

# **Hermann V. Hilprecht Near East Section records**

**0062**

**Finding aid prepared by Jody Rodgers.**

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Last updated on March 02, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

12/15/2016

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## Table of Contents

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Summary Information.....	3
Biography/History.....	4
Scope and Contents.....	4
Administrative Information.....	5
Controlled Access Headings.....	5
Collection Inventory.....	7
Correspondence.....	7
Curatorial.....	8
Collections.....	10
Publication.....	10
Teaching.....	11
Controversy 1905-1911.....	11

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Hilprecht, Hermann Volrath, 1859-1925
<b>Title</b>	Hermann V. Hilprecht Near East Section records
<b>Call number</b>	0062
<b>Date [inclusive]</b>	1892-1913
<b>Extent</b>	2.7 linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>Hermann Volrath Hilprecht, eminent Assyriologist, arrived in the United States in 1886, summoned by the Sunday School Times to edit their oriental section. He was also appointed Professor of Assyriology at the University of Pennsylvania. The following year, Hilprecht assumed the duties of Curator of the Babylonian and General Semitic section of the Museum of Archaeology at Penn. Hilprecht was the scientific director for the Babylonian expedition to Nippur. In all, he worked on four expeditions, specializing in the interpretation of the cuneiform tablets. The Hermann V. Hilprecht Near East section records consist of five boxes of data. The folders had been previously organized into correspondence, collections, publications and controversy divisions. During processing, the correspondence was placed more appropriately in general, curatorial and publishing subdivisions. The collection folders as well as the majority of the publication data required only placement in chronological order.</p>

## Biography/History

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Hermann Volrath Hilprecht, eminent Assyriologist, was born in 1859 in Hohenerxleben, Anhalt, Germany, the son of Robert and Emilie Hilprecht. His education began at Herzogl, Karls gymnasium in Bernburg, from which he graduated in 1880.

From 1880 to 1884, Hilprecht studied theology, oriental philology and law at the University of Leipzig attaining a Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1893. Additional degrees included an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the University of Pennsylvania and a Doctor of Laws from Princeton University. Hilprecht arrived in the United States in 1886, summoned by the Sunday School Times to edit their oriental section. He was also appointed Professor of Assyriology at the University of Pennsylvania. The following year, Hilprecht assumed the duties of Curator of the Babylonian and General Semitic section of the Museum of Archaeology at Penn.

Hilprecht was the scientific director for the Babylonian expedition to Nippur. In all, he worked on four expeditions, specializing in the interpretation of the cuneiform tablets, of which he was a gifted scholar. Hilprecht was well-known to exhibit an elitist attitude and was highly critical of other researchers, namely John P. Peters who led the initial expedition to Nippur.

Peters later accused Hilprecht of misrepresenting items as "finds" that Hilprecht had in fact purchased igniting what became a controversy of major proportions for the museum and delight for the Philadelphia press. Already known to seek acclaim and aggrandizement, Hilprecht sought and obtained support from scholars in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Other learned men of science countered, denegrating some of his translations. The trustees of the University of Pennsylvania were forced to review the case and, in 1905, found Hilprecht (and ultimately the reputation of the museum) not guilty of wrongdoing. The conflict took its toll on Sara Yorke Stevenson, museum director, who resigned. Hilprecht himself resigned in January 1911, amid conflict with George Byron Gordon.

Hilprecht was the recipient of many honors, among them the Lucy Wharton Drexel medal presented by the museum in 1902. In 1909, he was honored with the presentation of a twenty-fifth anniversary commemorative volume assembled by noted friends and scholars. Upon his death in 1925, Hilprecht presented the museum with his collection of over 3500 cuneiform tablets presented to him by the Sultan in recognition of his work in Nippur.

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## Scope and Contents

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Hermann Volrath Hilprecht, eminent Assyriologist, was born in 1859 in Hohenerxleben, Anhalt, Germany, the son of Robert and Emilie Hilprecht. His education began at Herzogl, Karls gymnasium in Bernburg, from which he graduated in 1880.

From 1880 to 1884, Hilprecht studied theology, oriental philology and law at the University of Leipzig attaining a Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1893. Additional degrees included an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the University of Pennsylvania and a Doctor of Laws from Princeton University. Hilprecht

arrived in the United States in 1886, summoned by the Sunday School Times to edit their oriental section. He was also appointed Professor of Assyriology at the University of Pennsylvania. The following year, Hilprecht assumed the duties of Curator of the Babylonian and General Semitic section of the Museum of Archaeology at Penn.

Although sparking controversy, Hilprecht was the scientific director of the Nippur expedition and was known world-wide for his expertise in cuneiform translation.

The Hermann V. Hilprecht Near East section records consist of five boxes of data. The folders had been previously organized into correspondence, collections, publications and controversy divisions. During processing, the correspondence was placed more appropriately in general, curatorial and publishing subdivisions. The collection folders as well as the majority of the publication data required reprocessing into chronological order. Portions of the data labeled as "collections," actually reflected curatorial duties and concerns and placed in a new series. The items deemed as "controversy" were in fact part of several conflicts spawned by Hilprecht.

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## Administrative Information

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## Controlled Access Headings

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### PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Clay, A.T. (Andrew Tobias), 1866-1925
- Coxe, Jr., Eckley B., b. 1872-d. 1916
- Fisher, Clarence Stanley, 1876-1941
- Gordon, G. B. (George Byron), 1870-1927
- Haynes, John Henry
- Hilprecht, Hermann Volrath, 1859-1925
- Houston, Samuel F., 1867-1952
- McHugh, Jane
- Pepper, William, 1843-1898
- Peters, John P. (John Punnett), 1852-1921
- Stevenson, Sara Yorke, 1847-1921

**SUBJECT(S)**

- Antiquities
- Casts
- Sumerian cuneiform

## Collection Inventory

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### CORRESPONDENCE.

	Box
Professional 1892-1895.	1
Professional 1896-1908.	1
General curatorial 1892-1907.	1
General curatorial 1908-1911.	1
A.T. Clay-curatorial 1900-1910.	1
A.T. Clay-Museum administration 1900-1910.	1
Sara Y. Stevenson 1892-1904.	1
Fritz Hommel 1898-1910.	1
Personal 1893-1909.	1
"Thank you" for promotional book copies 1893-1906.	1
Acquisitions and gifts 1894-1909.	1
Antiquities offered by dealers-declined 1894-1899.	1
Questions from the public 1894-1910.	1
Requests for cast photos, slides 1895-1910.	1

In-House-Board requests, memos 1896-1911.	1
Items offered for sale 1898-1910.	1
University personnel 1900-1908.	1
University library 1900-1906.	1
Clarence S. Fisher compensation 1903-1904.	1

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**CURATORIAL.**

	Box
Casts ordered 1890-1892.	2
Casts/molds purchased 1890-1899.	2
Casts sold/gifted by museum 1890.	2
Estimates for work and supplies 1891-1910.	2
Casts for sale-other museums 1890-1895.	2
Section reports 1898-1910.	2
Objects borrowed by Univ. personnel 1889-1914.	2
Showcase Inventory-Inscribed bowls 1904.	3
Tablet labels undated+1907.	2
Gordon inventory Babylonian section 1910-1914.	2



Gordon inventory notebook (Pgs.1-62) undated.	2
Gordon inventory notebook (Pgs.63-124) undated.	2
Gordon catalogue of tablet numbers-undated.	2
Showcase Catalogue 1-2000.	2
Showcase Catalogue 2001-4499.	2
Showcase Catalogue 4500-5999.	2
Showcase Catalogue 6000-8359.	2
Showcase Catalogue 8360-10364.	2
Showcase Catalogue 10365-12999.	2
Showcase Catalogue 13000-14999 (Not included).	3
Showcase Catalogue 15000-18025.	3
Showcase Catalogue 18026-20000.	3
Tablets loaned to Museum staff 1911-1917.	3
Cuneiform translations undated.	3
Early drafts of cast lists-undated.	3
Final cast lists-undated.	3
Office and catalogue labels-undated.	3
Lantern slide lists-undated.	3
A.T. Clay tablet publication catalogue-undated.	3

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Tablet Inventories-undated.	3
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Photographs and slides for sale-undated.	3
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Miscellaneous inventories-undated.	3
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**COLLECTIONS.**

Box

Shemtab Inventory 1888.	3
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Shemtab Collection acquisition 1889-1899.	3
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Armenian objects-H.de Morgan dealer 1890.	3
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Antiquities purchased from dealers 1892.	3
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Syrian Cave Specimen collection 1892.	3
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Khabaza Inventory-undated.	3
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Frishmuth Arab Amulets-undated.	3
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Pepper Collection-undated.	3
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**PUBLICATION.**

Box

Correspondence-printing and publishing 1892-1901.	3
Bills, receipts 1892-1910.	3
Requests 1892-1909.	3
Correspondence with Penn administration 1893-1910.	3
Correspondence with Museum staff 1893-1910.	4
Promotions and notebook 1900-1905.	4
Hilprecht Anniversary volume 1909.	4
Journal articles-Zeitschrift fur Assyriologie.	4
Letters to Board.	4

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**TEACHING.**

	Box
Horter exam 1894.	4

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**CONTROVERSY 1905-1911.**

	Box
Coxe Fund publication 1886-1887.	4

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C.S. Fisher-Hilprecht 1904.	4
Coxe Fund publication 1904-1908.	4
Peters-Hilprecht investigation documents 1905.	4
Peters-Hilprecht 1905-1906 (1 of 2).	4
Peters-Hilprecht 1905-1906 (2 of 2).	4
Jastrow-McClellan correspondence 1908.	4
Newspaper accounts Hilprecht-Barton disagreement 1910.	4
"The So-called Peters-Hilprecht Controversy" 1908.	5
Myhrman Assistant Curator hiring 1910-1911.	5
Hilprecht Investigation 1910-1913.	5
Sara Y. Stevenson notes on Hilprecht matters 1905.	5
Sara Y. Stevenson letters on Hilprecht matters 1905-1907.	5
Sara Y. Stevenson letters on her resignation 1905.	5
Resignations-board members 1905, 1910.	5
Stevenson-McHugh correspondence following her resignation 1905-1906.	5
Hilprecht resignation 1910.	5
Hilprecht-Gordon accusations 1910.	5
Scholar and clergyman support for Hilprecht 1910-1911.	5
Hilprecht appeal correspondence 1911.	5

