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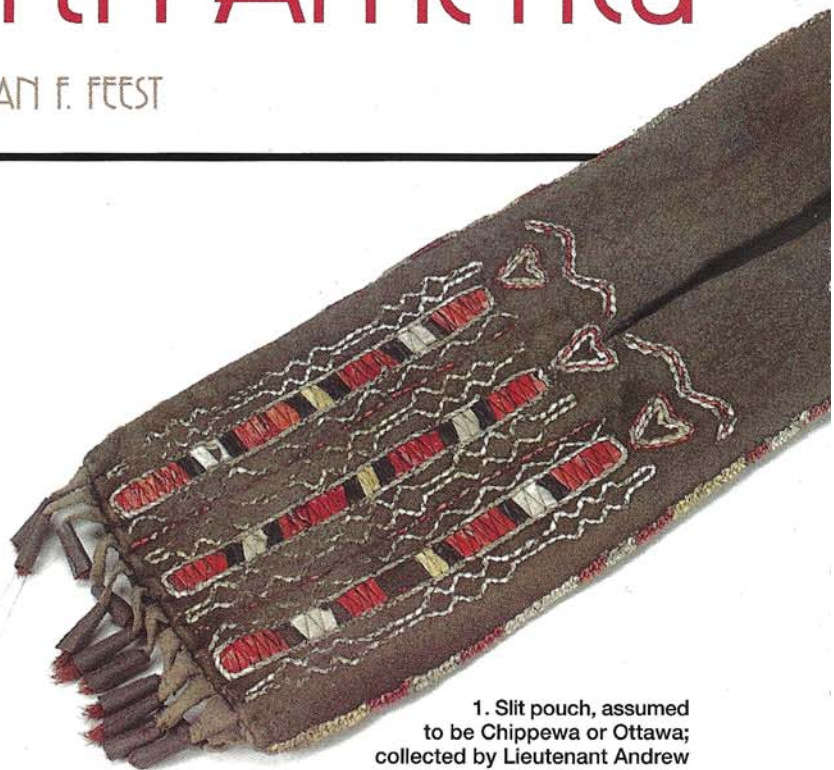
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# Slit Pouches of Eastern North America

CHRISTIAN F. FEEST

Slit pouches are flat, oblong containers of two layers of material, closed at all the edges by folds and/or seams. A longitudinal slit in the upper layer provides access to the two compartments formed by carrying the pouch folded over a belt or sometimes a powder horn. The latter variant points to the primary function of these bags as containers for bullets, cartridges and other material related to the use of firearms, which is also often documented in museum records. Other possible uses, such as tobacco bags, may be secondary.

I was first attracted to this artifact type as a young curator at the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, when in about 1965 in acquainting myself with the collection, I came across a reasonably well-documented example that had been collected among the Potawatomi during the first half of the nineteenth century. Looking for comparative evidence in the literature, I found only a Menominee example from the same period in the Museum der Weltkulturen (Museum of World Cultures), Frankfurt (Vatter 1925:77, 94, Pl. 18) and an earlier undocumented pouch at the Musée du quai Branly, Paris (Fabbri 1964: 193). My first catalog of the Vienna collection was published in 1968 at the same time as the catalog of the Arthur Speyer collection (Feest 1968a; Benndorf and Speyer 1968). In an extensive review of the latter, I noted the presence of two slit pouches in the Speyer collection, referred to the existence of the specimens in Vienna, Frankfurt and Paris, as well as two others collected among the Dakotas of Minnesota that I had seen in Prague, and one in the Richard Pohrt collection obtained by Milford Chandler among the Mesquakie, which Norman Feder had told me about. I also pointed out that Alanson Skinner (1921) had described the type for the Menominee. I closed the paragraph with the statement: "A comparative discussion of this type remains to be done" (Feest 1968b:147). Since nobody else has bothered to write this article during the past thirty-eight years, I feel that I might just as well do it myself. The number of known slit pouches has increased from a mere handful to more than fifty; we



1. Slit pouch, assumed to be Chippewa or Ottawa; collected by Lieutenant Andrew Foster between 1790 and 1795 from the Fort Michilimackinac region, Michigan. Leather, porcupine quills, tin cones. 16 $\frac{1}{16}$ " long, 3 $\frac{3}{16}$ " wide (41.7 cm x 9 cm). Courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Cat. No. 24/2016. Photograph by NMAI Photo Services Staff.

now know that they were distributed from Maine and the Canadian Maritimes to Minnesota.<sup>1</sup>

In this article, I intend to offer a critical overview of the material, the visual and textual evidence for slit pouches in Native North America, and on this basis to delineate their distribution, discuss the variation of their forms and their relationships to other artifact types, attempt to make some sense of their iconography and close with some thoughts about their origins. I will proceed neither chronologically, nor in geographical order, but begin with the better-documented pieces, before turning to the more problematic cases.

<sup>1</sup>This article is one in a series of studies of various types of quilled pouches and knife cases, which my wife Sylvia S. Kasprzycki and I began to publish in 1997 (Kasprzycki 1997; Feest 1997; Feest and Kasprzycki 2001). It concludes the subseries on belt-worn bags, and was delayed in part by the reorganization of the National Museum of the American Indian, which delayed the study of the largest collection of this artifact type in the world.



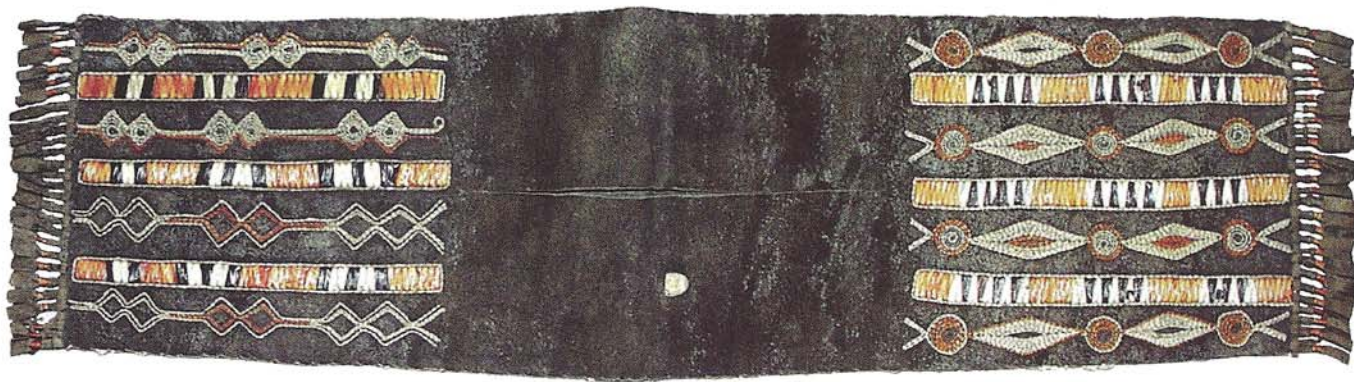
### THE EVIDENCE: ARTIFACTS, IMAGES, DESCRIPTIONS

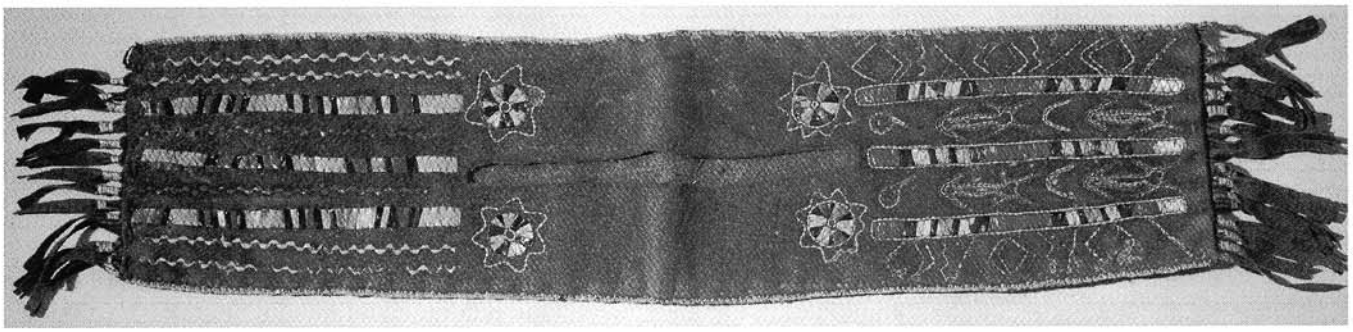
The first slit pouch to be described and illustrated in a scholarly publication is the specimen in the Museum der Weltkulturen (Fig. 2), which was among the first pieces from North America donated to the collection of the Senckenberg Natural History Society, Frankfurt, from which the ethnographic museum later emerged. In 1825 and 1826, the Senckenberg Society recorded the donation by Johann Baptist August Klein (b.1778, d.1831), a schoolteacher in Coblenz and collector of Roman coins, of a slit pouch and a double knife case with matching decoration said to have belonged to the "Menomenos" of the "Upper Mississippi," as well as a few pieces from the Dakotas of the Minnesota River valley. There are good reasons to assume that the slit pouch was collected at or near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, where the Menominee maintained a village during this period, and where they consorted with Dakotas and Winnebagos. Since Klein apparently never left his native region, he could not have been the collector himself; circumstantial evidence suggests that Klein must have received the material from a French source. The quillwork on the Klein pouch is an excellent example of Menominee line work, on which linked pairs of diamonds as well as linked circles alternate with patterned triangle bands (Vatter 1925:Pl. XVIII; Feest and Kasprzycki 2001:193–194, Fig. 3).

Although this is the only Menominee slit pouch presently known to exist, Skinner described another much smaller and undecorated slit pouch — only about a foot long versus a foot and a half — which had been given to him "by a Menomini friend as a relic of the famous chief Oshkosh, whose possession it once was" (1921:330–331).

As we shall soon discover, the linked circles and diamonds on the Klein pouch suggest a connection with some Dakota pouches, but the stronger relationships are with three other pouches from Algonquian groups in the Western Great Lakes region. One of these is a slit pouch in the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (Fig. 1) from the collection of Lieutenant Andrew Foster, who, according to the museum records, had been stationed at Fort Michilimackinac, Michigan and Fort Miami between 1790 and 1795. There were two Forts Miami on the Maumee River, one in present-day Ohio and one in Indiana, the latter fort established by the British downriver from the old one in 1794 (Tanner 1987:88, map 18); and it would be quite difficult to decide with which of the many tribes of the region (such as the Delaware, Shawnee, Miami, Wyandot or Ottawa) the slit pouch should be associated. But since Foster's last assignment was as commanding officer at the time Fort Michilimackinac was turned over to the Americans on September 1, 1796, it is a little more likely that the pouch was obtained there. If so, the pouch probably originated with either the Ottawa or Chippewa, an alternative supported by stylistic considerations as well. The Foster pouch also shows the alternation between patterned triangle bands and line work, but the line work is simple and consists only of linked groups of three diamonds and frames for the triangle bands. Toward the center, there are heart shapes and wavy lines running across the width of the pouch. This is the only truly (or almost truly) symmetrical design of the subgroup, whereas the other three pouches have equivalent, but not

2. Slit pouch, collected before 1825 among the Menominees, probably at or near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin; accessioned from the collection of Johann Baptist August Klein. Leather, porcupine quills. 19 1/4" long, 5 1/2" wide (50 cm x 14 cm). Courtesy of the Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Cat. No. E.157.





identical, patterns on both ends. Like all the other pouches of this group, it follows a five-color pattern (black, red, blue, yellow and white) and has quill-wrapped fringes, but it is the only pouch of the group with tin cones attached to the fringes.

Much less is known about a slit pouch acquired in 1962 by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York as part of the small George D. Macbeth collection (Fig. 3). The attribution to the Chippewas of Minnesota or Wisconsin was apparently made on stylistic grounds, but it is tempting to think that the material might go back to George Macbeth, a member of the Ontario Provincial legislature, who was born in the Red River settlement in the early nineteenth century. A pair of moccasins in the collection has been dated to the late eighteenth century (Sager 1995:42, Fig. 7), but on the whole an early-nineteenth-century date is more likely. The Macbeth pouch features fine quillwork rosettes, such as are found on a pair of leggings in the same collection and on other Western Great Lakes material of the period, and on two other undocumented slit pouches (Figs. 6, 11). Also unusual for slit pouches is the use of one-quill zigzag lines. The patterned triangle bands alternate with zigzag lines on one end and with complex designs on the other. Some of the designs are representational, which is rare on slit pouches, but it is difficult to decide what they represent; the best guess is that they are horned quadrupeds.

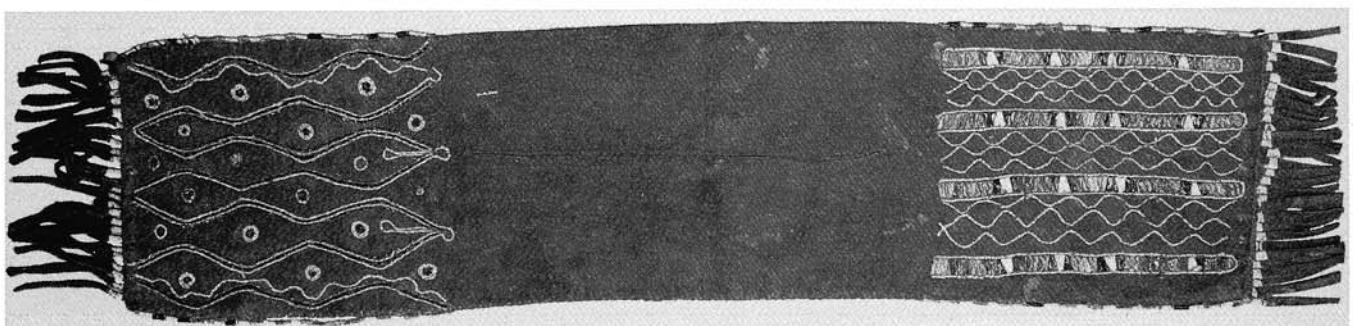
The Potawatomi slit pouch in Vienna is from the Johann Georg Schwarz collection (Fig. 4), but in all likelihood it dates back to the pre-1837 collection of Frédéric Résé, the first Catholic bishop of Detroit, Michigan. If so, it may have been procured among the Potawatomis of southern Michigan (Kasprzycki and Krpata 1988; Kasprzycki n.d.). On one end it has four (rather than three) patterned triangle bands alternating with groups of wavy

3. Slit pouch, Western Great Lakes, perhaps southwestern Chippewa, probably early nineteenth century. Leather, porcupine quills. 23¼" long (with fringes), 4¾" wide (59 cm x 12 cm). Accessioned in 1962 from the George D. Macbeth collection. Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History, New York. Cat. No. 50.2/6539.

lines forming chains of slightly rounded diamonds; on the other end there are only wavy lines, which are partly linked to form what appear to be spiritual beings, identified as such by short heart lines leading from small heads into the bodies, which also feature circles of diverse colors. The decorative areas are edged with a quill-wrapped filler sewn to the pouch; more commonly, the quills would be sewn to the buckskin.

This rather coherent Western Great Lakes subgroup has relationships to both the east and west. We will first turn to the west. In 1823 the Italian explorer Giacomo Costantino Beltrami attempted to discover the sources of the Mississippi and on this occasion assembled a sizable collection of artifacts, mostly of Dakota and southwestern Chippewa origin, which have survived in two museums in Italy. While in his travel account Beltrami offers tribal attributions for the artifacts that he illustrates, no such identifications are made in the museum records, nor does he refer to slit pouches in his text (1962). It is only on stylistic grounds that we can attribute a slit pouch in the Casa Beltrami in Filottrano to the Chippewas of Minnesota (Laurencich Minelli 1990:247, Fig. 13). The right side of the pouch (visibly worn on the outside) features the familiar alternating patterned bands and pairs of wavy lines, while the left side (worn toward

4. Slit pouch, collected between 1819 and 1837 among the Potawatomis of Michigan by Johann Georg Schwarz or by Bishop Frédéric Résé. Leather, porcupine quills. 20½" long (without fringes), 4⅞" wide (52 cm x 12.5 cm). Courtesy of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, Austria. Cat. No. 11979.



the body) is undecorated. However, the pouch exhibits an interesting and distinctive feature found on many pouches collected in Minnesota: the upper layer of the pouch is sewn together from two pieces of unequal size, the smaller of which appears on the left side. Since there is no technical explanation for this practice, its occurrence takes on a special significance. The quillwork is badly damaged, with only the red fairly well preserved; there are traces of black and white, and possibly also of light blue quills.

Several of these features, including the pieced upper leather (here on the right side), also occur on one of three slit pouches acquired in the last few years by the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center (MPMRC), Mashantucket, Connecticut (Cat. No. 1998.106.1). The pouch was bought from a collector in Ohio, who had obtained it in 1997 at Conestoga Auctions in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. It originally came from the Mary Merritt Doll Museum or its branch, Merritt's Museum of Childhood, in Douglassville, Pennsylvania, formerly Merritt's Early Americana Museum, established in 1964. So far it has been impossible to trace the history of the pouch any further back. On this example the patterned triangle bands appear in pairs and also alternate with wavy lines, but only the lateral ones are done in line work, whereas the central ones are executed as shaped triangle bands, a technique we would tend to identify as Siouan in a broad sense. The left side has lost nearly all of its quills, but the basic pattern is still discernible: it combines an X shape with a central square, which also serves as the centerpiece of a form somewhat resembling the horned beings on the Macbeth pouch.

An otherwise transitional pouch in the AMNH (Cat. No. 50.2/4727) acquired in 1942 from Clarence W. Ashley and attributed in the catalog to the "Northern Plains" seems related to this one. It has the asymmetrical design, undecorated slit and pieced upper leather, in this case on the left side, which also carries a combination of a quilled red X and white cross. It lacks the patterned triangle bands and wavy lines, but features a decorative panel consisting of seven red lozenges with blue centers.

The last western item with patterned triangle bands was obtained in 1913 by the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (Cat.

No. 276.343), through Truman Michelson from Thomas Chuck, a Mesquakie from Tama, Iowa. It is made of black-dyed bison skin and according to the museum records was used as the cover of a "woman's [sacred] pack" (Torrence and Hobbs 1989:123, No. 32). Despite this documentation this piece falls right into our series of slit pouches in shape, size and decoration. As on the pouch formerly in Merritt's Doll Museum, the patterned triangle bands are paired; there are no fine lines, and in fact, except for a two-color band of diagonal bars, all the quillwork is in triangle bands, including the wavy bands between the bars. On the left side a red X is combined with a smaller white cross, but the upper layer is not pieced.

There are four additional slit pouches that have asymmetrical designs, but differ in most other respects from one another — a characteristic they share with the Mesquakie bundle cover. None of them is well documented as to provenance, but all are likely to have been made and collected in the Western Great Lakes region or west of the Great Lakes.

The first of these is a second pouch recently acquired by the MPMRC (Fig. 5). The pouch was deaccessioned by the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, together with other non-Connecticut Native American and other ethnographic material in 1977, before the establishment of the MPMRC. The sales catalog described it as a Plains Indian buckskin pipe bag from the midwestern United States, donated to the society in 1843 and misleadingly listed as part of the "Moorehead collection," presumably referring to the early archaeologist and ethnographer Warren K. Moorehead. A search for the original catalog information led to the discovery of an early catalog card reading: "An Indian pouch, wrought with porcupine quills on deerskin. Gift of J. Hubbard Wells, Jr., May 8, 1843." A J. Hubbard Wells was listed in the 1850 Hartford City Directory as a printer. Further research revealed that he had been in the printing business since at least the 1820s and does not appear to have moved around a great deal. A first guess was that perhaps one of the authors whose works he had printed might have been the source of the pouch; but then a chance find led to the discovery of a burial record of a Hubbard Wells who died in Aztalan, Wisconsin, on January 3, 1851 at the age of fifty-one



5. Slit pouch, Western Great Lakes, possibly Winnebago, possibly obtained near Aztalan, Wisconsin. Formerly in the collection of the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford; gift of J. Hubbard Wells, Jr., 1843. Leather, porcupine quills, tin cones. 15" long, 4½" wide (38 cm x 11.4 cm). Courtesy of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Mashantucket, Connecticut. Cat. No. 748 Ppo 60.

years and ten months, and thus was born in 1799. So far, no proof of a relationship has been found between this person and the Hartford printer and/or the donor of the pouch. But if the place of death was anywhere near the place of collecting, there could very well have been a connection.

The Wells pouch is completely undecorated on one side and has no pieced upper side; but like many of the more western forms to be discussed, it has fringes with tin cones at both ends. The quillwork consists of four yellow triangle bands flanking the outside of a wavy band (also yellow) and a narrow red triangle band; in the center the yellow bands enclose a solid quilled area of shaped bands in red, yellow and black with pulsating and wavy bands forming a sort of checkerwork design. Thus, the color scheme is a relatively unusual black, red and yellow one. The typical pattern of wavy lines flanked by triangle bands is substantially transformed but still clearly recognizable.

Although any attempt to attribute this pouch to a specific group must remain highly speculative, both the possible Aztalan link and stylistic considerations may point to a Winnebago origin (cp. a pair of undocumented, but obviously Winnebago moccasins in the Übersee Museum, Bremen, Germany).

Another reasonably well dated, but otherwise relatively undocumented slit pouch was transferred in 1986 to the British Museum, London (Cat. No. 1986Am.18.117; King 1999:58, Fig. 52) from the Royal Institution of Cornwall in Truro, England, established in 1818. A printed list of "Presents, from 27th August, 1831, to 29th November, 1832" lists on page 7: "Captain Hambly, RN. Indian Pouch, Sheath of an Indian Scalping Knife." According to J. C. H. King, "the sheath survives and is a classic black dyed one with zig zag line technique quillwork down the centre, now in very poor condition" (King 2002).

6. Slit pouch, attributed to the Delaware, but more likely west of the Great Lakes, c.1820–1850. Purchased in London for George G. Heye in or before 1909. Leather, porcupine quills. 21¼" long, 5½" wide (54 cm x 14 cm). Courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Cat. No. 02/9638. Photograph by NMAI Photo Services Staff.

It is unlikely that a member of the British Royal Navy could have come anywhere near where slit pouches were to be found during the first decades of the nineteenth century. We would have to look among the possible relatives or neighbors of the donor for links to the origin of this pouch. The Hambly family is of old Cornish stock and can be traced back to the Domesday Book. A Captain William Hambly was active in the East India Company Maritime Service in the 1780s — too early for our purposes and without known connections to the Great Lakes region. Another William Hambly was captain of an English schooner in the 1850s, perhaps too late and also without the appropriate connections. Yet another William Hambly served as United States interpreter at the 1821 and 1825 treaty with the Creek — closer in time and subject matter, but we would have to assume that this William Hambly received the pouch and knife case from someone else in the Indian service. It would be tempting to associate the pouch with David William Hambly, whose father was from Truro, and who settled near the lead mines of Wisconsin as a geologist, but only in 1844 — too late for our purposes. His father John Hambly, however, was also in the mining business, went to Brazil in 1828 and returned to England in 1831. While he is not known to have been in Wisconsin, other Cornish miners were there during the 1820s. One Francis Clyma is said to have been the first Cornish miner to arrive in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, in about 1827. This would have been close to Winnebago lands at the time, but stylistically there is little resemblance to the Wells pouch (Fig. 5), for which I have suggested a Winnebago provenance.

The Hambly pouch is perhaps the most deviant of the quilled slit pouches. It has wavy lines along three of its four sides, as well as between and above a yellow-and-red triangle band on the right side of the pouch. On the left side, an X shape has been slit in half by a horizontal line. The slit is edged with line quillwork, and each end of the slit is flanked by a crescent form and circle, also in line work. Both ends have fringes with tin cones and red-dyed deer hair.





Two other pouches for which little or no documentation survives are fairly similar. One of them, now at the NMAI, was obtained in or before 1909 for George G. Heye in London, and was designated in typical Museum of the American Indian fashion as "Delaware" — a most unlikely attribution (Fig. 6). The other one was published by James Hanson (1994:253, Pl. 263) as part of the Forrest Fenn collection, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Hanson suggests a "Sauk and Fox" attribution, perhaps on the basis of a piece from the Chandler-Pohrt collection to be discussed below, but unfortunately my attempts to learn about the possible origins (and even the measurements) from Fenn Galleries were in vain. Both pouches have comparatively long fringes and are decorated with a solid block of quillwork on the right side, consisting of shaped bands forming linked diamonds and circles — a motif seen on the Klein pouch from the Menominee (Fig. 2), and on documented Santee Dakota slit pouches. Both pouches also have decorated slits; the NMAI piece has a quill-edged slit, the Fenn pouch's slit is edged with green ribbon. The NMAI pouch also has a small quilled design on the left side, which could be interpreted as a degenerated X; on the right side, to the left of the main decoration, it features two quilled rosettes reminiscent of those found on the Macbeth pouch (Fig. 3). Despite their utter lack of documentation, the two pouches probably originated somewhere in the vicinity of the Upper Mississippi valley.

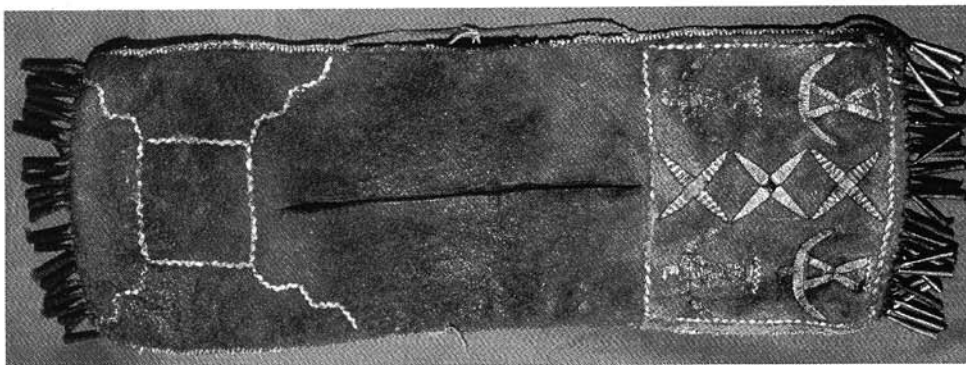
The documentation is far better for a group of slit pouches that are characterized by asymmetrical designs, undecorated slits, tin cones and upper layers

7. Slit pouch from the Messiter collection, possibly Western Great Lakes, c.1750–1800. Leather, porcupine quills, brass cones, red-dyed deer hair. 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ " long, 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide (48 cm x 10 cm). Courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau, Quebec. Cat. No. III-X-375.

that are pieced on the right sides. Almost all of them exhibit four-color quillwork (black, red, blue and white) and also have large Xs on the left side. Of nine pouches that share these features, four were collected among the Santees in Minnesota. And three of the nine were collected in the summer of 1856 by Vojta Náprstek, the founder of the Czech national museum of ethnology, the Náprstek Museum in Prague, Czech Republic, when he accompanied Superintendent Francis Huebschmann to the annuity payment on the Dakota Reservation along the Minnesota River. One of these resembles the previous three pieces in combining checkerboard bands and linked diamonds and circles on the right side; instead of an X, this pouch has a cross on the left side (Fig. 10; Feest and Kasprzycki 1999:287, Fig. 57). It shares its white glass bead edging with the second pouch collected by Náprstek (Cat. No. 22216), which may be unfinished, but which clearly shows that the addition on the right side of the upper leather is not a patch of quillwork, but indeed

8. Slit pouch, attributed by Gottfried Hotz to the Iroquois but more likely Western Great Lakes, c.1750–1800. Leather, porcupine quills, brass cones, red-dyed deer hair. 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ " long, 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ " wide (36 cm x 11.2 cm). Formerly owned by Sir E. H. Verney; acquired by Hotz in England prior to 1939. Courtesy of the Nordamerika Native Museum, Zurich, Switzerland. Cat. No. 8.





9. Slit pouch, collected in 1856 by Vojta Náprstek among the Santees in Minnesota. Leather, porcupine quills, tin cones. 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ " long, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide (36.5 cm x 14 cm). Courtesy of the Náprstek Museum, Prague, Czech Republic. Cat. No. 22215.

a stylistic feature; fringes and tin cones are now missing, but were apparently present originally.

Two undocumented pouches are fairly similar to the third Náprstek pouch. A piece from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia, from which the number is missing, has a solid panel of pulsating bands in black, red, blue and white on the right side, and a white X on the left; the fringes have tin cones only on the right side, while the fringes on the left are quill-wrapped and short like those of the Western Great Lakes pouches. The second slit pouch, from the NMAI (Cat. No. 16/5944), is merely documented as a "museum purchase" of 1929 and has been attributed to the Delaware; its solid panel is made up of alternating pulsating and wavy bands.

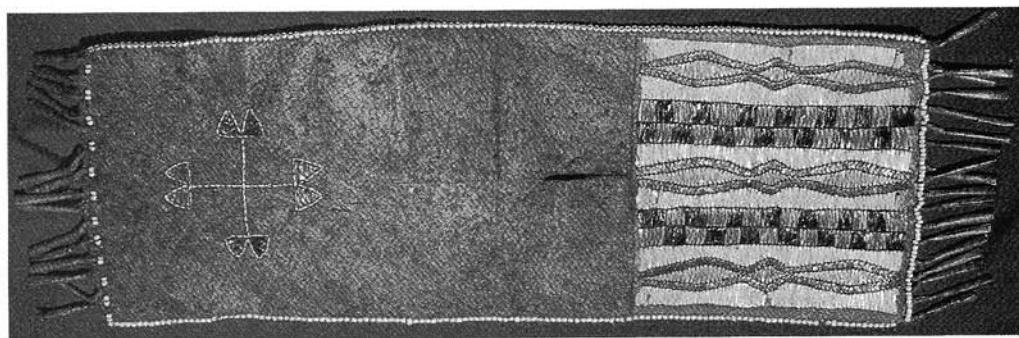
The third Náprstek pouch has a variant of the X form on the left (Fig. 9); similar to the Merritt's Doll Museum pouch now in the MPMRC, it consists of a square with lines (which are wavy) protruding from the corners. The decorative panel on the right introduces representational designs: two pairs of thunderbirds are arranged on both sides of three small Xs or four-pointed stars. The panel is framed by a two-quill zigzag line, the only time this technique occurs in our sample.

Benson Lanford has recently directed my attention to a pair of slit pouches in the collection of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis (Cat. Nos. 1932 027 0112 and 66-2095b). One of them, collected by William Faribault (probably of the Faribault family of traders among the Santees of Minnesota) resembles the previous group in several features. Its upper leather is pieced on the right, its right side is fully quilled, and there is a kind of an X shape on the left — here interpreted as short triangles emerging from the corners of a square.

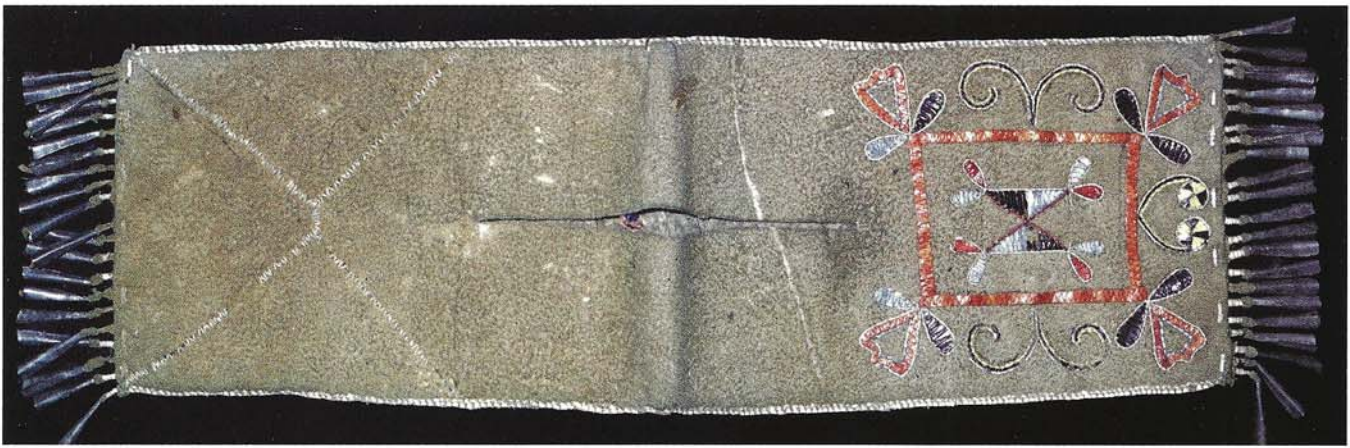
The unwrapped fringes with tin cones are also in line with the previous group. The color scheme appears to be red, blue, yellow and white, a feature it shares with the Hambly pouch in the British Museum. There is another resemblance to the Hambly pouch: the design on the right is made up of vertical rather than horizontal bands. (There is only one on the Hambly pouch.) The design itself is quite simple: a blue chevron on white ground edged by red bands. The second pouch in the Missouri Historical Society is undecorated, with unpieced upper leather, long, unwrapped fringes without cones, and white bead edging instead of quill edging.

Thunderbirds also appear on the third slit pouch in the MPMRC (Fig. 12), an item obtained at a sale at Christie's from the collection of Peggy Au Schatz (Christie's 1995), which had been on long-term loan to the Detroit Institute of Arts from 1984 to 1995. It is likely that the former owner is related or identical to the Peggy Schatz Art Studio in Chicago, but I have not been able to confirm this. Thus, nothing is known of the history of this pouch prior to 1984. It has three pairs of thunderbirds, but they are arranged around a central motif consisting of a combined cross and X made out of incurved double curves surrounded by red-and-black double curves. Two of the thunderbirds are in the corners on the left side of the decorative panel, whereas stars appear in their place on the right side. As on the third Náprstek pouch, the band work designs are outlined with line work. The left side of the pouch is blank, making it the only example in this group without an X there.

Asymmetrical double curves around a central diamond with extensions appear on a badly preserved slit pouch in the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul (Cat. No. 6167.6). Described as a kinnikinnik pouch by the



10. Slit pouch, collected in 1856 by Vojta Náprstek among the Santees in Minnesota. Leather, porcupine quills, glass beads, tin cones. 13" long, 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide (33 cm x 12 cm). Courtesy of the Náprstek Museum, Prague, Czech Republic. Cat. No. 22249.



11. Slit pouch, no documentation or provenance, possibly Santee, c.1820–1850. Leather, porcupine quills, tin cones. 15" long (without fringes), 4 $\frac{1}{16}$ " wide (38 cm x 12.5 cm). Courtesy of the Musée d'Ethnographie de la Ville de Genève, Switzerland. Cat. No. 21309.

donor, it was given to the society in 1922 by Helen A. Carver, whose father is said to have bought it from the Dakota when he was on the Plains with General Sibley fighting against the Sioux in 1863; it was probably looted from the fugitive Santees. Its four-color scheme differs in having a rose color instead of black, and it is edged with white glass beads.

Related to this is a slit pouch from the Speyer collection in the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC), Gatineau, Quebec (Cat. No. III-U-1, ex III-Q-3; Benndorf and Speyer 1968:105, No. 194, Fig. 34). This follows the four-color scheme typical for this group, but the white and blue are nearly gone. The X on the left is not quilled, but made of red cotton appliqué, and black thread has been used instead of quills for line work. The design on the right side looks floral at first glance but may represent a stylized thunderbird. An interesting feature is that the fringes on the

left side have been cut from the upper layer of the leather, whereas the lower layer remains uncut, a detail that is characteristic of a pouch type found farther to the east. Otherwise this pouch fits into the set under discussion.

A label attached to the pouch reads "Shawnee given by Mr. George Bogne, N.A. 27. Belt Bag."<sup>2</sup> I still have to locate a museum, probably in the United Kingdom, that uses such N.A. numbers. Unfortunately, I also cannot identify the George Bogne mentioned on the label, let alone associate him with the Shawnee. Judging from the assumed date of the piece (which I would place around 1840 or 1850), however, it is likely — if the pouch is actually Shawnee — that it was probably collected on their reservation in Kansas.

<sup>2</sup>Both Ted Brasser and I were led to believe that the number could refer to the Schoch collection at the Berne Historical Museum, which dates to the late 1830s and was obtained by the Swiss merchant Alphonse Schoch partly in St. Louis, Missouri and partly on an expedition to the tribes living along the Missouri in Kansas, including the Shawnee. N.A. 27 would be the Berne catalog number of a piece from the Schoch collection; and since N.A. 27 is missing from the catalog of the collection published by Judy Thompson (1977) and Arthur Speyer is known to have obtained one other item from the Schoch collection, it seems logical to assume that this could have been the case with this pouch as well. Closer inspection of the documentary record, however, reveals that N.A. 27 of the Berne collection is a blanket, which was not included in the catalog because it is badly torn. On second thought, a possible association with Schoch is highly unlikely: since the N.A. numbers were assigned to the Schoch material at the museum in the 1880s, there would be no reason to use English on the label; Schoch's original list is in French.

12. Slit pouch. Unknown provenance, no documentation, possibly Santee, c.1820–1850. Acquired in 1984 from Christie's, ex Peggy Au Schatz collection. Leather, porcupine quills, tin cones. 14 $\frac{1}{16}$ " long, 4 $\frac{1}{16}$ " wide (36.4 cm x 12.5 cm). Courtesy of the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Mashantucket, Connecticut. Cat. No. 680 Ppo 48.



The last pouch of this group, now at the Musée d'Ethnographie in Geneva (Fig. 11), is undocumented and was cataloged after the Second World War as coming from the "old collection." The design on the right side consists of a square enclosing an X made of two triangles, with heart shapes in the corners and both in- and outcurving double curves along its sides; the incurving curves at the far right end in quilled rosettes.

A pouch formerly in a private collection has the five-color pattern of the Geneva pouch, but resembles Dakota and Menominee pouches in its alternating wavy lines and linked diamonds (here interspersed with hour-glass shapes). The X is somewhat smaller than usual.

I would attribute the whole group, possibly including the "Shawnee" pouch at the CMC, to the Santee. Although there are clear subtypes as far as the decoration of the right side is concerned, the pouches seem to conform to a fairly narrowly defined style. We cannot be certain whether the variation relates to differences between the bands (Mdewakanton, Wahpekute, Wahpeton, Sisseton) or to other factors. But we can be quite certain that the Dakota were commonly using slit pouches in the 1840s, 1850s and even later. When discussing Menominee slit pouches, Alanson Skinner reported that he had "collected beaded specimens of this type among the Wahpeton Sioux, once friends of the Menomini" (1921:331).

One of these, now at the AMNH, was obtained by Skinner prior to 1914 from a Wahpeton-Sioux at Sisseton, South Dakota (see front cover). Although its design is completely floral, the older geometric pattern has been fully preserved: on one side, the floral patterns are separated by linked circles and diamonds; a wavy line is used to edge the sides, while the other side may be interpreted as a combination of an X and a cross, with the cross more clearly readable than the X. Interestingly, the slit is decorated with ribbon and beads, whereas it was undecorated on the quilled examples of the Santee type.

We also have substantial evidence for Santee use of slit pouches from pictorial evidence. Our main source in this respect is Seth Eastman, an army captain who was stationed at Fort Snelling, Minnesota in the 1840s and left a remarkable set of ethnographic drawings and paintings primarily illustrative of Dakota life. A quilled slit pouch appears in his 1848 oil painting *Chippewa Indians Playing Checkers* (McDermott 1961:Pl. I), which accord-

ing to Eastman's wife Mary depicts "two Chippeway Indians who were kept for a long time in the guard house at Fort Snelling" (McDermott 1961:58). While the house shown is clearly a Dakota summer house and the barrel in the foreground is marked "Sioux," the pouch could be either Chippewa or Dakota. Its visible right side appears to be solidly quilled, and the fringes are short and probably decorated with tin cones. Interestingly, the pouch is placed over a powder horn.

Another representation of a slit pouch by Eastman is in his undated oil painting *Indian Burial* (McDermott 1961:Pl. 35), which again definitely shows Dakotas. It appears that the slit pouch lying on the ground has alternating triangle bands and wavy lines on its right side and short fringes; it is probably closer to the Western Great Lakes type than to the Dakota type just described. The third oil painting by Eastman with a slit pouch is *Medicine Dance* of 1848 (McDermott 1961:Pl. 47), where the man sitting in the right foreground is wearing a pouch hanging over his powder horn.

Even more convincing for our purposes is a drawing by Frank Blackwell Mayer, the young artist from Baltimore, Maryland who attended the negotiations of the 1851 Traverse des Sioux treaty with the Dakota. The unpublished drawing, now in the Newberry Library, Chicago, depicts a slit pouch with the characteristic X; it is designated by the artist "Shandosahah," a term (*candožuha*) that actually refers to a tobacco pouch, rather than to a shot pouch (*tasusuožuha*).

Returning to the east from the Santees of Minnesota, we should take a brief look at some of the pictorial evidence for slit pouches in the Central and Eastern Great Lakes region in the eighteenth century. An unsigned and undated picture, most likely made around 1750 by a French artist, depicts an Indian warrior, probably an ally of the French, wearing a rather small and undecorated slit pouch over his powder horn. A British illustration from 1759 shows Peter Williamson, who had lived as a captive among the Delaware, in the costume of this tribe. In his captivity narrative, published two years earlier, Williamson only indirectly refers to shot pouches: "Their Gun, Tomahawk, scalping Knife, Powder and Shot are all they have to carry with them in Time of War" (1757:25). If we can trust the engraving, the fringes are fairly long and perhaps



13. Slit pouch, probably collected in the St. Lawrence River valley, second half of the eighteenth century. Leather, porcupine quills, glass beads, brass cones, red-dyed deer hair, traces of red paint. 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ " long (without fringe), 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide (31 cm x 10 cm). Formerly in the collection of the Bibliothèque publique de la ville de Versailles. Courtesy of the Musée du quai Branly, Paris. Cat. No. 71.1934.32.22.

14. Slit pouch, attributed to the Delaware, but more likely from the St. Lawrence River valley, c.1770–1800. Purchased by George G. Heye in 1912 from William Oldman, London. Leather, porcupine quills, red-dyed deer hair, brass cones. Approximately 13" long, 4" wide, with 4" flaps (33.5 cm x 10 cm). Courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Cat. No. 03/6408. Photograph by NMAI Photo Services Staff.



netted with quill wrappings adjoining to the pouch; wavy lines alongside the slit are clearly indicated.

Perhaps the best-known illustration of a slit pouch is in John Verelst's painting of *Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow, King of the Maquas* (Einhorn and Abler 1998:Fig. 4), one of the "Four Kings of Canada" who came to London in 1710.<sup>3</sup> No quillwork is discernible on the pouch, but the slit is probably edged; and there are several rows of brass or tin cones, some attached close to the slit, which is a most unusual feature. No pouch with this feature is known to exist, and if it ever did, the type probably had a rather limited distribution. More significant may be the fact that cones appear to be hanging entirely in front of the bag rather than below its edge, which indicates the presence of an uncut appendage at the lower end.

The westernmost group of remaining quilled pouches is made up of four examples that share an asymmetrical design in a four-color scheme (black, red, yellow and white), which differs from that associated with the Dakota; a black, red and white quill-netted fringe, and an undecorated slit. Three of the four pouches have brass cones with red (and partly also white) deer hair. The example without cones was collected by Milford Chandler among the Mesquakies in Tama, Iowa in the 1920s (Detroit Institute of Arts, Cat. No. 81.378; Hodge et al. 1973:8, No. 15). Like the Dakota pieces just discussed, it has a quilled X on the left side, but on the right side there are patterned triangle bands separated from one another and flanked by simple triangle bands. The fringes are long, as on the Fenn pouch and the related

one from the NMAI, and the upper leather is not pieced. The pouch is clearly transitional in character.

The second pouch, now in the Natural Science collections at Winterthur near Zurich (Cat. No. IX.2.125; Phillips 1987b:63, No. W122), was formerly in the collection of the local Antiquarian Society, where it had been cataloged as "Spanish," a suggestion that is not as farfetched as it first seems. On the right side, a sawtooth band flanked by red triangle bands is in turn flanked by three hourglass shapes and three Xs or four-pointed stars. Since hourglass shapes often stand for thunderbirds, the design is reminiscent of the third Náprstek pouch (Fig. 9), but the arrangement here is less systematic. One of the hourglasses is turned by ninety degrees — as if the maker had no idea what it represented. At the same time, the pouch is clearly fairly early, probably from the early 1800s.

The same may be true of the two other examples in this group, both of which are poorly documented. A pouch at the CMC (Fig. 7) was formerly in the Messiter collection, although this information is of little help, since the best documented trip of a Charles Messiter to North America does not fit the dates or probable provenances of the items in the collection. The Messiter pouch shares with the Winterthur piece the patterned quill edging and the sawtooth band, here flanked by three parallel wavy bands that extend beyond the fold in the center. On the left side is a square box with a cross. In addition to sawtooth and simple triangle bands, the pouch has quilled bands with diagonal bars and W forms, all of them lined with fine quill lines.

The fourth pouch of this group, also without provenance, is in the Nordamerika Native Museum, Zurich and was obtained by its founder Gottfried Hotz prior to 1939 in England (Fig. 8). It is said to have been in the

<sup>3</sup> In April 1710, four "Indian Kings," or civil chiefs, three Mohawks and a Mahican, traveled to London, hoping to secure British military support against the French and their Indian allies in Canada.



15. Slit pouch, St. Lawrence River valley, perhaps Kahnawake Mohawk, eighteenth century. Leather, porcupine quills. 12" long, 3 3/8" wide (30.4 cm x 8 cm). Formerly in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Courtesy of the Musée du quai Branly, Paris. Cat. No. 71.1878.32.66.



16. Slit pouch collected among the Mi'kmaqs of Restigouche, Quebec in 1841 by Henry O'Halloran. Cloth, glass beads, silk ribbon. 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long, 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide (32 cm x 11.2 cm). Courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau, Quebec. Cat. No. III-F-304.

collection of Sir E. H. Verney. Sir Harry Verney was a member of Parliament for Buckingham in 1832–1841, 1857–1874 and 1880–1885; he is best remembered for proposing marriage in 1857 to Florence Nightingale; she refused his offer and he subsequently married her sister Parthenope. He had no known obvious American connections, and we have no clue how he could have obtained the slit pouch now in Zurich, which like the Messiter and Winterthur pieces must date from around 1800 or even from the late eighteenth century. Its quilled decoration extends from the netted fringe to the fold and consists of a central and two lateral groups of three unpatterned triangle bands flanking symmetrical groups of two wavy and one straight band.

The Verney pouch provides the transition to another group of four undocumented pouches, the shared features of which include the flap consisting of the uncut extension of the underside of the pouch, a decorated slit and quill-wrapped fringes. The quillwork seems to be characterized by variants of a three-color pattern, and three of the four have both one- and two-color quill edging. Strikingly close in its design to the Verney piece is another slit pouch that can be traced to England, where it was obtained by George G. Heye in 1912 from William Oldman (Fig. 14). It is by far the shortest of the regular (as opposed to model) pouches and also has the narrowest lanes of quillwork, a feature that Sylvia S. Kasprzycki (1997) has associated with Abenaki quillwork. Here the triangle bands (nine and four of them, respectively) are patterned, and there are three wavy lines of slightly differing widths. The quill colors are quite faded; and it is impossible to distinguish more than two colors, although it is likely that originally there were three. The brass cones would indicate a fairly early date, probably around or before 1800. It is also notable that one end is totally uncut, i.e., has no fringes at all.

A central block of patterned bands extending to the fold is flanked by wavy lines in a related example from the Warnock collection in Detroit (formerly known as Masco and later as the Epic collection, Cat. No. 8707001), which was purchased in

1987 from the Alexander Gallery in New York without further documentation. Like that on the Oldman pouch, the slit is quill-edged, but unlike it the quillwork does not extend to the left end of the pouch. The outstanding feature of the Warnock pouch is that two of the wavy lines are interpreted as horned serpents. A few white beads are used as spacing devices on the relatively long fringes.

The other two pouches with flaps are more similar to one another than to the two preceding examples. Both are eighteenth-century specimens apparently collected in the St. Lawrence River valley, and they lack the prominence of the wavy lines and the limitation of the design to the right side. Both are asymmetrical and have patterned bands and the same black, red and white color scheme. One of them is now at the CMC (Cat. No. III-I-1314; Benndorf and Speyer 1968:67, No. 88, Fig. 34; Brasser 1976:52, No. 2), where it is cataloged as Iroquois, following the suggestion of Arthur Speyer, from whom it was obtained by the museum. Originally it seems to have come from the Hessian State Museum in Darmstadt, Germany and may have been part of the material presumably collected by Hessian mercenaries in the American Revolution. Unfortunately, all records were lost during the Second World War, so we cannot be absolutely certain about the collector or the accession date. The design is nearly symmetrical, with three patterned triangle bands flanked by wavy lines on the right side extending to the fold, and two similar bands on the left side from the end of the quill-edged slit to the left end enclosing one fine wavy line. There were formerly also triangle bands along the sides, but the quillwork is completely gone.

This pouch may be compared to a piece from the Versailles collection in the Musée du quai Branly, Paris (Fig. 13), which has been labeled "Iroquois or Huron type" by Ruth B. Phillips (1987b:49, No. W58). "Iroquois" may be understood to mean Kahnawake Mohawk, since the French relations with members of the Iroquois League were generally hardly conducive to collecting activities. The quillwork is limited to a patterned band on the right and an unpatterned band to the left of the slit,

17. Slit pouch, Abenaki, collected near Trois Rivières, Quebec, c.1840–1880. Red cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads. Dimensions unavailable. Courtesy of the Musée des Abenakis, Odanak, Quebec.



and to the edging, but the major designs are executed in white glass beads, with a cross on the left and an X design with incurving double curves on the right partly outlined with quilled lines. Other remarkable features are the asymmetric ends: the left side terminates in a triangular stepped appendage, is pierced along the edges and has only a few fringes, whereas the right side has quill-wrapped fringes with brass cones and red-dyed deer hair above the flap.

The apparent presence of a flap on the pouch of one of the Four Kings of Canada confirms that this is an Eastern Great Lakes type, with variants shared by the Iroquois and various St. Lawrence River valley groups. This is also confirmed by the relationship, especially of the last two pieces, with the last group of quilled slit pouches to be discussed. Like the Western Great Lakes pouches, these have symmetrical decoration (in fact, it is strictly symmetrical here) consisting of single patterned triangle bands alternating with wavy or zigzag lines. These pouches tend to have decorated slits, netted fringes and rounded ends, although none of these features is present on all three examples.

All three pouches appear to have been collected in the St. Lawrence River valley. Two of them are now at the Musée du quai Branly (Fabbri 1964:193). One specimen (Fig. 15) from the Bibliothèque Nationale collection differs from the other (Cat. No. 34.32.23, from the Versailles collection) in the decoration of the slit, the continuity of the outer triangle bands, the shape of the wavy or zigzag lines and probably the fringes, which are missing on this piece. It also clearly shows rounded ends and thus resembles another pouch preserved in Deerfield, Massachusetts, which is said to be from Kahnawake and to date from about 1750 (Flynt 2004:52, Fig. 1). It should be understood that for the people of Deerfield, Kahnawake was probably more or less synonymous with "French Indians," and probably included Abenaki and others associated with the confederation, the capital of which was located in Kahnawake. On the Deerfield pouch, the wavy lines are limited to a series of arcs adjoining the central triangle band, much like on the Warnock pouch. The fringes are netted by means of quill-wrapping in a style somewhat different from that found in other netted fringes.

The presence of slit pouches with rounded ends in the St. Lawrence River valley is supported by additional evidence. A small beaded slit pouch, perhaps a model for a doll, was in the Farquharson collection in Scotland (recently sold at auction). The collection has been dated to the 1760s, although it clearly includes pieces, such as this one, from a later period (Phillips and Idiens 1994). A notable feature is the stylized floral pattern at both ends of the slit. Even smaller slit pouches are worn by two of the dolls in an Abenaki canoe model collected in or before 1799 at Yamachiche, close to Trois Rivières, Quebec, and now in the Musée d'Ethnographie in Neuchâtel, Switzerland (Fig. 18). In shape and basic

design they resemble the Deerfield pouch (Kaehr 2000).

The survival of rounded-end slit pouches among the Abenakis of Odanak/St. Francis into the nineteenth century is illustrated by a beautifully beaded example preserved at the Musée des Abenakis in Odanak, Quebec (Fig. 17). Like the beaded Wahpeton slit pouch at the other end of the distribution (see front cover), it preserves and at the same time transforms the basic design. The wavy lines are interpreted as floral patterns and so is the cross-and-X design on the left side. A similar cross-and-X pattern is on a pair of mid-nineteenth-century mittens with moose hair appliqué in the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin (Cat. No. 1880.1898), and on a small "Algonquin" pouch in Vienna (Cat. No. 11985; Feest 1968a: 43, Fig. iii/18; Phillips 1987a: 59, Fig. 45i).<sup>4</sup>

The process of reinterpretation is carried even further on an undocumented slit pouch in a private collection, which I have identified as possibly Abenaki on the basis of the piece in Odanak. The seemingly unusual tabbed shape of this late-nineteenth-century example is not as unusual as it might appear, because it is also found among the Penobscot (the close coastal relatives of the Abenaki) and among the Mi'kmaq. A Penobscot "percussion cap pouch" in the NMAI (Cat. No. 02/8116) was collected in 1910 by Frank G. Speck at Old Town, Maine, and was described by him as follows:

An old specimen showing how this type of pouch came to survive in cloth is one for percussion caps, fourteen inches long with an opening down the under side four inches long with little flaps on the ends, the whole symbolizing an animal's entire skin with the flaps as legs. A worsted flower ornamentation is on the outside. This is also worn folded over the belt like the cased-skin pouch of which it is a copy (1940:128).

While it is conceivable that the flaps at the ends were interpreted as animal legs, it is doubtful that this points to the origin of slit pouches.

Mi'kmaq examples of the tabbed pouch type in the CMC (Fig. 16 and Cat. No. III-F-303) and Old



18. Figure from a model canoe wearing a miniature slit pouch, collected in or before 1799 at Yamachiche, near Trois Rivières, Quebec by Jeanne Elisabeth Gugu. Leather, red yarn. Dimensions unavailable. Courtesy of the Musée d'Ethnographie, Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Cat. No. IV.A.30.

<sup>4</sup>Phillips's interpretation of this as a sun motif is as unconvincing as the suggested identity of a variety of different northeastern motifs (1987a:59, Fig. 45i).

Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, Massachusetts (Cat. No. 26.29.160) date from the 1840s; but it appears that other types were also known by the Mi'kmaq. What appears to have been a recycled half of a round-ended Mi'kmaq slit pouch is now in the AMNH (Cat. No. 50.1/7458); others may possibly be seen in a mid-nineteenth-century anonymous painting of Mi'kmaq life (Feest 2000:145).

Another slit pouch that has recently been found in a private collection shows the persistence of the asymmetrical square-pointed-end form otherwise known from a single eighteenth-century example in Paris (Fig 13). This is the only cloth and bead bag (with no ribbons or yarn) in the group. Its floral patterns at both ends are asymmetrical and do not recall the cross-and-X design. But there are wavy lines alongside the white bead-edged slit, and there is a series of small double curves ("tree designs") along the edges. The Paris example was attributed to the St. Lawrence River valley in the broadest sense, which suggests a similar origin for this pouch, which was obtained at an auction as an "Ojibwa medicine bag." A first guess would place the piece in the St. Lawrence River valley/Eastern Great Lakes region — perhaps Mississauga, perhaps Iroquois.

A final beaded example is in the Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where it is attributed to the Stockbridge Chief Konkapot, who died in 1766. This attribution is highly unlikely, and in fact the pouch has no documented history prior to 1958 when it was given to the museum by Allen Peck. While the pouch itself may

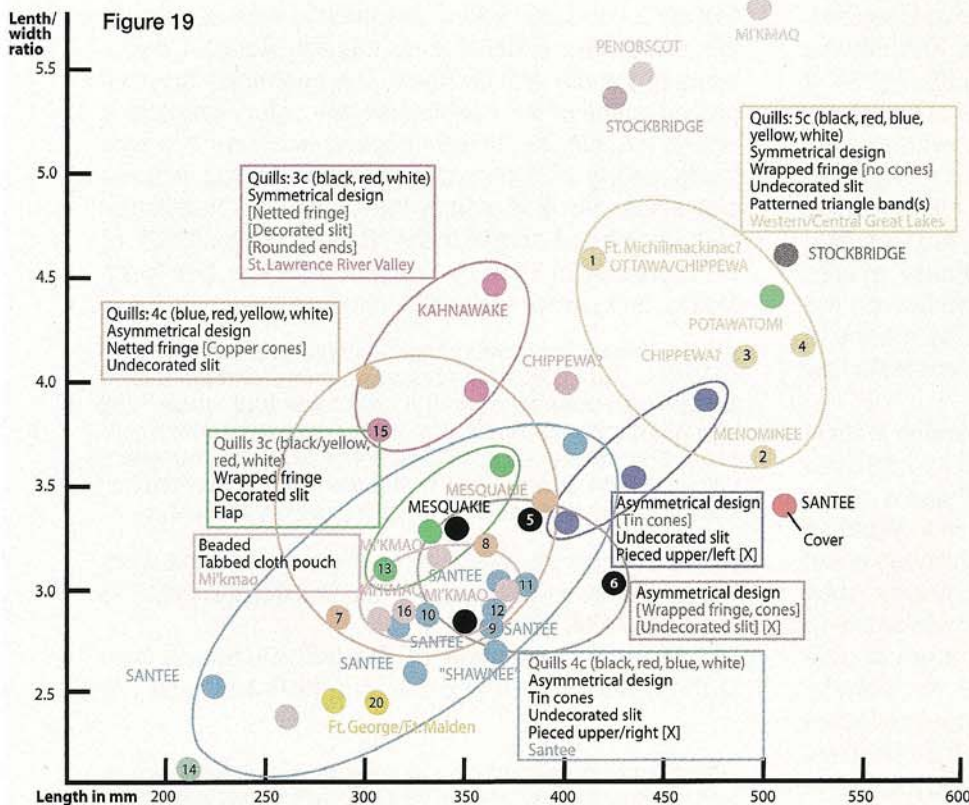
be of nineteenth-century manufacture and the long fringes are reminiscent of the Kahnawake pouch in neighboring Deerfield, the polychrome beadwork is so odd that it defies all attempts to date the piece, although an eighteenth-century date is out of the question.

There is another Stockbridge pouch, collected in the mid-twentieth century among the Wisconsin Stockbridge (Milwaukee Public Museum, Wisconsin, Cat. No. 55049/1655). This is undecorated and resembles the Western Great Lakes type in length, proportion and construction.

There were also other kinds of slit pouches. An example in the Jasper Grant collection in the National Museum of Ireland (Cat. No. 1902.321; Phillips 1984:42, No. 12, 61) has a base of leather, but the upper layer is of twined Indian hemp with false moose hair embroidery; the slit is edged with silk ribbon and the sides with white glass beads. The hourglass shapes and Xs are reminiscent of the Winterthur pouch. Between 1802 and 1809 Grant was stationed at Fort George near Niagara Falls, New York and Fort Malden near Detroit, but his collection includes material from many of the tribes that maintained an alliance with the British, and it is difficult to attribute specific items to specific groups. Ruth Phillips's guess that this could be Wyandot may be based on the assumption that false moose hair embroidery was an Iroquoian trait; but although the distribution of this technique is still not very well known, it was known to many Algonquian groups.

There are also finger-woven slit pouches. One at the museum in Saffron Walden, England (Cat. No. E381) is undecorated. Another one at the Field Museum, Chicago and formerly in the collection of Captain A. W. F. Fuller (Fig. 20) is undocumented, but displays groups of parallel and facing wavy lines on both sides of the slit and along the full length of the pouch, as do the pouches I have attributed to the St. Lawrence River valley.

It should be noted, too, that slit pouches also occur far away from northeastern North America among the Apache in the Southwest. I have made no systematic effort to bring together the evidence, but from the data in my files it appears that these pouches are similar to those discussed here in size and construction. They are, of course, beaded and not quilled. No trace of slit pouches is found in the region between Minnesota and the Southwest, and thus a direct relationship between the two forms is unlikely. I will later return to the question of an indirect relationship.



## DISTRIBUTION AND FORMS

A principle used by both historical linguistics and old-fashioned diffusionist anthropology holds that the point of origin of a phenomenon is most likely to be found in the area of the greatest local variation of the basic form.<sup>5</sup> If this is true, the lower St. Lawrence River valley — with its tabbed, rounded, pointed and square forms — should be regarded as the point of departure for the spread of slit pouches in eastern North America.

Due to the fact that only a small number of pouches have a reasonably well attested provenance, I have created a diagram to show the relationship among pouches in the hope that this would yield information on provenance (Fig. 19). The diagram is based on the observation that size and proportion of the pouches seemed to be a highly variable and possible regionally typical feature. Pouches for which measurements were available were plotted by length and length/width ratio.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, a number of physical and stylistic characteristics — such as design symmetry, presence of Xs, pieced uppers (left or right), uncut flaps, outline shape, presence, type and decoration of fringes, cones, quill color schemes and major quillwork techniques — were tabulated and investigated for co-occurring features. The tentative typology arrived at by this process appears on the diagram as color coding of the circles, some of which are numbered to identify the pouches illustrated here. Documented provenances were added to impart a sense of distribution.

A first observation is that most of the nonquilled, nonleather pouches fell outside the area dominated by quilled pouches. There are some exceptions to the rule, but they are hardly significant. Interestingly the non-quilled pouches deviate at both ends of the spectrum.

The second point is that the three best defined regional types appear as nonoverlapping fields on the diagram: the Western/Central Great Lakes type, the Santee type and the St. Lawrence River valley type. The latter could be somewhat enlarged by the addition of the overlapping brown circle and the adjoining green area. The Mi'kmaq type, clearly distinguished by shape and materials, coincides with the heaviest concentration of the Santee type. By and large, overlapping fields are transitional; the Beltrami pouch is grouped with the Ashley pouch and the Merritt's Doll Museum pouch; but it is in fact closer to the Western Great Lakes type than, for example, the Ashley pouch, which is associated with more westerly material. Among the unexpected exceptions (shown in green) are the Warnock pouch and the Oldman piece (Fig. 13), which end up at nearly

extreme points of the diagram. On the other hand, the undecorated Stockbridge pouch in the Milwaukee Public Museum falls within the range of the Western Great Lakes pouches. Thus, by and large, the diagram reflects geographical proximity.

A third conclusion is that the distribution of types makes more sense than the distribution of many of the individual features. Design, for example, seems to have a rather random distribution. This is interesting in itself and indicates that the same design features are distributed over the whole area, and that the differences are in size, proportion and construction details. Xs have a slightly more coherent distribution than does symmetry. Brass cones are nonoverlapping with tin cones, which suggests a temporal factor, as brass cones predate tin cones. Patterned triangle bands are perhaps the only stylistic feature that has a compact distribution; whether they are an Algonquian feature, as the diagram seems to indicate, will have to be looked at in greater detail.

## ICONOGRAPHY

Looking at the evidence assembled here the most striking feature is the basic similarity and limitation of the design elements. Unfortunately, either we have no early examples from the Maritimes or Maine or we do not recognize them, but we find variations on the theme of alternating patterned bands and wavy lines from the St. Lawrence River valley to the Mississippi. In the west, the wavy lines are often reinterpreted as linked groups of diamonds or linked circles and diamonds, or combined with the bands to form pulsating and wavy bands. Especially in the Great Lakes, wavy lines are sometimes reinterpreted as horned supernatural beings.

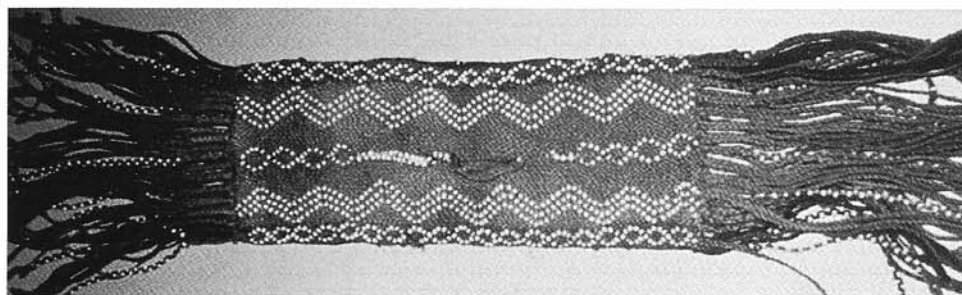
Patterned bands sometimes turn into checkerboard bands. The combination of patterned bands and wavy lines is found both in symmetrical and asymmetrical compositions. Asymmetrical forms are combined with blank left sides or with crosses, Xs or a combination of crosses and Xs.<sup>7</sup> Elaborate versions of these combinations are sometimes also found on the right side with blanks or simple Xs on the left. Alternatively, starlike Xs and hourglass shapes or thunderbirds are sometimes found in combination with the elaborate cross-and-X pattern. It is tempting to think that the Xs stand for stars, thunderbirds and the upper world in general, while the wavy lines represent the underworld. But this combination occurs only in a minority of the cases, and the cosmological views, while obviously based on similar concepts, differed enough throughout the area to make such an interpretation unlikely.

<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, ethnologist Edward Sapir (1916) has argued that the transformation of forms through diffusion leaves the original form relatively unchanged at the point of origin, with variation occurring at the fringes.

<sup>6</sup> Measurements were unavailable for two pouches in the National Museum of the American Indian, the Fenn and Saffron Walden pouches, one pouch in a private collection, the pouch in the Musée des Abenakis (Fig. 17) and the two miniatures in the Musée d'Ethnographie, Neuchâtel (Fig. 18).

<sup>7</sup> The suggestion made by Louis Garcia (2002) that the X could be a symbolic representation of Double Woman, the Dakota/Lakota patroness of craftworkers, is hardly compatible with the use of these pouches as shot pouches. If true, however, it would further illustrate the attributed character of such symbolic meanings to a basic shape, the distribution of which on slit pouches far surpasses the notion of Double Woman.

20. Finger-woven slit pouch, probably Great Lakes, early nineteenth century. Wool or plant fiber, glass beads. 12" long, 4 7/8" wide (30.5 cm x 12.4 cm). From the estate of Captain A. W. F. Fuller. Courtesy of the Field Museum, Chicago. Cat. No. 82734.



The late reinterpretation in both the east and west of both wavy lines and crosses-and-Xs in floral terms illustrates how quickly new meanings can be assigned to conventionalized designs.

Although the St. Lawrence River valley may not have been the place where slit pouches originated, it was here that they diversified. It is therefore useful to look at the relationship between the iconography of slit pouches and those of the other local type of belt-worn pouch, the string pouch (Kasprzycki 1997). Although string pouches generally have asymmetrical designs, both the alternating bands and wavy lines and elaborate crosses and Xs appear. Other examples of the cross-and-X design from the St. Lawrence River valley have already been supplied. An extremely close match is found in one of the Paris slit pouches and a string pouch from the d'Otrante collection in Stockholm (Kasprzycki 1997:Fig. 16). No such relationship exists between slit pouches and the third type of belt-worn pouches of the Northeast — tab pouches (Feest 1997), which have a strong pictorial element lacking in both string and slit pouches.

Another close relationship that should at least be noted in passing is between the patterned band/wavy line decoration and its derivatives on slit pouches and on single and double knife cases (Feest and Kasprzycki 2001). The matching designs of the slit pouch (Fig. 2) and the double knife case from the Klein collection has already been noted.

## THE ORIGIN

Belt-worn and neck-worn pouches were used over much of eastern North America at the time of European contact. Some were made from whole animal skins; others were fashioned from leather and/or shell beads. Most of the early illustrations show asymmetrical forms, while the only surviving specimen from this period is symmetrical on the outside, but structurally asymmetrical. This comes from the Tradescant collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England in the 1656 catalog of which it is described as one of several "Virginian purses embroidered with Roanoke" (Feest 1983:135–137). It is a more or less rectangular pouch with four arrow-shaped appendages of shell beads. Its width is four and a third inches (11 cm), just about the average width of slit pouches, but the length of the pouch without the appendages is only about nine and seven-eighths inches (25 cm) and thus in the lowest range of slit pouches. In construction, however, it differs from slit

pouches in having its opening at one end rather than across the central crease, and it also has a wedge-shaped piece of leather forming the bottom of the pouch. When discussing this pouch in 1983, I optimistically asserted that slit pouches were "probably older than the introduction of firearms in North America"; I have failed to uncover any positive evidence for this statement and now believe that slit pouches were indeed a postcontact development.

Speck's speculation about the development of tabbed slit pouches from animal skin pouches notwithstanding, much indicates a post-European origin of this type of artifact: the near universal association with post-European firearms, the rectangular shape of the majority of historically attested examples and — not least — the peculiar distribution of the type. The connection of these pouches with guns is reminiscent of the link between introduced horses and European-derived forms of riding gear, including Plains and Apache saddlebags.

As we have seen, the documented distribution of slit pouches closely follows the St. Lawrence River and extends across the Great Lakes region to Minnesota and Iowa, a pattern that is perhaps best explained as resulting from French influence. If there had been an English model for slit pouches, we might expect a much wider and perhaps also more erratic distribution in those parts of North America colonized by the British. At the same time, the appearance of rather similar forms of slit pouches among the Apache suggests a Spanish origin. The seemingly odd designation of the provenance of the Winterthur pouch as "Spanish" now seems to have validity: somebody must have recognized the basic shape of a totally undocumented piece as something that might have been found in Spain. The corollary of Feest's Second Law of Museum Documentation ("The uncertainty of an attribution increases with the square of its distance from the data supplied by the collector"; Feest 1968a:145; Sturtevant 1973:44–45) is not to dismiss lightly apparently wrong attributions, but rather to inquire into their ultimate purpose and meaning, is once again vindicated.

My search of the basic literature of standard European hunting costumes and accouterments has revealed no indication that slit pouches were found in the general region. The conclusion, supported by the prevalence of other types of shot pouches (especially oval or triangular leather bags with wooden or horn spouts), was that slit pouches must have been a regional type, with the border area between Spain and France as a rather likely place — given also the importance of early Basque contacts for the Mi'kmaq and their neighbors near the mouth of

the St. Lawrence River (e.g., Bakker 1991). Nikolaus Stolle, one of my anthropology students, took an interest in this question, and within two weeks came up with the first piece of pictorial evidence: a seventeenth-century picture of a Basque soldier wearing a slit pouch. More research needs to be done, also in view of the possibility that some of the design structure may likewise be of Basque origin. But with the discovery of the evidence at hand, the idea of a European origin of slit pouches in North America has now moved from mere speculation to a full-fledged hypothesis.

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