to 0.37 cm in length and from 0.37 cm to 0.40 cm in diameter. Comparable opaque white beads are known from the Oneida Iroquois sites of Marshall and Lemery, dating from 1637 to 1642 and from 1660 to 1677, respectively (Pratt 1961, pp. 10-14).

Burial 18 ♀



83.
Brass kettle fragments,
showing rim and bail
eyes. Burial 18.

an estimated diameter of 22.80 cm sprawled in an ample area before her face (ill. 83). Next to the kettle, by the skeleton's elbows, a lidded pewter vessel similar to sixteenth-century English baluster measures (Cotterell 1929, pp. 78, 113) was found in an advanced state of deterioration (ill. 84). John Winthrop mentioned in his diary that on 13 July 1631 he was host to Canonicus's son in Boston and on that occasion gave him "a fair pewter pot" (1853, 1:69-70).

The pewter measure contained a latten seal-top spoon and over ten thousand small, black, glass beads. The spoon is short, with a plain ball and annulus below the seal (ill. 85). Although it was not tinned, a minute rattail where the stem joins the bowl could indicate a date of manufacture later than the mid-seventeenth century (Raymond 1949, p. 7). Unfortunately, the touchmark in the bowl is faint and unrecognizable. The beads are similar to Type 84 beads from the Oneida site known as Lemery that is believed to date between 1660 and 1677 (Pratt 1961, p. 14).

Lemery[†] that is believed to date between 1660 and 1677 (Pratt 1961, p. 14).

East of the kettle and measure a heavy iron bar had turned the soil bright orange from three centuries of oxidation (ill. 82). The bar resembles a traditional stone pestle and may have been an instrument for pounding corn in a wooden mortar.

BURIAL 19 (A-7)

120 x 110 x 105

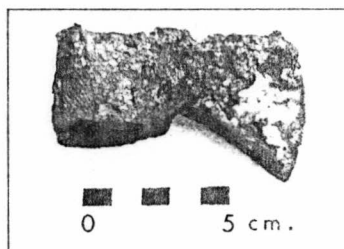
Although Burial 19 was undisturbed by previous digging, no skeleton or artifacts were found in its large, round pit. The floor was lined with decomposed, brown organic material, and only faint yellow streaks remained of the bones. The absence of grave goods and the advanced decomposition of the skeleton might indicate that this grave was somewhat earlier than the others. Some scattered charcoal granules occurred in the northern wall of the shaft.

BURIAL 20 (A-7)

135 x 112 x 127

Southwest, left, 50 years plus, female

In outline the shaft of this burial was trapezoidal, with its axis pointing northeast-southwest. The body of an arthritic female was arranged in it in a tightly flexed position on her left side (ill. 86). The extreme compactness of the skeleton could indicate tight bundling before burial or even reburial after the flesh had disappeared. Four tubular quahaug-shell beads decorated the left wrist that cushioned the skull. One intact bead measures 2.91 cm in length and 0.43 cm in diameter.



100.
*Small ax head of iron
from Burial 35.*

Twenty-seven purple and white wampum beads remained in place around the child's neck. These range from 0.30 cm to 0.40 cm in length and from 0.22 cm to 0.30 cm in diameter.

BURIAL 36 (S-1)

137 x 115 x 93

Southwest, right, 55-60 years, male

The individual in this grave lay with a finger of his left hand in his mouth (ill. 101). He was approximately 169 centimeters in height. Beneath his skull was a quadrilateral iron nail, 8.50 cm long, with a pyramidal head. Nails exactly like this have been documented from Fort Corchaug on Long Island (Solecki 1950, p. 31).

Seven unperforated cylinders of whelk column, each between 1.0 cm and 2.0 cm long, had somehow been attached under the old man's chin. Between his chest and folded arms he embraced a small packet of quadrilateral iron wampum drills, a European gunflint, and three sections of a tubular blue glass bead. The bead is 0.53 cm in diameter, and its core is separated from the outer surface by a medial white layer.

A tabular sandstone whetstone, 14.70 cm by 5.30 cm by 1.90 cm in length, width, and thickness, respectively, had been placed near the stomach. A triangular iron piece, about 5.0 cm long, was found anterior to the pelvis.

BURIAL 43 (H-12)

107 x 80 x 74

Southwest, right, 4-5 years

No distinguishing features marked this grave.

BURIAL 44 (W-6)

160 x 120 x 110

Southwest, right, 25-34 years, female

With this woman's remains were forty-two shell beads, two whelk-shell ear pendants, two glass beads, and three rubbed graphite stones. The shell beads average 0.50 cm in diameter but are of two lengths: the longer ones average 3.16 cm; the shorter ones, 1.72 cm (ill. 42). Some are of the more valued purple area of the quahaug shell, others are from the white base of the quahaug shell, and a few are from the inner spiral of the whelk. The necklace was strung alternately with long and short beads, and it hung in a double string around the neck. The woman's hands were crossed before her neck as if to protect her beads (ill. 111).

The two tiny glass beads have an opaque white outer surface and a clear inner core. They also appear to have been part of the necklace. In width they average a mere 0.15 cm and in diameter, only 0.26 cm. The two ear ornaments were found near each auditory meatus. Both are carved from whelk; one is drilled longitudinally, and the other is undrilled.

To the rear of the head three graphite pebbles had been deposited together. These were probably used to make black paint, a substance obtained by rubbing together the graphite and grease. Two of the pebbles are nondescript, and the third is flat and roughly circular, not unlike a coin about 3.20 cm in diameter.