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**98-An Inventory of Artifacts and Summary of Communications Found in the Collections of the Kalamazoo Public Museum and Associated with the Historic Period Indian Cemetery (2DKZ118) along the Kalamazoo River in Section 27, Comstock Township, Kalamazoo County, Michigan**

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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
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REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 98

1991

AN INVENTORY OF ARTIFACTS AND SUMMARY OF COMMUNICATIONS  
FOUND IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE KALAMAZOO PUBLIC MUSEUM  
AND ASSOCIATED WITH THE HISTORIC PERIOD INDIAN CEMETERY  
(20KZ118) ALONG THE KALAMAZOO RIVER IN SECTION 27,  
COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP, KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN

WILLIAM M. CREMIN

A Report of Information  
Collected and Prepared for:

Dr. John Halsey  
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Bureau of History  
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## INTRODUCTION:

In 1989, I received a call from Cheryl Lyon-Jenness of the Kalamazoo Public Museum who requested that I examine a collection of Historic Period Indian artifacts that museum personnel desired to prepare for exhibition. She informed me that the museum had purchased the collection from an area resident some years ago and that the documentation surrounding the purchase suggested that it had been retrieved from an Indian burial ground on the Kalamazoo River.

My examination of the items comprising the collection did indeed reveal that these were objects of personal adornment such as are typically found with human remains of the post-1760 period. In fact, most probably post-dated the War of 1812. And the various communications she showed me suggested that the collection could be firmly associated with a site (20KZ118) with which I was already familiar.

Some years ago, I and my associates in the Department of Anthropology at Western Michigan University conducted several programs of field research on the Kalamazoo River between the towns of Galesburg and Comstock, Michigan. During a program of survey and testing undertaken for the Michigan Department of Transportation at the Galesburg Rest Area along I-94 (Cremin 1982; 1983), a review of the documents, especially Durant's (1880) History of Kalamazoo County, Michigan, called our attention to the former presence of an Indian burial ground on the old Ford Farm, part of which fell within the limits of the MDOT project. According to Durant (1880:376),

at some time prior to the writing of his book local residents had exhumed 30 Indians from graves placed along the south bank of the Kalamazoo River on the Ford Farm in the NE 1/4, NE 1/4 of Section 27, Comstock Township. The graves were reported to lie side by side, and included a small log enclosure with an Indian in a sitting position wrapped in a blanket. Some of the graves produced silver and copper ornaments, and a tin or copper pail was observed to occur in nearly every one of them. It was further noted that some of the artifacts bore the inscription "Montreal", and that among these graves was one of an old Frenchman, at the head of which was a crude cross of wood.

Because the proposed location of the burial ground lay one kilometer downstream of the project limits, we were unable to pursue our investigation of 20KZ118 at the time. However, in 1985, when the City of Kalamazoo requested that we examine land they had recently acquired for purposes of establishing a new wellfield, we were provided an opportunity to evaluate the very parcel where the burial ground was reported to be located (Cremin 1985)

During our systematic and intensive survey of the Morrow Lake Wellfield property, we observed an old excavation on the shore of the lake where the now submerged channel of the river approaches the lake's edge. This location in the center of the N 1/2, SW 1/4, NE 1/4, NE 1/4 of Section 27 fits the description of the cemetery as being situated hard against the south bank of the river. Although intensive shovel testing and probing with a soil coring device along the margins of the 750 m<sup>2</sup> irregular, partially back-filled depression did not result in the recovery of cultural items or bone fragments, I am reasonably confident that we did actually

relocate the 19th century excavation of the Indian graves reported by Durant (Cremin 1985:7-8).

#### SOURCE OF THE PUBLIC MUSEUM'S COLLECTION:

Regardless of whether we have precisely located the Indian burial ground in question, there can be little doubt that the collection in the possession of the museum comes from the graves reported as being found on the Ford Farm by Durant (1880). However, Durant may have gotten his facts confused; witness this account in The Three Rivers Reporter (19 Aug 1876):

**Interesting Relics.**—Henry Streator, of Galesburg, recently opened an Indian burying ground near Galesburg. Three bodies were lying side by side only a little more than a foot from the surface. One skull was twenty-one and three-fourths inches in circumference. There were silver brooches three inches in diameter, and silver bracelets for the squaws, and silver crosses two inches long with the letters "R.C." marked on them. Four bracelets on one arm marked "Montreal". There were many finger and nose rings of copper and brass, and round buckles strung on ribbons for ornaments worn for belts. Scalping-knives with buck-horn handles with a turtle engraved on them. There were small stone beavers and arrowheads and tomahawks. In each grave there was a tin or copper pail at the foot. There were stone bullet-molds, composed of two flat stones with a hole in each of them. There was found here many years ago a cedar cross at the head of a grave—said to be that of an old French trapper who died among the Indians here. At that time a log hut about eight feet square and four feet high, stood near the graves. In it was an Indian skeleton in a sitting position; also the skeleton, of two dogs.

While Mr. Streator is cited in several places in the Durant book, whether he or this article in a local paper is the actual source of his information on the burial ground is problematic.

Importantly, the date of the newspaper article places the discovery of the graves in proper perspective; something that the account in the Durant book fails to do!

More recently, Mr. Darrell Richards, writing in the Totem Pole

(1938), discusses his meeting with a Mrs. Ford, who resided on a farm located on the Kalamazoo River three miles west of Galesburg. She produced documents showing that her husband's family had occupied the land since Thomas C. Ford settled here in 1834 and allowed him to examine several of the copper pails from the graves that were then in her possession.

In 1953, Mr. Alexis Praus of the Kalamazoo Public Museum, with the assistance of Mr. Karl Parchert and Mr. Richards, contacted Mr. J. Henry Ford of Three Rivers, Michigan, grandson of the first owner of the Ford Farm, regarding the whereabouts of the "silver cache" from the Indian cemetery. In a letter from Ford to Praus dated 12 Dec 1956, Ford states:

I thought I explained that Thos. C. Ford was the first Ford owner of the farm in Comstock Township. After his death (10 Apr 1879) his son Chas. G. Ford became the owner. It was at this time the Indian relics were found by him and his two sons, Thos. and J. Henry. The latter taking them after the death of his father and now has them.

This excerpt leads me to believe that Durant (1880) was referring to the discovery of Streater in 1876, substituting the number "30" for the three burials referred to in The Three Rivers Reporter article of that year. The collection in the museum, found by the Fords, while probably from the same Indian burial ground, represents a discovery post-dating Thomas C. Ford's death in 1879 and, thusly, could not provide the basis for the Durant reference published in 1880 (given the time needed to edit and print the massive volume appearing only a year after the land passed from father to son). Rather, I can only conclude that the collection dates to about 1880; certainly not sooner, but probably not long after Chas. G. Ford assumed ownership of the farm. The wording of the above excerpt also casts into doubt the guesstimate of ca. 1915(?) appearing on

the museum accession sheet (No. A1897).

In a letter from Director Praus to Mrs. J. Henry Ford dated 23 Mar 1959, the museum's purchase of the Ford Collection for \$150.00 was consummated, and three days later the "collection of Indian trade goods, consisting of silver pieces, stone tools, iron hatchets, and iron adze" was formally accessioned. The locational information on the accession sheet provides only that this material was found on the south bank of the Kalamazoo River, Section 27 (C. H. Ford property), Comstock Township.

#### INVENTORY OF THE FORD COLLECTION FROM 20KZ118:

- A large silver cross with ring in upper portion. It is 37.5 cm long x 24.7 cm across the arm.
- An arm band, broken in two pieces, with a design of a galloping horse engraved in the center. One piece is 12.5 cm long, and the second is 12.8 cm long. The arm band is 7.2 cm wide.
- A buckler(?), 9.4 cm in diameter and engraved with a bear in the center. There is a rocker-type engraving around the edge, and the rim is rolled. The object bears a maker's stamp "JO".
- Seven complete and three fragmentary round buckles of silver, plus 11 tongues of missing buckles. The buckles are 1.9 cm in diameter, and all are in (attached to?) a piece of wool or felt.
- Two iron knife blades, one 17.5 cm long and the second 10 cm long
- A wooden bowl lacking the bottom. It stands 5-7.5 cm high and is 11.3 cm in diameter.
- A wooden spoon bowl, 8.8 cm long and 6.6 cm wide.
- a copper pail, with straight sides and standing 12.5 cm high. The pail diameter is 11.9 cm.
- A semi-lunar silver gorget, engraved with lion and unicorn holding a seal around which are the words "Honi Soit Mal y Pense". Below, on a streamer, are the words "Dieu et Mon Driot". The maker's mark is "BL F and lion passant and crowned tiger in a shield".
- A low bowl of willowware, broken into two pieces. One piece from the rim is missing. This object dates to ca. 1810.
- A buckle set with glass "gems". Some are missing, but most are still present. The object is 5 cm long and 4.1 cm wide.
- Small square glass bottle with words "Essence of Peppermint by the King's Patent". It is molded on the sides.



- A silver ornament, circular in shape and with five interlocking circles inside the outer ring. It is rocker engraved and bears the maker's mark "RC".
- Hair clamp with hair attached, tubular in shape and attached to a ribbon with a double row of small silver buckles numbering 29 in all. The clamp is 1.8 cm in diameter.
- A fragment of a silver arm band decorated with seven rows of horizontal ribbing. It is 7.5 cm long around the curve and 2.2 cm wide. Near one end is the maker's mark "RC".
- A fragment of a small silver arm band decorated with a slightly raised, wide rib in the center. The fragment is 6.3 cm long and 1.9 cm wide.
- Five silver ornaments, circular in shape; one is complete, three are damaged, and one is only a fragment.
- A ribbon fragment with seven silver buckles. The ribbon is 2.5 cm in width.
- A conical metal bangle, 5 cm in length.
- A number of small bell fragments, one whole globular bell 1.6 cm in diameter, and one slightly damaged bell of the same size.
- A narrow silver band, probably a portion of an arm band, 5.6 cm long and 0.6 cm wide.
- One fragment of a metal whistle with string attached.
- A fragment of a silver arm band, split and with one half of its width missing for part of the object's total length. Total length is 9.4 cm, and maximum width of the arm band is 1.6 cm.
- A fragment of cotton cloth with three whole and one half of a silver buckle
- Two small gun flints.
- Eight small chert and argillite projectile points; one large quartzite point.
- The fragment of a metal button of moderate size.
- One silver buckle, 2.5 cm in diameter.
- A fragment of a silver buckle, 3.8 cm in diameter.
- Fragments of silver buckles as follows: one without a tongue, 1.9 cm in diameter; a half buckle, 1.6 cm in diameter; a complete widebanded buckle, 1.3 cm in diameter; one half of a widebanded buckle; 30 small buckles, some minus tongues; and two loose tongues.
- Two glass lenses and two flat, oblong pieces of glass.
- Six fragments of iron, including a rectangular buckle, part of a strike-a-light, and some unidentified pieces.
- Earring fragments, including 10 wire loops, three with balls; two nearly complete with conical bangles as drops; three loose balls; 17 bangle drops, some of which are badly damaged.

- A double barred cross of silver, 12.5 cm long and 5.9 cm across the arms. A maker's stamp is observable at the intersection of the upper arm and upright, but cannot be identified.
- A very elaborate double barred cross of silver, 13.8 cm long, 10.6 cm across the longer arm, and 7.2 cm across the shorter arm. Maker's mark "RC" occurs just below the upper arm.
- An arm band of silver with a dog-like figure engraved in the center. The band is 25 cm long and 7.5 cm wide.
- Two arm bands of silver engraved with a bird figure. They are 6.9 cm long and 6.3 cm wide.
- A small copper kettle minus the bottom, 13.8 cm in diameter and 6.9 cm tall. A portion of a handle is still attached.
- Two iron strike-a-like fragments.
- Sixteen small silver buckles and two buckle fragments.
- Five fragments of small silver ornaments with portions that are similar to small crosses.
- An oval fragment of a silver ornament.
- Two small curved pieces of sheet metal.
- A silver ornament, circular in shape and with a five-pointed star inside the outer circle, and with a second circle inside the star. This object is 5 cm in diameter.
- A small spiral of copper or brass wire.
- One small thimble.
- Four silver buckles, 2.2 cm in diameter and with two still in/ attached to cloth.
- Four silver buckles that are 2.5 cm in diameter.
- A piece of worked chert that is possibly a drill.
- A small clay or catlinite pipe bowl.
- A short string of white pony glass or seed beads.
- A string of short tubular beads.
- One large, right-angled catlinite pipe bowl.
- An iron adze blade.
- Three iron axes, two with round shaft holes and one with a triangular hole.
- A stone bullet mold in two pieces and one lead ball.
- Three stone celts, one of which is broken and a second that has been damaged by heat.
- A slate gorget of a gray banded slate with two holes. This object is 9.4 cm long and 3.8 cm wide.
- One bottle of vermilion powder and a lump of vermilion, together with tufts of hair colored with this substance.
- An indefinite number of straight pins, some still in cloth pieces.

-A portion of a wooden ramrod(?), ramrod holder, and coil of wire; all appear to be assembled into a unit.

-Bracelet fragments as follows:

- 3.8 cm wide, decorated with raised ribbing at varying spaces;
- 1.9 cm wide, featuring a raised design of wide ribs;
- 1.9 cm wide, decorated with a wide raised rib in the center and narrower ribbing along each side of the band;
- 2.2 cm wide, with a flat center area bordered on each side by five raised ribs;
- a complete bracelet that is 1.9 cm wide and features two wide ribs with a lower center band and edge bands;
- 3.0 cm wide bracelet that is nearly complete and features a narrow ribbing design;
- 1.9 cm wide, nearly complete, with two wide, flat ribs on each side of center; and
- 2.2 cm wide, decorated with a ribbing design of two rows, three rows, and two rows.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I am indebted to Cheryl Lyon-Jenness and her associates at the Kalamazoo Public Museum for permitting me to examine the artifacts comprising the Ford Collection and providing me access to certain documents and the original inventory of items as it appears on the back of museum accession sheets (No. A1897).

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