

THIS BEADWORK masterpiece, a collar from about 1900, is a rare example of artistry by an Ojibwe woman from Minnesota. Recently added to the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, it is one of only three of its type known in museum collections and rarely documented in photographs. Fortunately, the collar's unusual features helped to identify and place it.

The folded-leaf motif—unusual in historic Ojibwe beadwork for its representation of three-dimensional form—appears in several other pieces, now in the Society's collections, associated with Ojibwe of the White Earth and Cass Lake areas. In addition, a few photos in the collections show men and a woman at White Earth Reservation in similar collars with either a pointed or bib-shaped drop worn down the front or back of the torso.

Thus, it seems that the collars were worn in Minnesota during the first 15 years of the twentieth century.

During a hard winter in the early-twentieth century, two Indian women from the White Earth Reservation brought this collar, a bandolier bag, and a belt into the Becker County store of John M. Connell, trading the beadwork for two bushels of corn. Connell's young son Earl Gordon (born in 1893), present at the time, asked if he could have the three pieces. His father acquiesced; Earl treasured them, and they were passed down through the family. Luckily, a descendant provided this initial information. Research in the Minnesota Historical Society, Becker County Historical Society, and federal and state censuses yielded two photographs and some biographical information.

Born in New York in the 1870s (and named O'Connell), John Connell moved to Minnesota before 1880 and even-

tually owned a general store in Becker County's Richwood Township. His family's social activities were regularly noted in the county correspondence columns of the 1905 *Detroit Record* and in the Richwood column of the 1909 *Callaway Post*. One account reports that Connell's store was built in 1901; in another, it appears to have been much older. About 1930 R. B. Olson bought the store from Earl Connell, and it burned down in January of that year.

—MARCIA G. ANDERSON,  
SENIOR CURATOR

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ERIC MORTENSON/MHS



*Becker County merchant  
John M. Connell*

BECKER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



To see similar collars, visit the Society's photo and art database: [www.mnhs.org/photos](http://www.mnhs.org/photos) and enter negative numbers 91835, 65768, and 57555.



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