

INDIAN TRADE SILVER IN THE AMERICAS

By Steve Cox

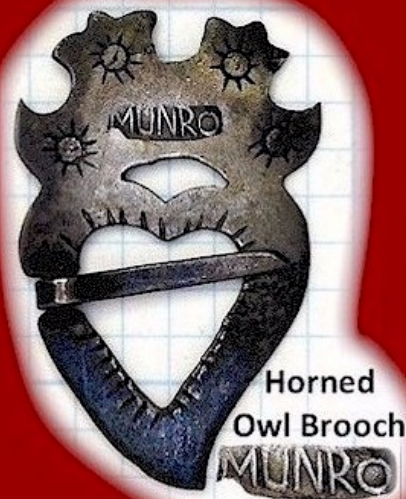
Indian Trade Silver is unlike most other forms of silver collecting in the since that by definition it has a beginning and an ending. The proper definition itself is almost unknown. The term trade silver was applied to any item that possessed a high polish and was used as a decoration, or for barter. This could include items made of lead, pewter, brass, tin, silver and rarely even gold. It is a complex field of interest, and few people invest the time required to educate themselves in the field of collecting. It takes years of intense research and hands on detailed examination of collections to become proficient just in authentication. Knowledge in metals, manufacturing techniques, trade history, cultural association, maker marks, and much more is required before one may find it safe to collect trade silver with any degree of success. To further complicate collecting trade silver it has no relative value, almost every piece is unique. With that said, like other rare collectables the vast amounts of counterfeits and authentic reproductions on the market can still lead to heart breaking moments.

Although some authorities use 1543, the year Jacques Cartier first sailed in to the Gulf of St. Lawrence as the origin of trade silver is was very limited. For our beginning date we will use 1605 when James Town was funded. This is a viable reference point leading up to significant trade in Northeast America. Soon after Jamestown was founded significant advances in trade evolved and large amounts of trade silver adornments were made specifically for trade with Native Americans. Large amounts of these articles were being given as awards for loyalty, presentations at treaties and in trade negotiations. All of this leads to a rapid spread and distribution of trade silver from the Gulf of St. Lawrence in the north to Alabama in the south, and from New England in the east to Wisconsin in the west. The earliest pieces came from Europe with the explorers and traders, and then gradually the manufacture of trade silver started flourishing in the Americas. Trade silver was primarily made by silversmiths, goldsmiths, pewtersmiths, clock makers and armorers, by makers from France, Great Britain, Canada and the Colonies. Later a large portion of trade silver was made by Native Americans and traders themselves. Originally items were made from European patterns and later items were fashioned after things held in high regard by the Native Americans. Such patterns included Bow and Arrows, clan and game animals. Also there were many patterns from Europe that became very highly prized with the Native Americans such as hearts, crosses, Masonic symbols, and a small number of mythical animals. Trade silver can be found in many forms including brooches, gorgets, medals, effigies, wrist and armbands, beads, rings, combs, hair plates and locketts.

Many trade silver pieces went unmarked for a lot of different reasons, but now with expert research many of the marks found on specimens have been identified. Even today there are maker marks found on many pieces that are yet to be identified.

Collecting trade silver is not for the casual weekend collector, but for the few that spend the required time, research and money it can be one of the most rewarding experiences in modern collecting.

Alexander Munro
(1754-1828) Shelbourne, N.S.



Horned
Owl Brooch
MUNRO



Cast Beaver effigy



Hudson's Bay Company
Masonic and Double Heart
Brooch



Hester Bateman (1761-1790)
Hudson's Bay Company order,
Nose Bob

**George Ridout
1745 New York, N.Y.**



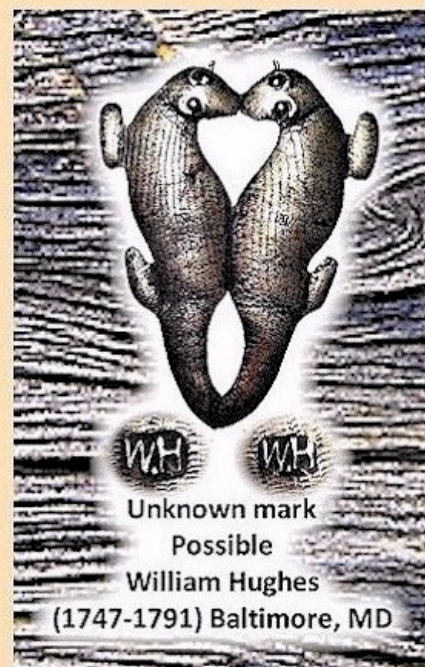
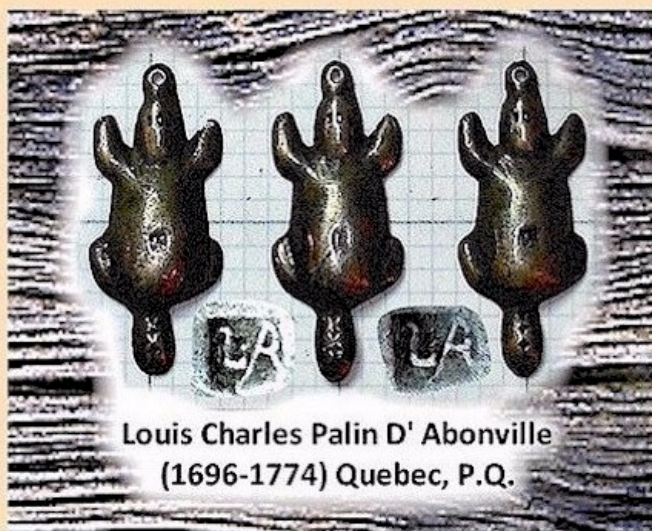
**Symbol of the Warrior
with war Club Brooch**



**Council Fire brooch
with Chief's Horns**



**Copper effigy Beaver
with rare applied Red Pitina
Ex Carl Gennette Collection**



David Stroughton

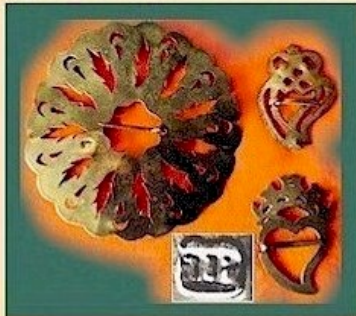
1800 Kingston, Ontario
Buttons & Hair Pipe



Thomas Powis

1781-1784

Quebec, P.Q.
Leaf, Horned Weeping
Heart & Double Headed
Eagle Serpent brooches



Saunders Pitman

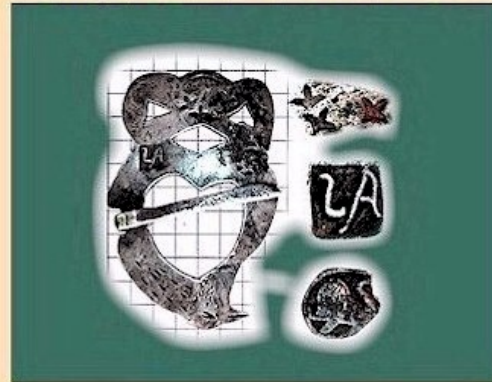
(1755-1802) Providence, RI



Louis Charles Palin

D' Abonville

(1696-1774) Quebec, PQ
Single Head owl brooch



Ignace Francois Delzenne

(1723-1780) Quebec, P.Q.
Trade Beads

Steve Cox, ASCAS member

Trade Silver Marks In The Americas 1682-1855 is the world's largest compendium of maker marks found on American trade silver between 1682

and 1855. This work was compiled by the author over a period of 15 years. Features include over 600 individual marks from hundreds of silversmiths in Colonial America, Canada, Great Britain, and France. This is a 128 page color edition available in paper and hardback featuring a detailed illustrated glossary, index and many full color plates. More information at www.stevecoxresearch.com

