

THE AMERICAS

The collections of the American Section are the largest of the Penn Museum and number approximately 300,000 archaeological and ethnographic specimens from North America, Central America, and South America.

Frank Speck and the Anthropology Department

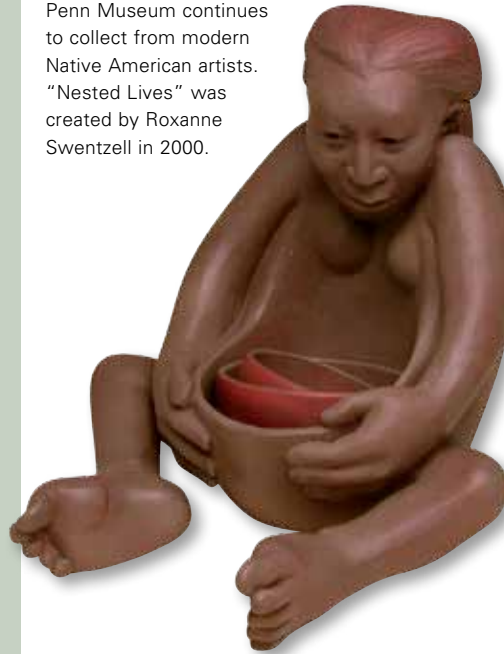
Frank Gouldsmith Speck (1881–1950) is best known for his research among remnant populations and highly acculturated groups of American Indians of the Eastern United States and Canada. He was an eccentric individual who as a child went to live with Fidelia Fielding, the last living speaker of her language, Mohegan Pequot. It was this connection that formed Speck's scholarly interests, as well as his entire attitude toward life, including his love for natural history and material culture and his distaste for social formality and academic pretenses.

After studying at Columbia University under Franz Boas, Speck completed his Ph.D. at Penn in 1909, the first conferred by the University in the field of anthropology. After legendary disputes with George Byron Gordon, the formidable director of the Museum, Speck left the Museum in 1911. He was rehired by the University and, in 1913, became Acting Chairman of the Department of Anthropology, which will turn 100 years old in 2013.

Speck visited Indians any time he could, often without notice. He established lasting relationships with them and gained their trust, which can be clearly seen in his photographs and his films.

— *Alessandro Pezzati*

Penn Museum continues to collect from modern Native American artists. "Nested Lives" was created by Roxanne Swentzell in 2000.



Chief Jasper Blowsnake, of the Ho-Chunk Nation, and Frank Speck at Winnebago Camp, Elk River Reservation, Minnesota, 1936.

The Beaver Bowl

This wooden bowl was collected among the Kaskaskia (a sub-group of the Miami people) by George Turner, a judge in Illinois Territory in 1795. Collected along with three wooden pipestems and a catlinit pipe bowl, these are the oldest dated objects in the ethnographic collection of the American Section of the Museum. Turner collected two of these bowls in that year. One went to Charles Wilson Peale's Museum which was housed in what is now Independence Hall. That bowl is currently in the collection of our sister institution, the Peabody Museum at Harvard. The second bowl went to the American Philosophical Society and through a series of transfers has ended up in our collection. Both bowls are carved in the shape of a beaver with the bowl opening in the back. Neither bowl exhibits any wear patterns which suggests that they were carved for Judge Turner if not on the spot, then at least just before he got there. They are, in fact, examples of early souvenir art, and demonstrate the rapidity with which Native Americans responded to a growing market and the desire for "exotic" material brought back from travels. This market continued to expand throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century.

— *William Wierzbowski*



The Beaver Bowl was collected in the Illinois territory in 1795. The eyes are inset with brass tacks.

Bill Coe and the Flying Jeep

William R. Coe (1926–2009) is remembered for directing one of the most ambitious excavation and restoration projects at an ancient site: the Tikal Project in Guatemala. But not all moments on the site were serious. Below is a reminiscence from the early days, courtesy of Anita Fahringer and The Codex, 2010–2011.

...Feeling like celebrating, Bill proposed that we do something he had always dreamed about: see if we could make the project's Jeep fly off the airfield... There was little moonlight, and the Jeep's light beams stayed on high as we began to zoom down the runway, past the Aviateca office and into outer darkness. That little Jeep really could go, and our exhilaration flew with us, but we were still on the ground. Faster and faster we went, our light beams cutting a swath through the night, insects filling the air. Suddenly, Bill exclaimed "Oh, no!" and various expletives, as he caught sight of the ditch that crossed the end of the airfield. For a few seconds we could see the black gap growing in size like an eternity to hell. Bill thought fast and overcame the temptation to hit the brakes. If he had, we would have all been dead. Instead he accelerated to the poor little Jeep's maximum, forcing it to go even faster. We reached the ditch. We were flying. We were flying! A split second later we stopped flying and landed with a mighty WHAM, which sent birds flying out of the airfield.

— Peter Harrison



Tatiana Proskouriakoff worked extensively at Piedras Negras.

The Accidental Mayanist: Tatiana Proskouriakoff

Of all the brilliant minds that have lit up the firmament of ancient Maya studies, there is none that arouses as much admiration, inspiration, and outright devotion as Tatiana Proskouriakoff (1909–1985). Born in Russia, she came to the United States with her family in 1916 and stayed after the Russian revolution broke out. She obtained an architecture degree in 1931, but jobs were scarce. After volunteering at the Penn Museum preparing archaeological illustrations, she was invited to join the Museum's excavations at the Maya site of Piedras Negras, Guatemala, in 1936. Her ability and her dedication to Maya studies eventually secured her positions at the Carnegie Institution in Washington, DC, and Harvard University, despite the fact that she never obtained a degree in the field.

Following her seminal studies on the architecture and sculpture of the Maya, Proskouriakoff made her greatest contribution by going against the current and discovering the true literary and historical nature of Maya hieroglyphic writing which, apart from numbers and the calendar, had been previously deemed impossible to decipher. She thus paved the way for the renaissance of Maya studies that continues to this day. Proskouriakoff's breakthrough in decipherment came while studying inscriptions from Piedras Negras. She was buried at the site in 1998.

— Alessandro Pezzati



Stela 14, on loan from the Guatemalan government, was discovered at Piedras Negras in the 1930s. This limestone stela, over nine feet tall, portrays a seated ruler with legs crossed and hands on knees, wearing an elaborate headdress. At the lower left is a standing woman. The hieroglyphs to the left were found on the circled area of the stela. They represent the name or title of one of the sculptors who carved the monument. Drawing by John Montgomery for Elin Danien.



William Farabee rides a saddled water buffalo on Marajo Island, Brazil, 1914.

William Farabee, Martyr to Science

William Curtis Farabee (1865–1925) is one of the great forgotten American explorers and anthropologists. He obtained his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1903, conducting his first expedition to Peru in 1909. In 1912, at age 48, he arrived at Penn to head the Amazon expedition, a three-year journey up and down the Amazon River and its tributaries, for which the Museum even purchased a yacht (later abandoned because the hull was rotten). Farabee met former President Theodore Roosevelt while in South America, who commended him in his 1914 *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* as the “greatest living South American explorer.”

During World War I Farabee served as a captain in the Intelligence Corps of the U.S. Army and was personally selected by President Woodrow Wilson as chief ethnographer of the American Peace Commission negotiating the Treaty of Versailles; he was charged with drawing up the cultural maps of the world. And in 1921, President Warren Harding sent him as a special diplomatic envoy to Peru.

Farabee returned to Peru for the Penn Museum in 1922 and 1923. But that would be, in hindsight, a fatal trip. A recurrence of a disease he had contracted during his Amazonian journey interrupted his excavations. “My dear Dr. Gordon,” wrote Sylvia Farabee from Ica, Peru, on June 8, 1922, “Mr. Farabee is here very ill with inflammatory dysentery. He took sick in the interior one hundred and fifty four miles away. As there was no physician he had to come here. He rode on horseback fifty-two miles the first day, then went to bed and sent for an automobile which arrived three days later. He has had an awful journey in a Ford car over the trail of the Pampa Huahuari to Ica a distance of one hundred miles where he arrived more dead than alive. Doctor says if he had been two days later he could not have saved his life.”

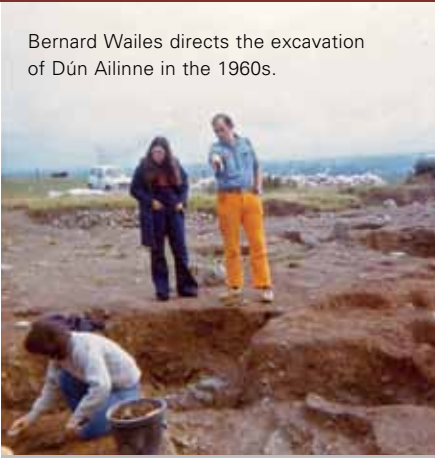
Upon returning to the United States he underwent over 30 blood transfusions, but finally succumbed in 1925. His obituary appeared in newspapers around the country, titled “Martyr to Science.” In spite of the accolades he received during his lifetime, Farabee remains little known today.

— Alessandro Pezzati

In 1896, the Museum sponsored the excavations of Max Uhle in coastal Peru, resulting in over 12,000 objects added to our collection from the site of Pachacamac. This mummy bale, which contains the body of an eight-year old child, came from a cemetery at Pachacamac. Peruvian mummification involved drying the body naturally on sand, then placing the corpse in a seated position in a basket. In this case, the body was enclosed in a simple cotton shroud. Carefully woven, colorful textiles were then wrapped around the basket, and small pouches containing dried plants were placed around the neck. A false head was attached to the top of the bale. This bale measures 0.94 m or just over three feet in height.



Bernard Wailes directs the excavation of Dún Ailinne in the 1960s.



Penn Museum began acquiring prehistoric European archaeological collections in 1892. The European collection represents major prehistoric periods—Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age—amounting to an estimated 20,000 objects. The Museum has also sponsored excavations, including those to France and Ireland.

Unearthing Pagan Ritual

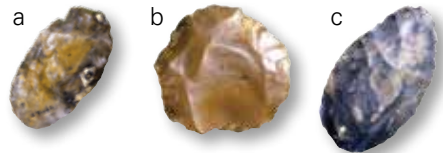
The archaeological scene of the 1950s and 1960s was marked by an interest in Irish royal sites. Sean Ó Riordáin's excavation at Tara, Co. Meath, in Northern Ireland and Dudley Waterman's work at the traditional royal site of Ulster, Navan Fort, Co. Armagh, ushered in the wave. At the outset, excavations trended toward sites from earlier periods (e.g. Newgrange, Knowth). Thus, the 1968 excavation of Dún Ailinne—a Pagan Iron Age site—was appropriate.

Traditional accounts of early Ireland associated Dún Ailinne with a ruling dynasty, complete with royal residences, inauguration sites, and places for communal worship. Dún Ailinne was a premier political and ceremonial site of early Ireland, but textual evidence from the medieval period dates its fall to the Christianization of Ireland, *ca.* 431 AD.

Bernard Wailes headed the Dún Ailinne excavation for nine years. The site produced numerous corroded iron objects (including an Irish-type short La Tène C sword), as well as copper rings, brooches, and glass beads—all of which suggest a limited manufacturing of bronze, glass, and bone objects during the Iron Age. Likewise, structural remains revealed two circular timber palisades positioned in what is termed a “figure-of-eight” arrangement. The entrance to the larger of the two palisades was flanked by “antennae” palisades, which were adorned with additional timber works. The impressive entrance approach supports the archaeological interpretation of the site as ceremonial. Lack of burial and household remains rejects the possibility that Dún Ailinne was designed for residential purposes. This observation, combined with the similarities between Dún Ailinne and the royal sites of Rathcroghan, Tara, and Navan, supports the belief of medieval historians that this site functioned as a center for the occult.

The final reports of Wailes and Susan Johnston's findings were published in the collaborative 2007 Penn Museum monograph, *Dún Ailinne: Excavations at an Irish Royal Site, 1968–1975*.

— KC Boas



Top, a bronze helmet in the collection dates to the Late Bronze Age *ca.* 1199–700 BC and was excavated at Bernières d'Ailly in France. Three rivets secure two sheets of bronze that are attached at the front and the back by folding a flap of metal from the first over the other at the rim. Fine parallel incisions decorate the crest of the helmet. Bottom, these flint-knapped bifaces are stone tools associated with the Lower Paleolithic in Europe. They were probably used as multi-purpose tools, especially for the butchering of animals. Approximate dates of use and findspots are: (a) *ca.* 300,000 BC; London, England, (b) 250,000–40,000 BC; southwest France, and (c) date unknown; Saint-Acheul, France. Left, this Bronze Age celt was excavated from a French site. Sometimes called a *palstave*, this tool was the prehistoric equivalent of an axe.



The African Section at the Penn Museum contains one of the largest African collections in the country. The collection includes approximately 15,000 ethnographic and 5,000 archaeological objects, most of which were obtained between 1891 and 1937.



Above, a Bangongo mask was purchased by the Penn Museum from W.O. Oldman. Painted geometric designs and two metal studs between the eyes decorate the face. Cowrie shells and blue and white beads form the hairline and other features, with dark cloth and 15 rows of cowries representing the hair. Left, this bronze and copper alloy plaque, dated to the 15th to 16th century, is from Benin, Nigeria. In the center is a high-ranking chief in ceremonial dress, carrying a dance sword in his right hand and a spear in his left hand. He is flanked by two warriors who carry spears and shields, and four smaller figures at the top and toward the bottom. The plaque, perforated for attachment to a wall, measures over 18 inches in height.



Big Game at the Museum

Natural history specimens collected by Arthur Donaldson Smith were on display in 1898 in the University Library, now the Fine Arts Library, which housed the Museum for a decade. At the time, the Museum was still defining its collection. Smith, a physician and big-game hunter from Philadelphia, traveled to Lake Rudolph (now Lake Turkana), eastern Kenya, in 1894–1895. His ethnographic collections are still at the Museum, but the location of the mounted heads to the left is unknown. Lake Turkana National Park in Kenya is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

— *Alessandro Pezzati*

Wild game trophies from Africa were once part of the Museum collection.



Since at least the early 19th century, goldsmith guilds of Ghana supplied Ashanti chiefs with beautifully crafted jewelry. Objects like this collection of gold amulets and beads were worn by members of royal families during festivities. Many pieces were made using the lost wax casting process.

Moroccan Pottery in the African Collection

Talcott Williams, one of the early officers of the Museum, was an editor of the Philadelphia Press for 30 years. He is best known for becoming, in 1912, the first director of the School of Journalism at Columbia University, built and endowed by Joseph Pulitzer. In 1897–1898 he traveled with his wife to Morocco to collect artifacts for the Museum. Below are some of the beautifully painted bowls he purchased. Now part of our collection, these bowls are just three of many we have that were manufactured in the 1890s.

— Alessandro Pezzati



Gbana Hai of Kpendehu, a wood carver, is shown here with a sculpture he made of a dog, which is now in the Penn Museum collection. Bawngge, Sherbro Island, Sierra Leone, 1937.

This 19th century nail-studded wooden figure from the lower Zaire River region was used by Kongo people in search of justice, solutions to problems, or protection from malevolent forces. By promising something to the figure, a client ensures the assistance of the supernatural forces, who are attracted to magical material lodged behind the mirror in the figure's abdomen. The client hammers a nail into the wood after making such an oath.



Numbering in excess of 42,000 items, the Penn Museum's Egyptian and Nubian material makes it one of the largest collections in the United States. Assembled over nearly a century, this collection is unusual in that the vast majority of the objects were obtained through archaeological investigations in Egypt and entered the Museum through a division of finds with Egypt's Antiquities Service.



Above, the Lower Hall of the Coxe Wing opened on May 19, 1926. The sphinx was originally placed outdoors at the Main Entrance, but was moved inside for fear the stone would crack in the winter. Left, during the early 20th century, Eckley Brinton Coxe, Jr., supported Penn excavations and research in Egypt. He also funded Museum operating expenses and major building additions.

Patron Saint of the Museum

His frail body sheltered the spirit of a courteous gentleman of high culture and lovable and gentle character. There are many who feel that in his death a man of rare quality and parts has passed away—an American gentleman of the truest and highest type.

From the *Bulletin of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, Monthly Bulletin No. 120* (December, 1916).

Eckley Brinton Coxe, Jr. (1872–1916), is remembered today as one of the Museum's greatest early donors. Born into a wealthy Pennsylvania coal mining family, the death of his father in Egypt when Coxe was only one apparently resulted in a life-long passion for ancient Egypt. As President of the Museum's Board from 1910 to 1916, and together with Charles Custis Harrison as Board Vice President and George Byron Gordon as Director, he ushered in one of the most glorious periods of Museum history.

Coxe began financing the Museum's publications in 1896; he later funded its first archaeological expeditions to Egypt and Nubia from 1907 to 1911. Prior to his early death, Coxe's financial aid covered half of the institution's operating expenses, as well as a number of salaries, expeditions, collections, and the addition of two wings to the building. The Rotunda, completed during his lifetime, was named for Harrison, at Coxe's request. Although the Coxe Wing did not open until 1926, ten years after his death, it remains his lasting tribute, together with the generous endowment he left for the Museum's Egyptian research.

— Alessandro Pezzati



The Granite Sphinx of Ramesses II

Excavated by W. M. Flinders Petrie in 1913 near the Ptah Temple at Memphis, the Penn Museum's twelve-ton sphinx is the largest sphinx in the Western Hemisphere. The sphinx, a lion with a human head, represents the power of the Egyptian king. Carved of a single block of red granite, quarried at Aswan, the five-fold titulary of Ramesses II appears along the base of this sphinx. Ramesses II's son and successor, Merenptah, added his own cartouches on the shoulders after his father's death. For several years after its arrival in Philadelphia, the sphinx sat in the garden in front of the Museum. The sphinx was moved inside the building in 1916. When the Coxe Wing was nearing completion in 1926, the sphinx was moved to its current location in the Lower Egypt gallery.

— Jennifer H. Wegner, Ph.D.

Egyptian Section Curator Clarence Fisher excavated at Memphis for eight years, 1915–1923. He discovered the palace of the pharaoh Merenptah, ca.1236–1223 BC, shown here. The inscribed and painted columns now reside in the Lower Egypt gallery. Photograph by Bechari.



The mummy case of Nebnetcheru dates to Dynasty 21 or 22 (1075–712 BC) and may be from Thebes.





Above, a gold and chalcedony necklace from Memphis includes beads in the form of cowrie shells, barrels, and a pomegranate. Suspended from the necklace is a solid gold amulet of the goddess Sekhmet. Depicted with the head of a lioness, Sekhmet was the consort of Ptah, the patron deity of Memphis.



Right, this large, faded green faience *shawabti* from Hawara was excavated by W. M. Flinders Petrie. Shawabtis are funerary figurines placed in tombs among grave goods; this figure acted as a substitute for a deceased man named Horwedja, born of Shedet, in case he was called upon to perform manual labor in the Underworld. Left, this green feldspar amulet borrows the shape of a papyrus stalk. Approximately 6.8 cm long (2.7 inches), its details are finely carved, and traces of original gold leaf still exist at the base and close to the top. In sunken relief around the shaft of the amulet are six columns of hieroglyphs that comprise one of the very short spells of the "Book of the Dead," Chapter 159. This amulet was discovered in the late New Kingdom burials at the Ramesseum, the mortuary temple of Ramesses II.



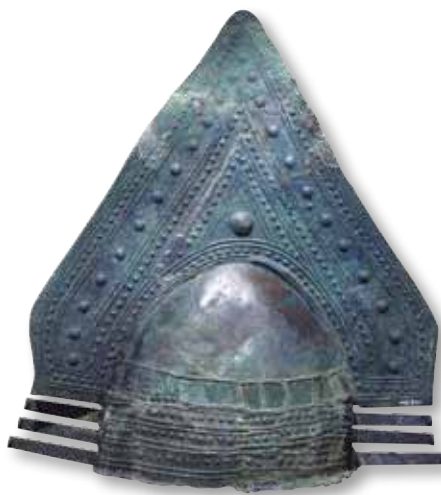
Left, a wooden coffin and lid, dated to the Middle Kingdom (20th to 18th century BC), served as the inner sarcophagus of Ahanakht, a veterinarian and vizier from the site of el-Bersheh.

Right, a limestone false door was the focus of the inner chapel of the temple of Kaipure at Saqqara, and was acquired by the Penn Museum in 1904 with the entire inner chapel. It dates to ca. 2300 BC. Offerings were made for the deceased at this false door, so the spirit could come up from the burial chamber and take its sustenance.





This Roman relief sculpture dates to the 1st century BC. At 162 by 114.5 cm (approximately 63.8 by 45 inches), the white marble slab was reused in the arch of Trajan at Puteoli. The left panel has a squared background that frames overlapping soldiers, carved in deep relief. The right panel displays a single soldier carved in deep foreground relief upon a rounded background. The reverse side contains an inscription, which is now erased; "IMP CAESARI" and "PUTEOLANA" are still visible.



Attributed to the Etruscan culture, *ca.* 725–700 BC, this bronze crested helmet was discovered in Tomb 43 in Narce, a site in Tuscany. Made from two sheets of hammered bronze, oblong rectangular pieces were riveted over the joints for greater strength where the strain was heaviest.

The classical world and the acquisition of objects from classical lands was a primary interest of the Penn Museum at its founding in 1887 and during its formative years. This was a reflection of an intense interest in classical antiquity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in America. The collection of the Mediterranean Section of the Museum comprises about 34,000 objects of Greek, Roman, Etruscan, Cypriot, and Bronze Age Aegean origins, as well as small numbers of artifacts from related culture areas.



Bronze casts and plaster reproductions were featured in this 1905 exhibit at the Museum.

Replicas of Famous Monuments of the Past

Reproductions of famous monuments were an important part of the Museum's educational mission in its early years, before the increasing number of original objects displaced the plaster and bronze replicas. In this photograph from 1905 are important plaster casts, including the frieze of the Parthenon. Bronze sculptures, reproductions of originals discovered at Pompeii and Herculaneum, were made by the Chiurazzi foundry of Naples. The bronzes were purchased by John Wanamaker, the department store magnate and generous supporter of the Museum, and today, many can be found in the Roman gallery.



Top left, a view of Tumulus MM in 1957, shows the open trench and spoil tips, with horse and wagon for scale (see arrow). Towering at 53 m high, even after millennia of erosion, and with a prodigious basal diameter (ca. 300 m), the “Midas Mound” is by far the largest of the Gordion tumuli. It protected the burial of an elderly man who had died ca. 740 BC, the immediate predecessor of the historical king Midas, and likely his father (Gordias?). Top right, Gordion, Turkey, 1955. This photo shows the excavation of the Early Phrygian citadel gate (ca. 850–800 BC). Tumulus MM is on the left. Bottom left, the team that tunneled into MM in 1957 included a mining foreman, a carpenter, and 11 colliers. Paid on the basis of every cubic meter of clay excavated, the men worked in three shifts per 24 hours, using the Gordion team’s Decauville railway to remove the spoil. Now stone-lined for the modern visitor, the tunnel and open trench survive to this day.

Miners and the “Midas Mound”: Breaching Tumulus MM

Gordion, royal city of Phrygia, has yielded many remarkable discoveries since the Museum began research there in 1950. Most celebrated is the astonishingly well-preserved kingly burial found inside Tumulus MM in 1957. The tomb was excavated by the project director, Rodney Young, but the drive to initiate the work may actually have come from members of the Museum Board, who were threatening to withdraw their support for the Gordion excavations unless something “spectacular” was soon found.

Young formulated a two-year strategy to take on the mini-mountain and overcome the formidable logistical and physical challenges. First he needed to ascertain the position of the burial chamber within the tumulus; otherwise it would be akin to looking for a needle in a haystack. Assuming that MM was similar to the many other Phrygian burials he had already excavated, Young banked on the chamber being at the mound’s base. But where exactly? Off-center locations were favored by the Phrygians, presumably to baffle tomb robbers. Young’s solution was to locate the stone packing typically placed over the roofs of burial chambers. Using a powerful drill, deep probing from the mound’s surface in 1955 and 1956 was successful in revealing a concentration of rubble near the center of the tumulus. The next challenge was how to dig through to the chamber. Trenching down from the top of MM was discounted on the grounds that it would mutilate the monument and be extremely laborious. Instead, Young opted for a more precise and dangerous lateral approach at ground level, taking the shortest and easiest route in from the perimeter. The first 70 m were dug by the Gordion team, since this only involved open trenching. It took a month. But after that the only way forward was by tunnelling. To expedite this hazardous task, Young recruited a mining team from Turkey’s northern coalfield in the Black Sea province of Zonguldak, shown in the photograph above. For another three-and-a-half weeks, as the suspense intensified, the Turkish miners tunneled round the clock, covering almost another 70 m, until their way was blocked by the wall of an intact chamber complex. The end of the beginning.

— Gareth Darbyshire



Above, dating to the Archaic Greek Period, this black figure amphora by Exekias was manufactured in Athens ca. 540–530 BC. Its iconography depicts scenes from the *Aethiopis*, a largely lost 7th century epic poem. Penn Museum's Greek collection contains many noteworthy red figure and black figure vases. Below, this bronze lion-headed *situla* from Gordion Tumulus MM, in a painting in the Museum collection by celebrated British artist Piet de Jong, dates from ca. 740 BC. Such buckets contained alcoholic drinks served at elite parties, in this case the funeral banquet.



Above, Harriet Boyd Hawes and Edith Hall Dohan, standing on the far right, were part of early 20th century Museum expeditions to east Crete. They are shown here with the Greek workmen they hired and supervised to excavate Gournia and other sites. Below, restored from fragments, this Minoan *rhyton*, used for serving liquids, was crafted in Crete ca. 1450 BC. Decorated in the Marine Style, the rhyton features a collar at the base of the neck, a splayed mouth, and a single handle. A design representing coral extends down from the collar and up from a quatrefoil rock-work motif at the base, delineating a zone with dolphins within a net pattern.



Above, this ceramic flask reflects the Cypriot culture of the Iron Age. In the central panel, a bird is flanked by two lotus facing a rosette in each lateral zone. Bars and wavy lines decorate the handle and the neck of the flask.



Penn Museum's fieldwork in the Middle East began with the late 19th century excavations at Nippur, the preeminent religious center of early Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq). The Nippur excavations were the first American archaeological project in that part of the world. Since that time the Museum has worked in nearly every country in the Middle East, with research including not only archaeological surveys and excavations, but also ethnographic studies. Today the Near East collection includes nearly 90,000 artifacts.



The painting of the Nippur excavations by Osman Hamdi Bey was inspired by a photograph by John Henry Haynes.

Nippur and Hamdi Bey

The 1889–1900 excavations at Nippur in Mesopotamia led to the founding of the Penn Museum. They were immortalized on canvas by the most famous painter of Ottoman Turkey, Osman Hamdi Bey, who, as an archaeologist and Director of the Imperial Ottoman Museum, knew of the subject first-hand. He made the painting for the University of Pennsylvania Museum in 1903, but it was forgotten in storage until the late 1980s. In 2008, it was put on display in the Museum Director's office and later included in the traveling exhibition *Archaeologists & Travelers in Ottoman Lands*, along with a second painting by Hamdi Bey, "At the Mosque Door" (1891), purchased by the Museum in 1985. Both paintings returned to Turkey for a traveling exhibition loan to the Pera Museum in Istanbul in 2011.

— Alessandro Pezzati



Above, this relief of a winged genie was found at the palace of Ashur-Nair-Pall II in Nimrud, Iraq. It dates to 883–859 BC and is made of either limestone or soft gypsum. Below, the Ur-Namu Stela was recovered from the site of Ur in present day Iraq. It is carved from stone and depicts the king before God. The Museum has many other fragments of this stela.



A Telegram of Discovery from Ur

On January 4, 1928, the Museum received a telegram from Leonard Woolley announcing his great find of the tomb of Queen Puabi, at that time translated as Queen Shubad. Not wanting to attract undue attention (because telegrams were transcribed by individuals), the message is written in Latin. The translation in pencil, below the Latin text, reads: "I found the intact tomb, stone built and vaulted over with bricks of Queen Shubad adorned with a dress in which gems, flowers, crowns and animal figures are woven. Tomb magnificent with jewels and golden cups. Woolley." The Royal Tombs of Ur in Mesopotamia (ca. 2650–2550 BC) contained a wealth of objects made from gold, silver, lapis lazuli, carnelian, and other semi-precious stones. Excavated by the Penn Museum and the British Museum, Ur is one of the most spectacular archaeological discoveries of the 20th century.

— Alessandro Pezzati



Above, Queen Puabi is now exhibited with her jewelry as it was recovered. Gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian, and white agate are the featured materials. Below, this terracotta and bitumen figurine from Ur dates to the Ubaid Period, ca. 6500 to 3800 BC. The bird-headed woman stands with her hands on her hips. The incised details of her bitumen wig remain preserved. This statuette was excavated as part of the joint British Museum/Penn Museum expedition to Ur.



Mary Louise Baker in the 1950s.

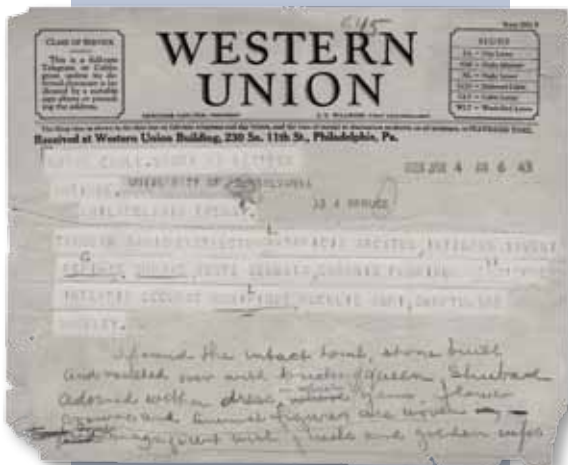
The Importance of Conservation at the Museum

In the early years, restoration or reconstruction work was carried out by curators and their assistants, whether it was baking tablets, mending pottery, or fumigating textiles. Later, artists were brought in to do the work, such as Paul Casci, who came from Florence in the 1910s as a restorer. He also made casts for sale by the Education Department.

Museum artist Mary Louise Baker worked on restorations and reconstructions, including the bull-headed lyre from Ur. Her reconstruction, though based on Sumerian art motifs found in the Royal Tombs, was entirely fanciful, and when Sir Leonard Woolley decried it as such upon a visit in 1955 (to accept the Museum's Drexel Medal), it led to a period of embarrassment. In 1977, Penn art professor James House created the current, simpler look of the lyre, which corresponds to the fact that its original appearance is not known.

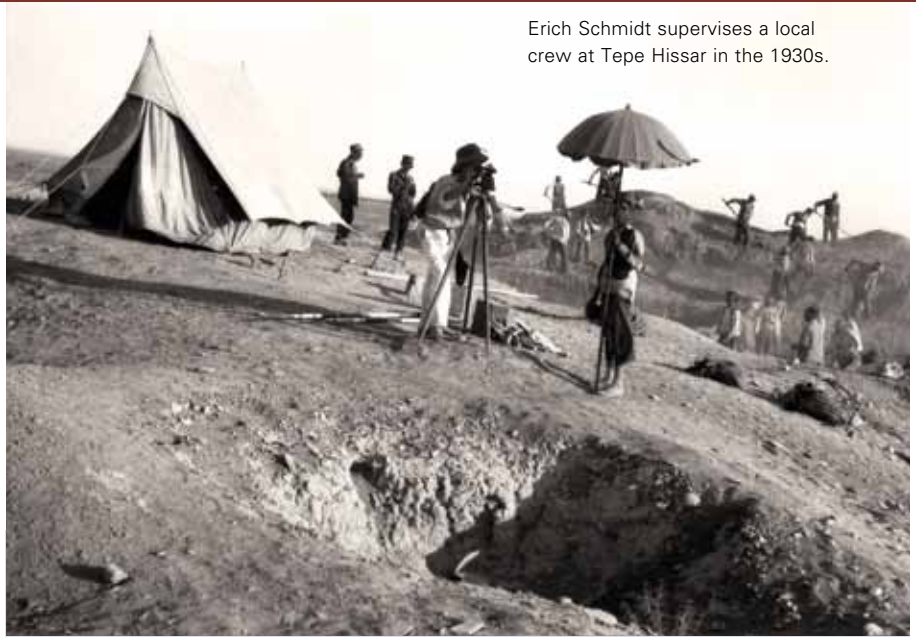
Today the Museum's conservators are much more specialized. In addition to being artists, they must also be scientists and historians, and understand all steps in the creation of the Museum's artifacts, whether feather headdresses, baskets, or clay figurines.

— Alessandro Pezzati





This photograph was taken in 1962 at Hasanlu, Iran. It captures victims of a battle that destroyed the city around 800 BC. These skeletons were found in Burned Building II, just as they were left by their attackers. Note the skull and antlers of a red deer in front of the workman.



Erich Schmidt supervises a local crew at Tepe Hissar in the 1930s.

Schmidt at Tepe Hissar

In 1931 Museum archaeologists were the first Americans to excavate in Persia (Iran), at the site of Tepe Hissar, under Erich F. Schmidt (1897–1964). A German who came to the United States in 1923, he was the archetypal archaeologist: brilliant, fearless, and tireless, though he had suffered an injury when imprisoned in Siberia during World War I, and walked with a limp. From 1931 to 1939, Schmidt carried out an enormous amount of work in Iran, including excavations at the Islamic city of Rayy (AD 637–1220) and surrounding prehistoric occupations. He also conducted an aerial survey to locate archaeological sites in Luristan, and took over the directorship of the University of Chicago's work at Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenid Persian Empire under Darius the Great.

— Alessandro Pezzati



Left, carved in high relief, this limestone mortuary statue from Syria portrays a woman of high status. Her elaborate headdress and jewelry indicate that she may have been a priestess. The piece was carved in the 2nd century AD, with a false inscription added later, probably in the 19th century. Right, one of a series of jars found sunken into the floor along an interior wall of a "kitchen" in a well-preserved Neolithic house at Hajji Firuz Tepe in Iran, this wine jar is the oldest known wine storage container in the world (ca. 5400–5000 BC). The capacity of the container is nine liters or 2.5 gallons.





The Babylonian Section houses a collection of almost 30,000 clay tablets inscribed in Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform, making it one of the ten largest collections in the world. The vast majority of texts derive from the Museum's excavations at Nippur in the latter part of the 19th century, along with smaller excavated groups of tablets from Ur, Billa, Malyan, and Fara.

Top, this ancient clay tablet is inscribed with a map of the countryside around Nippur, and is dated to the 14th-13th century BC. Below, members of the University of Pennsylvania team pose for a group portrait at the completion of the final season at Nippur. Hermann Hilprecht stands at right, brandishing a golf club. Photograph by Clarence Fisher, 1900. Right, dated to the 22nd century BC, this tablet is the oldest known medical text. Fifteen prescriptions, most involving obscure plants and potions, are written in Sumerian.



Nippur and the Sumerian Dictionary

In 1888, the Penn Museum's first expedition sent Museum founder John P. Peters and Hermann V. Hilprecht to the Babylonian city-state of Nippur. Under difficult conditions, from extreme temperatures to dust storms and rampant disease, the first two months of excavation supplied little in findings, yet stateside support sent the expedition excavating the following year. The second time around would be a success. Subsequent excavations at Nippur yielded over 50,000 texts—documents ranging from literature to mundane daily accounts from as long ago as the 3rd millennium BC—many of them written in Sumerian cuneiform, a language with no known relatives.

The abundance of knowledge uncovered at Nippur, and later at Ur, positioned the Penn Museum at the forefront of a longstanding archaeological quest—the decipherment of cuneiform. Since its first discovery by European travelers in the 17th century, decipherers had already cracked Akkadian cuneiform, but other languages in cuneiform needed attention. The Babylonian Section at the Penn Museum attracted the world's best Sumerian scholars, including Samuel Noah Kramer and Åke Sjöberg. In 1976 Sjöberg, working with his colleague Erle Leichty, undertook the project of assembling a Sumerian dictionary, modeled after the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary. The first volume of the Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (PSD) for the letter B was published in 1984, followed by three volumes for the letter A. In recognition of the PSD, on April 18, 1984, *The New York Times* Word of the Day was not English for the first time in its history—instead in Sumerian, a cuneiform-printed “hallelujah.”

Steve Tinney took over as director of the project in 2002, with a vision to make the dictionary relevant and accessible with a modern tool—the internet. Continually growing, the electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (ePSD) offers a lexicon of Sumerian words with definitions along with the Sumerian texts in which they are found. By early 2013 the Sumerian dictionary will be integrated with ORACC: the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (<http://oracc.org>).

— Alexandra Fleischman

The Asian Section of the Penn Museum covers all of Asia with just over 25,000 objects. Only about one percent is on display at any time; the great majority of the objects are kept in storage and used for research and classroom purposes. Unlike the Museum's other sections, the Asian collection has little archaeological material, as its focus is largely ethnographic.



Above, embroidered Mandarin squares were attached to the clothing of Chinese officials during the Qing Dynasty to denote rank. This square was worn by a first-rate military official. Left, two young girls admire the crystal ball ca. 1930s.

The Purchase, Theft, and Recovery of the Crystal Ball

The Chinese crystal sphere, on display in the Harrison Rotunda, has been an iconic object in the Museum since 1927, when it was purchased by Eldridge R. Johnson in memory of Museum Director George Byron Gordon. The 55 pounds of transparent quartz crystal is supposedly from the collections of the infamous Qing dynasty Empress Cixi (1835–1908), a concubine who rose to the position of Dowager Empress of China. After her death, many of her belongings were dispersed. Purportedly among her possessions was a flawless, crystal sphere—believed to be the one now owned by the Museum.

Johnson, the founder of the Victor Talking Machine Co. of Camden, NJ, was a great supporter of the Museum, having already purchased a number of magnificent pieces for us, including the famous horse reliefs of Chinese Emperor Tang Taizong (599–649). Johnson found the sphere in the antiques department of Wanamaker's department store—a former Philadelphia institution closed in 1995—and asked Gordon about it. He thought the \$50,000 price too high. But when Gordon died suddenly later that month, Johnson bought the piece, and did not even haggle. The crystal sphere then enjoyed a peaceful 61-year stint as one of the Penn Museum's best-loved objects.

One night in 1988, while the security system was undergoing repairs, the sphere was stolen, together with its base and a small bronze statuette of Osiris. The Japanese silver base was found the next day by an alert student along the South Street Bridge, but the other two pieces had disappeared. There were no leads.

Three years later, Jes Canby, a scholar of ancient Near Eastern sculpture and a Museum volunteer, visited a thrift shop on the other side of the Schuylkill River from the Museum and made a discovery. On a shelf was the statuette of Osiris. It had arrived from "Al the trash picker" who had sold it, along with a table, for \$30. The FBI, under Robert K. Wittman, author of *Priceless*, quickly traced Al to a nearby garage, whose owner was clearing everything out. The crystal ball had also been in his garage—the owner had given it to a friend who was into the occult. The ball was ultimately recovered without a scratch and without fingerprints or any evidence of those who stole it. And it is, again, floating in the center of the Harrison Rotunda.

— Alessandro Pezzati

The Eccentric Maxwell Sommerville

Maxwell Sommerville (1829–1904) was one of the most colorful characters associated with the early days of the Museum. The first and only Professor of Glyptology (the study of engraved gems) at Penn, he had become wealthy through publishing and pursued collecting in two disparate areas: engraved gems and artifacts of Buddhist worship.

When conducting tours of his “Buddhist Temple” at the Museum, Sommerville dressed up in Buddhist robes. His gallery displayed art and temple furnishings from countries ranging from India to Japan, including as much as he could fit into the space. He openly welcomed practitioners of the faith to worship in the gallery.

For all his contributions to the Museum, Sommerville still managed to stir some scandal. Following his death in 1904, an investigation by Adolf Furtwängler, the eminent German archaeologist, raised concern as to the legitimacy of certain gems in Sommerville’s collection. Museum authorities immediately removed the exhibit, and most of the gems have not, with the exception of a small show in 1956, been exhibited since.

Modern investigation sheds a redeeming light on this scandal, however. Contrary to the popular rumor that Sommerville’s gems were forgeries, these pieces were, in fact, Neoclassical, dating to the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. This underscores the point that the value of museum collections can change over time. Today the Neoclassical gems, especially those signed by their carvers, are as important and valuable as the ancient ones; they reveal aesthetic elements and motifs of great interest to modern scholars.

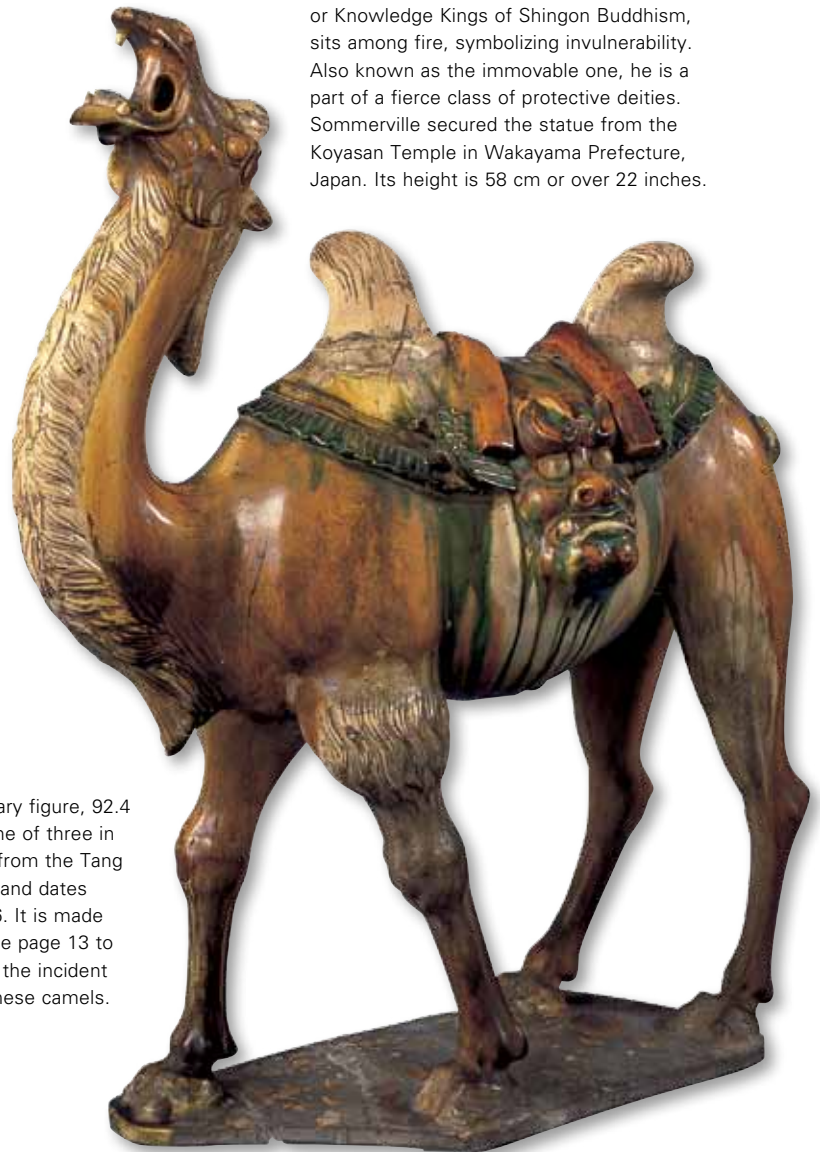
— *Alessandro Pezzati*



Maxwell Sommerville poses with ethnographic pieces from his collection, dressed in some as well.



A 19th century statue of Fudo, one of the Myo-o or Knowledge Kings of Shingon Buddhism, sits among fire, symbolizing invulnerability. Also known as the immovable one, he is a part of a fierce class of protective deities. Sommerville secured the statue from the Koyasan Temple in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan. Its height is 58 cm or over 22 inches.



The camel mortuary figure, 92.4 cm (36 in.) tall, one of three in our collection, is from the Tang Dynasty in China and dates from AD 618–906. It is made of glazed clay. See page 13 to learn more about the incident involving the Chinese camels.



Charles Sheeler photographed the opening exhibition in the Harrison Rotunda in 1915, complete with Oriental porcelains, European tapestries, and Oriental rugs.

George Byron Gordon and the Chinese Collection

George Byron Gordon (1870–1927) was born of Scottish-English ancestry on Prince Edward Island, Canada. After obtaining his Ph.D. at Harvard, he joined the Museum staff in 1903 as Stewart Culin's replacement. He soon impressed University administrators with his work ethic and vision; in 1910 he was made Director.

Gordon oversaw the largest period of growth in the history of the Museum: three wings were added to the original 1899 Museum building, including the Harrison Rotunda, the Coxe Egyptian Wing, and the Administrative Wing. The collections saw a multifold increase, as well as the Museum's fieldwork, from Leonard Woolley in Ur, Iraq, to Louis Shotridge's research in Alaska, and Clarence Fisher's excavations in Egypt. Gordon was the first to establish regular courses in anthropology at the University. He also established *The Museum Journal*.

Gordon was ambitious, tireless, and possessed a keen collector's eye. His interests and expertise ranged widely, but he is today best remembered for bringing together the Chinese collection at the Museum. He was one of the first Americans to appreciate Chinese art. The Harrison Rotunda, now more commonly thought of as the Chinese Rotunda, was the location of a major exhibition in 1915 of 335 Chinese artifacts worth over \$1,000,000. Museum benefactors were asked to purchase specific pieces and, indeed, the best of the million-dollar show is still in the Harrison Rotunda today.

— Alessandro Pezzati



Above, a death mask from the Liao Dynasty in China (AD 916–1125) was created from beaten silver. Top right, according to 29 characters engraved on its base, this bronze, four-sided *fanghu*, or square jar, was taken as booty by Chen Zhang during an attack on the state of Yan during the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC). A pattern inlaid with green malachite decorates the vessel, still visible although much of the original malachite is now lost. Bottom right, a beautiful solid silver bowl and lid from the Song Dynasty (AD 960–1279) are decorated with a floral pattern in gold niello.



The Robert Louis Stevenson Collection

One of the best-loved authors in the English language is Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson suffered from poor health for much of his life, and died in 1894 at the early age of 44. He often traveled for reasons of health. At the age of 38 he first visited the Pacific, spending time in Hawaii, Tahiti, and the Gilbert Islands. In 1890 he settled in the Samoan Islands, where he is buried.

Twenty years after his death, in November 1914 and January 1915, a collection of letters, manuscripts, books, and over 200 objects that Stevenson had collected in the South Seas came up for auction at the Anderson Auction Company of New York. John Wanamaker helped the Museum secure 20 pieces, including three coconut corselets from the Gilbert Islands and a navigation chart made of sticks from the Marshall Islands. The inhabitants of the Gilbert Islands are known from historical sources as having been the most warlike in Micronesia. Their weapons included spears, swords, and small hand weapons made of coconut wood and lined with shark's teeth, which explains the need for the fiber armor.

— Alessandro Pezzati

The Oceanian collection of the Penn Museum includes over 22,000 objects from all the major island groups of the Pacific, insular Southeast Asia, and Australia. Except for a very limited number of archaeological specimens, the collections are ethnographic, representing the material culture of the Pacific peoples from the mid-19th century to the present.



An Angu Funeral in New Guinea

Born in 1919, Ward Goodenough is a world-renowned linguist and anthropologist, who has studied the connection between language and culture in the Pacific islands for half a century. In 1951, when newly arrived at Penn, he traveled to New Guinea to seek out an area of study. The reconnaissance took him to the interior where he attended the funeral of an Angu man in a highland village. In the photograph above, the body is being moved out of the smoking hut to adorn the garden.

— Alessandro Pezzati



This headband from the Marquesas Islands was collected by Stevenson in 1888. A large disk of pearl shell (diameter 16 cm, approximately 6.3 in) overlaid with a carved sheet of sea turtle shell is attached to a band of woven coconut fiber. The openwork carving depicts six human faces and, at the top, two curved elements resembling the points of the large ceremonial fishhooks used to suspend sacrificial victims in temple areas.

This figure of a hornbill duck comes from the Iban people in Sarawak, Borneo. The duck is carved from wood, with decoration in pigments and feathers.



Above, a large suspension hook from Yentshemangua, New Guinea, is 97 cm in height, approximately 3.2 feet. Carved in wood, it depicts a female figure sitting on a wide double-hook crescent, her body covered with representations of scarification. Below, these spearheads were made by the Kimberley people of the Murchison District of Western Australia from bottle glass. The longest is 16 cm in length, approximately 6.3 inches.



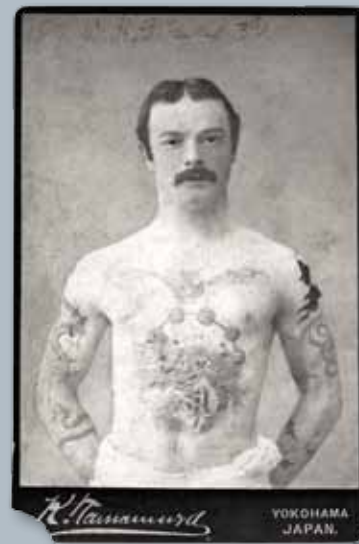
An ivory figure, collected in Fiji but possibly made in Tonga, was a gift of Museum founder William Pepper. Carved before 1875 from sperm whale tooth, drilled holes in the head may have been used for suspension. The left shoulder and arm were broken off and mended with iron pins. This figure is 20 cm or about eight inches in height.

Furness in Borneo and East Asia

William Henry Furness III, scion of a notable Philadelphia family that included architect Frank Furness and Shakespearean scholar Horace Howard Furness, traveled to Borneo on behalf of the Penn Museum in 1896–1897, together with Alfred C. Harrison, Jr., and Hiram M. Hiller. The purpose was to obtain ethnographic collections for the Museum but also to capture and study the orangutan. He brought orangutans back to the Philadelphia Zoo, and spent years trying to teach them to speak.

Over the course of five trips in seven years, Furness, Harrison, and Hiller made their way twice around the world and visited at least 20 countries, mainly in East Asia, including India, Japan, China, Burma, Thailand, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and Russia. They made ethnographic studies of the Dayaks in Borneo, the Nagas in Assam, India, and the Ainu of Japan.

— Alessandro Pezzati



Furness is shown here with tattoos inked during his first trip to Japan, photographed in Yokohama. His trips illustrate the spirit of exploration felt by many who contributed to the Penn Museum in its early days.



John Cotter, Archaeologist of Philadelphia

Though based in Philadelphia, the Penn Museum has often neglected the American past to search for places more distant in time and space. Charles C. Abbott and Henry C. Mercer excavated in Pennsylvania and New Jersey in the 1890s, as did J. Alden Mason and others in later years, but it was not until John Cotter (1911–1999) arrived at Penn in 1960 that Philadelphia became the center of a major historical research project.

Cotter began his career in the 1930s working on prehistoric sites of the American Southwest and Southeast. He is best known for his excavations for the National Park Service at Jamestown, Virginia, and Independence Park, Philadelphia. He taught at Penn from 1960 to 1978, offering the first courses in historical archaeology in the United States. Cotter and his students made a number of salvage excavations around the city, from privies to basements to taverns. He synthesized over 30 years of archaeological research at more than 150 sites in Philadelphia and surrounding regions into *The Buried Past* (with Daniel G. Roberts and Michael Parrington, Penn Press: 1992).

— Alessandro Pezzati

Dating to the early 1970s, the Historical Archaeology Section of the Penn Museum is the oldest such section in the United States. Since the subject matter of Historical Archaeology involves the study of the modern world (AD 1400 to the present), such collections in North America date either to the Colonial Period or to the 19th and 20th centuries.



Top left, John Cotter began teaching at Penn in 1960. His courses were the first offered in the field of historical archaeology. In this photograph, he examines pottery from an excavation. Above, Silver Reef, Utah, was the site of an excavation conducted by Robert L. Schuyler of the Historical Archaeology Section at the Penn Museum. Pictured above is an early photograph of the Elkhorn Saloon on Main Street in Silver Reef, Utah, in the late 19th century. Before it became a ghost town, Silver Reef was a cosmopolitan industrial mining camp which supported a diverse immigrant population, ranging from Irish miners to German saloon keepers to a Chinatown population of almost 100. This information was obtained by archival research, an important part of historical archaeology. Photograph courtesy of the Utah State Historical Society. Below, Penn students excavate at Silver Reef under the direction of Robert Schuyler.



The Physical Anthropology Section curates extensive human and primate skeletal collections from around the world. In total, the Museum holds approximately 10,000 individuals in various states of preservation from both historical and archaeological contexts.



Above, the original labeling system for the Morton crania collection categorizes according to sex and race. Right, known as “The Lovers,” these skeletons were found in a tender embrace during the 1972 season at Hasanlu, a site of archaeological excavation in western Azerbaijan, Iran. The skeletal remains were found in their grave with no other objects, with the exception of a stone slab under the head of the skeleton on the left.



Crania of the Morton collection, like this skull of an Englishman, were measured using a craniostat, which was specifically designed to hold the head steady during radiography.

The Curious Cabinet of Dr. Morton

While the Samuel George Morton crania collection has been part of the Museum since the mid-1960s, it has informed the fields of medicine, biology, and anthropology since the early 1800s. Morton’s special interest in crania may have stemmed from preparation for an 1830 lecture by the German anatomist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, entitled “The Different Forms of the Skull as Exhibited in the Five Races of Men.” Indeed, the controversy surrounding the proposed biological basis of race has followed Morton’s collection ever since, in many cases resulting in incorrect findings. Morton, himself, determined that specimens belonging to the “Native African” group had the smallest cranial capacity of all the geographically circumscribed groups he measured. “Native African” was one of six geographical races identified by Morton: African, Asian, Australian, European, Native American, and Pacific Islander. Morton concluded that intelligence and racial superiority correspond to skull size, a theory for which he has been dubbed the “Father of Scientific Racism.” Indeed, his work was implicated as justification for slavery and racial oppression during the 19th century.

On a more positive note, the development of forensic anthropology is owed, in large part, to the Morton collection. Cranial patterns from the collection reveal that the roundness feature of head shape is more pronounced in northern Europe than it is in southern Africa; likewise, the physical size of crania increases with distance from the equator, in correspondence with cooler climates. CT scans of the collection, available to scholars, will be crucial for future research in this area. More on the Morton collection can be found at the Museum’s ongoing exhibition: *Year of Proof: Making and Unmaking Race*.

— KC Boas

Recent Research on Ancient Remains

Recent research by the Penn Museum's Janet Monge and her colleagues has discredited the long-accepted tale of Ur's sacrificial dead. The early account, expounded by Sir Leonard Woolley, the excavator of Ur in the 1920s and 30s, claimed that processions of royal courtiers were put to death by drinking poison to accompany their king and queen to the afterlife. Research gleaned from CAT (Computed Axial Tomography) scans dispute this claim. The scans generate a 3-dimensional image of the skulls, which allows them to be reconstructed and examined for evidence relating to their cause of death. It was concluded that the scanned individuals died from blunt force trauma to the head. Using forensic analysis, it was determined that the victims were also exposed to heat before burial. This suggests that they were killed before the burial ceremony and preserved using primitive mummification techniques.

— KC Boas



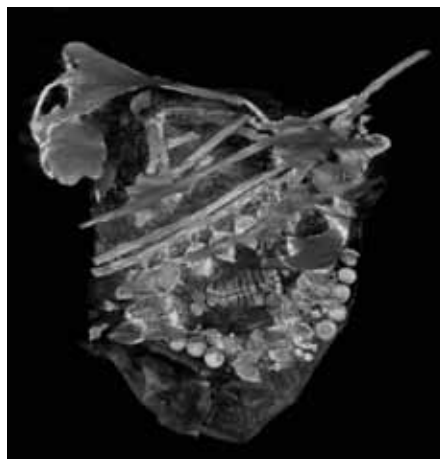
Carleton Coon studied human and animal skeletons. He is shown in his office with two specimens of animals.

The Controversial Carleton Coon

Carleton S. Coon (1904–1981) was a Curator and Professor at the University of Pennsylvania until his retirement in 1963. He had a colorful personality; he did not believe that scholars should be stuffy or pompous. That made him a fan-favorite on the Museum's *What in the World?* television show. Coon was one of the last “generalist” anthropologists—proficient in archaeology, physical anthropology, and cultural anthropology. His main areas of study were human prehistory and issues related to race.

He was controversial as well, and has therefore faded somewhat from scholarly memory. His *The Origin of Races*, written in 1962, in which he posited that the human races had evolved separately, was a racist tract, sometimes cited as justification for segregation.

— Alessandro Pezzati



Janet Monge, Aubrey Baadsgaard, and Richard Zettler conducted research on two preserved skulls from Ur in the Museum collection. On the left is the skull of a female retainer to Queen Puabi as it is displayed in the Museum. On the right is a CAT scan of the same skull. It was discovered that death was caused in both cases by a blow to the back of the head.