

[Joshua Buck's wampum belts] have been in the possession of his family for over 30 years, but the Council of the Six Nations believing that the belts belong to them have offered a reward of \$100 for their recovery but should they again get control of them some one [*sic*] else would be made custodian and they would again begin to diminish in numbers as they have in the past, as various tempting offers have been made for their purchase. The present Council does not even know approximately how many belts there are, so little do they know about them (Hewitt 1897).

Hewitt's negotiations with Joshua Buck stalled after Buck fled the Reserve to avoid robbery and rape charges (Hewitt 1898). Over the next year, Hewitt continued to negotiate with Joshua Buck largely through his sister Esther; Hewitt's efforts were ultimately unsuccessful (Hewitt 1898, 1899). The Chiefs of the Grand Council were also unsuccessful in regaining all of the belts held by the Buck heirs (Fenton 1979).

In 1900, ethnologist and honorary Chief Harriet Maxwell Converse learned that a Chicago-based Indian artifact collector and dealer, Thomas R. Roddy, had purchased eleven belts from Grand River (Abrams 1994:368). She contacted Canada's Indian Superintendent E.D. Cameron, stating that Roddy was in possession of the "missing John Buck belts," and that "[t]hese eleven including the eight now at Ohsweken, and three that John Buck the elder sold, (which were not national) make up the entire 22 which [Converse] saw when John Buck was living" (Converse in MAI n.d:1). While her letter mentions that Roddy was attempting to sell the belts to the Buffalo Historical Society, it is unclear whether she actually saw the belts or simply assumed they were the missing Buck belts based on descriptions provided to her. Regardless, Converse's 1900 allegation led Cameron to begin a campaign to retrieve the belts in Roddy's possession.¹⁵ Against the backdrop of these events, Pauline Johnson purchased the zigzag wampum belt from one of John Buck, Sr.'s sons (Tooker 1998:224–225).

¹⁵ Research by William Fenton (1989) and Elizabeth Tooker (1998) strongly suggests that at least two sets of belts were available for sale at this time, one of which was in Roddy's possession. In 1910 George Heye purchased the Roddy belts from the Indian Exhibits Company (a/k/a the Indian Trading Company). In 1914 Edward Sapir, Head of the Anthropology Division of Canada's Geological Survey, notified Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs, that George Heye had purchased the Roddy belts. Sapir stated that Chief Josiah Hill of the Six Nations Reserve was circulating a photo of ten belts stolen from Six Nations following the death of John Buck Sr.; according to Sapir, the photo matched the Roddy belts that Heye had purchased. Consequently Duncan Scott began an investigation into allegations that the belts had been stolen from Grand River. The matter was dropped a year later and Heye retained the belts, which the MAI-HF repatriated to the Grand Council in 1988 (MAI n.d:20). William Fenton (1989:397) believed that Roddy's source for the belts was Cayuga Chief James Jamieson, who had acquired the belts from his wife, who Fenton identified as a daughter of John Buck, Sr. In contrast, Tooker's (1998) research on the eleven Roddy belts repatriated by MAI-HF in 1988 indicates that none were pictured in the 1871 Hale photographs of the Canadian Confederacy belts in John Buck's care and that therefore none of the eleven belts were Confederacy belts. Tooker did identify six of the eleven repatriated MAI-HF wampum belts in an 1899 J.N.B. Hewitt photograph that was said to depict belts in Chief Jamieson's possession. Tooker suggests that the six belts may have been Cayuga and that the other five were acquired by Roddy from an "unknown person(s)" (Tooker 1998:225–28).