

## Archaeological Collections in the Susquehanna Valley: The Clyde Richmond Collection

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Figure 1. The Richmond collection at the Gilbertsville, Mt. Upton school.

### Introduction

The Richmond Collection consists of over 1,000 prehistoric artifacts collected by Clyde Richmond from the Unadilla, Susquehanna, Butternut and Chenango valleys during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to nearly a thousand spear and arrow points, the collection also includes a number of rare and unusual artifacts, including a gorget, stone beads, smoking pipe fragments, and a fragment from a bannerstone. In addition, a number of large grinding tools as well as fragments of steatite pots, pitted stones, gouges, axes, celts and adzes comprise the collection (Figure 2).

The collection is displayed in a glass case in the lobby of the Gilbertsville-Mount Upton (GMU) school (Figure 1). There are fourteen frames with artifacts glued to the surface, and larger artifacts occupying the floor of the display case. A brief count of the different artifact types within each frame was performed, resulting in the following counts shown in Table 1. These artifacts were originally on display at the Mount Upton Elementary School, and when the school was relocated to its current building, the artifact collection was left behind. Several people in the community missed seeing the old artifacts, and Leigh Eckmair, Historian for the Town of Butternuts, along with the maintenance staff at the former school, collected all of

Table 1. Artifacts in the Clyde Richmond Collection.

Frame #	POINT	KNIFE/SCRAPER	DRILL	BONE	POTTERY	BEAD	PIPE	ADZE/ CELT	GOUGE	NETSINKER	GORGET	BANNERSTONE	STEAATTE	SINW STONE	HOE	PITTED STONE	PESTLE	AXE	TRADE BEAD	COIN	BUTTON	Total
1	66																					66
2	58			6	9	1																74
3	80		7																			87
4	131																					131
5	53																					53
6	117																					117
7	111																					111
8	10					1		6			1											18
9	126																					126
10	88			2		1	2			1		1								1	1	97
11	37																					42
12	72									1												73
13		49																				49
14	36	9	1															5				51
Floor									4	2			2	1	3	4	2					21
<b>Total</b>	919	124	13	8	9	3	2	6	4	4	1	1	2	1	3	4	2	5	3	1	1	1116



Figure 2. Pitted stones and other large artifacts in the Richmond Collection.

the artifacts and brought them to the new building where they reside today. The collection was in poor condition when it was retrieved, and several of the artifacts had to be re-glued back on to their respective frames. Today the collection welcomes elementary through high school students every morning when they enter the school building and are a source of pride within the community.

As the collection is locked behind a glass display case, detail in analyzing each individual artifact was hindered, with resulting data reliant on the interpretation of those who had previously grouped the artifacts by category. Consequently, the numbers in this presentation may differ slightly from the actual number of points versus knives, etc. This allowed the sidestepping of typological issues such as how to classify broken points that were reworked into other artifacts. This being said, the numbers in Table 1 do give some idea as to the nature of Richmond's collection. The frames were not numbered, so they were numbered arbitrarily from top to bottom-left to right for the purposes of this study. Projectile points make up the dominant artifact type, which is often the case in most artifact collections. The diversity of artifacts found is also not uncommon, representative of many early 20<sup>th</sup> century collections containing several of these more unusual artifact types.

The collection includes a small but diverse number of bone tools, including antler tines, deer mandibles used for processing corn or hides, and beaver incisors used as woodworking tools. These kinds of objects are rare in archaeological contexts in our area, as bone and antler quickly decompose in the acidic soils.



Figure 3. Wire wound glass trade beads in the Richmond Collection.

One thing that is unusual about the Richmond collection is the relative lack of pottery. Only nine pottery sherds are included in the collection. While a thorough analysis of specific point types was not performed, most of the points in Richmond's collection appear to date from the Middle Archaic through Transitional Periods (8,000-2,500 years ago), prior to the invention of pottery. It may simply be that Richmond tended to work sites which were too early for pottery to occur, thus finding very little. However, given that pottery is still commonly found throughout the valley floors, it may be that Richmond was selective about the pottery he collected, or possibly that it not one of primary collecting interest to him.

### **Clyde Richmond**

Little is known about Clyde Richmond or where he obtained his artifact collection. His obituary states that he was born in Mt. Upton in 1885 and operated a hardware store there for over 40 years before retiring. He passed away in 1963 at the age of 78. Sadly, while he was clearly a passionate collector, his obituary makes no mention of Richmond's love of Indian artifacts. No written records exist regarding the sites from which Richmond collected these artifacts, unfortunately limiting their value to archaeologists. What little we do know about his collecting comes from two written sources. First, Richmond is mentioned as one of Arthur Parker's local informants in his *Archaeological History of New York* (1920). While his name does not appear anywhere else in Parker's study, it is likely that many of the sites from the area that are listed in Parker's book may have initially been reported by Richmond. The second source encountered is written by Brownell (1976), who mentions digging with Clyde near Polkville in the Chenango Valley.

There is also some confusion regarding Richmond being the sole contributor to the collection. Local historian Bill Walters states that a fellow named Gaston Islicker, who formerly resided

three miles east of Sidney, had also donated his collection for display at the Mt. Upton School along with Richmond's. It is unclear if his collection was merged with Richmond's or if Islicker's collection never made it to the current school building. If Islicker's artifacts were ultimately included in the collection, he should also be acknowledged.

While the research value of the collection is limited by the fact that no written records exist, there remains data that we can learn from these kinds of unprovenanced collections. The presence of nearly a thousand arrowheads would make a good sized sample for examining the variation in projectile point morphology. Additionally, several of the points appear to be made from exotic raw materials, including jasper from eastern Pennsylvania and flint ridge chert from the Ohio Valley. An examination of these points might show evidence of exchange at different times with other regions of the northeast.

Also of interest in the Richmond Collection is the small but rare collection of historic trade goods. The collection includes a button and a coin as well as three historic trade beads. Although it was not possible to further identify the coin or button due to low visibility within the case, the trade beads appear to date to the early through mid 18<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 3). These artifacts may have come from the old site of Unadilla at the confluence of the Susquehanna and Unadilla Rivers, or from another site in the area. If they did come from a different site, this would be an important finding, given that other reputed post-contact era sites in the vicinity, such as the "Hutted Knoll" and the "Indian Castle" near Polkville have yet to be documented archaeologically. Unfortunately, unless additional documentation comes to light, we will likely never know exactly where many of these artifacts came from.

**Access:** The collection is located in the Lobby of the Gilbertsville-Mt. Upton School on Route 51 between Mt Upton and Gilbertsville, and can be viewed during normal school hours without an appointment.

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