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Archeology of the Village of Gilboa: *Various Pipes Found at the J. Reed Site*

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While smoking is today recognized as a significant health risk both for the smoker and the second hand recipient, smoking was once ubiquitous throughout society. The development of smoking technology is a useful tool in understanding an archeological deposit.

The J. Reed Site in old Gilboa yielded a rich array of clay smoking pipes. Such pipes were first manufactured by Europeans in the seventeenth century and remained the most popular smoking device until the mid-nineteenth century. At that time, the briar pipe began to be manufactured and gained in popularity among middle class smokers. (The briar pipe is made from the root of the tree-heath [French bruyere], found in the Mediterranean Sea area.) However, the clay pipe continued to be manufactured in abundance and were cheap (if fragile). As they sold for a few cents per gross, they remained the smoke of choice for the working classes into the early twentieth century, and many working men made a practice of cutting the pipe stem so that they could hold the pipe in their teeth, thus freeing both hands for work.





Pipes from the J. Reed Site, Gilboa, NY: Rows 1 and 2: Fluted and plain pipe forms; Row 3: L-R, “TD” pipe with stars, “Tirks Head” effigy piped; Row 4: L-R Shield and Eagle pipes, fluted forms. Row 5: decorated pipe stems, Row 6: wood or bone pipe stem from a composite pipe.

Early clay pipe forms were often undecorated. By the mid-nineteenth century, pipe manufacturers had a vast array of decorated forms. Catalogs would feature 300–400 varieties to choose from. Clay pipes became a public expression for the smoker, and motif themes included Irish nationalist, Masonic, and patriotic.

Pipes from the J. Reed Site reflect styles popular during the mid-nineteenth century, roughly between the 1840s and the 1880s. Most of the styles recovered were general designs popular during this time period and of no known special significance. However, three of the styles recovered were of patriotic motifs and include the “Turks Head,” “Shield and Eagle,” and the “TD with stars.” What is interesting is that the only identifiable motif is a patriotic one, and thus reflects the sentiments of the smoker.

Some of the pipe forms found at the J. Reed Site have been seen at many sites throughout North America. Effigy pipes became common by the mid-nineteenth century. They were known as early as 1648 (Kenyon 2008:10). The turbaned human effigy form found at the J. Reed Site has been known as the Turks Head pipe. Various forms of this pipe have been found in Canada and the United States. The Henderson Company in Montreal manufactured a form identical to the J. Reed effigies between 1847 and 1876. Their pipe also included the “United States of America” along the headband of the figure, and thus were likely exported to the United States. The Henderson Company was taken over by W. H. Dixon who continued to make pipes until 1894. No makers mark was found on any of the J. Reed specimens—it is not possible to attribute the source as popular pipes were widely copied. Other examples of this style have also been found in Rome, NY (Hanson 1971).

The Shield and Eagle pipe found at the J. Reed Site has also been found at other sites. Reckner (2000:103) notes two different examples of this motif from the Five Points Site in New York City and a 13 star TD pipe, similar to one found at the J. Reed Site. Another example of the 13-star TD pipe has been recorded from Sacramento, California (Humphrey 1969:28). Many of the specimens from Sacramento seem to date from a fire in a sundries store in November 1852. Reckner (1999:35–37) notes the 13-star TD pipe in contexts dating between 1840 and 1860. Examples of the Shield and Eagle pipe were also found in the same context. The effigy example from Fort Stanwix in Rome, NY also dates to the mid-nineteenth century.

Pipe stems found at the J. Reed Site are almost all undecorated, with few makers marks. This lack makes it difficult to place the collection into a more specific temporal context. There is one possible maker’s name from one stem marked “Whit TO.” This may indicate a pipe manufactured in Toronto, but no positive identification has been made. If marked Toronto, then this pipe specimen would date before 1891, when the McKinley Tariff Act requirement to include the country of origin was not in effect. The lack of identifying marks or at least partial marks may be an indication that the assemblage dates before 1891.

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