

**ABORIGINAL USE  
OF WOOD IN NEW  
YORK**

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Aboriginal use of wood in New York by William M. Beauchamp

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**WILLIAM M. BEAUCHAMP**

**ABORIGINAL USE  
OF WOOD IN NEW  
YORK**



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JOHN M. CLARKE Director

Bulletin 89

ARCHEOLOGY 11

## ABORIGINAL USE OF WOOD IN NEW YORK

BY

WILLIAM M. BEAUCHAMP S.T.D.

	PAGE		PAGE
List of authorities.....	87	Ceremonial articles.....	169
Fire-making.....	91	Idols.....	172
Food.....	93	Musical instruments.....	174
Houses.....	94	Hunting.....	177
Forts.....	110	Games.....	180
Burial.....	116	False faces.....	184
Weapons.....	120	Miscellaneous.....	192
Warlike usages.....	131	Conclusion.....	196
Canoes and fishing.....	139	Explanations of plates.....	197
Household articles.....	149	Index.....	267
Land travel and transportation..	160		

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Bulletin 89  
ARCHEOLOGY II

## ABORIGINAL USE OF WOOD IN NEW YORK

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## ABORIGINAL USE OF WOOD IN NEW YORK

### Fire-making

The aborigines of New York had three means of adapting wood to their use. With fire they felled trees and reduced them to any desired length. With this they hollowed their mortars and canoes, as well as some household utensils. Stone and shell implements aided in this, removing the charred wood. Sand was also used, either as a gritty cutting stone, or in its free and granulated form, aided by water. The use of metals changed all this in most cases, but not in all. For dugout canoes and wooden mortars fire is still employed, chipping and burning following each other.

Fire was obtained in several ways. The simple friction of two dry sticks might produce it, as was often done. The Mohawks called this process *gannigarannie*, which was an expansion of their own name. There was also an aboriginal tinder used in most cases, called *tā-hah-nyn-ka'-ose* by the Onondagas. Of one kind in Canada we have this account:

For a wick they have the skin of an eagle's thigh, with the down, which takes fire easily; they strike two pieces of ore together, as we do flint with a piece of iron or steel; in place of matches they make use of a little piece of tinder (it is a piece of wood decayed and very dry, which burns easily and incessantly till it is consumed); having taken fire they put it into some pulverized cedar bark, and blowing gently this bark catches fire. *Relation*, 1634

Another way was by rapidly turning a little cedar stick, but this was a Huron mode, little used by the Algonquins, though in favor with the Iroquois. In his *Light and Fire-making*, Mr H. C. Mercer gives an illustration of the last mentioned method, and also of the mode in use among the Penobscot and Iroquois Indians. His description of the latter follows.

Make a spindle of hard wood (hickory, cedar) weighted as here, with a flywheel made of strips of bark pegged or sewed together. A wythe bow, with a rawhide string caught at the notch on the spindle top, causes the latter to twirl back and forth as you lift and press the bow. For your hearth, notch against the side of a piece of juniper, pine or cedar, twirling your spindle point at a nick previously made in the wood directly over the notch. In about 20