



MEET THE PEOPLE

BURIAL 194 Eyeglasses in His Pocket

This man of European descent, who stood 5 feet 9 inches tall, died in his sixties.

Like many of the other men of European heritage buried in the Old Frankfort Cemetery, he ate more Old World grains, such as wheat and barley, than others buried there and somewhat fewer corn-based products. His diet may reflect greater purchasing power and suggests he may have been economically somewhat better off than others interred in this cemetery.

Burial 194 had button tumors on his forehead, as indicated by the bony nodules on his skull. These kinds of tumors may have been unsightly, but they were rarely painful.

His other ailments, however, do show that he experienced a lot of arm, back, and tooth pain. He suffered from tuberculosis in his legs. He dislocated his right shoulder earlier in life and it became arthritic. Compressed discs in his back reflect a life of heavy labor or lifting, or age-related degeneration of his spine. He lost many of his teeth to gum disease long before he died. This is illustrated by new bone growth that had filled-in the holes left by lost teeth. Many of his remaining teeth were abscessed, caused by cavities and severe wear.

A cluster of five bone buttons along the right side of his rib cage and six brass coin buttons near his pelvis suggest that his family buried him in a shirt and drop-front trousers (see opposite). Next they placed his hands across his pelvis and tucked a pair of eyeglasses into his shirt pocket. Finally, they wrapped him in a shroud and fastened it with machine-made straight pins.

The copper eyeglass frames had extendable and hinged *temples* (the part worn over the ears). They held oval lenses, handmade of flat flint glass that had a very low-power correction (0.75 percent diopter). The edges of the lenses were not

polished, as lenses are today. They appear to have been chipped into a shape to fit the frames. These eyeglasses are similar to styles with extendable temples made in Germany and England around 1800. These types of glasses are not known to have been made in the United States.

Historically, eyeglasses were more than just reading aids. During the nineteenth century, they were a common status symbol. Due to the cost of eyeglasses, however, the middle class and poor could often only afford one pair for an entire family. A single pair of eyeglasses would be handed down from parent to child.

He had been buried in a coffin made of cherry. The recovery of late machine-cut nails and machine-made pins from his grave suggests he died sometime after 1835. Since his eyeglasses were made around 1800 in Europe, perhaps a grandfather gave him this pair as a gift before he immigrated with his family to America.



Above Eyeglasses.

The white box highlights one of the five bone buttons found next to the eyeglasses. The buttons may have been attached to a pocket or eyeglass case.