

Stewart Culin Cuban expedition records

1101

Finding aid prepared by Jody Rodgers.

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University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
Creator	Culin, Stewart, 1858-1929
Title	Stewart Culin Cuban expedition records
Call number	1101
Date [inclusive]	1900-1902
Extent	0.15 linear feet (the expedition records consist of three folders of documents plus 10 negative envelopes of photographs)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>In 1901, Stewart Culin, Curator Section of American and Prehistoric Archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology traveled to Cuba to investigate the existence of a wild tribe in the mountains of Eastern Cuba. Culin's journey, which lasted a few weeks, took him to Havana and points in Eastern Cuba including El Caney, Mata, Yara, Yateras, Jara, Punta Maisi, Pueblo Viejo, El Caney, El Cobre, Daiquiri, Santiago de Cuba and Guantanamo. The collection consists of 0.1 linear feet including correspondence, field notes, financial records, and photographs. The field notes contain some drawings of musical instruments and utensils with notes on Spanish vocabulary and pronunciation. The photographs depict the harbor and buildings of Havana as well as the native population of Eastern Cuba playing musical instruments and photos of Jose Almenares Arguello, age 112, and his home.</p>

Cite as:

[Item name]. Box [Box number]. Stewart Culin Cuban expedition records. Penn Museum Archives. Accessed [Date accessed].

Biography/History

Born in Philadelphia in 1858, Stewart Culin joined his father's business following graduation from Nazareth Hall. In the course of his duties, Culin regularly came in contact with Chinese community members, learned to speak Chinese, and developed an interest in Chinese medicine and ancient Chinese games. In the course of studying the games of Korea, Japan, and India, in addition to China, he became an expert on games of the world and published and lectured on this subject. Culin also studied American folklore and was a founding member of the American Folklore Society and President of the national society.

Largely self-taught, Culin benefited from the friendship and mentoring of Daniel Brinton and Frank H. Cushing. Culin shared an interest in Chinese medical practices with Brinton, first American Professor of Anthropology, at the University of Pennsylvania. Culin served as Recording Secretary of The Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of which Brinton was President. Brinton's ideas about museums influenced Culin's vision of the museum as place to display and study cultural objects.

Culin served as Secretary of the Board of Managers of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology from 1890 to 1894, as well as Secretary of the University Archaeological Association during the years 1890 to 1897. He became Director of the Museum, Section of General Ethnology in 1892. He held this position until 1899 and served as Curator, Sections of Asia and General Ethnology and Curator, Section of American And Prehistoric Archaeology until 1903 when he resigned from the museum.

In 1901, Culin traveled to Cuba to study the existence of a pure native type. The trip lasted a few weeks, but Culin returned with photographs and notes related to native Indians in Cuba. Culin also traveled extensively in the American Southwest, California, and the Northwest Coast. He completed the work of Frank H. Cushing, pioneer Ethnologist, on the games of the North American native population, including the Zuni and Navajo tribes and the Pomo of Northern California.

Culin was the founding Curator of Ethnology at The Brooklyn Museum, serving from 1903 until his death in April 1929. In addition to his interest in Native American and Asian culture, Culin also collected costumes, textiles, and decorative arts from Africa and Eastern Europe. The Brooklyn Museum received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1993 to preserve and make available the Culin Archival Collection.

Scope and Contents

The Stewart Culin Cuban expedition records consist of correspondence, field notes, photographs and some financial records from Stewart Culin's trip to Cuba in 1901. They are housed in three folders of documents plus 10 negative envelopes of photographs. The records are organized chronologically. The correspondence is dated from 9/12/1900 to 6/9/1902 with the bulk dated from the year of the expedition. The field records are dated from May 20, 1901 to July 1, 1901 with additional undated entries. The financial records are dated from June and July of 1901. The photographs are not dated individually. The correspondence contains letters of introduction, letters about shipments of artifacts, thank you notes, questions about artifacts and the height of the lighthouse at Cape Maisi. One letter relates to notes of correction which are also present. These notes refer to Culin's proofs from the expedition and advise him to make changes because the text of the proofs "might do harm to persons mentioned under the new regime." The letters include contacts from J.E. Duerden of Johns Hopkins University; Jose Bofill, the Director of the Santiago Museo y Biblioteca in Havana; Josiah Monroe of The Juragua Iron Company Limited of Philadelphia; Robert Mason; Lawrence C. Carr; Theodore Brooks; and T.L. Scott of the Office of the Military Governor of the Island of Cuba.

The field notes, in two small notebooks, detail day-by-day expenses and contain some pencil drawings of musical instruments, utensils, and objects. Culin lists the Spanish vocabulary for the objects and includes notes on pronunciation. Some drawings appear to be line maps. Several pages are loose in the folder and appear to be torn out of the notebooks. These are undated and contain lists, names, and drawings. A typed paragraph, also undated, tells about the battleship "San Pablo" renamed "Soberano" after it came to Havana.

Financial records contain bills from a hotel and local supplier, a "Billete de libre transito", other receipts, and a group of business cards from local shops and merchants.

The photographs are contained in four folders. The Archives has not determined if the negatives are a part of the collection. The prints depict Western Cuba, including Havana and the harbor, Eastern Cuban views, and the Indian residents including Jose Almenares de Arguello, and photographs from the Cuban Exhibit, Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, New York; Nassau; The Bahamas; New Providence; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Administrative Information

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Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Field notes
- Photographic prints

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Havana (Cuba)

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Culin, Stewart, 1858-1929

Collection Inventory

RECORDS, 1900-1902.

	Box
Correspondence 1900-1902.	1
Field notes 1901.	1
Financial records 1901.	1

PHOTOGRAPHS, 1901.

	Box
Western Cuba-Havana.	1
Eastern Cuba-Indians.	1
Eastern Cuba-views (1 of 4).	1
Eastern Cuba-views (2 of 4).	1
Eastern Cuba-views (3 of 4).	1
Eastern Cuba-views (4 of 4).	1
Miscellaneous.	1