

TWO CENTURIES OF IROQUOIS BEADWORK

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To the 16th-century Iroquois living in what is now central New York state, European glass trade beads were something special; they were believed to have had magical and spiritual meaning. To this day, the Iroquois have a special relationship with glass beads. Iroquois artists began creating three-dimensional beaded items in the late 18th century. The first beaded pincushions and wall pockets were small, but they increased in size and quantity during the 19th century. Two centers of beadwork making arose: one around Niagara Falls in western New York and southern Ontario, and the other around Montreal in southern Quebec and the adjoining parts of eastern Ontario and northern New York. By the end of the 19th century, large brightly colored pincushions, wall hangings, purses, and other items were made for an active tourist market. Recently these art forms have become highly collectable by individuals and museums. Over 60 forms of beadwork were developed. As in the 19th and 20th centuries, many Haudenosaunee artists continue to create colorful beadwork in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

For over two hundred years, the *Haudenosaunee* (commonly referred to as the Iroquois, a Confederacy of six nations: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora) have created beaded items. Beadwork utilizing glass beads is created for several purposes. It is used to decorate traditional clothing that is worn in ceremonies, community social events, pow wow dance competitions, and secular government meetings. It also decorates three-dimensional items made as gifts for family and friends on such occasions as births, weddings, and graduations. They are also made for sale to tourists and visitors at places such as festivals, fairs, and tourist attractions such as Niagara Falls. These beaded pieces, sometimes referred to as whimsies, are the subject of this article.

Iroquois beadwork is often referred to as “raised” (sometimes called “embossed”) beadwork, but not all Iroquois beadwork features multi-layers of beads that define raised beadwork. Although the first three-dimensional pieces of Iroquois beadwork were made in the late 18th century, it wasn’t until the middle of the 19th century that true raised beadwork was developed. From around 1850 to

about 1920, most Iroquois beadwork had raised designs in various forms of birds and flowers. For most of the 20th century, Iroquois beadwork was flat. It wasn’t until its recent revival that Iroquois beadwork has once again featured raised designs. Iroquois beadwork might better be defined by its basic shapes, the materials used in its construction, its floral and faunal motifs, and its beaded mottos, dates, and place names.

Most pieces of Iroquois beadwork were created for sale to tourists and have often been dismissed by art critics and scholars as “souvenir trinkets.” Within the last decade, however, Iroquois beadwork has been the object of serious study and museum exhibition. As researchers and museum curators share more information about the beadwork, more and more people are able to recognize Iroquois beadwork. This has resulted in an increasing appreciation of these artistic creations and the skilled artists who made them. What were often curious tourist souvenirs when they were made are now the object of increasing respect by both Iroquois and non-Iroquois alike (Phillips 1998).

Many beadwork admirers want to collect pieces of the beadwork. Iroquois beadwork appeals to collectors of Victoriana, American Indian material, and beadwork in general. And then there are the collectors who specialize in pincushions, dolls, and purses, and those who collect picture frames, match holders, and other wall hangings. There are also collectors who specialize in collecting items with beaded words or place names on them such as Good Luck or Niagara Falls. Iroquois beadwork appeals to all of these interests.

Many museums—from large museums that specialize in American Indian art and culture to small village historical society museums—have Iroquois beadwork in their collections. Usually they were donated by people who either bought them as souvenirs or who inherited them from those who did. It was the rare museum that intentionally collected Iroquois beadwork because it was not considered “authentic” or “true” Indian work due to its Euro-American influences such as the floral designs, beaded words and dates, and velvet cloth. Usually the provenience has been lost and the beadwork in museums is frequently referred to

as “Victorian.” Sometimes it is recognized as Indian-made and sometimes as Iroquois but rarely is the maker’s name or national affiliation identified. Recently, however, many museums have taken an interest in learning more about their Iroquois beadwork. And many museums, especially in the northeastern part of the United States, are actively acquiring pieces of contemporary Iroquois beadwork for their collections.

The problem of attributing a national identity to a particular new piece is complicated by the extensive trading that has traditionally occurred among artists and sellers. The origin of a piece cannot be assumed to be from the seller. It is common for beadworkers to wholesale their beadwork to sellers who may carry beadwork from several individuals representing several different nations. And frequently the sellers will not divulge the source of the beadwork because they fear that potential buyers will bypass them to buy directly from the beadworker. In other instances, a seller has erroneously claimed to have made a particular piece of beadwork but the true identity of the beadworker was not revealed until later when the actual maker identified his pieces. To be absolutely sure of the identity of the artist who made a particular piece, one has to become familiar with the individual styles of all the contemporary bead artists. This is not difficult because there are fewer than 40 individuals who are actively creating Iroquois beadwork today.

This new appreciation of Iroquois beadwork has been encouraged by the advent of internet auctions which provide a steady supply of antique pieces. The largest of the online auctions, eBay, may have over 80 pieces listed at any one time. By comparison, a collector would have to explore hundreds of antique shops to find that many pieces. Over 12,000 pieces have been listed on eBay in the last six years, and because there are so many pieces, eBay is a unique research source. Only with such a large database as provided by internet auctions, is it possible to define beadwork types and assign an age and tribal affiliation to pieces. In addition, some pieces come with family histories that report where and when a piece was purchased by an ancestor. Of course, some information may not be accurate but it generally provides valuable clues as to where and when a particular piece was made.

The renewed interest in Iroquois beadwork has encouraged beadworkers to create new pieces. On some reservations, beadwork groups have been formed to teach young people who have not beaded before. In addition, experienced beadworkers meet to share their designs. Off reservations, in museums and schools across North America, experienced Iroquois beadworkers conduct workshops for both Indian and non-Indian students. Thousands of people

have created at least one piece of “Iroquois” beadwork in such workshops. Many of these workshops were associated with one of the several Iroquois beadwork exhibits that have been created in the last few years. These exhibits have been featured in a dozen museums in the United States and Canada. As a result, Iroquois beadwork has become better known and popular.

EXHIBITIONS

Although the author mounted several small exhibits of Iroquois beadwork in central New York during the 1980s and 1990s, it was not until the turn of this century that major exhibitions were organized.

Flights of Fancy was an exhibit of several hundred pieces of Iroquois beadwork from the author’s collection which was featured in several museums in central New York state from 2000 through 2004. It was installed at the Yager Museum at Hartwick College in Oneonta, the Chemung Valley History Center in Elmira, and the History Center in Ithaca. Smaller versions were installed in Ste. Marie among the Iroquois in Liverpool and in various venues in Broome County. These exhibits concentrated on the wide variety of Iroquois beadwork forms and functions created over the last two centuries in the two main centers of beadwork creation: around Niagara Falls and near Montreal.

Across Borders was organized by the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal and the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University in Lewistown, New York. They worked in collaboration with the Kanien’kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center in Kahnawake, Quebec, the Tuscarora community of western New York, and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Ontario. The exhibit featured both old and new beadwork and information on what the beadwork meant to the beadworkers and their customers. *Across Borders* traveled to museums in Ontario, Quebec, New York, and Connecticut from 1999 to 2003.

Ska-Ni-Kwat (“we are of one mind”) was a project conceived by Samuel Thomas, contemporary Cayuga beadworker. It involved the creation of two complete traditional beaded Iroquois outfits and exhibits that featured them. The outfits were complemented and explained by about 100 pieces of historic beadwork from the author’s collection. *Ska-Ni-Kwat* traveled to Connecticut, New York, Oklahoma, and Ontario in 2003-2005. It will be featured at the New York State Museum in Albany in 2006 and 2007.

The Canadian *Ska-Ni-Kwat* project was developed into a traveling exhibit by the Royal Ontario Museum in 2005. It is

called *Ohyahohdiwenago'h* (“through the voices of beads”) and is planned to travel in Canada for at least a decade.

Thousands of people have seen the exhibits and marveled over the creative pieces of bead art. People are discovering the beauty and creativity of Iroquois beadwork and they want to know more about it.

IROQUOIS BEADWORK: A DEFINITION

What is Iroquois beadwork and how is it different from other beadwork? Although there are beadwork traditions in many native communities in North America, their beadwork is much different from that produced by Iroquois beadworkers.

The many forms of Iroquois beadwork feature a design in glass beads sewn onto a fabric that is stretched over a cardboard backing or fabric lining (interfacing). The beaded designs are often beaded over a paper pattern that is attached to the surface fabric. Various forms of velvet were and still are the favored fabrics to cover pieces but other fabrics such as velveteen, wool, silk, and cotton are used as well (Gordon 1984). The beads are often raised above the surface of the piece, sometimes as much as an inch and a half. The beads are raised by stringing more beads on the thread than needed to span the intended space; this creates an arch of beads and many arches create a raised beadwork design. The beads often form designs featuring birds and flowers, natural themes that appealed to the Victorians who drove the market of souvenir sales in the 19th century. The backsides of early pieces are usually covered with polished cotton, which is also referred to as chintz, oil cloth, or glazed cotton. Calico has been the preferred fabric for backings for the last fifty years.

Pincushions are stuffed with a variety of materials. The earliest pieces are filled with cotton or wool. During the last half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, sawdust or wood chips was the preferred stuffing material. Pine sawdust was often selected because of its nice aroma. For the same reason, Mohawk pincushions were often stuffed with sweet grass. Some 19th-century pieces are stuffed with cattail fluff while others are filled with crumpled newspapers. Some strawberry-shaped pincushions are filled with emery and were used to clean and sharpen needles. Contemporary pincushions are frequently filled with polyester batting but sawdust is used for the very special pieces. Picture frames and other wall hangings are often beaded on a base of cardboard. This is frequently cut out of cereal boxes. Contemporary pieces often use Tagboard or cardboard file folders. Nineteenth-century purses and needlecases are often lined with newspaper. The paper patterns appear to

have been cut out of a heavy paper like grocery bags. Any sort of paper, even copy paper, is used today.

Most pieces are either stuffed pincushions or wall hangings, and purses that have a cardboard base. There are, however, two forms that combine the two techniques: birds and boots. Birds have pincushion bodies with wings and tails lined with cardboard. Some boots are mainly pincushions with a cardboard-based cuff that forms a pocket on the top. Cardboard was also used to reinforce large beaded elements on the face of pincushions, often leaving very little space between the beads and the cardboard to insert pins.

The majority of the glass beads used are seed beads of various sizes. The earliest beads, used around 1800, are very small (sizes 12°-15°) while by 1900, larger sizes (6° and 8°) were preferred. Chalk white beads in size 8° were available in the early 1800s, but they were used very sparingly, only to outline purse flaps and to be placed near the end of floral sprays on early pincushions and purses. Twentieth-century beadwork utilizes mostly sizes 10°-12°. During the last half of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, seed beads were often combined with larger “bugle” beads (*Sprengperlen* in German; literally “broken beads”) that are sewn into the center of flowers or birds or form decorative loops at the bottom of hanging pieces (Pl. IA top).

Bugles are tubular glass beads, often with polyhedral bodies, that were manufactured in Gablonz, Bohemia, until 1917. They were made in several colors, some with colored enamel paint on the walls of the hole, others with an outside color coating. They were made by breaking long glass tubes into lengths of less than 6 mm, hence the name *Sprengperlen* (Jargstorf 1995). The broken edges are sharp and tend to cut the thread used to sew them on beadwork. As a result, many Mohawk pieces made before 1918 are missing their beaded loops.

Mohawk beadwork uses bugle beads in much greater quantity than Niagara beadwork. In the latter they and large round glass beads are used mostly for flower centers and bird bodies. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, some sewers augmented their seed bead designs with fanciful plastic beads, but the incorporation of plastic beads into the designs is very controversial and not acceptable to many beadworkers who prefer to work only with glass beads.

Throughout the two centuries of Iroquois beadwork production, many colors of beads have been used and some are more popular in some decades than in others. It is not known whether this was due to beader preference or to the availability of the various colors. Small white beads were favored from the beginning and are still used extensively in contemporary beadwork. White has special meaning among the Iroquois as representing light, life, and goodness. Black

beads are rarely used; mostly for bird eyes. By the early 19th century in western New York, white was joined by yellow, red, pink, dark blue, light blue, amber, light orange, lavender, and green. Many of these beads are less than 1.0 mm in diameter (size 16°) and too small to get a needle through. They were applied to purses, clothing, pincushions, and tablecloths by laying a string of beads on the pattern and then tacking the string down with a needle and second thread. By the middle of the 19th century in the Niagara area there was a switch to a preference for clear seed beads, often in combination with white beads around 2 mm in diameter. Colored beads were rarely used. Often silver-lined bugle beads were used in the center of beaded elements such as flowers and birds.

By the 1870s, the Mohawks were mass producing boxes, picture frames, and pincushions using clear beads as well but much larger ones, often as large as 3.5 mm (size 6°). In addition to the clear beads, the Mohawks preferred red, green, blue, and yellow on their pieces. The four colors continued to be used in various color shades and sizes into the 20th century after the clear beads were replaced by chalk-white ones.

In addition to glass beads, metallic sequins were used on many 19th-century and early 20th-century pieces. They are often inserted into a design where there isn't room for a beaded motif but the beader needed to fill an empty space. They were sewn on with a bead in the center. Although glass beads on beadwork exhibit little physical change over the years, sequins on old pieces are rarely shiny but have oxidized to a rusty color. Many copper or brass sequins have turned green. Celluloid and plastic sequins came into use sometime after WWI. Somewhat larger than sequins were pressed-paper flower-shaped elements that were sewn on Mohawk beadwork in the 1920s.

White thread is almost always used to sew on the beads as it makes clear beads sparkle more. White is even used on dark colored velvets. Traditional (non-Christian) beadworkers reserve dark thread for burial clothes.

The paper patterns that underlie the beadwork designs are usually made of white paper, which fills in the beadwork designs. Some Mohawk beadwork utilizes paper that is covered with silver- or gold-colored foil that bring out the sparkle in the yellow, amber, and clear beads above them.

Iroquois beadworkers invented raised beadwork and are best known for it but others have made it as well. Fox Indians living in Tama County, Iowa, made pincushions with "Tama" beaded on them. There is no known connection between the Fox and the *Haudenosaunee* so the Fox Indians may have "invented" raised beadwork independently. In the 20th

century, Alaskan beadworkers produced pincushions and wall pockets depicting native wildlife and the name ALASKA. These beadworkers may have had some contact with Mohawk people who joined the gold rush in the late 1890s (Mike Tarbell 2005:pers. comm.). There are pieces of Mohawk beadwork made in 1898 and 1899 with KLONDIKE beaded on them, and Mohawk beadwork was sold in Alaskan shops in the early 1900s (Peter Corey 2002:pers. comm.). The items with wording from Iowa and Alaska appear to be the only non-Iroquois pincushions with beaded words sewn onto cloth. Auctions often list pieces of beadwork as being made by Indians living in Wisconsin, Nova Scotia, Maine, and other places, but without any proof, it is safer to believe they are really Iroquois beadwork that just ended up in those states.

From around 1890 to 1920, many Mohawks traveled extensively in Wild West shows and Indian medicine shows. These entertainers brought baskets and beadwork to sell to the people who came to see their shows. They also sold to tourists at train stations and on the trains themselves (Murray 1856:127). It is reported that during the latter half of the 19th century, Mohawk families and entertainment groups traveled extensively throughout North America, as well as making several incursions into Europe, where they put on shows and sold their baskets and beadwork (Blanchard 1983).

Iroquois beadwork was also widely disseminated by honeymoon couples who visited Niagara Falls, "the honeymoon capital of the world," and took home one or more pieces of beadwork as souvenirs and gifts. For example, it is estimated that in 1850, some 60,000 tourists visited Niagara Falls; the market came to the beadworkers, tens of thousands each year (Adamson 1985; Vidler 1985). If the visitors bought their beadwork from a seller who was set up near the Falls, the beadwork was probably made by the Seneca or Tuscarora who had the exclusive right to sell at the Falls. Iroquois women sold their beadwork on streets near the Falls, at Queen Victoria Park in Canada, at Prospect Point, and on Goat and Luna islands in the United States. If the beadwork was purchased in one of the many souvenir shops that opened in the 19th century, the beadwork could be Mohawk because they wholesaled to the "curiosity shops" that featured Indian souvenirs.

Although it is difficult to estimate the number of pieces of beadwork that were made and sold, there are approximately 20,000 pieces in known collections today, based on a survey of collectors. Perhaps as many as 200,000 pieces were made in the last two hundred years, figuring 20 beadworkers each making an average of 50 pieces a year. And, because they are all made by hand, there are no two pieces exactly alike.



Figure 1. The back of the earliest-known dated beaded pincushion; height: 5.5 cm (photo: D. Elliott).

Although similar designs are repeated, at least the bead colors are varied from piece to piece. A calculation of the proportion of Niagara beadwork to Mohawk beadwork results in an estimate that there are ten times more pieces of Mohawk beadwork than Niagara beadwork.

Based on the author's collection of approximately 1,800 pieces and an examination of many other private and museum collections as well as offerings on eBay, pincushions of various sizes and shapes predominate, comprising about half of the examined Iroquois beadwork. Purses, also called bags and pouches, are the next most common, making up about a quarter of the total. Wall hangings such as picture frames, wall pockets, and match holders that have a cardboard foundation are next in frequency, followed by miscellaneous pieces such as mats, dolls, and clothing. This does not include the large number of souvenir pins, necklaces, barrettes, and earrings made by Iroquois craftspeople or the beaded traditional regalia made for use other than to sell to tourists.

Contemporary beadworkers see beadwork as a significant part of Iroquois culture and see beadworking as an important link to the past. In Iroquois communities, beadworkers are admired as continuing a revered Iroquois tradition. Although there are a few male beadworkers, the majority of the beadworkers are women and, in a matrilineal and matriarchal society, the economic benefit of beadwork sales increases the power of women even more.

HISTORY OF IROQUOIS BEADWORK

Dating beadwork has always been difficult because the makers did not keep records (in fact, many did not read or write) and buyers rarely recorded the purchase of souvenirs. Although some later pieces of beadwork have dates beaded on them, the earliest do not. Fortunately, a few pieces have dates written on the back in pen, usually by the recipient. The earliest such notation reads, "Ann Bollinger 1797 June inst." Although there is a spot on the fabric near the last number, and it could be a 9 instead of a 7, the date places the pincushion in the late 18th century (Fig. 1; Pl. IA bottom), provided the attribution is authentic. This piece is probably from western New York or Pennsylvania where there were Bollingers (Paul Huey 2000:pers. comm.). The name would most likely be the giver or receiver of the piece, not the maker. The maker was probably Seneca. The pincushion exhibits the central flower and multiple outlines, two motifs that are elaborated in later Seneca beadwork.

Molly Brant was a prominent Mohawk woman in the 18th century. She was recognized as a skilled seamstress and known for her beautiful traditional Iroquois sewing which most likely incorporated beads (Lois Feister 2000:pers. comm.). That would then make Molly the earliest recorded Mohawk beader. Unfortunately, none of her beadwork is known to have survived. It is likely that she only decorated clothing with beads and did not make three-dimensional pieces like pincushions (Huey 1997).

The earliest pieces with beaded dates are the Seneca “zigzag” purses made in the 1830s. There are references to Indians selling their beadwork at Niagara Falls as early as the 1830s. They would most likely be either Seneca or Tuscarora sellers.

Pieces from the 1840s are relatively common. They can be identified because Lewis Henry Morgan (1850, 1851, 1852) pictured them in three of his publications. The most common beadwork forms are six- and eight-lobed pincushions about 4 in. (10 cm) in diameter. The central flower made of small clear beads is repeated from pincushion to pincushion while the “sprays” between the clear flower petals are made of colored beads. Often the sprays are the same color or two colors are alternated (Pl. IB top). Velvet and wool, often red or black, are the favored cloth for the beaded side of the pincushions while a tan colored polished cotton most often forms the back. The binding is usually silk. Morgan also pictured purses with flowers beaded on them. Besides the flowers, they can be identified by the many rows of parallel lines of beads outlining the purses (Pl. IB bottom).

In his 1850 Tonawanda field notes, Morgan writes:

They imitate natural objects, like flowers, with great accuracy. The art of flowering as they call it is the most difficult of any part of beadwork, for the reason that in addition to an accurate knowledge of the flower at the stage in which it is to be represented, they must be able to imitate closely. In combining colors they never seek for strong contrasts, but choose those, which most harmoniously blend with each other. White beads are most used, and usually to separate other colors. In making up their combinations the following general rules are observed: light green and pink go well together with white between, dark blue and yellow also with white between, red and light blue with white between, dark purple and light purple with white between. For flowering dark green are used for stems with white glass, pink glass and green glass, and pale yellow glass for the flowers (Tooker 1994:152).

Many people believe that Caroline Parker, a skilled Seneca beadworker and sister of Ely Parker, a friend of Lewis Henry Morgan, made the pincushions and purses. Perhaps members of her family and friends living on the Tonawanda Reservation, located between Rochester and Buffalo, were also beadworkers because there are so many pieces in this style. Morgan bought a fine tablecloth from Caroline in the 1840s. A pair of children’s moccasins in this style in the Milwaukee Public Museum is labeled as being from the Tonawanda Indians, Niagara County, New York, where Caroline lived.

Richard Hill (1997:pers. comm.)—artist, author, and expert on *Haudenosaunee* art—believes the earliest known photograph of Iroquois beadworkers is a stereoscopic picture taken by the English photographer, William England, in 1859. The photograph shows five women sitting on the ground, each working on a piece of beadwork. Finished pieces are laid out in front of them (Pl. IC top). The back of the stereo card reads:

Group of Indian Women at Bead Work. Scene on Goat Island, Niagara. Goat Island during the summer season is much frequented by vendors of souvenirs of the Falls, for few can pay a visit here without carrying away some little article of curiosity as a remembrance thereof; hence those who keep shop ‘under the shade of the greenwood tree,’ drive a considerable and profitable trade. Amongst them the Indian women are conspicuous, as seated on the sward they curiously contrive purses, pincushions, needle-books, slippers, caps, and other numerous articles in elegant bead work, which for beauty of design and neatness of execution is unsurpassed. In the neighbourhood of Niagara in times past, ere the white face set foot upon their territory were the hunting grounds, of the Seneca Indians, and it is the remnant of this scattered tribe that gains a subsistence by the manufacture and sale of fancy articles upon the ground where at one time the tribe held undisputed sway. About four miles from Niagara, is a small Indian village, where the old laws and customs of this people are still observed to a limited extent, the inhabitants electing their chief and looking up to him as the patriarch of the flock.

The women may be Seneca or they may be Tuscarora who lived much closer to Niagara Falls. The beadwork in clear beads with dark velvet centers is indeed elegant (Pl. IC bottom).

Many pincushions were made in western New York in the 19th century. They featured white and clear beads and rarely used colored beads. Small wall pockets also called wall slippers were made using the same beads and designs. Elegant trifold needlecases with clear beads on dark velvet were created mid century. Elaborate mats were beaded in intricate designs around the circumference leaving the fabric center clear (Pl. ID top). Perhaps the fabric center was meant for a place to set a glass or ceramic vase or a beaded tree. Few 19th-century trees survive, but the technique of making them has been revived in the 21st century.

By the late 19th century, there were several Tuscarora beadworkers producing beautiful pieces. Several stereo cards by George Barker show Tuscarora beadworkers at

the Falls in the 1860s and 1870s. Delia Patterson and her half-sister Elizabeth (Rihsakwad) posed with beadwork in 1894. They are the earliest known named and pictured Tuscarora beadworkers (Richard Hill 2005:pers. comm.). The censuses list several “fancy beadworkers” in that period (Evans 1910). Sophronia Thompson, identified as a maker of a beaded tree, was also working at the same time. One talented sewer created star-shaped pincushions with a “snowflake” design in the center. Another, whom I call “Mrs B,” created pincushions with birds circling the center (Pl. ID bottom). Both of these styles of beadwork often carry the message FROM NIAGARA FALLS. We have yet to match any beadwork to the talented beadworkers listed in the censuses.

In 1905, Matilda Hill returned from boarding school and started sewing and beading which she continued until her death in 1985, eighty years later. She organized “beading bees” on the Tuscarora reservation and formed assembly lines to produce hundreds of pieces. She was most known for the beautiful birds that she made. Her daughter, Dorothy Printup, and granddaughter, Dolly Printup Winden, carry on her tradition.

During the latter half of the 20th century, much of the Niagara beadwork has simple motifs featuring one bird and one flower or a pair of leaves. Heart-shaped pincushions were the most common. At the end of the century, less than a dozen women were producing beadwork to sell at Niagara Falls and the New York State Fair.

With the increasing appreciation of Iroquois beadwork in the 21st century, many of the sewers have begun to produce very elaborate and beautiful pieces of beadwork (Pl. IIA top and bottom).

Little is known of historic Cayuga, Onondaga, and Oneida beadwork. Having less contact with tourists and tourist sites, perhaps members of these three nations never developed a large beadwork industry. Or perhaps Onondaga and Oneida beadwork resembles Mohawk beadwork and is included with that. Older Cayuga beadwork would most likely be in the Niagara tradition.

It was not until the 1850s that the Mohawks began to produce beadwork for sale. It appears that the very earliest types of items they made were picture frames, watch holders, purses, and caps. The picture frames were made with purple velvet and featured large clear beads. Often they were highlighted with blue, green, yellow, and red beads. Box purses, heart and trilobe pincushions, and eight-lobed rectangular pincushions were made with the same beads on purple velvet.

By the 1890s, Mohawk beaders from Kahnawake (then called Caughnawaga) were prolific producers of elaborately

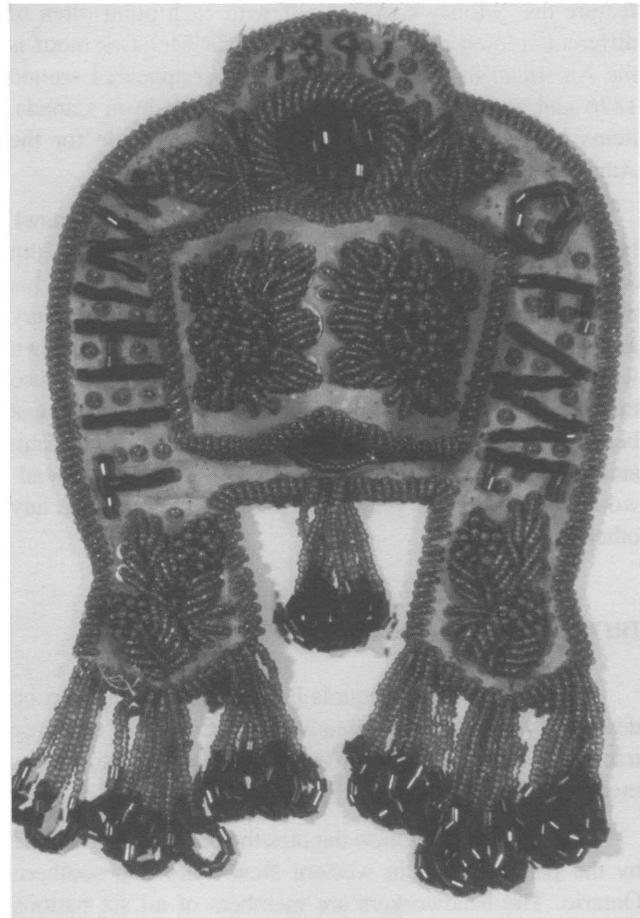


Figure 2. Mohawk combination horseshoe/whiskbroom holder with 1896 date and misspelling; H: 24 cm (photo: D. Elliott).

beaded boots, trilobe pincushions, purses, and needlecases. Beads were predominately large clear seed beads. Beads were piled high in Victorian excess. They also made horseshoes, match holders, and whiskbroom holders. Clear, yellow, and green beads were favored on yellow and green cloth. Around 1897, they started using a hot-pink material for pincushion tops and started to bead dates in with the design. Fantastic pincushions featuring exotic animals in colorful beads appeared. Mottos, often misspelled, appeared on the pincushions and wall hangings. The Mohawk beadworkers could speak Mohawk, French, and English but were illiterate, so in their haste to copy words written down for them, they often made mistakes (Fig. 2).

Loops of bugle beads hung in large clumps from the bottom of hanging pieces and sometimes were laid down on pincushions. When the bugles became unavailable around 1917, beadworkers subsequently continued to make pincushions with animals and dates but the hanging loops were now formed of seed beads. The large clear beads were replaced with chalk white beads. Many pieces

feature the “Mohawk star” motif with each point often of different colored beads. Another popular Mohawk motif is the American flag. It seems to have first appeared around 1876 and continued through the 1930s. Made in Canada, items bearing the US flag were obviously made for the American market.

Along with the evolution of the Niagara and Mohawk beadwork traditions, a third was developed in the late 20th century by Cayuga beadworkers Sam Thomas and his mother, Lorna Hill. Unlike other beadworkers, contemporary and ancestral, they bead full time. In addition to their own work, they teach beading classes to thousands of students so their techniques are spread widely. Credited with inspiring a beadwork movement among the Oneidas in Wisconsin, Sam and Lorna have probably created 20,000 pieces of beadwork in their first 25 years, unquestionably more than any other beadworkers.

IROQUOIS BEADWORK TRADITIONS

Each of the three Iroquois beadwork traditions can be described in broad terms. Beadwork from each of the three traditions carries similar attributes of shape, cloth, beads, motifs, and sizes.

The *Niagara Tradition* denotes the beadwork produced by the people living in western New York and southern Ontario. The beadworkers are members of all six nations although the majority are Tuscarora and Seneca. The beadwork started in the late 18th century with small pincushions with multi-beaded outlines. The majority of the mid- to late 19th-century beadwork was done in clear beads. Much was done on red or blue fabric. In the 20th century, multicolored beads were sewn on colorful velvet. The designs feature flowers and birds. Words are beaded in small uppercase letters with FROM NIAGARA FALLS being the most popular wording. Bindings are popular and edging beads are looser.

The *Mohawk Tradition* is made in the St. Lawrence River valley, primarily at Akwesasne, Kahnawake, and Kahnasatake. Most of the beadworkers identify themselves as Mohawk. Mohawk beadwork started in the middle of the 19th century and featured clear beads which were highlighted with green, blue, amber, and red beads. Purple velvet was popular as the face cloth. In the late 19th century, Mohawk beadwork featured extremely raised beadwork and hanging loops weighted down with bugle beads. This beadwork, which features an extravagance of beads on such items as trilobes, boots, wall hangings, and needlecases, illustrates the pinnacle of “raised” beadwork. Yellow, green, and hot pink cloth is preferred. Early 20th-century beadwork

features colorful animals, dates, and words beaded in large uppercase letters. Over 140 different mottos and place names have been recorded on Mohawk beadwork. The most common dates represent the first decade of the 20th century. A technique of alternating clear and colored beads in a checkerboard fashion was popular in the late 19th century. This was replaced by alternating chalk white and colored beads during the first half of the 20th century.

By researching in museum collections and learning from established beadworkers, Sam Thomas and his mother, Lorna Hill, developed a third tradition. Although they are Cayuga, they combine motifs and techniques from both the Niagara and Mohawk beadwork traditions. In addition to creating pieces in most of the sixty established beadwork forms, they introduced new forms such as address books, checkbook covers, and photo albums. Produced since about 1980, *Thomas-Hill* beadwork features birds and flowers made in a rainbow of colors or pieces that feature all clear crystal beads. Their beadwork designs incorporate Niagara



Figure 3. Contemporary fancy boot by Sam Thomas; H: 29 cm (photo: D. Elliott).

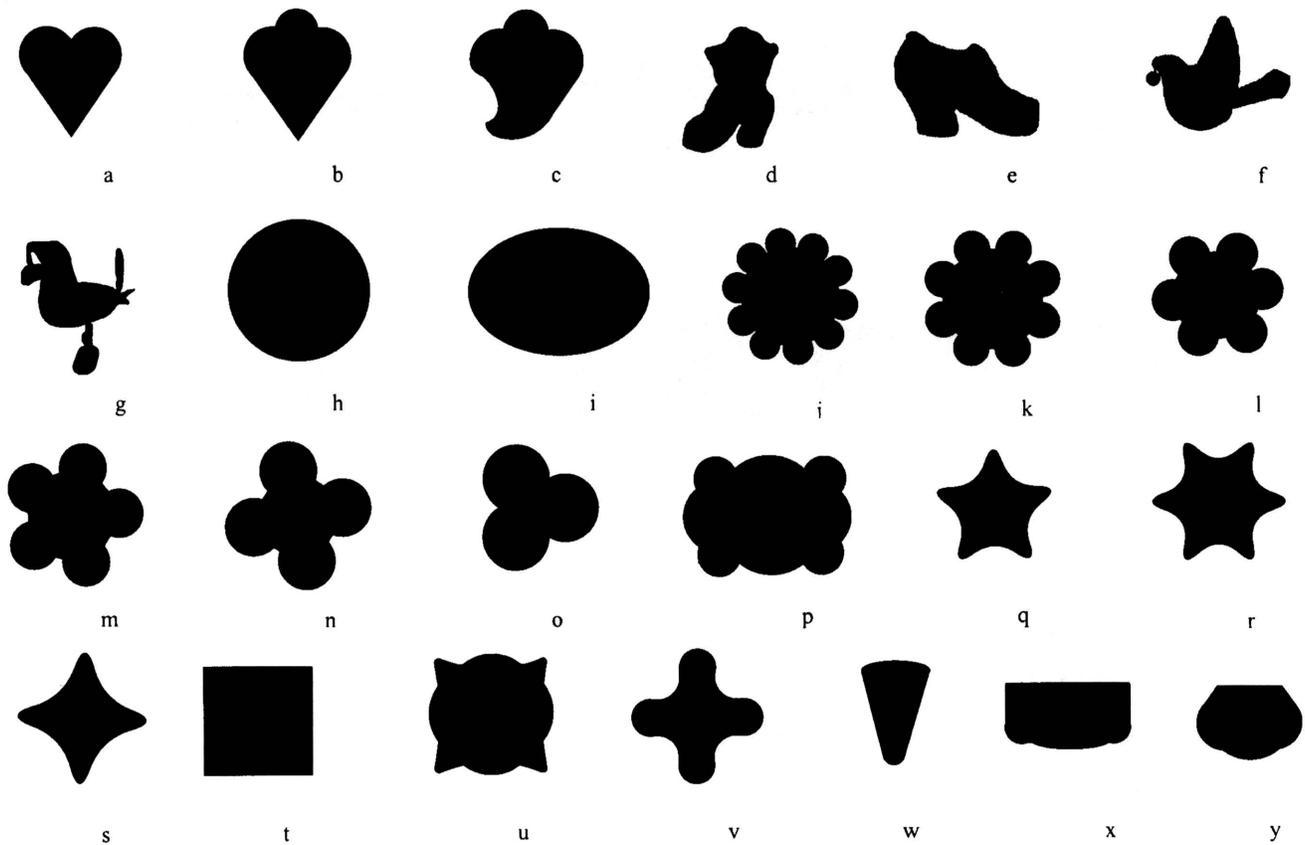


Figure 4. Pincushion shapes: a, heart; b, trilobe heart; c, asymmetrical heart; d, boot; e, shoe; f, Tuscarora bird; g, Mohawk bird; h, round; i, oblong; j, ten-lobed; k, eight-lobed; l, six-lobed; m, five-lobed; n, four-lobed; o, three-lobed; p, eight-lobed rectangle; q, five-pointed star; r, six-pointed star; s, diamond; t, square; u, lobed square; v, cross; w, strawberry; x, trifold needlecase; y, clamshell needlecase (drawing: T. Elliott).

and Mohawk motifs that are elaborated to form the new tradition. Strawberries and hummingbirds are common motifs. Fine velvet is the favored face cloth. Many pieces are large and flamboyant (Fig. 3).

IROQUOIS BEADWORK CATEGORIES

Iroquois beadwork is very varied in function, form, and size but can be separated into five main categories: pincushions, wall hangings, containers and purses, clothing, and miscellaneous. The latter incorporates pieces that do not fit into the other four categories, such as dolls and mats. The items in these four categories come in a wide variety of shapes. Over 60 different shapes have been identified (Figs. 4-6). Many of these shapes, such as the heart, have several forms (Elliott 2002).

Pincushions

Pincushions comprise the most common category of Iroquois beadwork. While many of these have beaded

suspension cords, they are included here and not in the Wall Hangings category as they principally served as pincushions. Of the 25 forms of pincushions, some are more common in one tradition than another and some are made in one tradition only.

Heart. The Valentine-style heart (Fig. 4,a) is the most common pincushion shape. It has been made for over two hundred years. The earliest hearts are very small and were most likely made in the Niagara area, probably by Seneca beadworkers. Thousands of Mohawk hearts with purple velvet centers beaded in mostly clear beads were made during the second half of the 19th century. They feature two leaves on the top of each pincushion (Fig. 7). The early 20th century features hot pink Mohawk hearts, a continuation of the hearts previously made with purple velvet. By the middle of the 20th century, Mohawk hearts are done on many different colored fabrics and feature floral designs and words. 20th-century Niagara hearts often picture a flower on one top lobe of the heart and a bird in flight facing it on the other side. MONTREAL, MT CLEMENS, OTTAWA, BROCKTON FAIR, and CAUGHNAWAGA are common

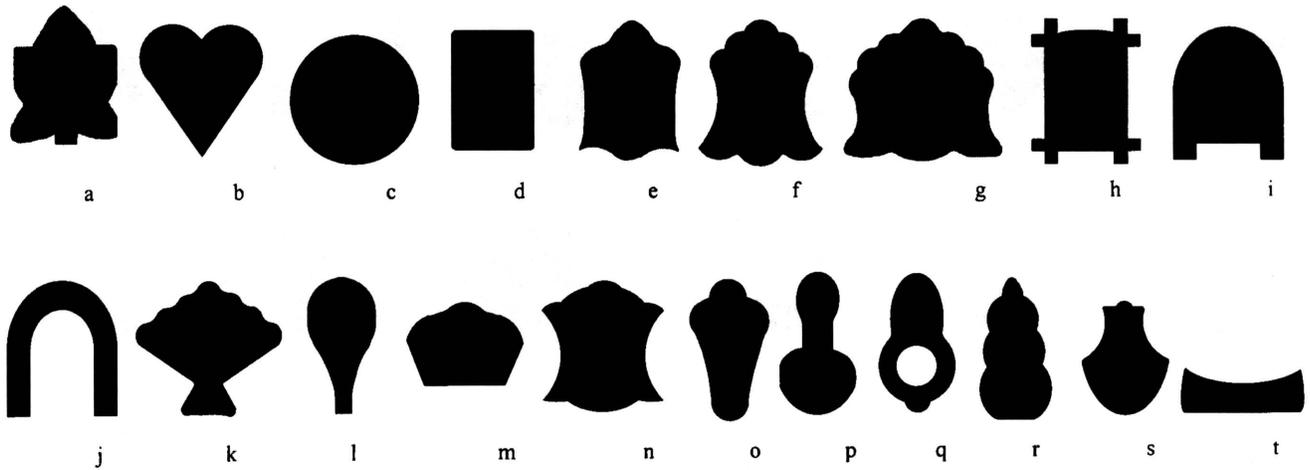


Figure 5. Shapes of wall hangings: a-i, picture frames; j, horseshoe; k-l, whiskbroom holders; m, tie rack; n, match holder; o, scissors holder; p, s, wall pockets; q, watch holder; r, letter holder; t, canoe (drawing: T. Elliott).

names written in large upper case letters on Mohawk hearts. NIAGARA FALLS and NY STATE FAIR in small upper case letters predominate on Niagara hearts.

Trilobe Heart. Another form is the trilobe heart (Fig. 4,b) which was made in both areas. There are some very early ones in the Niagara area. Trilobe making peaked among the Mohawk in the 1890s and the first two decades of the 20th century. These were often profusely decorated with highly raised flowers featuring multiple loops hanging from them. Trilobes with hot pink cloth often feature animals such as cows, lions, deer, and unidentifiable animals and birds. Mohawk trilobes measure up to 13 x 12 in. (32 x 30 cm) in size and are the largest of all the pincushions (Pl. IA top).

Asymmetrical Trilobe. A variation of the trilobe is the asymmetrical trilobe (Fig. 4,c). This shape is very similar to an Iroquois silver brooch design.

Shoe and Boot. These two forms (Fig. 4,d-e) show an obvious Victorian influence. The earliest boots were made in the 1860s in the Niagara area. They feature clear beads on dark fabric which was often red or blue and sometimes green. They stood 4-6 in. (10-15 cm) high.

In the 1890s, beadworkers in the Mohawk area created boots as large as 10 in. (25 cm) tall with another 2 in. (5 cm) of beads hanging from the bottom. Beaded suspension cords reveal that the boots were intended to be hung. Many of these boots have pockets at the top formed by a beaded,

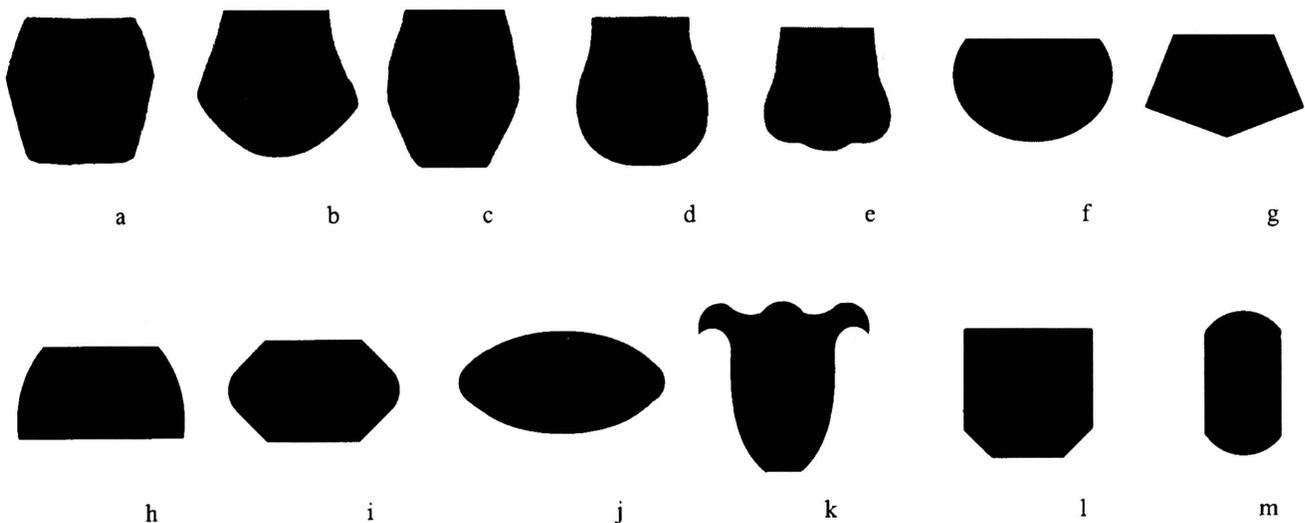


Figure 6. Purse and container shapes: a, hexagonal flat bag; b, rocker-shaped flat black bag; c, urn-shaped flat black bag; d, classic flat black bag; e, lobed flat black bag; f, small flat purse; g, pentagonal bag; h, fist purse; i, box purse; j, pinch purse; k, urn; l, collection box; m, small container (drawing: T. Elliott).

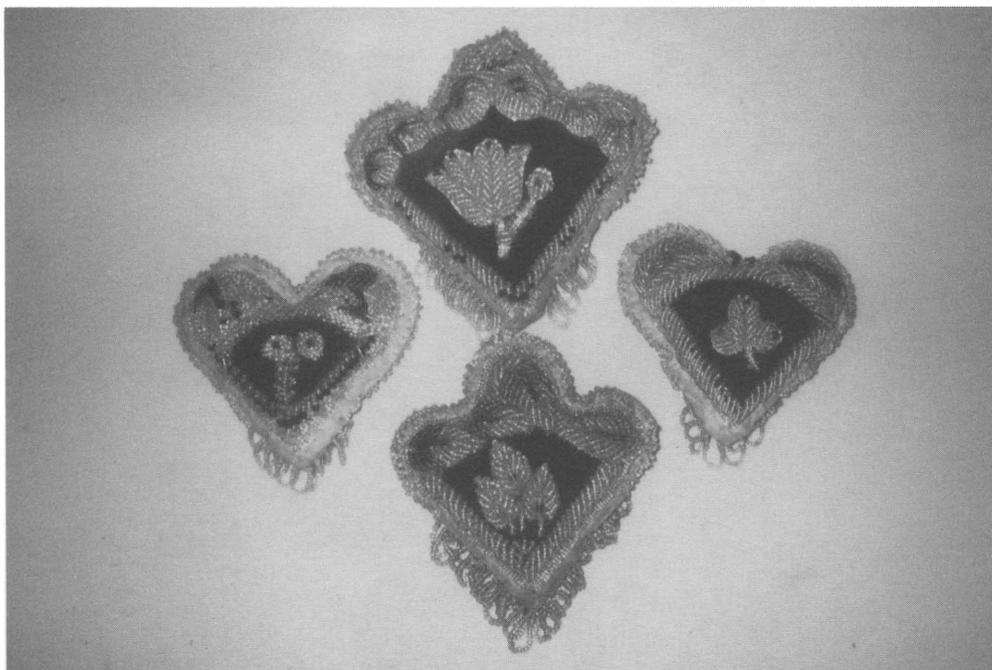


Figure 7. Nineteenth-century Mohawk hearts (H: 14 cm) and trilobes (photo: D. Elliott).

cloth-covered cardboard cuff. Perhaps this pocket was meant to hold scissors, thread, or the like. The velvet cloth is almost smothered with large stylized floral medallions of raised beadwork with bunches of beaded loops spilling out of them. Beaded birds often fill the spaces in between (Fig. 8).

Ankle-high shoe forms seem to appear in the 1920s (Pl. IIB top). They are made in both areas.

Bird. These (Fig. 4,f-g) may be the most popular Iroquois pincushion form among collectors. Birds were introduced in the 1890s in both areas (birds made to sit atop beaded trees may be a separate development). Each area has a distinct bird form although both are always covered with widely spaced beads. The Niagara bird has uplifted wings and carries two balls, sometimes referred to as cherries or strawberries, in its beak. The Mohawk bird also carries two balls (or an envelope, cone, or plaque with a date on it [Fig. 9]) and also usually has two or more balls hanging from a perch to which the bird's legs are attached. Mohawk birds have down-swept wings and often have their date of creation beaded under the tail. Some have the word BIRD beaded there. A third type, which is from the Niagara area, is a bird with wings at its sides.

Round and Oblong. Pincushions of these forms (Fig. 4,h-i) are scarce. The most common round type is one that is about an inch (2.5 cm) thick with beadwork designs on both sides. It is early and probably comes from the Niagara area.

Multi-lobed. There are three-lobed, four-lobed, five-lobed, six-lobed, eight-lobed, and ten-lobed cushions that are basically round pincushions with scallops or lobes around the circumference. The ten-, eight-, and six-lobed pincushions were made in the Niagara area in the middle of the 19th century (Fig. 4,j-l). Five-lobed pincushions were popular in the 20th century (Fig. 4,m). Four-lobed pincushions seem to have been made from the 18th century through the 20th century (Fig. 4,n). Three-lobed pincushions are very rare (Fig. 4,o).

Eight-lobed Rectangle. The eight-lobed rectangle (Fig. 4,p) is the most common type of Iroquois pincushion and one of the largest. These Mohawk pincushions average about 8 x 10 in. (20 x 25 cm). Although some have red, blue, brown, or green fabrics, the great majority have purple or magenta velvet. Purple pillow pincushions were made by the thousands, probably at Kahnawake. Most feature one or more birds with floral ornamentation that sometimes grows out of a basket or urn. All four sides of these pincushions are framed with leaves. The beads used in the leaves are clear, red, blue, green, and amber. If there is more than one of each color, they are usually symmetrically placed across from the other. Round designs composed of bugle beads were sometimes placed in the four corners. These pincushions were probably used to store fancy hatpins. Although they are so similar to each other, identical eight-lobed rectangles have never been reported. Because there are so many of

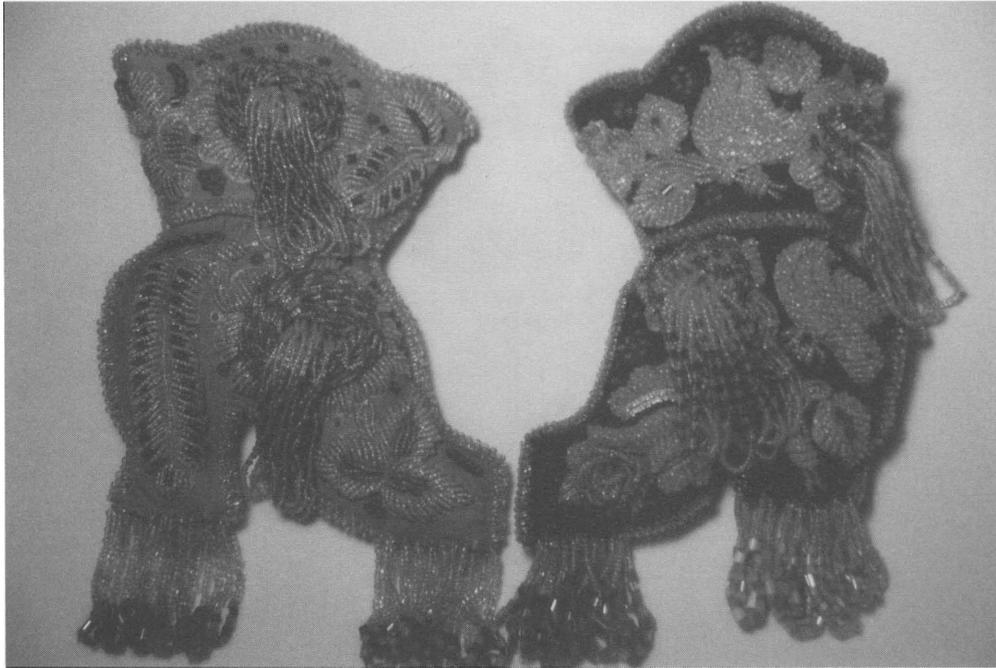


Figure 8. Late 19th-century Mohawk boots; H: 25 cm (photo: D. Elliott).

them, they had to have been made by more than one person. They were probably made between 1860 and 1910. The common motif of crossed American flags above a bird with outstretched wings may have begun in 1876, the year of the United States centennial (Pl. IIB bottom).

Star. Star-shaped pincushions can be distinguished from the lobed ones because the projections are more angular. There are eight-pointed (*see cover*), five-pointed (Fig. 4,q) and six-pointed stars (Fig. 4,r). Almost all the star-shaped pincushions were made in the 20th century by Mohawk beadworkers.

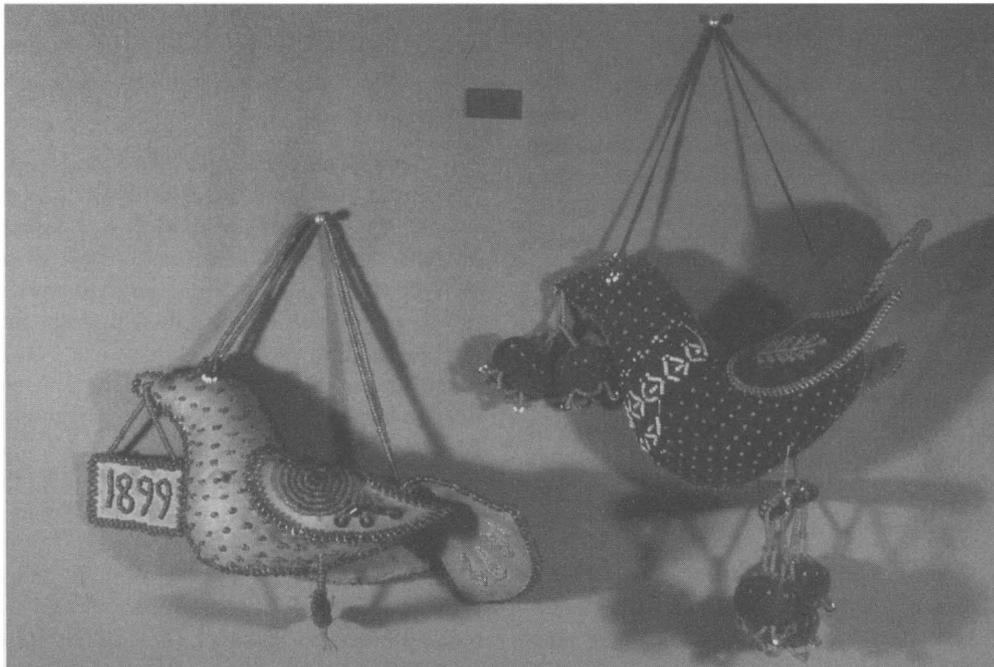


Figure 9. Mohawk birds: The one dated 1899 is 19 cm long; the other is from the mid or late 20th century (photo: K. Karklins).

Diamond. The diamond-shaped (Fig. 4,s) pincushion could be considered a four pointed star but is usually referred to as diamond shaped though they are also referred to as rhombs (Pl. IIC top). Some have incurved, not parallel sides. Diamonds often have dates from the first half of the 20th century beaded in the center and many read CANADIAN NATIONAL EXHIBITION or NIAGARA FALLS.

Square. Pincushions with a square outline (Fig. 4,t) are relatively scarce and almost all of them are very fancy. Each may have been made for a special occasion (Pl. IIC bottom).

Lobed Square. These (Fig. 4,u) pincushions were probably made by the same person, probably a Tuscarora. She made other pincushion shapes as well and substituted butterflies for the birds. Many of the lobed squares have FROM NIAGARA FALLS beaded in the center which is circled by birds. Some have beaded dates centering on 1900.

Cross-shaped. Pincushions in the form of a cross (Fig. 4,v) are rare. Very well made, the old ones date to the late 19th century. This form has been recently revived by Sam Thomas.

Strawberry. Representations of strawberries (Fig. 4,w) are made in both areas and share similar characteristics. Like the birds, they have beads spaced over them to resemble strawberry seeds (Fig. 10). Red velvet usually forms the covering. They have a loop at the top and three or four loops at the bottom. Many of the older ones are filled with emery instead of cotton or sawdust and were used to clean and polish needles. Those of the 21st century are stuffed with polyester batting.

Needlecase. These are pincushions with covers. They were made in two basic styles: trifold and clamshell. *Trifold needlecases* (Fig. 4,x) are divided into three segments, the central one being stuffed. The end segments fold over the pincushion. Niagara needlecases were made as early as the 1860s. Most feature clear beads on dark colored velvet. Many say FROM NIAGARA FALLS. Late-19th-century Mohawk examples have highly raised floral medallions on one side, often with beaded loops cascading from their centers (Pl. IID top).

Clamshell needlecases (Fig. 5,y) have only one fold so they are shaped something like a clam (Fig. 11). The pincushion occupies one flap. These seem to all come from the Niagara area.

Related to the needlecases are small *two-fold* and *trifold* pieces that sometimes have a padded pincushion but in others there are only pockets. Perhaps some are needle or pin holders while others are personal cardholders. They

are elaborately beaded in the style of the early to mid 19th century (Pl. IID bottom).

Wall Hangings

Wall hangings comprise items constructed of beads sewn on cloth that is stretched over a cardboard foundation and have suspension cords at the top so that they may be hung up. Although some pincushions also have suspension loops, they do not have a cardboard foundation. Just about all wall hangings are beaded on just one face with the exception of canoes which are beaded on both sides. About one in four wall hangings features a beaded word (such as MATCHES, FAST BOAT, GOOD LUCK, MONTREAL, or SCISSORS) that indicates the piece's intended function or a tourist destination. Beaded dates are also common.

Picture Frames. The most common wall hangings are picture frames. They were introduced very soon after photography became popular. Mohawk beadworkers were making picture frames by the 1860s; the Prince of Wales was given these when Mohawks visited London that year. A pair of Seneca picture frames are dated 1867. Picture frames are made with cloth stretched over two pieces of cardboard with one or more openings in the larger front piece. The two pieces are sewn together leaving an opening at the top where pictures can be slipped in. Picture frames are made in about ten basic shapes with many variations (Fig. 5,a-i). Their heights range from 5 in. to 12 in. (12-30 cm). Most are made for one picture although double picture frames are common (Fig. 12). Picture frames with three or four openings are rare. Mohawk picture frames usually have clusters of loops hanging from the bottom while Niagara frames have a lesser fringe (Pl. IIIA top).

Plaques are similar items. They are shaped like picture frames but consist of only one piece of cardboard and have no window for a picture. They usually carry names or beaded symbols. Plaques were made in both areas during the 20th century.

Horseshoe. Beadwork in the form of a horseshoe (Fig. 5,j) has been made in both areas since the 1890s. It seems to be the only form that does not have a physical function. Horseshoes are basically good luck tokens with GOOD LUCK being beaded on most of them. Almost all horseshoes have a beaded message. In addition to GOOD LUCK, there is such wording as I LOVE YOU, CALL AGAIN, REMEMBER ME, THINK OF ME, or SOUVENIR. Ranging from 3 in. to 8 in. (8-20 cm) in height, they are meant to hang with the open end down, a position opposite to what most Euro-Americans use. Variations of the horseshoe have a space for a picture while others are fitted to hold a whiskbroom (Fig. 2).

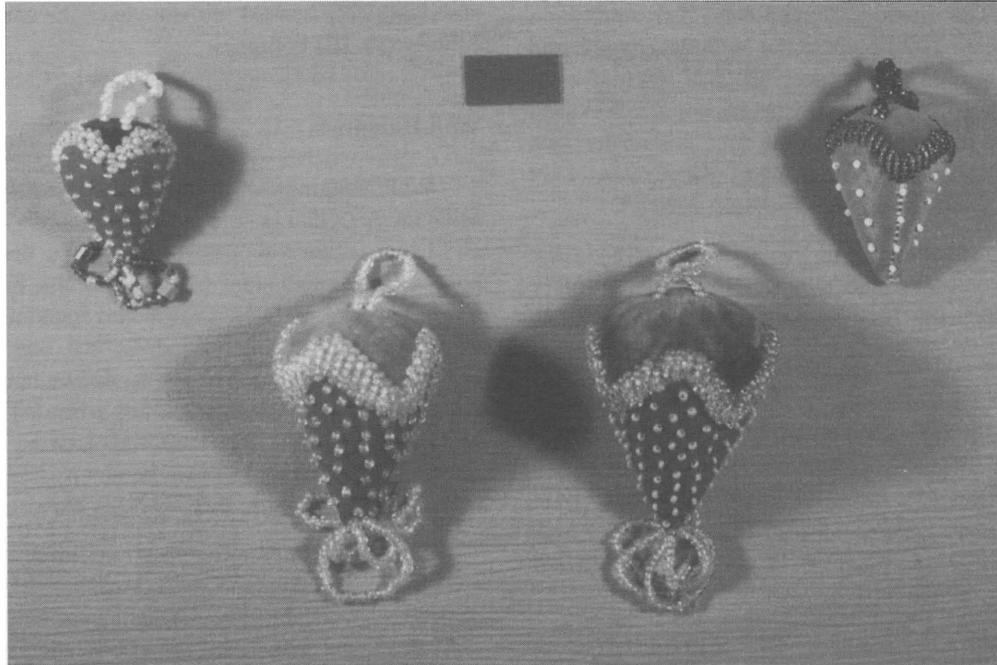


Figure 10. Strawberries; the largest is 7 cm high (photo: K. Karklins).

Whiskbroom Holder. This form (Fig. 5,k-l) was introduced in the 1890s in the Mohawk area. They have a cardboard back with a cardboard strap across the front forming a loop into which a whiskbroom may be slipped handle down. Sometimes they have the word WHISK beaded on the front and many feature a beaded date or

MONTREAL. Many were made during the first quarter of the 20th century. They come in a variety of shapes such as a snowshoe or banjo, but most are the same basic shape as the match holders described below but with a narrower base and wider top.



Figure 11. Clamshell needlecases; 19th century; the largest is 12 cm wide (photo: K. Karklins).

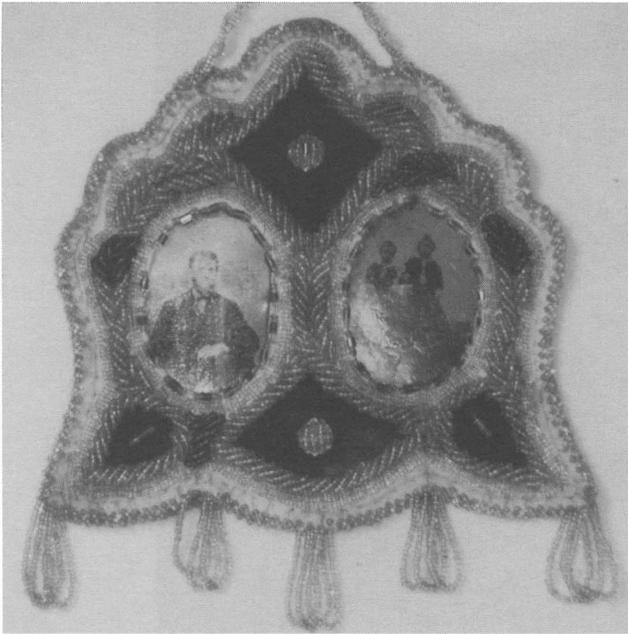


Figure 12. Double Mohawk picture frame; late 19th century; H: 23 cm (photo: D. Elliott).

Tie Rack. Related to whiskbroom holders are tie racks (Fig. 5,m). Often depicting Indian heads, these items appear to have been made only in the 1930s (Karlis Karklins 2006: pers. comm.).

Match Holder. Also called match safes, match holders (Fig. 5,n) were made in the same area and during the same period as whiskbroom holders. Most of the classic match holders have two pockets, purportedly one for unused stick matches and the other for used ones. Match holders frequently bear beaded dates and words, and average about 7 in. (18 cm) in height. They often feature a wealth of bugle beads sewn flat against the fabric (Pl. IIIA bottom). A single-pocket variant was made in the 20th century.

Scissors Holder. Long single-pocket wall hangings were made to store scissors (Fig. 5,o). Made in the 20th century, they are Mohawk forms and sometimes have the word SCISSORS beaded on them (Fig. 13).

Wall Pocket. Also called wall slippers, the first wall pockets (Fig. 5,p,s) were made in the mid 1800s in the Niagara area. They were usually made of all clear beads but sometimes had highlights of silver-colored bugles. Red and green beads were also used to highlight the clear beads. Most are 5-9 in. (12-23 cm) high. The only beaded words seen on them are NIAGARA FALLS or FROM NIAGARA FALLS.

Watch Holder. A specialized wall pocket is the watch holder (Fig. 5,q) which has a circular window in the pocket

allowing the dial of the pocket watch in it to be seen (Pl. IIIB top). These small wall pockets may be one of the very first forms of Iroquois beadwork.

Letter Holder. Another form of wall hanging is the multi-tiered letter holder (Fig. 5,q) with three or more slanted pockets on the front. These forms are rare.

Canoe. One of the more recognizable Indian forms is the beaded canoe (Fig. 5,t). They range from 2 in. to 8 in. (5-20 cm) in length. The most common beaded wording is FAST BOAT, with one word on each side. Wording commemorating Admiral Perry dates them to the time of the Spanish-American War. The small early canoes are from the Niagara area while the largest are Mohawk. They continue to be made. The largest may have been hair comb holders or match stick holders. The very early miniature ones may have had a spiritual meaning associated with heavenly canoes and may not have been made for sale.

Purses and Containers

Most purses and containers consist of cloth sewn onto a cardboard or stiff-paper foundation. They come in a wide variety of sizes and shapes (Fig. 6).

Flat Purses. After jewelry, and beaded garments and accessories such as leggings, sashes, belts, and moccasins, the earliest beaded items were probably purses, also referred to as pockets, pouches, and bags. The earliest beaded purses date to the first half of the 19th century and are of three distinct types. The first is a flat bag that features beads in a zigzag pattern. Although some bags have a rounded form, most are hexagonal in outline (Fig. 6,a). The zigzags may be a beadwork interpretation of like designs in quillwork on earlier bags. On some of these bags, the zigzag beading is interrupted to accommodate a beaded date in the 1830s. Some purses have zigzags only outlining each side while the faces of the purse picture abstract “finger-like” designs. Red, white, and yellow beads are favored. Double curve motifs are also included. One bag features the outline of a stone giant, a figure in Iroquois stories. Both sides are different and only one side has a flap (Pl. IIIB bottom). These are Seneca purses. Lewis Henry Morgan (1850) depicts one in his Third Regents Report. He calls it “a work bag.”

The second type of purse—with different designs on both sides—is the kind pictured by Morgan (1852) in his *Fifth Annual Report*. It features *multiple bead outlines* in light blue and white beads. Floral motifs are often featured. Like the zigzag type, it has only one flap and both sides are different. Many of these bags are hexagonal although other shapes are also used. Morgan (1852:Pl. 18) calls this type a



Figure 13. Scissors holders from the 1930s; the larger one is 20 cm high (photo: K. Karklins).

“satchel.” This type is similar to the beadwork executed by Caroline Parker and may be her work.

The third type—the *flat black bag*—is the most common and the most recognizable type of Iroquois beadwork (Pl. IIIC top). These purses feature almost identical designs on both sides. The floral designs are beaded in two shades of five colors: red, blue, green, yellow, and white. The fabric is black or dark brown velvet with a binding, often in red. A few have a beaded fringe. There is a flap on either side but the opening is in the top. Some bags have a small pocket on one side; it may have held a comb. The pouches range from 3 x 3 in. (8 x 8 cm) to 9 x 7 in. (22 x 18 cm) with an average of around 6.5 x 6.5 in. (16 x 16 cm). They appear to have been made throughout most of the 19th century. Thousands were made but there seems to have been an effort to make all the designs different for no two identical purses have been observed. They come in a variety of shapes with four being the most prevalent (Fig. 6,b-e). Although the flat black bags are common, little is known about where or when they were made. It is probable that they were produced in Canada by Mohawk beadworkers. This is based on the fact that the newspaper used to line one such pouch bears the date April 1845 and mentions Montreal (K. Karklins 2005:pers. comm.). It is also suggested by the use of five colors like in the purple pillow pincushions made by the Mohawk and the lack of evidence that they were made in central or western New York. They are often attributed to one or another of the six nations but there is no proof as yet to substantiate these claims.

Small flat purses (Fig. 6,f), usually with clear or chalk white beads, were made in the Niagara area during the second half of the 19th century. They have one flap and different floral motifs on each side.

Pentagonal purses (Fig. 6,g) were made in the Mohawk area from the late 19th century throughout the 20th. They often feature elaborate flowers or animals. One by Louise Deer, a Mohawk beadworker from Kahnawake, pictures Mickey Mouse.

Three-dimensional Purses. There are three forms of purses that are not flat but decidedly three-dimensional.

Niagara fist purses (Fig. 6,h) are commonly made with a floral motif in clear beads on red or blue twill. They have been made since the 1860s. Later Niagara fist purses are larger and more ornate with birds and flowers and sometimes FROM NIAGARA FALLS beaded on them (Pl. IIIC bottom). Mohawk fist purses often feature flowers and leaves like those found on 19th-century pincushions.

Box purses (Fig. 6,i), mostly made by the Mohawk, are bulkier and vary from 2 x 2 in. (5 x 5 cm) to 6 x 8 in. (15 x 20 cm). In the 19th century they were covered with purple velvet but hot pink fabric was preferred in the early 20th century. The beads are clear with highlights of red, blue, green, and yellow beads along the outside. Mohawk boxes of the 20th century often show interesting animals such as foxes, elephants, and ducks. Many have BOX beaded on the lid.

Another form is the *pinch purse* (Fig. 6,j), made by sewing three football shaped fabric-covered cardboard pieces together along two sides. The purse is opened by squeezing inward from the ends. These are usually beaded on only two sides with the bottom left bare. They are a Niagara form and have been made since the mid-19th century. At least one contemporary Tuscarora beadworker, Dolly Printup Winden, makes nice Christmas tree ornaments by sewing all three sides together and sewing a hanger at one end and beaded loops at the other.

The *bandolier bag* is a rare form that is more common among native people from the northern Great Lakes region. They are large square bags with a broad beaded shoulder strap. A few bandolier bags with Iroquois motifs were made in the 20th century.

Containers. There are three basic container forms: urn, collection box, and small container or cup.

The most common container is the *urn* (Fig. 6,k) which has four, five, or six panels. Although some were made in the 19th century (Fig. 14), most date to the 1920s and are so dated. The 20th-century urns have beaded balls (like those that the beaded birds carry) hanging from the upper junctions of the panels. A stunning six-sided urn from Akwesasne has alternating tiny heart pincushions and miniature canoes instead of the balls. The panels feature beaded birds, flowers, the Mohawk star, and US flags. The urns usually have beaded suspension cords that emanate from the upper panel junctions. The relative fragility of the cords suggests the urns were meant to hold something lightweight such as dried or silk flowers.

Shorter and wider containers similar to urns may have been used for calling cards. One dated 1899 with the name WATONKEE is a mystery. A similar piece has KLONDIKE beaded on it, while another reads CROCHET, indicating it was meant to hold crocheting materials.

Containers shaped something like an urn often have Christian symbols indicating that they may have been used in churches as *collection boxes* (Fig. 6,l). Some have beaded angels with wings just like on the birds of Mohawk pincushions.

There are *smaller containers* shaped like short drinking glasses, some cylindrical (Fig. 6,m) and some with flaring rims (Fig. 15). Their function is unknown. They usually have elaborate fringe on the bottom and probably were meant to be hung.

Clothing

Beadworked clothing is divided into three categories: outfits, caps or headdresses, and moccasins.

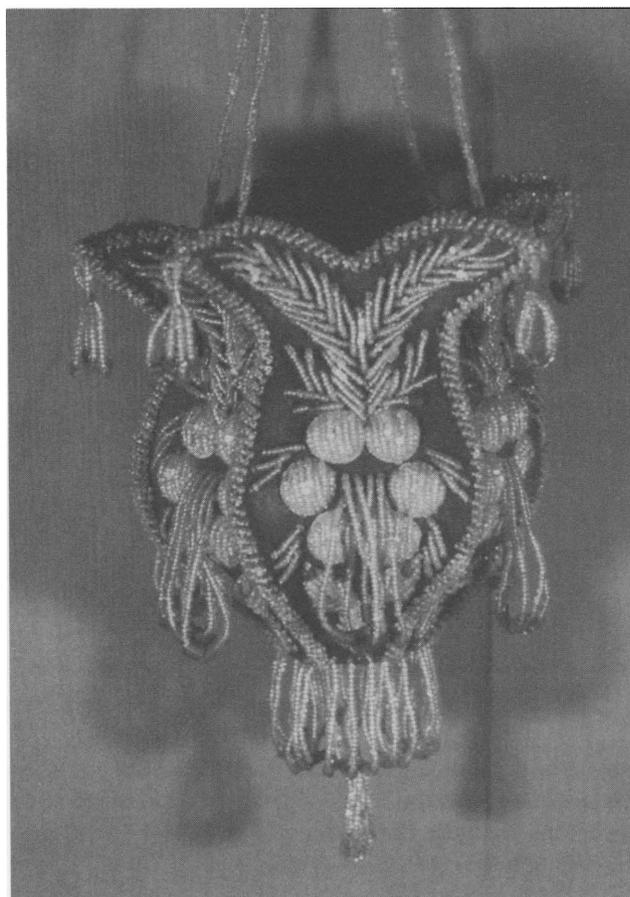


Figure 14. Urn from the late 19th century; H: 18 cm (photo: K. Karklins).

Outfits. There are three categories of outfits. The first encompasses historic traditional 19th-century garments which include cotton skirts and shirts made in the 18th-century style by such people as Caroline Parker.

The second category includes the outfits worn by entertainers in pageants and medicine and Wild West shows. These were usually made of leather, velvet, or canvas. Many were made by East-coast regalia and costume companies that provided them to members of the Improved Order of Red Men as well as Indian entertainers. Beadwork panels and strips obtained from the Mohawk were applied to the various components at the factory.

The final category comprises contemporary outfits made by the Iroquois people for their personal use. They are made in the 18th-century style and worn for such occasions as family celebrations, ceremonies, and pow wow dancing.

Caps or headdresses. There are several forms of Iroquois caps or headdresses. The earliest known is what is called a *Glengarry* because it is shaped like a Scottish wedge cap (Fig. 16). These are usually beaded in the same



Figure 15. Small containers; late 19th century; the largest is 14 cm wide (photo: K. Karklins).

five-color floral motif as the flat black bags, which may be modeled after sporrans. It is thought that they were women's hats. They span the 19th century or at least the first three quarters of it.

Smoking caps are round velvet caps with a beaded band along the lower edge. This band is often decorated with the same type of five-color beadwork as the Glengarry. The bands of some examples exhibit the beaded wording SMOKING CAP and a date. This form appears to have about the same time range as the Glengarry, but extends into the early 20th century as well.

A similar form is the *round cap* (Pl. IIID top) that was popular on the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario as well as elsewhere. It differs in that there is a beaded panel at the front. These were men's hats and appear to date to the 19th century.

Formed on a light wooden frame and adorned with feathers and sometimes beadwork as well, *gustowehs* are headdresses worn today by Iroquois men in longhouse ceremonies. The main beadwork is around the headband and depicts *Haudenosaunee* symbols. *Gustowehs* differ in feather arrangement from nation to nation and often small models of the six configurations are made to sell. Few full-size *gustowehs* are sold to tourists today.

Moccasins. Iroquois moccasins are very distinctive (Pl. IIID bottom). They have brown leather bodies with beaded vamps and cuffs. Early moccasins exhibit the zigzag

motif seen on early 19th-century purses. Mid-19th-century moccasins feature small clear beads sewn on red or blue satin. Later moccasins are decorated with the five-color floral motif. Mohawk moccasins of the early 1900s exhibit the leaf designs seen on pincushions.

Miscellaneous

Beadwork types that do not fall into the previous categories are included here.

Mats. These items resemble the top panel of a large pincushion. They come in round, square, star-shaped, truncated-square, and eight-lobed forms (Pl. ID top). The majority appear to be from the Niagara area. They are elaborately beaded except in the center. Perhaps they served as bases for vases. Some served as the bases of beaded trees as there are at least two examples of sets of a tree and its beaded mat. There are also examples of sets that include a mat and a matching pincushion. In recent times some mats have been produced which have raised beadwork in the center and are purely decorative.

Tablecloths. Early 19th-century *tablecloths* have beadwork along the edges and in the middle. Morgan collected one that was probably made by Caroline Parker in the 1840s (Rochester Museum and Science Center collections).

Dolls. These are made by members of all of the six nations. Traditional Iroquois dolls have a cornhusk body

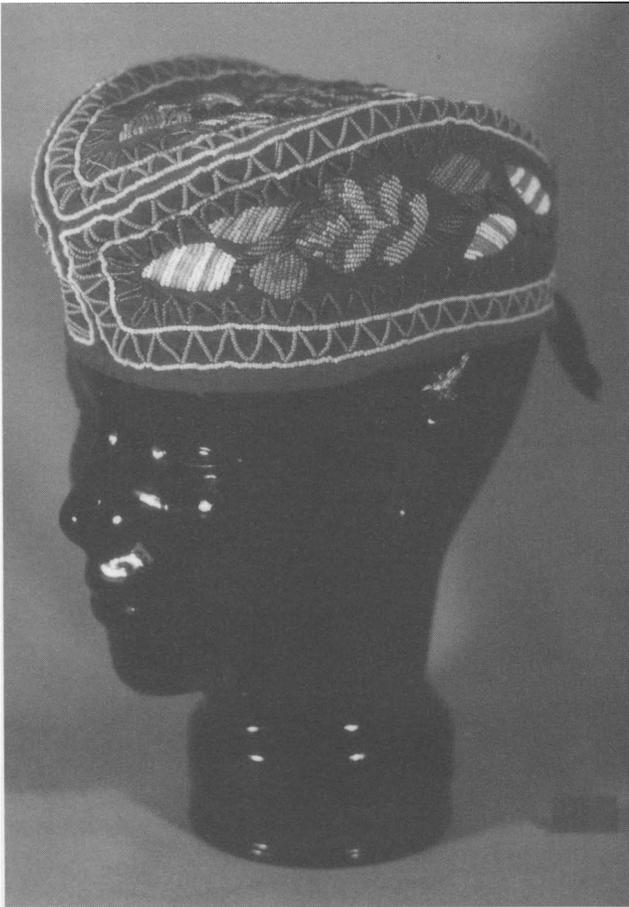


Figure 16. Glengarry hat; late 19th century; length is 28 cm (photo: K. Karklins).

while some dolls have cloth or leather bodies. Most are dressed in what is called traditional Iroquois clothing. Male dolls have beaded leggings, an apron, and shirt. Females have beaded leggings, a skirt, and shirt. The moccasins are often beaded. Many cornhusk dolls come from the Seneca reservations while the dolls from the Tuscarora reservation usually have leather faces and hands. Stuffed cloth dolls are also made at Tuscarora.

Miniature Furniture. Another form of Iroquois beadwork that is still being made is miniature furniture. This is made of beads strung on wire and is probably a craft borrowed from the Victorians.

Pins. Small pins comprise the least expensive group of Iroquois beadwork. Some include tiny moccasins while others have little dolls on cradleboards. Another form is the little flat Kateri doll. It is said to represent Kateri Tekakwitha, the beatified Algonquin girl who lived in the Mohawk Valley until her conversion to Christianity in 1676. These little dolls can be worn as pins or hung on necklaces.

CONCLUSION

For more than two centuries, talented Iroquois beadworkers have created works of art using glass beads. They combine traditional designs into forms familiar and attractive to the eyes of Euro-Americans. Long dismissed as unimportant, beadwork made by the Six Nations Iroquois (the *Haudenosaunee*) has recently become a popular field for both researchers and collectors, so much so that several museum exhibitions have been mounted and are currently on display. Always creative and experimenting with new forms, Iroquois beadworkers promise to continue to innovate and create beaded artwork in the 21st century.

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