

of reacquiring it when she was financially able (Johnson 1905a, 1906a). In 1906, she proposed such an arrangement to Heye (Johnson 1906b).

On March 26, 1906, Pauline Johnson agreed to sell George Heye the zigzag belt for \$500; their agreement stipulated that Johnson could repurchase the belt for \$500 plus 6% interest per annum before April 1, 1908 (Heye 1906).²⁰ No further communication between George Heye and Pauline Johnson has been found, nor is there any documentation that suggests that Johnson invoked her right to repurchase the belt before the 1908 deadline. At the time of Pauline's death in 1913, the belt was still in Heye's possession.

Pauline's sister Eva Johnson outlived all of her siblings and it was left to her to handle her own affairs as well as her family members' estates (Nicks 2009:18). At some point Eva Johnson discovered that Pauline had sold the zigzag belt to Heye.²¹ Dr. Trudy Nicks of the Royal Ontario Museum, who has spent a great deal of time researching Eva Johnson's life, discovered a letter from Eva Johnson to Director Currelly of the Royal Ontario Museum:

I had a long talk with Mr. Heye of the Indian Museum, New York. My dear friend Mr. Joseph Keppler, formerly President and Publisher of the Puck Publishing Co., took me to see Mr. Heye, at my request, about one of our treaty wampum belts and which Mr. Heye, who is a friend of Mr. Keppler, has. He bought it from Pauline when she was going to England for \$500.00 but he promised it to me! I have not got it! He promised it upon his death! (Johnson 1930)

There is no record in the NMAI archives or in Eva Johnson's papers to confirm any arrangement between her and George Heye regarding NMAI 008386.000. The context of the letter is ambiguous: it is unclear whether Heye promised to return the belt literally "upon his death," or whether Johnson merely used this as a figure of speech. If an agreement or bequest existed, Heye probably assumed that he retained all rights to the belt after Evelyn Johnson passed away in 1937 with no heirs.

²⁰ The agreement included a further stipulation that if Johnson were to sell the belt again, Heye would be given first right of refusal to purchase it. Their agreement was witnessed by H.S. Jamison and Walter McRaye, Pauline Johnson's business partner and co-performer (Heye 1906).

²¹ After her siblings' deaths, Eva Johnson attempted to track down a number of objects sold/given by her siblings, for example a wampum belt that Pauline Johnson had given to Sir Frederick Leighton (Trudy Nicks, Ph.D., Senior Curator, Department of World Cultures, ROM, personal communication 4/7/2011). Eva Johnson herself purchased two wampum belts from the Buck family (Tooker 1998:224–25).