

STARS

Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 31
Number 1 *Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol 31,*
Issue 1

Article 4

1952

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Recommended Citation

Brannon, Peter A. (1952) "The Pensacola Indian Trade," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 31 : No. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol31/iss1/4>

THE PENSACOLA INDIAN TRADE

by PETER A. BRANNON

Any account of the trade with the southern Indians out of Pensacola must of necessity be a historical recording of the contacts of Spanish (and British to an extent) West Florida with the Alabama Basin region to the north. The "Pensacola Trade Route" incidents make much of the romantic story of the early settlement of the Gulf country.

Over a long period of years, while doing archaeological research in the former Creek country of Alabama, I realized that I never saw much Spanish trade goods. The character of European material found on old Indian sites demonstrates British influence very positively. There is some French stuff, quite a bit of Italian or Mediterranean European, and some Oriental material, but there is no Spanish silver (except a few coins) and so far as can be identified, no evidence of fire arms, iron hatchets and that type of material which came from Spain.

Lachlan McGillivray, a rich trader in the Alibamo country, the father of General Alexander McGillivray, controlled the trade relations out of Charleston, Savannah and Augusta up to the close of the American Revolution. He went home with the British from Savannah in 1783 and the State of Georgia took possession of his property. There are records in the Montgomery County, Alabama, court house dated as late as 1821, which show guardians being legally appointed in the settlement of this old McGillivray property. So far as historical records in Alabama go, Lachlan himself had no tie with the Pensacola merchants. Alexander McGillivray was credited with being a silent partner of Panton, Leslie and Company, who were the principal traders in the entire South from Georgia to the Mississippi, with headquarters at Pensacola.

The American State Papers, under "settlements of Spanish claims in West Florida" show William Panton was granted lot

16, in the town of Pensacola, built on and fenced in 1781.¹ John Forbes and Company, successors to the Panton firm, claimed this lot through Panton's possession from 1795.

Albert J. Pickett in his *History of Alabama*, published in 1851, (1900 edition)² makes the statement that Alexander McGillivray, who died 17 February 1793, was buried in Panton's garden in Pensacola. The story of Panton, Leslie and Company; John Forbes and Company; Forbes, Leslie and Company; and that "House of Panton," which included James and John Innerarity, is recounted in *Florida Historical Quarterly* (xix,107.Oct.1935) by Mrs. John W. Greenslade, the granddaughter of John Innerarity, who was the last manager of the old British firm.

The Pensacola trading house sent goods up a trail to the north and northeast which went out of Pensacola along the ridge between the Escambia and Perdido rivers to cross the Conecuh a short distance east of the present Brewton, Alabama. This trail proceeded to a point a little east of the present Montgomery and thence to Tuckabatchee, the largest town in the Indian Nation. From here the traders carried their goods as far north as the present Talladega County and we find some British goods out of Pensacola recorded as having gotten into the hands of the traders on the Chattahoochee River. Most of the Pensacola trade, though, centered on the Tallapoosa and Coosa rivers and not far above the junction. Numerous historical references indicate conflicts between the natives and travelers who followed the Indian trail which subsequently became the Federal Road, in their journeys to the Tombigbee country from the Milledgeville area of Georgia. Pensacola goods likewise followed the trail of the present road northwest out of Pensacola which proceeded to Mobile and to the Mississippi River. The records show that the main house of the Company

1. Brannon, "House of Panton," *Montgomery Advertiser*, May 6, 1934. *American State Papers. Public Lands*, vol. 4, p.189.

2. p.430.

at Pensacola generally carried a fifty thousand dollar stock and had a trading establishment for swapping skins at Chickasaw Bluff, near the site of the present Memphis.

Bartram visited Manchac on the Mississippi,³ this same Chickasaw Bluff trading post in 1777 (1776), so we must conclude there was a trading post there prior to that time, and inasmuch as the route to this place seems to have been through Mobile, it must be concluded that Pensacola goods went that way.

Col. Benjamin Hawkins, late of North Carolina, an original appointee of President Washington as a Commissioner to treat with the Indians, and who served as the U. S. Agent in the Creek Nation from 1796 until his death in 1816, gives the towns and traders as follows:

TRADERS IN THE UPPER CREEKS

The 26 towns are the mother towns:

1. **Tallassee.** James McQueen, a Scotchman; has property. The oldest white man in the nation; was a soldier under Oglethorpe when he first came to Georgia in the year 1732. He is healthy and active; has had a numerous family, but has outlived most of them.

William Powell, a little property and not desirous to accumulate much.

2. **Tuckabatchee.** Christopher Heickle, a very honest, industrious man; in debt to Mr. Panton. He has been 40 years in the nation. A native of Germany; was a good pack horseman, but not sufficiently intelligent for a trader.

Obadiah Lowe, a meddling, troublesome fellow; has some property.

3. **Autossee.** Richard Bailey, a native of England. 33 years a resident among the Creeks; has property, but is in debt to Mr. Panton and to the public factory. He has two sons; they have been educated; the oldest by the U.S.; the youngest is now with the Quakers; he was banished the 28th of May by the National Council at Tuckabatchee and has since been permitted to return, and was killed by a fall from his horse.

Josiah Fisher, a cooper; an inoffensive man.

4. **Hothlewaulee.** James Russel, has the character of a good trader. Abraham M. Mordecai, a Jew of bad character; in debt to Mr. Panton, Mr. Clark and the factory.

William McCart, his hireling, said to be honest.

3. Bartram, William: *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida.* London, 1791. p.411.

5. *Fuscehatchee*. Nicholas White, a native of Marseilles, an old trader, a good trader, 30 years in the nation.

William Gregory, his hireling, of a good character.

6. *Cooloome*.

7. *Ecunhutkee*.

8. *Sauvanogee*. John Haigue, commonly called Savannah Jack; much of a savage.

9. *Mooklausau*. Michael Elhart, an industrious, honest man; a Dutchman.

10. *Coosaudee*. Robert Walton, an active man; more attentive to his character now than heretofore.

Francis Tuzant, an idle Frenchman; in debt to Mr. Panton and to the factory.

John Mcleod, of a bad character.

11. *Wetumcau*.

12. *Hookchoie*.

13. *Hookchoieoochee*.

14. *Tuskeegee*.

15. *Ocheubofau*.

16. *Wewocau*.

17. *Poccuntallauhassee*. John Proctor, a halfbreed.

18. *Coosuh*. John O'Kelley, a halfbreed.

19. *Aubecoochee*.

20. *Nauche*. James Quarls, has a bad character of an honest man. Thomas Wilson, a saddler.

21. *Eufaulauhatche*. James Lesley, appears to be a decent, respectable man. He died in the spring of 1799.

22. *Wococoie*. James Clark, a Scotchman, a hard drinker; in debt to Mr. Panton.

John Gilliard, his hireling.

James Simmons, an indolent, careless man.

23. *Hillaube*. Robert Grierson, a Scotchman; has property.

David Hay, his hireling, a Pennsylvanian.

Stephen Hawkins, an active man of weak mind; fond of drink and much of a savage when drunk.

24. *Ocfuskee*. Patrick Donnally, formerly tricky, but reformed and has property.

25. *Eufaulau*. John Townshend, a man of good character.

26. *Kialjee*. John O'Rieley, an Irishman, who drinks hard.

Townlay Bruce, of Maryland, formerly a clerk in the Indian Department; removed for improper conduct. A man capable of business; excessively attached to strong drink; an enemy to truth and his own character.

TRADERS IN THE LOWER CREEKS

I. *Coweta*. Thomas Marshall, a steady trader; has accumulated considerable property.

John Tarvin, in debt to Mr. Panton; called Johnny Hauho by the Indians, a name expressive of the man; he is honest.

James Darouzeaux, an old residenter and interpreter in the nation.

Hardy Read, an illiterate trader.

Christian Russel, an active, honest Silisian; a tanner, shoemaker from choice, a doer by trade; a seaman; constantly in motion and trying everything for an honest livelyhood.

2. *Coweta Tallauhassee*. James Lovet, a trader of some activity; illiterate, without regard for truth.

3. *Cusseta*. Thomas Carr, of long standing in the nation; has property, cattle and negroes; is in debt to Mr. Panton; appears to be an honest, funny seaman; says he is a Scotchman, but has the Irish dialect.

John Anthony Sandoval, a Spaniard; in debt to Panton, Clark and the factory, and out of credit.

4. *Uchee*. John Smithmoor, in debt to Mr. Panton.

5. *Ooseuchee*. Samuel Palmer, a honest old man, of little property.

6. *Cheauhau*.

7. *Hitchitee*. William Grey, an active, good natured man, of loose character, but more attentive to his character now than heretofore.

8. *Palachoclee*. Benjamin Steadham, an old man; a saddler; has an industrious, honest son at Tensaw, and one of halfbreed, and two daughters at Palachoclee, who live well; are industrious and have property; the girls are good spinners.

9. *Oconee*.

10. *Sauwoogolo*.

11. *Sauwoogeloochee*.

12. *Eufaulau*.⁴

THE TRADE

The Indian trade with the Alabama-Coosa country was an exchange of glass beads, bottles, blankets, needles, thimbles, muskets, bullets, lead, liquor (rum) and trinkets which pleased the natives. The merchant received in exchange what must be more generally called leather, rather than furs. The fur animal in the South was not comparable with that medium of exchange of the Hudson Bay Trading Company of the northern regions. In the middle Alabama country is found considerable evidence that the French traded with the Indians, for there is an abun-

4. (Brannon, *Southern Indian Trade*, Montgomery, 1935, pp.27-32). See also Hawkins: *Letters*, Georgia Historical Society Collections, 1916, *passim*; and Pound, Merritt B., *Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent*. Univ. of Georgia Press. 1951.

dance of fragmentary olive oil and perfume bottle remains. Venetian beads, which must have come from the Mediterranean, "Black Jets," which are credited with originating in France, are likewise found. The French were the first Europeans to trade cork screws to the Indians. After 1763 there were no French licenses to the merchants. In fact the French did not encourage trade except through their posts at Fort Toulouse and Fort Tombeckbe. With the close of the American Revolution, Great Britain lost the opportunity of trade through Savannah and Charleston, and George Galphin, who had served with the Colonists, inherited most of the British trade of the East. Even though Spain owned West Florida and dominated the Mobile country until after 1812, the British influence was strong in that territory and the Scotch merchants in West Florida took advantage of their opportunity.

Archaeologists, from evidences and reports of the very earliest contacts between the whites and the natives, have established the fact that a great trading path extended from Pensacola, by the junction of the Coosa and Alabama on to the Cumberland, north of the Tennessee and to the Great Lakes. With a branch off at Tuckabatche, a trade route went on out across the Mississippi River and to the West. Archaeologists are convinced that the Indians in the middle country of America visited the Gulf region, and we find in the Deep South, much Lake Superior copper which had been traded to these Indians. Likewise, there are numerous conch shells and salt water evidences in the upper country, proving the inter-trade relations over these pre-historic paths. The middle Alibamo country sought by the Pensacola merchants as a trading ground, was literally the "cross roads" of the American South. The routes and trails went from the Atlantic coast at Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, on across the present Alabama and to the west of the Mississippi. Trade routes went from the St. Johns area, the Apalachicola area, Pen-

sacola and the Gulf, due north to Canada, crossing in the great Alabama drainage area of the Gulf country.

A pertinent evidence of the influence of the Pensacola trade is the finding of the application of the seal of West Florida as an inscription on silver gorgets. These trade ornaments quite often occur in archaeological finds, some of them having the British Colonial seal in its exact points, while others have the crest side of the West Florida seal. One must assume that those replicas or imitations, which show the figures of George and his Queen on the reverse, and the British Colonial seal on the obverse, would emanate either at Charleston or Savannah; and that where the West Florida seal, either front or back is shown, came in through British merchants at Pensacola. Medals in bronze and sometimes Sheffield ware occur in the trade objects turned out, sometimes suggesting that some of them came from Pensacola and some of them from the Atlantic coast.⁵

The "Pensacola Trade Route" is well known in Alabama history especially on account of the several incidents of a murderous nature which took place along the trail. Murder Creek, a tributary to the Conecuh River, which watershed makes the Escambia in Florida, gets its name from the fact that at a celebrated camping place where the trail crossed a stream northwest of the present site of Brewton, Alabama, Colonel Kirkland and a party of Royalists traveling in the late 1780's from South Carolina to Pensacola and accompanied by General Alexander McGillivray's man servant, were waylaid at this point and all but the servant were murdered. Savannah Jack and a celebrated white man of the Hillibi town, the Cat, two traders, having visited Pensacola and learning that the

5. Note references to the British West Florida Pensacola trade in Peter J. Hamilton, *Colonial Mobile*, pp. 331, 332.

For other details of the Indian trade see Capt. Hugh Young, "Topographical Memoir on East and West Florida" in *Florida Historical Quarterly*, vol. xiii, pp.91-92. This includes a "list of articles exchanged by the Indians with the factors with customary prices at the trading house."

South Carolinians had a sum of money in their baggage, murdered the party and escaped with the loot. The incident and the scene made the site famous and to this day it is called Murder Creek. On this same trail and even as late as 1813, Indian traders and groups of Upper Creek natives who had gone to Pensacola with them, clashed with the new settlers at another stream-crossing not far from Murder Creek and known in Alabama geography of today as Burnt Corn Creek Crossing. Whether the accusation is justified or not, we at this late date cannot determine, but those who have written of Alabama's history seem to think that all the bad Indians went to trade at Pensacola and the better ones went to trade with the English on the Atlantic.

There might be some justification of this assumption from that fact that Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, U. S. Indian Agent and his assistant agents controlled the natives east of the present Macon County, Alabama, better than they did those who lived in the Coosa Valley and south to the Gulf. Lachlan McGillivray, the trader originally out of Charleston, who married the half-breed daughter of the French Commandant at Fort Toulouse and whose son Alexander McGillivray, was later the partner of the Panton firm at Pensacola as previously stated, certainly controlled the Indian trade in the Alabama-Coosa Valley, even when Col. Hawkins who lived on the Flint River in Georgia, enforced the original Colonial licenses of the traders on the Chattahoochee and farther east.

OPERATION OF THE TRADE

Trading parties, whether they visited Pensacola or Charleston, were generally made up of either the traders of several towns or one trader who went along to look after the interests of several. They carried down, to the trading center pack-horse trains of ponies, onto which were loaded the goods for trade: skins, oils, herbs, roots, nuts and such, and they returned with

the purchased goods loaded onto what they termed "leads", made up of ten horses tied together. These proceeded single file, none of them bridled, along the narrow "path", but each ten under the control of a driver who was responsible for his load. The senior McGillivray, who came into the Nation from Charleston sometime around 1730, is said by Pickett to have been hired by his cousins in Charleston who gave him a pocket knife as his first driver's commission into the Nation.⁶ This knife he swapped to the Indians in the interior for four skins and with the trade goods that he got in Charleston for these four skins, he started that trading house, which at the time of the close of the American Revolution, was the largest one in the Nation. The sleigh bells and hawk bells, so very numerous in the archaeological remains found on old town sites, are evidences of the popularity of this form of adornment of these pack horse ponies who were ringed with strings of these bells in order that they would not get lost when turned loose at night. William Bartram in his very interesting story of his travels through this Gulf country, notes many cases of trading parties with which he came in contact.⁷

No story of the trade relations with the Creek country out of Pensacola could be complete without reference to that notorious soldier of fortune, Maryland-born William Augustus Bowles. Bowles is said to have resided at Pensacola for sometime, though it is a known fact that at one time he was an enlisted man in the British Navy. Mr. Bowles had a checkered career. He was an actor and a portrait painter in the British West Indies; he served a prison term in Madrid and one in Manila, and he spent some time at St. Helena, to be eventually captured through the intrigues of Colonel Hawkins and Mr. Forbes of the house of Panton, at a called Council at Taskigi on the Coosa.⁸ He was

6. Pickett, *op. cit.*, (1900 edition) p. 343.

7. Bartram, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

8. *Am. State Papers. Indian Affairs*, vol. 1, *passim*; Pickett, p. 471.

an intrepid and consistent enemy of Panton; and in character, served the British on the Chattahoochee for a time, endeavoring to win the influence of the Alabama Basin Indian traders to the Atlantic Coast merchants and wean them from Spanish Pensacola.

Bartram, on his visit to Pensacola in September 1776 (this date may be 1777 as the journal is confusing) says there were several merchants in the town.⁹ He does not name them. Swanson and McGillivray, the merchants at Mobile, forwarded Bartram's roots, herbs and seeds which he had collected up to that time, on to Dr. Fothergill at London. If there had been a British merchant at Pensacola at the time, it would seem that Bartram would have mentioned him by name, particularly in view of the fact that during his visit he was cordially received by Governor Chester and Mr. Livingston, secretary of the colony.

The trading posts in West Florida in Spanish days were probably subsidized in one way or another by the Spaniards but they were kept by Scotch and British merchants. There are records of these posts as located at St. Marks, St. Johns, Apalachicola, Pensacola and Mobile. Most of the more easterly posts than Pensacola were in operation as early as 1771.

Alabama history is replete with references to settlers who made more or less prominent establishments on the trade routes. You may see mention of "Milly's House on the Pensacola to Tuckabatchee Trail," or "Woccocoi Clark's place in the present Coosa County." The latter refers to the trader, an Englishman, who lived at Woccocoi, on a branch of the Coosa River and who ran a seventy horse pack train to Pensacola. This gentleman, well known in Alabama history, had a celebrated Indian wife whom he called Queen Am. Milly, who lived on the Tuckabatchee trail, was the widow of a British soldier, a deserter from the Army when the troops started home

9. Bartram, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

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from Savannah in 1783, and who died of smallpox at Cusseta. She maintained a tavern, ran a toll-gate bridge, maintained a trading house and in her career there, is said to have had husbands of three different colors. Even so, she was an impulsive, generous and respected woman who grew to old age on that stream in Montgomery County, which perpetuates her name today. The "Pensacola path" coincident with portions of the later Federal Road, figured prominently in the literature on the South of that period.

THE BRITISH-CREEK TREATY OF 1765

In May 1765 the British officials of West Florida assembled a "Congress" at Pensacola of the Upper and Lower Creek Indians, who attended in large numbers, to discuss their various relations, especially the Indian trade. A treaty was drawn up and signed by the British officials and the principals.

The following is extracted from the journal of the proceedings:¹⁰

Wednesday May 29th 1765.

Present

His Excellency Governor Johnston, John Stuart Esqr

Superintendent

Indian Chiefs & Interpreters as usual.

The Congress being opened the Mortar¹¹ spoke as follows [translation:]

You must look upon us as a poor People & your younger Brothers who are now come to converse with you, in former times we were entirely unacquainted with the Customs of the White People, but since they have come among us, we have

10. Brannon, *op cit.*, pp. 50, 51; *Mississippi Provincial Archives 1763-1766*. English Dominion, vol. 1, p. 215.

11. The Mortar was one of the four "Great Medal" chiefs of the Upper Creeks and hence was considered to be of especial importance by the British.

been Cloathed as they are, and accustomed to their Ways, which makes it at this day absolutely necessary that we should be supplied with the goods in the Nation.

The King of England knows his Red Children are very Numerous, & must be Cloathed, they are all indigent & I hope the King, the Governor, the Superintendent & all other White people are sensible that they are so, & as I have this day considered the Conveniency of the English in granting them Land to plant, so I expect they will in return Consider me and my People. This Land was formerly part of our hunting Ground, but now many of us are grown old & Incapable to kill Deer enough to purchase Cloathing. We had formerly good Success in hunting but are now obliged to Cross the Cherokee River for Game, which Considerations induce me to desire, that as Deer skins are become Scarce, The Trade may be reduced in proportion, so that we may be enabled to Clothe & maintain our Families, that is to say, that we may be able to buy a Blanket, for four pound Leather, when we come to Trade at Pensacola; a Pair of boots for 2 lb. Leather; a flap for 1 lb. a Blankett for 6 lb. a Gun for 12 lb. a Check Shirt 3 lb. a White 2 lb. a hatchett 1 lb. Callico per Yd. 2 lb. as some of their Women are very big, Gartering per ps 3 lb. Nonsopretties 1 lb. Silk Ribbon 2 yds. for 1 lb. Broad hoes one for 2 lb. fine Shirts 5 lb. Rum per Bottle 1 lb. Leather; Price of Kettles to be reduced, in the price one pound, Barley Corn & small Beads 12 strands for 1 lb. Leather, Sixty Bullets for one Skin, 16 flints for one skin the Quantity of Gunpowder to be increased from the old Measure, the price of handfs of every kind to be Lowered 1 lb. Leather, Looking Glasses to be reduced in the price, 1 lb. Leather. Thick Saddlers Laces, 6 yds for 1 lb. Leather, Small black Duffles for 4 lbs. Leather, fine Broad Ribbon, to stand as it does, these are rates at which I expect to Buy Goods in my Nation: which, I imagine the English can afford to sell them

at, & as their Merchandize arrives here without the Expence of Land Carriage upon Horses, they can afford to reduce the prices at Pensacola Still lower, Paint is an article of which the Red people are very fond and the Traders now in our Nation only give a little on the point of a knife for one pound Leather therefore I hope the Superintendant, will direct a proper measure for selling Paint, I expect to buy knives at the same Price at which they are Sold by the White People in the Woods, if I have omitted any thing I desire that some of my Warriors may mention it, & if the Trade is fixed upon the above footing it will make them happy & I desire that they will immediately restore whatever they may have taken at different times from the White People. . . .

I have reason to Suppose that you do not receive me like a friend, as I observe all the Flags you hang out, are Crossed with Red, Whereas I expected to see every thing White, were you to go into my Nation & see me with all my Warlike Implements about me you would think of me as I now do of you. here he ended his Discourse.

To which the Governor made the following answer.

I know that your people are poor, it has pleased God to make us Richer than them, & that we shall Supply them with what they may want as far as we Can and altho' You have Granted to the English these Points of Land on which you used to hunt, yet you may still Continue to do so.

The Trade being reduced too Low amongst you will frequently occasion a scarcity of Goods, no person of any repute Trades to the Cherokee Nation which was in a great measure the occasion of the late Cherokee War.

Your endeavors to serve your Country, by Lowring the trade, are highly Commendable. You have spoke like a Man, & as such will no doubt be easily convinced upon hearing our reasons that it will be for the Good of your Country that the Trade

should Continue upon the old footing, it is very true some articles might bare a Little Lowring but those people who, in time of War, at so great a risque, carryed Goods into your Nation, must have Proffits Equivalent, as Trading Licenses are granted from each province in America indiscriminately, it is not in the power of any Single Governor to reduce, or Augment the Trade, in the mean time, however, for your Satisfaction, I will call a meeting of the Traders to your Nation & Consult them upon that Head, altho I am well assured that if the Trade is Lowered, none but Vagabons & runagadoes will go to trade among you.

The Superintendant has long known the Cherokee Nation, but never yet has found a Trader amongst them Who dare go down to Charlestown least he should be apprehended, for Debt, or some missdemeanor. . . .

As to the Red Cross in our colours, it is no Emblem of War, but what we allways use & you have often seen amongst us.

Though The Mortar had made a good case, Lo, the poor Indian ¹² did not get what he asked for. The treaty contained the following rates of exchange:

RATES OF GOODS IN THE UPPER AND LOWER CREEK NATIONS

	lbs.	
2 yds of Strouds for	8	Leather
1 Blanket	8	
1 do. Shagend	6	"
1 White Shirt	3	"
1 Check do.	4	"
1 Fringed Housing	10	"
1 laced ditto	6	"
1 pr. Gartering	4	"
1 do. Dutch pretties	2	"
3 yds. Quality binding	1	"
2 do. Silk ferret	1	"
1 do. Indian Calico	4	"
1 Trading Gun	16	"
10 Flints	1	"

12. An American Indian, so called from a line in Pope's *Essay on Man*.

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10 Hawks Bells	1	"
1/2 pint Gun Powder	1	"
40 Bullets	1	"
1 Romall handkf	2	"
Saddles according to Quality	4	"
1 Snaffle Bridle	1	"
5 Strands Barley Corn Beads	1	"
20 Strands Common Do.	1	"
1 pr. Trading Scissors	1	"
1 Knife	1	"
1 Cutteau	3	"
1 Trading Razor	2	"
1 oz. Vermillion	1	"
3 spans Brass Wire	1	"
1 pr. Ear Bobs	2	"
1 Large Silk Bengall	4	"
1 Small ditto-	3	"
12 Pea Buttons	1	"
Brass (Kettles no)		
Tin (fixed price)		