

A memorial to an old time Mohawk Valley Native American artifact collector Edward J Brown 1857 – 1952

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A trait that seems almost inborn into the human race is the tendency to accumulate or collect something which is special to them. Here in the middle Mohawk Valley where early man resided, numerous individuals began to gravitate toward preserving the artifacts which remained from their culture. These collectors picked from the fields while following the plow and searched known Native American sites for that which they called Indian relics. The artifacts themselves were often placed in frames to protect them. I now wish to introduce one of those old time Mohawk Valley collectors who was part of my life from early childhood. That man was Edward Brown 1857 – 1952. Mr Brown resided his entire life in the town of Canajoharie. The family had a farm in the Happy Hollow section of the town and it was there that his interest in Indians, their culture and those artifacts they left began. A well known Indian site was on their family farm. In the dawning years of 1900s the Brown family moved to Canajoharie village but Mr Brown's search for artifacts continued for many years.



Mr and Mrs Brown. Sarah Nichols Brown 1862 -1950. Sarah was the Happy Hollow girl from next door who Edward married in 1882.

Within his collection there are two small but now dilapidated leather covered books. Within them is recorded Mr Brown's record of where and when the artifacts were found. The earliest date is 1890 for finds at Allen Farm (Allen's Woods) less than a mile east of the Brown Farm. In 1898 he was at Otstungo site in the town of Minden. In ensuing years he, doubtless along with fellow collectors, searched on

area sites. The last date recorded was 1932. Many of his finds were skillfully arranged in frames while some were stored in cupboards up until this writer attained them.



The family consisted of Edward, his wife Sarah Nichols Brown and two daughters, Anna Brown Davies, 1882 – 1931, and Nellie Brown Shineman, 1887 – 1977, my great aunt. The Brown family descended from German immigrants who first came to the area just prior to the mid 1800s. In thinking back over 70 years I'm drawn to the time I first became aware of Mr Brown's accumulated treasures. One day in about my sixth year I was taken to the Brown house. A curtain was drawn back exposing a small closet in which Mr Brown kept his collection of framed artifacts. There was no doubt about his attachment for his special treasures. His great joy was showing them to friends especially to young people. Doubtless even in his later years he still cherished them. One wonders if he ever thought of just what would some day happen to his collection. Edward Brown died on Christmas Day 1952 at the age of 95. Finally each daughter took part of the collection. When each passed away their part was willed to this writer. Now the trust of their final disposition rests again with an older person. That person hopes that these pieces of the past will be cherished and preserved in the valley where they were found.



Edward J Brown and his two daughters Anna and Nellie who in later life preserved their father's Native American artifact collection

The Collection of William H Klinkhart 1868 – 1964 of Canajoharie, NY, was recently presented to Fort Plain Museum. Brown and Klinkhart were lifelong friends. They both belonged to St John's German Church in Canajoharie, NY. Each used the same framing method to organize and protect their finds. Each of these old time collectors had the foresight to catalog their collections. Mr Brown never owned an automobile so he was limited to the horse and buggy or walking to his destination. I was told that Mr Klinkhart did drive a car and sometimes took Mr Brown on hunting expeditions as they became older.

Willis "Skip" Barshied, Stone Arabia, April 2013