1. Louis Shotridge at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia in 1912, posing in regalia. He holds a ceremonial dagger, either Cat. No. NA1288 from the University of Pennsylvania Museum collection or Figure 9 from the Heye collection. The Chilkat tunic is in the NMAI collection; the bear hat was repatriated in 1999. The negative of this image resides at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, but this photograph belonged to William C. Orchard, a longtime Heye staff member, who gave it to the Museum of the American Indian. Photograph by William Witt.

2. Copper mask with patina, Chilkat, c.1850. Copper, abalone shell. 8" high (20.3 cm). Heye purchased this mask, along with those shown in Figures 3 and 4, from Bernard A. Whalen in 1904. This piece has been described as a possible potlatch dance mask (Collins et al. 1977). Cat. No. 2146. Photograph by the NMAI Move Team.
In April 1904, in the early years of a collecting career that would become a lifetime passion, the New York collector George G. Heye purchased eighty-four Northwest Coast and Eskimo objects from a Los Angeles dealer, Bernard A. Whalen of Alaskan Indian Curios. Of particular interest, and the focus of this article, is an assortment of masks, rattles, bracelets, feast spoons and daggers with elaborate pommels, all made of copper or a combination of copper and sheep or musk ox horn. These copper and horn pieces are something of an anomaly in that, though many of them have an aged appearance, they seem to be unknown in Tlingit collections made before around 1900. Furthermore, although Tlingit artists used copper extensively as decorative elements on masks, rattles, daggers and headdresses, the creation of a single object entirely of copper was extremely rare; large pieces were customarily used throughout the Northwest Coast only for the ceremonial “coppers,” of which there are a number in early museum collections.

Several museums have copper pieces that are strikingly similar to the Whalen objects. Some of them are, or have been, in private collections and are published on a fairly regular basis in auction catalogs, where their estimated prices run well into five figures. The available documentation on these pieces seems to be scarce or fictitious, but a number of them appear to be associated with three places in the homeland of the northern Tlingit people — the Gold Rush community of Skagway; the town of Haines, which had a Presbyterian mission and a school as early as 1880; and the village of Klukwan, which was known as the wealthiest and most remote of all Tlingit towns in Alaska. Several pieces also seem to have some association with Louis Situwuka Shotridge (b.1882[?], d. 1937), who became...
the first Native American museum curator, collecting important Tlingit regalia for the University of Pennsylvania Museum, in Philadelphia, during his twenty-year (1912–1932) career there (Mason 1960; Milburn 1986; Seaton 2000).

The intent of this article is to review the available information about the Whalen pieces as well as similar objects elsewhere, to consider them within the context of Heye’s collecting practices and to situate them within the genre of native art “made for sale,” which has become an increasingly important area of study since Graburn’s seminal 1976 publication (Graburn 1976; Wyatt 1984; Lee 1991, 1999; Phillips 1995; Phillips and Steiner 1999).

Heye’s Whalen purchase was by no means his first encounter with a dealer. Although his collecting career had begun with a one-on-one transaction during which he purchased a deerskin shirt from its maker in Kingman, Arizona, he had been buying at Covert’s Indian Store in New York for years and was to develop lifelong relationships with dealers such as J. D. Standley in Seattle, Washington, Julius Carlebach in New York and W. O. Oldman in London, to name only a few.3 But the Whalen purchase was described in one museum history as “the nucleus of the Heye collection” (NMAI Archives Box OC276#12), and marked Heye’s transition from an enthusiastic hobbyist to a serious museum collector. He had, the previous year, acquired a six-hundred-piece collection of prehistoric New Mexican pottery from Henry Hales, and later in 1904 he was to add another archaeological collection, this time from Arizona. He was newly acquainted with George H. Pepper of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and with Marshall Saville, a professor of American archaeology at Columbia University, New York, who had taught him the importance of systematic collecting and scientific recording. And he was almost certainly purchasing these ethnographic objects to add to what he envisioned as a scientific collection of traditional native-made material, intended for the education of a nonacademic audience (Museum of the American Indian–Heye Foundation 1916).

Heye’s interest in these copper and horn objects seems to have persisted through the succeeding decades. In 1916, the year the Museum of the American Indian–Heye Foundation was founded in New York, Heye acquired a large feast spoon made of copper and horn (Fig. 10). In 1918 Fred Harvey sold him another copper dagger and rattle (Figs. 6, 13). In 1926 William Wildschut collected for Heye a copper mask recorded as “purchased in Holland.”4 And finally, in 1947 Heye purchased another copper mask from his old friend Joseph Keppler (Fig. 11).

Like many museum collectors of his time, Heye was primarily interested in old pieces, not new ones. He maintained this standard for years; in 1917, as Donald Cadzow was preparing for his first collecting trip to Alberta and the Mackenzie River, he carefully recorded them as an aide-memoire what he referred to as “Mr. Heye’s ‘My Golden Rule’”:

Every object collected add field tag.
Material must be old.
Hunting outfits
Fishing outfits
costumes
masks and ceremonial objects, also dance objects
household utensils particularly stone and pottery dishes and lamps
Talismans, hunting charms, all ivory carvings (old)
NO TOURIST MATERIAL

The copper pieces from Whalen fit the criteria for Heyes collection: everything was identified by tribe (Tlingit, Haida, Chilkat), and many pieces by iconography (Thunderbird, Bear or "Kotts," Mountain Sheep); they all suggest "traditional" or "ceremonial" contexts — masks, rattles, chiefs’ daggers; they incorporated lavish, or exclusive, use of copper, a material that was associated throughout the coast with wealth, prestige and supernatural power (Levi-Strauss 1982); and for the most part they showed a deep, sometimes green, patina suggesting a long period of use. The few exceptions, some brightly polished copper and silver spoons with animal crest designs, were catalogued as "Modern-1904." One of the daggers (Fig. 8), an iron knife with a copper handle, included the information that it came "from Koo-dee-how at Kluikan." This is probably a reference to "Chief Coudawot," who appears in a widely published 1895 Winter and Pond photograph standing next to Yeilgooxu (English name George Shotridge), Louis Shotridge’s father and hereditary chief of the famous Whale House of Kluikan.5

The accession information for the Whalen pieces was entered on Heye’s catalog cards in his careful script. (He kept three sets and recorded all the information himself, as well as numbering each object.) In this case, rather than stating the origin of the objects as “from Alaska Indian Curios,” his attribution was “collected by B. A. Whalen.” This was his usual means of obscuring the origin of objects from a shop, but was perhaps not unusual among collectors of the time. Rather than the “Ye Olde Curiosity Shop, Seattle,” “The Nugget Shop, Juneau” or “W. O. Oldman, Ethnographic Specimens, London,” Heye’s preference was to describe pieces as “J. D. Standley collection,” “collected by Belle Simpson,” or “purchased from W. O. Oldman.”6

Heye died in 1957, but Director and Curator Frederick Dockstader added more pieces to the copper collection and in the 1960s devoted one whole exhibition case at the museum in Upper Manhattan to a display of Northwest Coast copper. There were two outstanding pieces acquired at this time — one was a copper rattle said to have belonged to Chief Shakes and acquired by Judge Nathan Bijur during his work in Alaska.7 Bijur was the federal judge who officiated at the 1867 raising of the American flag in Sitka at the time that Alaska’s purchase
3. Mask depicting a mosquito, Klukwan (attributed), c.1904. Copper, abalone shell. 8 1/8" high, 14" wide (21.6 cm x 35.6 cm). Heye purchased this mask, along with those shown in Figures 2 and 4, from Bernard A. Whalen in 1904. According to Aaron Shugar, this mask was molded from a simple face form, then the nose was folded inside and the mosquito nose was added. The sun rays were attached to the back with rivets, and the engraved designs were done by hand (Shugar 2004). Note the similarity of the eyebrows to those in Figure 4. Cat. No. 6981. Photograph by the NMAI Move Team.

4. Copper mask depicting Thunderbird, with a heavy patina, Tlingit, c.1904. 7" long (17.8 cm). Copper, abalone shell. Heye purchased this mask, along with those shown in Figures 2 and 3, from Bernard A. Whalen in 1904. Cat. No. 2873. Photograph by the NMAI Move Team.

5. Mask representing a brown bear, Tlingit, c.1904. Copper, abalone shell, bear fur, mountain goat–horn teeth. 16" long (40.6 cm). This mask was in the 1973 Masterworks exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, where it was recorded as “Presented by Morton D. May.” Four other masks of this type have been published. Cat. No. 24/3149. Photograph by the NMAI Move Team.
from Russia was formalized. This would date the rattle to the middle of the nineteenth century. The second piece, a mask (Fig. 5), was obtained from Morton D. May of the May Company, a Los Angeles department store. The catalog number indicates that it was accessioned in 1969, but it was likely part of a 1967 exchange during which May acquired the Wildschut mask (see footnote 4).

Bernard A. Whalen, of Alaska Indian Curios, was a dealer who divided his time between Los Angeles during the winter months and Skagway during the spring and summer. He was thus well positioned to profit from the Alaskan tourist business, which was booming by this time. Skagway, which had begun as a tent city during the Klondike Gold Rush, was a prosperous frontier town by 1904, serving as a railway point for the White Pass and Yukon Railway. Among other businesses, it boasted at least five curio stores, as well as a number of shops that seem to have sold curios as a sideline along with drugs, household furnishings and jewelry (Spude n.d.:141–161). One of the jewelry stores, owned by P. E. Kern, offered jewelry, watches and silverware, and had an Indian Art Department highlighting goods "made by Alaska Indians" (Fig. 14). Kern’s advertisements in the Daily Alaskan showed photographs of a well-appointed shop featuring not only pocket watches, silverware and china, and silver and gold jewelry, but also an Indian Art Department that sold "copper pot latch spoons," a "Witch doctor’s rattle" and household accouterments, such as copper trays, paper knives and belt buckles. Many of them were decorated with swastikas, which Kern presented as an emblem of good luck. One of his workmen, a man named Kasko, was pictured in an advertisement that told a purported legend of the origin of the swastika, ostensibly derived from the “Alaskan Indian” word “Sha-da-ya-ka.”

This seems to have been highly successful as a marketing strategy, and a photograph taken around 1905 shows a workshop with at least a dozen workers, some of whom appear to be native and others Euro-American. Kern evidently realized that the tourist experience required Alaskan souvenirs to be “the real thing,” that is, actually created by native artists.

8. Iron dagger with copper handle, Chilkat, c.1904. Iron, copper, leather binding on pommel. 22 1/2” (57.1 cm). Heye purchased this piece from Bernard A. Whalen in 1904. The catalog information states that this dagger was obtained from Koo-deu-e-how at Klukwan. Cat. No. 2199. Photograph by Ernest Amoroso.

9. Eagle dagger, Tlingit, c.1904. Copper, musk ox horn, abalone shell, leather. 20” long (50.8 cm). Heye purchased this piece from Bernard A. Whalen in 1904. Witthoft and Eyman described this dagger as having a native copper blade and a pommel carved from musk ox horn, depicting an eagle (1969). The eagle has a movable tongue fastened with a copper pivot. A similar dagger with a wolf pommel is at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia as part of the collection that George B. Gordon purchased in Portland (Cat. No. NA1288), and is reported to be the one Louis Shotridge is holding in his formal portrait (Fig. 1), though I believe that he is holding the dagger shown here. Cat. No. 4630. Photograph by Ernest Amoroso.
Kern’s operation was noted by George T Emmons, the most prolific collector of Northwest Coast objects, who was impressed by the high quality of the work. He commented on the “Chilkat, expert metal workers, [who] obtained copper plating and made wonderful masks, rattles, spoons, and bracelets...following the old designs, and aged them to a dark, dull green...I found that they were all in the hands of a curio dealer in California who had formerly been in the same business in Skagway. Through an agent there he had delivered both the metal and the haliotis for inlaying” (Emmons 1991:379–380). If Emmons’s assessment is accurate, Whalen not only sold a portion of Kern’s inventory in Los Angeles, but may also have supplied him with some of the raw material for the production of the merchandise.

The Daggers

Heye bought six daggers from Whalen in 1904. They were the type known as chief’s daggers or fighting knives, important signifiers of rank and power, and noted by outside observers in historical accounts beginning in the eighteenth century (de Laguna 1972:Pls. 48, 51; La Perouse 1799 in de Laguna 1972:116). The pommels of such daggers usually depicted an animal or other form from nature associated with clan history, and the tapered metal blades, fashioned from iron, copper or steel, were shaped with delicacy and skill. The blades on the six daggers from Whalen have a single raised “rib” down the center, unlike many of the older daggers, which have a gracefully fluted blade (Vaughan and Holm 1982:66–75). The backsides of the blades are flat rather than slightly curved, as if they had each been cut out of a single sheet of metal.

Daggers were highly valued, and it seems unusual for a single dealer to have such a large number so similar in appearance and construction. Despite the similarities, however, Whalen’s daggers had differing attributions — two Tlingit, one Chilkat and three Haida. Five had copper pommels in various degrees of brightness, while one was made of horn decorated with copper and abalone shell (Fig. 9).

Heye added the daggers and the rest of the Whalen pieces to his ever-growing hoard in storage in New York. He was by then spending considerable time in Philadelphia, and had made friends with George B. Gordon, then curator of American archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania Museum. (Gordon would eventually become the museum’s director.) In 1905 Gordon traveled to Portland, Oregon for the Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, and while there he purchased three copper daggers that bear a striking resemblance to the daggers Heye had picked up in Los Angeles. The source for Gordon’s daggers (as well as a number of other Tlingit pieces) was Louis Shotridge.

At this time Shotridge was young, around twenty years old, not yet settled on a career and in town accompanying his wife Florence, who was demonstrating the art of Chilkat weaving at the exposition. She and Louis had been living at Haines, not far from Skukwan and Skagway and Louis brought some pieces from Skukwan to sell at the exposition. Heye evidently introduced Gordon and Shotridge (Cole 1985:255), and Gordon purchased forty-nine objects, including the daggers (Milburn 1986:62).

Where Heye first met Shotridge is not known, but it may have been in Los Angeles, possibly at Antonio Apache’s Indian Crafts Exposition. Florence and Louis Shotridge were employed there the following year, 1906, and may have been there previously. The Heye–Gordon–Shotridge association continued for several years, as Heye left the banking business and in 1908 deposited his collection at the University of Pennsylvania Museum, where Gordon expected it to remain. Shotridge sent another shipment to Gordon from Los Angeles, this time including some copper masks as well as knives and pipes, but Gordon refused most of them because they were new rather than old (Milburn 1986:63). Shotridge explained apologetically that everyone, including his father, thought the knives were good because they were just like the old ones but that henceforth he would not send any more copper.

When Shotridge, by now on the University of Pennsylvania Museum staff, posed in 1912 for a photographic portrait wearing Tlingit regalia from the museum collection, he chose to carry one of the copper daggers (Fig. 1). According to Mason (1960:15) it is the wolf dagger that he had sold to Gordon in 1905 in Portland, but it looks more like the eagle dagger that Heye purchased from Whalen (Fig. 9). In any case, Shotridge’s choice of one of these daggers in a formal portrait of a Tlingit chief in his finest regalia suggests that, at least to him, the fact that the dagger was of recent manufacture took nothing away from its social value, cultural importance or authenticity.

Heye was to add one more copper dagger to his collection. In 1918, as one of two copper pieces purchased from Harvey, he added a dagger with the

---

10. Feast spoon, Tlingit, c.1904. Copper, wood, abalone shell, mountain sheep horn. 18” long (45.7 cm). Acquired by Heye in 1916. Witthoft and Eyman describe it as “ten pieces carved from a pair of musk-ox horns, attached to the wooden core with seven copper pins and overlaid with seventeen thin pieces of native copper set with copper pins. The bear at the tip of the handle has separate hands and feet cut from the black tip of the horn, set with four more copper pins” (1969:19). Cat. No. 5/944. Photograph by the NMAI Move Team.
familiar rib running down the center of the blade and a pommel of darkened copper adorned with inlaid abalone shell (Fig. 6). The catalog information for this knife states “Made about 1895 by Charles Shortridge” (“Shortridge” is undoubtedly an error; the other Harvey piece, a rattle, is attributed to “Charles Shotridge”). “Charles” is to date an unidentified member of the Shotridge family. Perhaps he was related to George Shotridge, Louis’s father. It is possible that Charles may have learned some of the techniques used in Kern’s workshop and supplied Louis with some of the Klukwan pieces he sold to Gordon.

In 1969 John Witthoft and Frances Eyman, of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, conducted a study of the metal in the daggers that Gordon had acquired in Portland, as well as one of the daggers that Heye had acquired from Whalen. The question of whether the copper was from a native source in Alaska or the central Arctic was not resolved, but Witthoft did postulate that the darkening of the copper was a result of the blade’s being covered with fish oil, a substance that caused a chemical reaction with the copper and would create a dark patina (Witthoft and Eyman 1969).

The Masks
Heye purchased three copper masks from Whalen (Figs. 2, 3, 4). He acquired two others later, one in 1926 from Wildschut (Cat. No. 14/9080), and one in 1947 from Keppler (Fig. 11). A Brown Bear mask acquired by Dockstader in 1967 was the last copper mask to enter the NMAI collection (Fig. 5). Most of the masks have abalone shell inlay depicting the eyes, nostrils or teeth; only two have eyeholes. They have been interpreted as potlatch dance masks (Collins et al. 1977) and Dockstader, who remarked that copper masks are extremely rare, indicated that they were made of sheet copper (n.d.: Fig. 121). The construction technique seems to be a combination of hammering sheet copper over a mold, or several molds, probably made of wood, and then finishing the piece by riveting ears, noses or head ornaments to the finished product. The abalone shell or horn inlay, particularly for the rows of teeth, is secured by a metal backing riveted to the reverse side of the mask. Several of the masks are then finished with engraved designs on the cheeks, the chin or the forehead.

Like the daggers, the presence of three similar copper masks in one curio shop is unusual. Almost all Tlingit masks are carved of wood, and most of them were used by native healers and found in association with other shamanic equipment. Masks were, however, highly popular with collectors, and some masks had been made for sale as early as the mid-nineteenth century. When Ensign Albert Niblack visited Alaska in 1885—1887, he commented that “The number of masks in the collections of the U.S. National Museum is out of all proportion to their importance or their use by the Indians. There are only one or two ceremonial dances in which they are worn, which is quite contrary to the accepted opinion” (1890:384).

The Brown Bear mask acquired by Dockstader in the 1967 exchange with May (Fig. 5) appears to be part of the same “production run” as four other masks that have been published. Three of them are associated with the Nugget Shop, Inc.: Curio Dealers, Jewelers, and Opticians, a well-known Juneau store. The NMAI mask is attributed to “Ex Coll. Belle Simpson,” the owner of the Nugget Shop for many years. Dockstader considered this mask an important acquisition for the museum and, when he was refurbishing the exhibition cases in the 1960s, he made it the centerpiece of the exhibit case devoted to Northwest Coast copper. The second “Ex. Coll. Belle Simpson” mask is listed as depicting a “Sea Bear” and attributed to “Haida,” first in the Museum of Primitive Art, New York, and now in the Michael Rockefeller Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Cat. No. 58.329). It has been widely published (Collins et al. 1977:249, Gunther 1962:69, Wardwell 1964:31). The third “Simpson” mask (Fig. 15) was purchased in 1926 by Ale’s Hrdlička of the United States National Museum in Washington, D.C. (now the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History). While on a visit to
Juneau, Hrdlička purchased a copper mask from Dr. Robert Simpson, Belle's husband, and acquired with the mask the following information: "Ceremonial sheet copper mask used in mortuary ceremonies (killing of slaves)...the mask originally came from Yakutat. I have forgotten the name of the native who brought it in, but it is a genuine article and is probably the only one in existence...These were worn by the medicine men at their various ceremonies" (Hrdlička 1929:34). A fourth copper Sea Bear mask, now in the collection of the St. Joseph Museum, St. Joseph, Missouri, is also published in Collins et al. (1977:315). According to Sarah Elder, chief curator of the St. Joseph Museum, the mask was acquired as part of the George Collection, an assemblage of some four thousand pieces given to the museum in 1940. The accession records indicate that Mr. George began collecting in 1904. It is probably a coincidence that 1904 is the year that Heye made his Whalen purchase. The fifth copper mask from the same mold has appeared twice in Sotheby's catalogs, the first time on May 30, 1986 (Lot No. 153) and the second on May 23, 1995 (Lot No. 224). Each of these masks is finished in a slightly different fashion: some with hair; some with a great deal of abalone shell inlay and others with less; and one with teeth made from carved horn.

Finally, there is a sixth copper mask in the collection of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Vaughan and Holm 1982), depicting a semi-human eagle or hawk with a distinctive beak/mouth form and abalone shell–inlaid mouth and eyes that are reminiscent of the Whalen Thunderbird mask (Fig. 4).

The stylistic and manufacturing similarities among these copper masks suggest a common origin, despite the variations in attribution and cultural information. Circumstantial evidence — including the reasonable proximity of Klukwan and P. E. Kern's "native manufacture" at Skagway, the association of Whalen with both Skagway and Los Angeles, and the possibility that Louis Shotridge may have obtained some of his Klukwan objects-for-sale from a kinsman who was familiar with Kern's operation — suggests that the common origin may have been Kern's workshop. It is tempting to postulate that the pieces were in fact produced by the "skilled Chilkat metalworkers" who worked for Kern. But Kern's was not the only curio workshop in Alaska, and there is tantalizing, sketchy information about at least one other workshop where a Euro-American merchant employed native artisans to produce copper masks for sale to the tourists who visited Alaska in the early part of the century.

Joseph Chilberg was another merchant/entrepreneur who came to Alaska to make his fortune. By 1900 he had settled in Nome and worked as a trader and dealer in native artifacts collected from the local Alaskan people, including Inupiat, Athabaskan and possibly visiting Tlingit. He acquired at least two Anvik wooden masks now in the NMAI collections (Fienup-Riordan 1996:267). Chilberg is reported to have befriended a number of local native people and, in an effort to find profitable work for them, began a workshop where artisans were employed to make curios to sell to the local tourists. According to Chilberg's grandson, who was a young boy when he heard his grandfather's stories, copper masks were one object type manufactured in some quantity. In this case, the masks were produced by hammering sheets of copper into the back of a wooden mold, rather than the front. Chilberg ordered the copper in sheets from the Phelps-Dodge Company (Rowland 2003). Chilberg was a highly successful dealer in artifacts in Nome and may have sold some of the copper pieces in his own operation. Eventually he moved to California and became a banker and a collector of Indian artifacts, but he seems not to have kept any of the copper masks for his personal collection. It seems likely, however, that there were other curio dealers and perhaps similar enterprises throughout Alaska during the years when the tourist traffic was rapidly becoming a growth industry.

The Rattles

Northwest Coast rattles, like masks, are primarily made of wood and, in the south, from sheep horn. Heye collected only one copper rattle from Whalen (Fig. 12) but acquired a second one from Harvey (Fig. 13). Dockstader purchased a third copper rattle in 1965 from a descendant of Bijur.14 The collection information states that it was acquired "by Judge Bijur during his work in Alaska," and that it was formerly the property of the Tlingit chief Shakes of Etolin Island, Alaska. All three rattles are the round type used by native healers, and all three show human or animal faces with abalone shell...
defining the features and have human hair held in place by the fastening together of the two halves of the rattle. The Whalen rattle has a heavy, dark patina with a greenish cast, while the other two rattles simply look darkened with age. Three other copper rattles have been published, and all of them have been in the hands of collectors. The first, in the collection of the Autry National Center/Southwest Museum, Los Angeles (Cat. No. 980.G.131), was given on behalf of a collector who died in 1905 (Inverarity 1950: Fig. 126). The second, published in *Pleasing the Spirits* (Ewing 1982:105), was originally acquired as a gift to “the Rev. Mr. R. A. Laak [Laak was the minister at Haines] for services performed at a small settlement near Haines, Alaska, about 1890.” And the third, published in *Soft Gold* (Vaughan and Holm 1982:Fig. 87) was a gift to the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts from Louis Farlow in 1904. Like the copper bear dagger that Farlow also gave the Peabody in 1904, the source for the rattle was Grace Nicholson, the Pasadena, California dealer. The rattle was accompanied by information explaining that it was obtained from the nephew of a Chilkoot shaman. Nevertheless, it looks remarkably like the rest of the copper rattles and the other copper pieces that Heye purchased from Whalen.

**Conclusion**

The production of items usually referred to as curios has had a long and honorable history on the Northwest Coast. During Alejandro Malaspina’s 1791 visit to Yakutat Bay, he reported that “as soon as they discovered the market for such articles (figurines, spoons, daggers, boxes, etc.), the Indian men and women began to make them for trade” (de Laguna 1972, Vol. 1:144). Haida argillite carving, an enterprise geared to a foreign market, was a full-blown industry by the 1820s (Sheehan 1981). Rolf Knight’s study of native people and the labor market in British Columbia lists “the ethnographic trade,” meaning the production of both ceremonial and utilitarian items for sale, as an important means of making a living, alongside occupations such as commercial fishing and cannery work, logging, crewing on ships large and small, prospecting, mining and railway work (Knight 1978). He points out that, at least during the days of intensive museum and tourist collecting of the late nineteenth century, many talented carvers were still working (Wright 2001; Black 1997). Objects such as masks, rattles and dancing gear were easy to replace and,
except for clan treasures, were freely sold (Oberg 1973).

The question of the authenticity of objects made for sale was perhaps of more concern to the people who purchased curios than to the artists who made them. Producing art for sale — particularly curios such as copper masks and rattles, which were traditional objects made of nontraditional materials — may have allowed the native artists a degree of freedom to embellish their work in new ways. Certainly some of the copper objects produced for sale are of great beauty and have been displayed in more than one masterworks exhibition (e.g., Gunther 1962). The 1890 report on Alaska’s tourist trade took a different view, stating that

All carvings...originally manufactured for their own use by the natives have long since been sold...The people of several villages devote themselves exclusively to the manufacture of curios, and several individuals make a specialty of producing specimens of any degree of antiquity desired. As the excursions...are expensive and not likely to be repeated...many years will probably elapse before the general public will become aware of the imposition, and in the meantime the curio trade will flourish (Porter 1893:250–251).

The pieces that Heye purchased in 1904 are now a century old. Perhaps we can begin to think of them, and pieces like them, in a new way; rather than thinking of them as curios they can be thought of as precursors to the work of contemporary native artists such as Preston Singletary (Tlingit), Joe Fedderson (Colville) and Susan Point (Coast Salish), who create traditional forms in non-traditional media. Heye’s prodigious collection is the foundation for the new National Museum of the American Indian. It will pay tribute to all native artists, ancient and modern, who worked with materials old and new to create many kinds of artistic expression.

Footnotes

1 These include the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts; the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; the Autry National Center/Southwest Museum, Los Angeles; and the St. Joseph Museum, St. Joseph, Missouri. There are others undoubtedly.

2 As just a few examples see Sotheby’s, April 24, 1982, Lot Nos. 477 and 478; and Sotheby’s, May 30, 1986, Lot Nos. 152, 153 and 154. Two of the 1986 pieces reappeared at Sotheby’s, May 23, 1995, Lot Nos. 224 and 225. Sotheby’s auction of December 4, 1993 included a dagger, Lot No. 175, which is very similar to the one in Figure 8. Sotheby’s catalog of October 26, 1979 has a copper and sheep-horn shark dagger, Lot No. 359, which appears (and may be) identical to W. Canning & Co. shark dagger in an advertisement in the Winter 1992 issue of this magazine. A third shark dagger and a copper rattle are published in Pleasing the Spirits (Ewing 1982: Figs. 128 and 45). The rattle is very much like the one shown on the cover of this issue, as well as one in the Southwest Museum, Cat. No. 980.G.131. (The rattle from the Southwest Museum was published in Inverarity [1950] as Fig. 126 but the number there is incorrect.)

3 Covert’s Indian Store on lower Fifth A venue was also known as Covert & Harrington, Commercial Ethnologists. The letterhead promised “Collections illustrating American Indian Life for schools and colleges. Museums supplied with authentic material.” The “Harrington” in the firm was Mark Raymond Harrington, a young Columbia University graduate who in time would become one of Heye’s most indefatigable collectors.

4 This mask was exchanged with Morton D. May in 1967 and, according to Curator Gretchen Faulkner, is now in the collection of the Hudson Museum, University of Maine, Orono.

5 According to de Laguna, Coudawot was a chief of the Raven 3 (Ga naxte di) clan at Klukwan (1972). Another Winter & Pond image of Coudawot, inside the Whale House at Klukwan, is in Wyatt (1989:119). A photograph of Coudawot on his deathbed was taken by George T. Emmons and is published in Emmons (1991:271).

15. Mask, Tlingit, c.1904. Copper, abalone shell, bear fur. 16” long (40.6 cm). Acquired by Ale˘s Hrdliˇcka in Juneau, Alaska in 1926 from the Nugget Shop, Inc.: Curio Dealers, Jewelers, and Opticians. Its origin is given as Yakutat, Alaska, and the catalog information states that it was as “worn by the medicine men at their various ceremonies and particularly when they killed the slaves at the potlatches.” Hrdliˇcka purchased it specifically for the United States National Museum. Courtesy of the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Cat. No. 352801.

Kate Duncan points out that many more objects in museum collections were acquired from curio shops than has generally been recognized (2000:94).

See cover illustration.

Two stories in the Daily Alaskan show the pattern. The November 2, 1902 issue relates: “B.J. [sic] Whalen is packing up his stock of Indian curios and his household goods preparatory to leaving for Los Angeles on the next trip of the Seattle, which is due here Tuesday. Mrs. Whalen and Miss Bernardine will accompany Mr. Whalen to the Southern California City” The May 16, 1903 issue notes: “B.A. Whalen began the work of preparing his old place of business at the corner of Third Avenue and Broadway, yesterday, for occupancy. He will open his curio store at once.”

Cruises up the Inside Passage began in 1882, and by 1890 the Pacific Coast Steamship Company reported yearly tourist traffic at more than five thousand with an average ticket price of $100. In addition, more than half of the visitors spent in excess of $50 to $100 for curios, making a total income for 1890 of more than $2,500,000 (Porter 1893:250–251). Molly Lee has done several thoughtful analyses of the Alaskan tourist market (1991, 1999).


One of the Portland daggers (Cat. No. NA1286), has a copper pommel depicting a human or sun face, much like Heye’s piece (Fig. 7). Heye’s piece, however, is attributed to the Haida. Another, the “ceremonial dagger” depicting a bear (Cat. No. NA1287), is very similar in workmanship and design to a dagger at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts (Cat. No. E28191) and one at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Cat. No. 64029; Collins et al. 1977:335; Wardwell 1964:112). The Peabody Essex Bear dagger was a $499 bequest, but the Peabody Harvard dagger was acquired by Grace Nicholson, the Pasadena dealer, and sold to Lewis Farlow, who gave it to Harvard in 1904. It does not seem beyond the realm of possibility that Grace Nicholson and Bernard Whalen, who were neighboring dealers in Indian artifacts, and both sold pieces to Heye, were at least aware of each other’s existence. Whether they were competitors or colleagues I do not know, but it is interesting to speculate on whether Nicholson picked up a few of the Kern pieces from Whalen for subsequent resale.

It appears that some molds may have been for a single, whole mask, while other masks were created from several molds, which the artist could “mix and match” as he chose.

See cover illustration.

Bill Holm identified this as having been made around 1900, probably for sale (Vaughan and Holm 1982).

George Heye continued on page 105
George Heye continued from page 95

Bibliography

Black, Martha

Cole, Douglas

Collins, Henry B., Frederica de Laguna, Edmund Carpenter and Peter Stone

Daily Alaskan
1902 November 2, Daily Alaskan.
1903 May 16, Daily Alaskan.

de Laguna, Frederica
1972 Under Mt. St. Elias: The History and Culture of the Yakutat Tlingit. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, 7.

Dockstader, Frederick J.

Duncan, Kate C.

Emmons, George T.

Ewing, Douglas C.

Fienup-Riordan, Ann

Graburn, Nelson H. H. (editor)

Gunther, Erna

Hrdlicka, Alés

Inverarity, Robert B.

Kaplan, Susan A. and Kristin J. Barsness

Knight, Rolf

La Perouse, Jean Francoise de Galaup, Comte de
1799 A Voyage around the World. London.

Lee, Molly

LeviStrauss, Claude

Mason, J. Aiden

Milburn, Maureen

Museum of the American Indian–Heye Foundation

Niblack, Albert P.

Oberg, Kalervo

Phillips, Ruth B.

Phillips, Ruth B. and Christopher B. Steiner (editors)

Porter, Robert D.

Rowland, David
2003 Personal communication.

Seaton, Elizabeth

Sheehan, Carol

Shugar, Aaron
2004 Personal communication.

Spude, Robert L. S.

 Vaughan, Thomas and Bill Holm

Wardwell, Allen
1964 Yakutat South Indian Art of the Northwest Coast. Art Institute, Chicago.

Wilholt, John and Frances Eyman

Wright, Robin K.

Wyatt, Victoria


Except where indicated, all photographs are courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Formerly on the staff of the Museum of the American Indian—Heye Foundation, Mary Jane Lenz is a Museum Specialist in the Curatorial Department of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Her most recent publication is Small Spirits: Native American Dolls, University of Washington Press, 2004.