

TRADE BEADS

By C. E. STORY

THE pictures show examples of glass trade beads from the site of old Fort Moore (called Savannah Town prior to 1716), old English military post and Indian traders' headquarters. More than 25,000, which include 275 different sorts, of these reminders of old trading days in the period from 1680 to 1750 have been collected from this trader-Indian rendezvous of the colony of South Carolina.

Plowed fields now occupy the site, where in the old days the traders, after attending to the wants of the local tribes, loaded their trains of

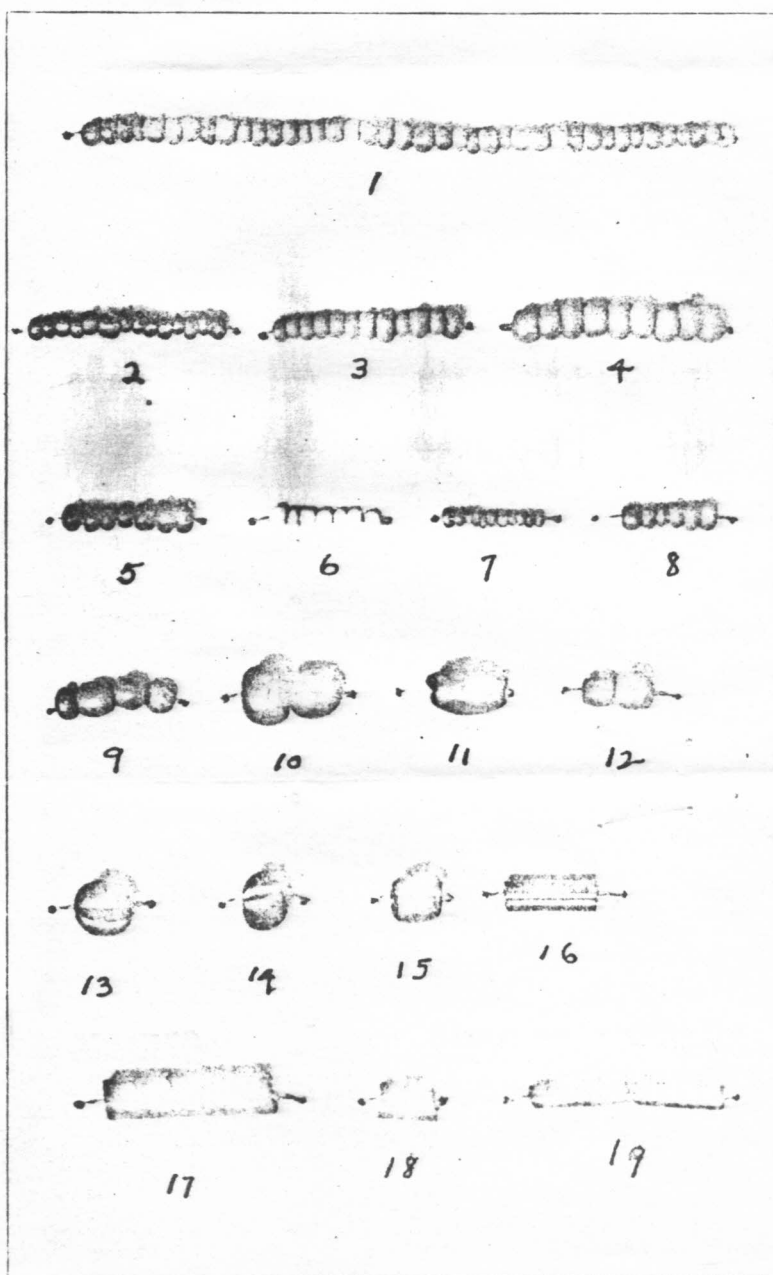
pack horses for long journeys to the coast, or to interior points. Some bundled deerskins for Charles Town for export. Others strapped on the backs of the horses packs of goods and prepared to set out along the trading paths. Charleston (called Charles Town in those days) was the port from which the traders obtained their supplies. Glass beads formed an important item in the traders' packs, which also carried such goods as guns, powder, bullets, flints, knives, hoes, kettles, hatchets (tomahawks), looking glasses and rum (mixed with 1-3 water). These goods

were exchanged for deerskins, more than any other commodity, apparently, for 59,827 skins were exported from Charles Town in the year 1722. One hundred and twenty-one thousand deerskins were exported in the year 1706, this being the combined exports of Carolina and Virginia. In each year from 1698 to 1765 thousands of deerskins were exported from the southeast, old records showing sometimes more, sometimes less than the quantity cited above for 1722.

Making at most 20 miles per day, the hardy trader took hill and valley in his stride. Beset with danger from hostile savages, he penetrated dark swamps and thick forests, forded creeks and rivers, tarried a while at the Indian settlements as he came to them, steadfastly following the trail west across Alabama into Mississippi, or north through the Carolinas to the borders of Tennessee and Virginia. Arriving at length at the end of his journey, his goods packs empty, his horses heavily loaded with skins, he perhaps recuperated for a few days, then set out on his weary way back to Fort Moore, there to enjoy for a while the profits of his trip, then forthwith to prepare for another similar.

In the year 1716, according to Savannah Town prices, one deerskin was worth three strings of beads. Cherokee prices of that year allowed an exchange value of two strings for a deerskin. Lengths of the strings are not given in the old records. Prices in terms of beads showed advances by the year 1765, when a price list gives 20 strands of common or 5 strands of "barley corn" beads as exchange value of one pound of "leather," as skins were then called.

By far the most plentiful of the beads to be found on the site of old Fort Moore are the small seed beads. The colors are turquoise or sky blue, dark blue, gray, black, white and red. The turquoise blue beads are the most common. An interesting type of bead found at old Fort Moore is a green translucent glass specimen. This bead is said to have come originally from Syria. Trade houses called it the Cornaline de Aleppo. It is also referred to as the Hudson's Bay Company type, that Company having introduced it extensively in the regions in which they operated. It is found in burials and on old sites from Canada to Florida and from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This



Beads from the site of old Fort Moore (also called Savannah Town) in South Carolina on the Savannah River three miles below Augusta, Ga. Illustrated from the collection of C. E. Story, Augusta, Ga.

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bead is found with both plain red surface and with striped surface.

The tubular or cane bead is common at Fort Moore (See illustration). Colors of these are red (with green core), light blue, dark blue, gray, white, black and green. This type of bead was made by rapidly elongating a hollow bulb of hot glass to form a tube, sometimes as much as .150 feet in length. The tubes were then broken up into lengths for handling, sorted as to size, then cut into proper lengths to form beads.

Milk glass beads were made in the plain white and in the striped variety. The latter are sometimes called "stick candy" beads, suggested by the blue and red stripes on the white ground. The tubular milk glass variety are sometimes called "spaghetti" beads.

Tubular type red beads are called "fire cracker" beads. Little oval beads slightly larger than a rice grain are "rat" beads. They are black, white, gray and other colors. "Rat" beads are of the class called "wire wound," made by winding and shaping thread-like molten glass around a revolving rod, the size of the perforation being governed by the diameter of the rod. Wire wound beads are made in many different sorts.

There are globular black beads half an inch, more or less, in diameter, with white or honey colored stripes running transversely in zig-zag belts around the bead and crossing each other at irregular intervals. They are called "Chinese" beads, the curious and irregular patterns formed by the stripes suggesting Chinese letters. Flat disc beads are found with perforations through the long axis of the bead; other disc beads have the perforation running the short way, like the hole in a grindstone.

Other Fort Moore types include those of opalescent glass, some of which are about the size and shape of a bird egg; faceted beads in various colors; clear transparent glass beads, some of which have frosted glass stripes made into the bead beneath the surface; and colored and clear glass "raspberry" beads, which are covered with nodules or bosses, suggesting the name given them.

Then there is the "star" or "chevron" type, a bead made in layers of different colors, combinations of white, red, blue and sometimes green.

Little is known concerning the origin of these glass trade beads. It is believed that many of them were made in Venice, where at the end of the eighteenth century twenty furnaces were operating, turning out over 500 different style beads. At the same time France had glass factories, and there were glass factories operating in England, some of them

employing Italian workmen. It is claimed that beads also came to America from Australian glass establishments. A glass factory was started in the colony of Jamestown, Va., first in the year 1607, then another one was established there in 1622. Italians were imported to run this second glass house, and beads were manufactured for the purpose of trading them to the Indians. It is not known whether or not any of the Jamestown beads were used or traded at Fort Moore. However, beads found on what is said to be the site of the Jamestown furnace show close resemblance to some of the Fort Moore beads.

In general it may be said of the trade bead that it was an important factor in the early exploration and settlement of this country. The wampum, or native shell bead, which was displaced by the trade bead, had already acquired a deep significance, and was used as a medium of exchange, for personal adornment, and as a symbol in the expression of friendship. As a seal to vows, treaties and agreements, the ceremony of the presentation and acceptance of wampum conveyed the idea of a solemn and binding ratification, not to be expressed in any other way. At the same time it served as a tangible memento and valued record of the occasion. How

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much of this significance the trade bead assumed when introduced is hard to judge, but there is little room for doubt that it was held in high esteem for a long time during the early period of our history.

1. Transparent or translucent light, dark and medium shades of blue glass.

2. Transparent or translucent dark blue glass.

3. Transparent or translucent, some opaque, light blue or gray glass.

4. Same as (3), except larger.

5. Opaque black glass.

6. Opaque white glass.

7. Same as (1), except one-half as large.

8. Core transparent or translucent green glass, with red glaze covering the surface.

9. Same as (8), except larger.

10. Same as (9), except larger.

11. Same material and coloring as (9), (10), except shape is ovoid.

12. Opaque red glass (without the green glass core).

13. Core transparent or translucent green glass with red glaze covering the surface. Longitudinally striped with three groups of parallel lines, each group consisting of three lines, alternating white, brown, white.

14. Same color and material as (13), with three groups of stripes, each group consisting of two white stripes.

15. Same color and material as (13), with three groups of stripes, each group consisting of one wide white stripe, bordered on each side by a narrow white stripe.

16. Cane or tubular bead. Core transparent or translucent green glass, with red glaze covering the surface, longitudinally striped with three groups of parallel lines, each group consisting of two white stripes.

17. Cane or tubular bead. Core transparent or translucent green glass, with red glaze covering the surface. On the surface are traces of white stripes.

18. Cane or tubular bead. Same as (17), except shorter and of smaller diameter.

19. Cane or tubular bead. Medium blue transparent or translucent glass. Some have traces of fine white stripes. Some have smooth ends, some have rough ends.

Briefs

H. T. Daniels, Hot Springs, Ark., dealer, has issued a new catalog and price list which largely comprises Indian Relics. However, coins, bills, gems, fossils, minerals, and other hobby material is included.

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We note the statement made that "ancient pits found in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Canada show that the aboriginal American Indians discovered and used petroleum.

HABITATION SITES in Northwestern Alabama

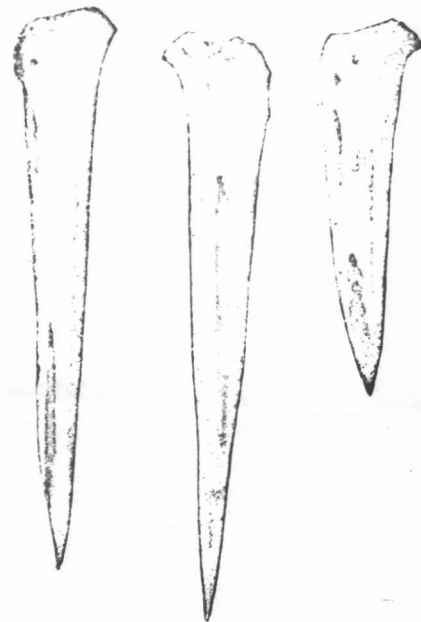
(Continued from page 99)

The ancient peoples occupied the region a long time, during which they made real cultural progress. Although their mode of livelihood is largely unknown, they seem to have lived a fairly sedentary life and to have had extensive trade connections with other parts of the continent. In their graves, for example, are found numerous massive chunks of lead ore. There was no local source of supply, and it seems probable that this was imported from the Missouri lead-mining area. Copper objects found in the mounds probably came from Michigan. Occasional marine shells, evidently used as ceremonial objects, came from the Gulf of Mexico.

The presence of the lead in these graves, it is reported by Walter B. Jones, Alabama State geologist, has led to many local legends and much loss of time and money in searches for Indian lead mines in that State. Treasure seekers have dug ceaselessly in the dead of night with magical incantations.

At the close of the field work in the basin all the artifacts were deposited with the University of Ala-

bama, while the skeletal material went to the University of Kentucky and samples of the pottery to the University of Michigan. At these institutions they will be preserved for future study.



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