

A SHORT HISTORY OF
anthropology
AT PENN



Frank G. Speck (right) and Chief Jasper Blowsnake at Winnebago Camp, Elk River Reservation, Minnesota, 1936. UPM Neg. #148615.

By Igor Kopytoff

THIS BRIEF HISTORY of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania emphasizes three periods: the Department's protohistory in the 19th century, closely associated with the founding of the Museum; the Department's formal beginnings in the early 20th century; and its revival after World War II, which effectively gave rise to the present Department. This survey stops in the early 1960s, when the Department is clearly and fully established and began to expand.

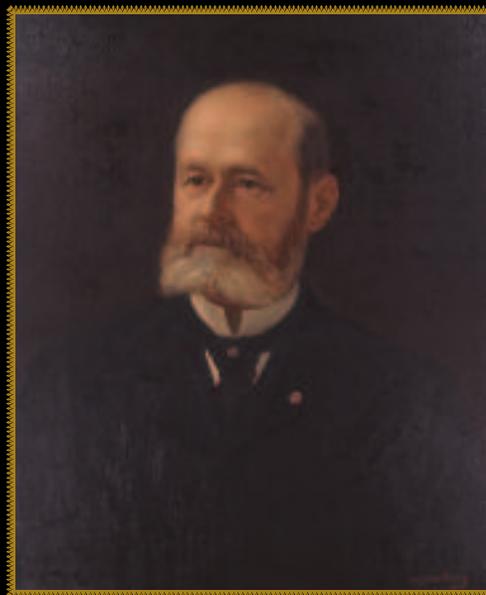
THE MUSEUM AND THE "PROTOHISTORY" OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The Museum was formally founded in 1887, on the initiative of William Pepper, Jr., M.D., University Provost (then the equivalent of today's University President). At this time, the post-Civil War opulent elite of Philadelphia were self-consciously creating the institutional trappings of a late 19th century cultured city. The decade before, Philadelphia had hosted the Centennial Exposition, and over the preceding decades various learned societies had been founded at an accelerating pace. In 1872, the University of Pennsylvania, ambitious to grow, had moved from Center City to West Philadelphia to secure room for expansion. In the 1880s, a privately financed American exploratory expedition to Mesopotamia was organized, inspired partly by the nationalistic wish not to be outdone by France and Britain in this new field of research. By the late 1880s, Pepper had involved the University in a new expedition to Nippur (in modern Iraq). The excavated objects became the property of the University which promised to provide safe storage and exhibit space for them. This resulted in the creation of the Museum, first housed on the third floor of College Hall (1889), and then (from December 1890) in the newly built University Library—today's Fine Arts Library. Finally, between 1893 and 1899, a new building was planned and built on a plot of land bordered by 34th and South Streets (see *Expedition* 47(1):32-37), the earliest part of the present University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The Museum's focus was to be on the ancient civilizations of the Old World and on the collection of their artifacts—an endeavor that carried special appeal for the original sponsors of the project. This quickly broadened to a focus on the archaeology and ethnology of past and present societies in both the Old and New Worlds.

Anthropology—the study of the development of mankind as a whole and in all of its aspects—made its first appearance at Penn at this time (when the field was a discipline, but not yet a profession) in the form of Daniel Garrison Brinton, M.D., a non-practicing physician with strong linguistic and ethnological interests. Throughout the country Brinton was recognized as the "spokesperson for the nascent professional discipline of anthropology." A prestigious armchair scholar and theoretician, Brinton argued that anthropology was the "science of man," subsuming studies of race, language, culture, and archaeology—an Americanist approach to anthropology that would later be labeled "four-field anthropology."

In 1886, Brinton was appointed "Professor of Archaeology and Linguistics" in the University of Pennsylvania's newly created



Oil portrait by M. Dantzig of Daniel Garrison Brinton. UPM Neg. #150246.

graduate school—then known as the “Department of Philosophy” since it granted Ph.D. degrees; literally “Doctor of Philosophy.” According to University Catalogues, Brinton offered a number of courses under the section called “American Archaeology and Linguistics”: Methods of Study in Archaeology, General Outlines of American Archaeology, General Philology of American Languages, and instruction in several American languages (Algonquin, Nahuatl, Maya, and Kechua). Unfortunately, we do not know how active Brinton’s teaching was or how many students, if any, took these courses. In fact, his position may have been merely honorary, recognizing his status as a luminary in the field. We do know that no one majored or minored in this section from 1894 to 1899.

During the Museum’s early years, Brinton served briefly as one of its multiple honorary vice presidents and was appointed in an honorary capacity to its Board of Managers. However, given the nature of his anthropological pursuits (armchair scholarship and writing), his influence on the Museum’s development was relatively minor. He was not personally interested in fundraising and did not participate directly in the collection and curation of materials for the Museum. His interests instead were focused on “investigation” and “didactic instruction,” not the sort of acquisitive endeavors that the Museum’s sponsors envisioned would create a great Museum with national stature.

Arguably, Brinton’s most significant impact came through his sponsorship of Stewart Culin—the son of a Philadelphia merchant who used “a form of self-trained urban participant-observation” to pursue his anthropological interests in the local Chinese community. In 1892, with Brinton’s support, Culin was named the Museum’s first “director.” However, his position, which controlled only the American and Ethnology



Oil portrait by Leopold Seyffert of Sara Yorke Stevenson at age 70. UPM Neg. #151005.

sections, was less powerful than that of later Directors. Instead, most of the Museum’s supervision was directed by Provost Pepper through his confidant Sara Yorke Stevenson. Although Culin’s national reputation grew, his attempts to extend his control over the Museum’s other sections led to conflicts with Stevenson that eventually led to his departure for the Brooklyn Museum in 1903. As a result, it can be said that Brinton failed to institutionalize the discipline of anthropology in the Museum or the University. In the end, his major anthropological contribution to the Museum was the bequest of his extensive library to form the nucleus of the Museum Library’s collection on his death in 1899.

In contrast, the career of Mrs. Sara Yorke Stevenson, an Egyptologist with close ties to Provost Pepper and the social elite of Philadelphia, had a major influence on the early development of the Museum. A driving force behind the founding and the building of the Museum, Stevenson was a successful fundraiser who served as Curator of the Egyptian and Mediterranean sections as well as Secretary and President of the Museum’s Board of Managers. Her main objective was to see the Museum achieve a national stature (somewhat autonomous from the University), and she pursued this by acquiring objects for its collections from around the world.

With regard to the history of anthropology at Penn, however, she is best remembered for her near miss. In 1893, while serving as Vice President of the Jury of Awards for Ethnology at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, she met an up-and-coming young German anthropologist named Franz



Stewart Culin on one of his expeditions to the western United States, ca. 1901. UPM Neg. #140826.



George Byron Gordon on the Koskokwim River, Alaska, 1907. UPM Neg. #143057.

Boas. Encouraged by Frederic Ward Putnam of Harvard University's Peabody Museum, she convinced Provost Pepper to invite Boas for a joint appointment at the Museum and the newly founded Wistar Institute. Unfortunately, Boas's salary demand of \$3,000 per year was deemed unacceptable, and he found his way instead to the American Museum of Natural History and Columbia University. Ironically, most histories of American anthropology now credit Boas and his students with the establishment and dissemination of the four-field approach.

In the early 20th century, the Museum—now housed in its own building—entered a period of transition which saw first the departure of Culin in 1903, and then, the resignation of Stevenson in 1905 over issues of Museum autonomy. The University, now led by Provost Charles Custis Harrison (1894–1911), exerted greater control over the Museum by insisting that it (and not the Museum's Board of Managers) hire and fire curators. The major result of this transition was the elevation of George Byron Gordon from Curator (1903–10) to the Museum's first official Directorship (1910–27).

Gordon—a Canadian who had trained at Harvard in classics and Native American ethnology—saw the Museum as a stage for the academic promotion of anthropology, and with the authorization of the Museum Board, he taught some courses in both anthropology and archaeology and began to hire a number of anthropologically trained scholars.

In 1908, two new anthropologists came to Penn. The first, Edward Sapir—who would go on to become a great linguist and cultural anthropologist—came from Berkeley on a temporary curatorial appointment that lasted two years until his

departure for the National Museum of Canada (Ottawa) where he sought a more research-oriented environment concerned more with publication and less with concrete artifacts. The second was Frank G. Speck, an Americanist ethnologist with some claim to Native American descent, who specialized in the Northeast and had trained with Boas at Columbia University. In 1909, he became the first person to receive a Ph.D. from Penn in Anthropology. Given the title of Assistant Professor, Speck received \$700 a year from the University. In 1910, after taking over Sapir's curatorial appointment he also received a salary of \$800 a year from the Museum.

By this time a Department of Anthropology existed within the Museum, though one did not yet exist among the academic departments of the College. The Museum's Anthropology Department offered eight courses and taught over a hundred graduate and undergraduate students, awarded three Harrison fellowships, and had two Ph.D. candidates. Yet, Gordon was apparently opposed to the formation of a regular academic department within the College—an indication of his view that there was an inherent conflict between the missions of museums and of academic anthropology.

The two anthropology instructors were Speck and Gordon. Speck's singular temperament, however, was incompatible with the rather formal and stiff Gordon. Their relations deteriorated very seriously and very quickly, and in 1911, Speck left the Museum to be appointed to the College. In 1913 he became the Acting Chairman of a formally constituted academic Department of Anthropology with its associated graduate group in the College, and in 1925, he became Chairman and Professor.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The early phase of the formally constituted Department of Anthropology is marked by the presence of several distinguished anthropologists, some of whom are now remembered as pioneers of American Anthropology. Most served briefly and sometimes intermittently, with appointments in the Department or the Museum or both. These included:



Frank G. Speck (right) and Chief Jasper Blowsnake at Winnebago Camp, Elk River Reservation, Minnesota, 1936. UPM Neg. #148615.

Frank G. Speck and George Byron Gordon

The relations between Frank G. Speck and George Byron Gordon remained antagonistic for many years. There are many anecdotes about the feuding between them. The question of how many of them are factually true (as they seem to be in spirit) is the kind of problem that collectors of oral tradition face. Their relationship is dealt with in Winegrad's history of the Museum and Darnell's early history of the Anthropology Department. A typical anecdote that has had word-of-mouth currency over the years may be detailed here in the interests of historic preservation.

After Speck had, practically speaking, detached himself from the Museum, he nevertheless continued to occupy an office just above the Museum Director's office. In his campaign to dislodge Speck, Gordon supposedly put a padlock on the bathroom on Speck's floor, depriving Speck of its use. Speck solved the problem by opening and using his window—the dribbling on the Director's window below quickly resulted in a key being conveyed to Speck. Apocryphal or not, the story is consonant with Speck's personality as it appears in numerous other stories. There was also feuding over the use of classroom space in the Museum by Speck and over Gordon's sequestering of some of Speck's manuscripts. As Darnell suggests, the quarrels had some repercussions in the profession, outside of Penn, for about a decade.



A. Irving Hallowell in 1961. Photo by Jules Schick. UPM Neg. #100853.

Although Gordon's tenure ended unexpectedly with his death in 1927, the bad blood between Speck and Gordon had disconnected the Department of Anthropology from the Museum. This made the role of Anthropology at Penn problematic during the tenure of "Acting Director" Jane M. McHugh (1927–29) and Directors Horace H. Jayne (1929–40) and George C. Vaillant (1941–45). In the contest between

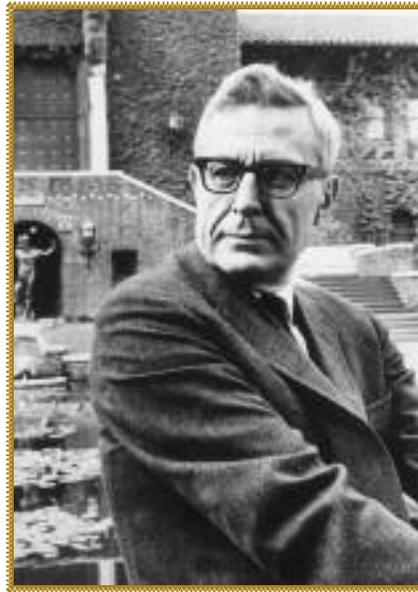
Department and Museum, the more ornamental function of the Museum and its Philadelphia connections worked in its favor. By 1942, the University had decided to let the Department of Anthropology lapse upon the anticipated retirement of Frank Speck in 1950. A preliminary dismantling of the Department began, for example, with Hallowell's departure to Northwestern University in 1942. But after the suicide of Museum Director Vaillant in 1945, the University decided to revitalize the Museum.

AFTER WORLD WAR II

This task was given to Froelich G. Rainey, a Yale-trained archaeologist who had done work in Alaska and the Caribbean and had served with the U.S. State Department during World War II. Rainey became Museum Director in 1947, guiding it for three decades until his retirement in 1977 and presiding over its growth into a major research center. Rainey convinced the University that the Museum could not be intellectually viable without an association with a Department of Anthropology. This led to the Department's revival.

Wilson D. Wallis, an Oxford-trained ethnologist and a Penn Ph.D. (1915), who held various positions between 1911 and 1915 and later founded a major department at the University of Minnesota; D. Sutherland Davidson, a Penn Ph.D. (1928) and an archaeologist and ethnologist specializing in Australia, who held various appointments between 1925 and 1945; Heinrich Wieschhoff (1942–47), an Africanist trained in Germany, who later became an aide to Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General of the United Nations, and died with him in the Congo in 1961; and A. Irving Hallowell, a Penn Ph.D. (1924) and Americanist cultural anthropologist trained under Speck and Boas, who pioneered psychological anthropology, filled various positions at the Museum and in the Department between 1924 and 1942, and then returned to Penn from Northwestern University in 1948 at the time of the Department's revival.

The overall configuration of the Department conformed to the emerging personality of American Anthropology as it was then being shaped most notably by Franz Boas and his followers—a holistic configuration currently expressed in the term "four-fields" (archaeology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, and physical/biological anthropology).



Left, Froelich G. Rainey using an underground periscope during the Penn Museum's excavations at Sybaris, Italy, ca. 1968. UPM Neg. #140893. Middle, Loren C. Eiseley in the Museum's Warden Garden, before 1970. Photo by Frank Ross. UPM Neg. #140724. Right, Ward H. Goodenough (left) and Nakanai informant, Hoskins Peninsula, New Britain, 1954. Photo by Ann Chowning. UPM Neg. #60279.

Loren C. Eiseley, a paleontologist and a Penn Ph.D. (1937) then teaching at Oberlin College, was brought in as Chairman of the Anthropology Department in 1948. Hallowell was invited back from Northwestern, and Ward H. Goodenough, a new Yale Ph.D. trained under Bronislaw Malinowski, Edward Sapir, and George P. Murdock, came from the University of Wisconsin in 1949. A full-scale Department thus emerged with a full-time teaching faculty of four—at a time when there were only about a half-dozen graduate anthropology departments in the U.S., each with normally fewer than a half-dozen faculty members.

Speck continued to teach until his death in 1950, whereupon his courses were handed over to advanced graduate students—J. Louis Giddings, an associate of Rainey's specializing in Alaskan archaeology, and Anthony F. C. Wallace, a cultural anthropologist and a student of Speck's and Hallowell's whose interests included cultural anthropology, Northeastern ethnohistory, and psychology. The Department's offerings were further strengthened by the secondary appointment of Wilton M. Krogman, a Chicago-trained professor of physical anthropology in the Graduate School of Medicine.

Rainey and Eiseley agreed that a close relationship between Museum and Department would further the interests of both. Eventually the University approved a plan whereby every Museum Curator (including the Director) would normally receive an academic appointment in an appropriate academic department and would earn tenure in it. The relevant departments were then Anthropology, Classics, and Oriental Studies, but in time they were followed by such others as American

Civilization and History of Art. The curators were to teach at least one course a year and provide research opportunities and guidance to graduate students. As a matter of reciprocity, department members were given appointments as curators in the Museum. What this relationship meant in practice was not always clear. The Museum supplied at least the bulk of the Department's strength in archaeology, while appointments in the Museum ranged from courtesy appointments to active involvement in Museum activities. The pragmatic meaning of the relationship fluctuated, occasionally causing misunderstandings. Until the 1960s curators identified primarily with the Museum, which budgeted their salaries and sponsored their research activities. Their participation in the Department was essentially peripheral and restricted to teaching. The flavor of these arrangements comes through in Carleton S. Coon's and Rainey's memoirs.

When this arrangement began in 1949 it added three faculty members to the Anthropology Department: Froelich Rainey, the Museum Director; Linton Satterthwaite, a Mesoamericanist Penn Ph.D. (1943); and Carleton S. Coon, a Harvard-trained physical anthropologist and Middle Eastern ethnologist. The only exception to the arrangement was J. Alden Mason, a distinguished American anthropologist, archaeologist, linguist, and Berkeley Ph.D. who became a curator in 1926 but never entered into the new arrangement and never took up an appointment in the Department. In the 1950s, three more curators were added by the Museum and given Departmental appointments: Robert H. Dyson, Jr., a Harvard-trained, Middle Eastern archaeologist who would later go on to serve as Museum Director (1982–94);

William R. Coe, a Penn Ph.D. (1958) and Mesoamerican archaeologist; and Alfred Kidder II, a Harvard-trained Ph.D. and Andean archaeologist.

Rainey initiated a period of extended and ambitious archaeological field research. Much of this was in the Museum's "ancient civilizations" tradition, such as the Tikal project in Guatemala directed by Coe and the Hasanlu project in Iran directed by Dyson. These projects (or "expeditions" as they were often, rather archaically, called) generated many Ph.D. dissertations in the Department of Anthropology. Although Giddings left for Brown University in 1956 to establish an anthropology program and a museum patterned on the Penn model, Penn's Anthropology Department was on the threshold of a major period of expansion in the late 1950s—mirroring an unprecedented expansion and diversification of anthropology as a discipline.

The expansion in the 1960s was supported by University Provost David Goddard (1961–71) and guided by Anthony F. C. Wallace, a Penn Ph.D. (1950) who had held a secondary appointment at Penn in the late 1950s. Wallace came in as the Departmental Chairman in 1961—Eiseley having become University Provost in 1959 and Goodenough having served as Acting Chairman until 1961. In the late 1950s and early 1960s other new faculty members were appointed. Ruben E. Reina, trained at the University of North Carolina under John Honigman, brought a cultural anthropological perspective to the existing Mesoamerican and South American archaeological strengths. Robbins Burling, a Harvard-trained Ph.D. in social relations, bolstered cultural anthropology and linguistics and brought a research interest in Southeast Asia (and later moved to the University of Michigan). Paul Friedrich, from Harvard, enhanced cultural anthropology and linguistics (and then moved to Chicago), while Bernard Wailes, from Cambridge University, initiated Penn's distinctive program in European archaeology and archaeological methods in 1961.

The expansion continued through the 1960s and 70s, with some significant senior appointments. For example, William H. Davenport reinforced the Department's commitment to Oceania and social organization initiated by Goodenough; Dell H. Hymes brought in sociolinguistics; the sociologist Erving Goffman brought his own brand of anthropologically influenced social psychology; and John Witthoft brought a con-

Housing the Department of Anthropology

In the 1940s and 50s, the Department's primary appointees occupied office space in Bennett Hall and did their teaching on Penn's central campus, while curators were housed in offices in the Museum and did most of their teaching there. In the late 1950s, as the University embarked on a building program and various departments were choosing new quarters, the Department decided to get closer to its Museum colleagues. Initially, it moved into temporary and makeshift quarters in the Museum's west wing. In the 1960s, when the Museum began planning a new wing (Rainey's final visible legacy), the Departmental Chairman, Anthony F. C. Wallace, secured a National Science Foundation grant to provide space in it for the Department. In 1970, the Department moved into the new academic wing, its present commodious quarters.

centration on North American archaeology. New junior appointments created new strengths in Africa, North and South America, the Middle East, and—within physical anthropology—paleontology, primatology, and medical anthropology.

Since that time, the Department has reflected the dynamics of the wider field. As professional mobility increased, so did the



Left, Robert H. Dyson, Jr., holding up a gold bowl he discovered at Hasanlu, Iran, in 1958. This image appeared in *Life* magazine, January 12, 1959. Photo by T. Cuyler Young. UPM Neg. #148612. Right, Anthony F. C. Wallace at the Tuscarora Reservation in upstate New York, 2005.

turnover in personnel, specialties, and the number of appointments—permanent, transient, and adjunct. The Department also reflected the administrative dynamics of the University. The dismantling of some departments enriched Anthropology with faculty transfers from American Civilization and Folklore. The number of Ph.D. students also skyrocketed. 🏠



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on the African Frontier and co-edited another on African indigenous slavery.

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