

foods and medicinal herbs and to preserve Gay Head Wampanoag arts and crafts.

See also Mashpee.

Banks, Charles Edward, *History of Martha's Vineyard*, 2 vols. (Edgartown, Mass.: Dukes County Historical Society, 1966); Ritchie, William A., *The Archaeology of Martha's Vineyard* (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1969); Simmons, William S., *Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620-1984* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1986).

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WAMPUM

In contemporary American English, wampum is a slang term meaning "money." And indeed, its use as a medium of exchange was one of the historically evolved functions of wampum—originally a collective term for small cylindrical marine-shell beads, either white or dark purple. Among the Indians of the northeastern woodlands, wampum's use as legal tender was its least culturally significant function; for them wampum was and still is both the medium and the message of social communications.

Wampum is one of many words belonging to the Eastern Algonquian language family that came to be incorporated into modern American English beginning in the early seventeenth century via a trade language, or pidgin, that was primarily derived from the languages of coastal Delaware. It is a shortened form of *wampumpeag* or *wampumpeake*, an Algonquian word of southern New England origin meaning a string of white shell beads. The term appears in contemporary documents, as do the full form and another shortened form, *peag* or *peake*. The form *wampum* prevailed in usage in the Anglo-American colonies to such an extent that it was also borrowed in English translation by neighboring non-Algonquian-language-speaking Indian populations, including speakers of Iroquoian. For example, the Iroquois continue to use the term in English translation, but in its plural form, *wampums*, when referring to wampum strings and belts.

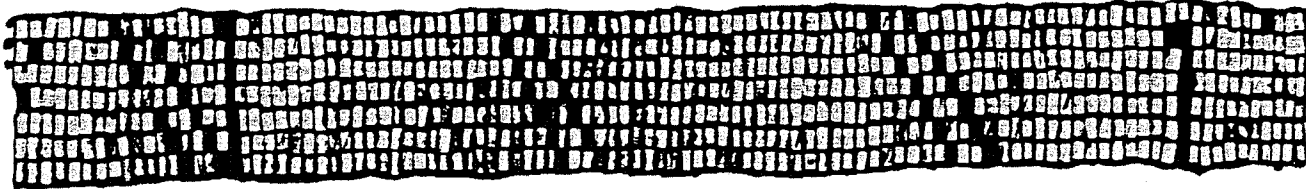
In the contemporary Dutch colony of New Netherland these shell beads were known as *sewant* or *ze-*

want, a Narragansett Algonquian term. This word referred to the beads in their unstrung state. The word also appears in *Sewanhacky*, a name by which Long Island was known in 1636 and which no doubt refers to the manufacture of these beads by Corchaug, Montauk, and Shinnecock Algonquians residing on the eastern half of the island. Wampum manufacture centered here, particularly at Peconic Bay, and across Long Island Sound, where it was carried out by Mohegan, Narragansett, Niantic, and Pequot Algonquians of coastal Connecticut and Rhode Island.

White wampum beads were made principally from the central spiraled columella of periwinkles, knobbed whelks (*Busycon carica*), and channeled whelks (*Busycon canaliculatum*). Dark purple beads were manufactured solely from the dark purple spot of the hard clam, or northern quahog (*Mercenaria mercenaria*). The scientific name of this mollusk acknowledges its former role in the manufacture of wampum for use as money. Reportedly, because of the relative difference in bead yield per unit of raw material, in economic and other exchange contexts each dark purple bead was considered equal in value to two white beads.

In contemporary New France the French applied the word *porcelaine* to these shell beads. The French term acknowledged the resemblance in color and substance between the white beads and the rare and highly valued translucent ceramic referred to by that name that was then being imported into Europe from China and Japan. The French name was itself derived from the Italian term for this ceramic, *porcellana*.

The term *wampum* or, more properly, *wampumpeag* specifically refers to white marine-shell beads, which historically conformed to a certain size and shape. These beads were more or less cylindrical and of a relatively small diameter and length. In the early seventeenth century they averaged about one-quarter inch in length and one-eighth inch in diameter. By the late eighteenth century wampum beads had become somewhat longer, but also more uniform in size and shape. This uniformity was directly related to the beads' economic uses: they were usually exchanged in strung fathom lengths, but were increasingly used in the form of woven "belts" as well. Bead standardization was also related to the shift from the beads' aboriginal style of manufacture in the early seventeenth century to their increasing cottage-industry manufacture within Anglo-Dutch communities as far inland as Albany in the mid-eighteenth century, and to their subsequent manufacture in wampum factories.



Wampum belt. This belt was presented by representatives of the Six Nations of the Iroquois at the Treaty of Fort Stanwix on 1-7 September 1784 with the New York State Indian Commissioners. It descended in the family of General Peter Gansevoort.

The last of these factories, the Campbell Factory, closed in Bergen County, New Jersey, in the 1880s, when the raw materials for wampum making could not be obtained in sufficient quantity to make wampum manufacture economically viable. This factory depended upon a steady supply of northern quahog shells for bead manufacture, and a decline in the public's taste for these shellfish led to a decline in their harvesting and market availability.

Accompanying the evolution in the size and shape of wampum beads was a shift in bead-drilling techniques. American Indians originally used stone-tipped tools and drilled from either end of the bead. By the middle of the seventeenth century, wampum holes were drilled from either end using an iron awl or drill of European manufacture. Subsequently, holes were drilled straight through from one end only, using a metal drill. The size, shape, and drilling pattern of wampum beads, as revealed by X-ray analysis, can be used to roughly date individual beads or to relatively date a series of beads. But an object made with or decorated with one or more beads cannot be so easily dated: wampum beads were frequently recycled, and extant bead strings and bead belts often incorporate "old" beads as well as "new" ones.

White marine-shell beads conforming in size and shape to wampum beads have been found at archaeological sites of northeastern woodlands Indians spanning the past four thousand years. Dark purple wampum beads, on the other hand, have not been found at prehistoric sites; rather, they make their appearance in the archaeological and documentary record around the turn of the seventeenth century. It is very probable that these purple beads were initially manufactured by coastal Indian communities to imitate the dark blue glass beads of similar size and shape then traded along the coast by Europeans.

Written records of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and a few rare contemporary illustrations document the many functions of wampum, a term

that increasingly came to mean both the white and the dark purple beads. Individual wampum beads were in-laid on a variety of wooden objects, including bowls, the handles of stone or iron celts (aboriginal "tomahawks"), and ball-headed war clubs. Individual beads were also used for body ornamentation—suspended as pendants from the ears or nose or strung on necklaces. Hundreds and even thousands of beads were woven into headbands, collars, and sashes and attached to other articles of clothing and accessories. Wampum could be owned by individuals, clan lineages, clans, tribes, nations, and confederacies of tribes or nations.

Archaeological evidence suggests that all composite woven forms of wampum such as headbands, collars, sashes, and belts date no earlier than the seventeenth century. While the earliest historic reference to wampum may have been Jacques Cartier's observation of the highly valued, snow-white shell beads in use among the St. Lawrence Iroquois in 1535, the earliest reference to what were likely shell beads woven into a "strap-like" form was in the 1609 report of "stropes of beads," presumably wampum, being proffered to Henry Hudson by Mahican Algonquins.

The most culturally significant function of wampum among the northeastern woodlands Indians has been its use, in the forms of strings and belts, in rituals of kinship affirmation and rituals of condolence. It is in these contexts that it is possible to see the primacy of color in communicating meaning—whether it be the color of wampum; the color of the feathers decorating the calumet, or peace pipe; or the color of other ritual materials.

Color—specifically white, red, and black (or dark purple)—is fundamental to the symbolic meaning of wampum among these Indians. White wampum forms the background for a system of symbolic contrasts with red-painted wampum and dark purple wampum. In ritual contexts, white wampum beads symbolize social states of being, exemplifying the de-

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sire of the individual or community for physical, social, and spiritual well-being. White wampum in its ritual use stands in potential contrast both to black wampum, which most frequently symbolizes ritual asocial states of being, such as the "darkness" of mourning, and to red-painted wampum, which most frequently symbolizes antisocial states of being—specifically, war. In addition, one or more pictographs are frequently woven into the belt in beads of a contrasting color and serve as a mnemonic for the belt's message or, in some cases, as an intensifier. For instance, black-fielded belts featuring the pictograph of an ax or hatchet also symbolize war. Furthermore, wampum belts could be painted to change their communication functions. A white-fielded "peace belt" might be made into a "war belt" by a coat of red paint, or a black-fielded "war belt" might be changed to a "peace belt" by a coat of white or, in the upper Great Lakes, blue-green paint.

By the end of the seventeenth century another white substance had been incorporated into this system of communication. The metal silver came to symbolize social relations between the Iroquois and the Anglo-American colonies—"the Silver Covenant." This symbolic permutation of white shell into white metal is also evident in the eighteenth-century correspondence between circular marine-shell gorgets and silver gorgets of similar size and shape, known as *wampum moons*. Albany Dutch silversmiths would list such an ornament in their records as a *schulp* (shell). Across the continent, a similar analogy in substance and form, and perhaps symbolic meaning, appears to be reflected in the southwestern *concho*.

While the manufacture, functions, and functional contexts of white wampum extend far back into prehistory, its use in the form of wampum belts is an early seventeenth-century innovation. Wampum-belt ceremonialism and iconography developed and flourished in the cross-cultural exchanges of American Indians and Euro-Americans, in which peace and trade were perceived as one. While the beads and belts never assumed the symbolic significance among Euro-Americans that they had among Indians, by the late eighteenth century most wampum beads were probably the product of non-Indian manufacture. Furthermore, theoretically, half of the wampum belts in circulation at this date were made by Euro-Americans, or on their behalf, for presentation to Indians.

While wampum beads, strings, and belts are identified with "traditional" northeastern woodlands Indian

religious, social, and political practices, they were also incorporated into mission Catholicism in the seventeenth century, as exemplified among the Christianized Huron (formerly of southwestern Ontario and later of Lorette, near Quebec City). Wampum beads sometimes functioned as rosary beads. Wampum belts and other wampum objects were made as gifts to the Society of Jesus or to mission churches, where they were displayed above the altar. Latin inscriptions woven into extant belts record their dedication to the Virgin Mary. One of the more interesting syncretisms is evident in a wampum belt offered to Saint Michael, the Archangel, to elicit his assistance on the warpath.

It was Jacques Cartier who stated in 1535 that the white shell beads that he found in use among the St. Lawrence Iroquois were regarded by them as the most precious articles in the world. It was also Jacques Cartier who first asserted an analogy between the uses of these beads by the Indians and the uses of gold and silver among Europeans. Cartier's observation should not be taken at face value, however, for he and subsequent commentators also recognized the analogy between the symbolic functions and meaning of these white shell beads and the functions and meaning of silver, gold, and diamonds in Western European traditions. In the Western world these substances have served as tangible metaphors of highest cultural value: not simply wealth in the economic sense, but wealth as a visible symbol of well-being.

One might speculate that, cross-culturally, white, bright, and light things serve as material metaphors for those abstractions of greatest cultural value, such as life itself—animacy and consciousness—and their correlated states of physical, social, and spiritual well-being. In the context of contemporary American English, the value of "a gem of wisdom" or of "the Golden Rule" is not in its monetary worth, but in its reflective virtue.

Hamell, George R., "The Iroquois and the World's Rim: Speculations on Color, Culture, and Contact," *American Indian Quarterly: Journal of American Indian Studies* 16 (1992): 451-69; Hewitt, John N. B., "Wampum," in *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, vol. 2, ed. Frederick Webb Hodge, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin no. 30 (Washington, D.C., 1910); Williams, Lorraine E., and Karen A. Flinn, *Trade Wampum: New Jersey to the Plains* (Trenton: New Jersey State Museum, 1990).

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The ornaments in this book are from *American Indian Design & Decoration* by LeRoy H. Appleton, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1971. Page i, Seminole beadwork: rainbow (*top*) and Arapaho beadwork (*bottom*); p. ii, General Pueblo pottery decoration: turtle; p. iii, Yuchi beadwork: centipede (*top*), Mimbres pottery painting (*middle*), design based on Cheyenne motif (*bottom*); p. v, Haida totem pole symbol: footprint; p. vi, Zuni woven sash; p.vii, Navajo, edge of woman's blanket; p. 713, Winnebago beadwork; p. 715, Eskimo carved ivory work bag fastener; p.727, Arapaho symbol for rocks; p. 728, General Pueblo pottery decoration; p. 730, Ojibwa woven bag. Space breaks based on Cherokee motif. Ornaments at letter headings: A: General Pueblo pottery decoration, cloud serpent; B: Mimbres pottery decoration, bird; C: Nez Perce woven bag; D: Florida Gulf Coast incised pottery; E: Hidatsa painted buffalo robe; F: Potawatomi woven bag; G: Yuchi beadwork, storm clouds; H: Delaware quill embroidery on hide; I: Menominee woven bag; J: Blackfoot quillwork; K: Iriquois incised pottery pipe design; L: Delaware quill embroidery on hide; M: Acoma woman's dress border; N: Pueblo pottery; O: Tlingit basketry, scoopnet; P: Potawatomi beadwork; Q: General Pueblo pottery; R: Dakota beadwork on hide; S: Mississippian incised pottery decoration; T: Eskimo carved bone needle case; U: Zuni pottery decoration, deer; V: Sauk and Fox beadwork; W: Lillooet basketry, mountains with lakes; Y: Santa Ana pottery; Z: Pueblo pottery.

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