

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

A BRITISH REGIMENTAL GORGET IN MINNESOTA

In the fall of 1927 the writer received for inspection a crescent-shaped sheet of silver, richly engraved. It was found about seven years ago by Mr. Harry Bedman while plowing on his farm on the shore of Lake Ida, about seven miles northwest of Alexandria, Minnesota. When found it was crumpled up. It is about the size and approximately the shape of the visor of a cap.

This ornament is beautifully engraved with the British coat of arms such as it was during the reigns of the first three Georges. The shield, having in its four quarters the distinguishing marks of England, France, Scotland, Ireland, and Hanover, is encircled by the ribbon of the Order of the Garter bearing its motto "Honi soit qui mal y pense." On the one side is the lion and on the other the unicorn, and below is the motto "Dieu et mon droit." On the reverse side are a number of hall marks. The edges are rolled.

This article, which at first sight looked like an epaulette or shoulder ornament, proved on investigation to be a gorget. A gorget was originally a part of a knight's armor, a crescent-shaped piece of steel for the protection of the neck between the upper part of the breast plate and the lower edge of the helmet. Later, when personal armor went out of use, miniature gorgets of silver or of gold became parts of the uniforms of higher military officers and were worn on the breast, suspended by cords or ribbons, as a sign that the officers were on duty.

After the middle of the eighteenth century, when England conquered the French dominions of America, medals and other ornaments were bestowed upon prominent Indian chiefs to gain their good will and loyalty. Among such ornaments were

gorgets and the chief receiving such an honor was known as a "gorget captain" — the title of captain being the highest military distinction known to the Indians. These gorget commissions were awarded with much dignity.

A good account of gorgets as Indian ornaments is given by Mr. Arthur Woodward in an article entitled "Indian Use of the Silver Gorget," published in *Indian Notes*, 3:232-249 (October, 1926). The subject is also discussed in a pamphlet by Mr. Harrold E. Gillingham entitled *Indian and Military Medals from Colonial Times to Date*.

It is not likely, however, that this Alexandria gorget was ever presented to an Indian gorget captain. As far as the present writer has been able to learn through considerable correspondence, the Indian gorgets were made in Montreal or Philadelphia and the engraving inscribed upon them is different from that on the Alexandria gorget. There are four hall marks on the reverse side of the latter, and these marks indicate that it was made in England. The first shows *H. B.* in cursive capitals, the second a large lower case *b*, the third a lion *passant*, and the fourth a crowned leopard's head. According to C. J. Jackson's *English Goldsmiths and Their Marks* (London, 1905), the *H. B.* and the *b* were the marks of Hester Bateman of London (entered at Goldsmiths Hall, 1774-76), the lion *passant* was the trade mark for London, and the crowned leopard's head, the royal assay mark. It is doubtful, however, that the Minnesota gorget belongs to this particular period. Accompanying Mr. Woodward's article is shown a photographic reproduction (p. 235) of an official British army gorget from about 1778. The ornamentation on this gorget has nothing in common with the Alexandria gorget except the crown. One would expect official army gorgets of the same period to be of one pattern. As there was a goldsmith in London by the name of Henry Bailey (entered 1748), who used cursive capitals, it is more probable that this gorget dates from about 1750.

The writer has corresponded with the directors of a number of museums, but has not heard of the existence of any gorget similar to this one. It appears to be the oldest known gorget in America. Inasmuch as it was found in the distant Northwest, on the highway between the Mississippi and the Hudson Bay posts, where no Indian gorgets appear to have been distributed in the early period, the writer believes it belonged to a British army officer who passed that way.¹

Letters relating to this "find" from officials of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the College of Arms, London, and the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall, have been placed in the manuscript division of the Minnesota Historical Society. As may be seen, the writers of these letters also believe that this gorget was formerly the property of some British army officer.

H. R. HOLAND

EPHRAIM, WISCONSIN

BEAVER MONEY

In 1841 two of the employees of the Northern Outfit of the American Fur Company at La Pointe found themselves restrained by the action of a rival from carrying on their business in their usual way. One of these men, James P. Scott, in reporting the case on March 4 to his superior, Dr. Charles W. Borup, explained how the rival had made a complaint to the Indian subagent which had resulted temporarily in enforced idleness for the two men. He then continued his report, stating that the rival "told him [*the other employee*] that if he would redeem all of the Beaver money in their [*the rival's company*] possession for Silver (amounting to about \$70.00) "

¹ Another possible explanation is that the gorget at some time may have been taken by Indians from a captured or slain officer in some other section of the country and that it reached the place where it was found through Indian migration, war, or trade. *Ed.*



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