

Sara Yorke Stevenson Egyptian Section records

0057

Finding aid prepared by Jody Rodgers.

Last updated on March 02, 2017.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

July 2011

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
Creator	Stevenson, Sara Yorke, 1847-1921
Title	Sara Yorke Stevenson Egyptian Section records
Call number	0057
Date [inclusive]	1890-1907
Extent	0.8 linear foot (the egyptian section sara yorke stevenson records consist of two archival boxes of correspondence, collection information and financial records)
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Sara Yorke Stevenson, the first curator of the Egyptian section of the Free Museum of Science and Art, was a vital force in the creation and success of the museum. Along with William Pepper, Stevenson worked tirelessly through the Department of Archaeology and Paleontology and the American Exploration Society to gain subscriptions, build the Museum and acquire a collection of antiquities. In addition to being the first curator of the Egyptian Section, Stevenson was the Secretary of the Board of Managers and of the American Exploration Society. She served as President of the Board from 1904 to 1905. While Stevenson was performing the dual role of Secretary of the Board of Managers and Curator, the museum relied on the London-based Egypt Exploration Fund to provide a share of the findings of archaeologist W.M. Flinders Petrie to the museum. Stevenson cultivated a relationship with Flinders Petrie and well connected Egyptians such as Yacoub Artin Pasha. Mrs Stevenson traveled to Egypt in 1898 cementing connections and investigating other</p>

possible sites for exploration. The Egyptian Section Sara Yorke Stevenson records consist of two archival boxes of correspondence, collection information and financial records.

Biography/History

Sara Yorke Stevenson, the first curator of the Egyptian section of the Free Museum of Science and Art, was a vital force in the creation and success of the museum. Along with William Pepper, Stevenson worked tirelessly through the Department of Archaeology and Paleontology and the American Exploration Society to gain subscriptions, build the Museum and acquire a collection of antiquities. William Pepper did not live to see the the completion of the Free Museum of Science and Art. It opened in 1899 under the Board of Managers whose President was Daniel Baugh. Three curators handled the administrative details within their respective departments: Herman Hilprecht was in charge of the Babylonian Section, Sara Yorke Stevenson ran the Egyptian and Mediterranean Sections, and Stewart Culin was director for the American and other (African, Pacific, Far East) Sections. The Curators also had other functions; Sara Yorke Stevenson became Secretary of the Museum in 1901. When she became President of the Board in 1904, another curator, William H. Furness, became Secretary. However, during the controversy over Hilprecht's scholarship that followed shortly after, both Stevenson and Furness resigned.

While Stevenson was performing the dual role of Secretary and Curator, the museum contributed to the London-based Egypt Exploration Fund who provided a share of the findings of W.M. Flinders Petrie to the museum. Stevenson cultivated a relationship with Flinders Petrie along with well connected Egyptians such as Yacoub Artin Pasha. This served the American Exploration Society and the museum well. Mrs Stevenson traveled to Egypt in 1898 cementing connections and investigating other possible sites for exploration.

Sara Yorke Stevenson was born and spent her early years in Paris. Her parents Edward and Sarah Hanna Yorke were natives of Louisiana. When her parents returned to North America, Sara stayed on in Paris in boarding school eventually joining them in Mexico where her father had interests. Following the death of her brother during some violence in Mexico, the family moved to Vermont. Sarah left Vermont following her father's death to live with relatives in Philadelphia. She quickly became a member of the Furness-Mitchell intellectual group and an important member of several civic groups. The Mitchell-Furness group was interested in anthropology among other intellectual topics. Stevenson was known as an "armchair archaeologist or anthropologist" and never carried out her own fieldwork. However, she analyzed the information that others had collected and gave lectures on archaeology and the newly emerging discipline of museology. Among her many activities, Stevenson was a founder and officer of the University Archaeological Association, the American Folklore Society and the American Exploration Society.

Married in Philadelphia to attorney Cornelius Stevenson, Sara Yorke had one son. After resigning from the Museum, she wrote a column for the Philadelphia Press and was instrumental in the early development of the field of museology.

Scope and Contents

Sara Yorke Stevenson, the first curator of the Egyptian section of the Free Museum of Science and Art, was a vital force in the creation and success of the museum. Along with William Pepper, Stevenson worked tirelessly through the Department of Archaeology and Paleontology and the American Exploration Society to gain subscriptions, build the Museum and acquire a collection of antiquities. William Pepper did not live to see the the completion of the Free Museum of Science and Art. It opened in 1899 under the Board of Managers whose President was Daniel Baugh. Three curators handled the administrative details within their respective departments: Herman Hilprecht was in charge of the Babylonian Section, Sara Yorke Stevenson ran the Egyptian and Mediterranean Sections, and Stewart Culin was director for the American and other (African, Pacific, Far East) Sections. The Curators also performed other functions; Sara Yorke Stevenson became Secretary of the Museum in 1901 and when she became President of the Board in 1904, another curator, William H. Furness, became Secretary. However, during the controversy over Hilprecht's scholarship that followed shortly after, both Stevenson and Furness resigned.

While Stevenson was performing the dual role of Secretary of the Board and Curator, the museum relied on the London-based Egypt Exploration Fund who provided a share of the findings of W.M. Flinders Petrie to the museum. Stevenson cultivated a relationship with Flinders Petrie and well connected Egyptians such as Yacoub Artin Pasha. This served the American Exploration Society and the museum well. Mrs Stevenson traveled to Egypt in 1898 cementing connections and investigating other possible sites for exploration.

The Egyptian Section Sara Yorke Stevenson records consist of two archival boxes of correspondence, collections information and financial records. Some letters are dated after Stevenson's resignation in 1905 and some letters to and from Stevenson are in French. The information has been placed in chronological order during processing.

A highlight of the correspondence series is communication between Sara Yorke Stevenson and W.M. Flinders Petrie, archaeologist and Egyptologist. Flinders Petrie, at the time, was excavating in Egypt for the Egypt Exploration Fund as well as the American Exploration Society. The letters are hand-written and have been transcribed. Both the hand-written and typed copies are in the folders. Topics include allotting funds to Flinders Petrie to secure items directly for the museum, his agreement to do so, the specific types of antiquities desired, talk of donations of money, money sent to Flinders Petrie directly, how well the museum is doing and gossip about the Egypt Exploration Society.

Stevenson's Egyptian trip records include official documents, calling cards, letters of introduction, ephemera and also a "list of monuments to be recovered from Tanis by the American Exploration Society" written in Sara Yorke Stevenson's hand.

The Collections series highlight is a bound catalogue, dated July 1, 1890, titled "Catalogue of the Egyptian Antiquities in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania." The items are divided into those "sent by the Egypt Exploration Fund", those sent by W.M. Flinders Petrie in January 1890, additional donations from Flinders Petrie, items deposited by Stuart Culin and gifts presented by donors E.W. Lehman, Mrs. Bloomfield Moore, John Harrison, John Morris, and Dr. Thomas Biddle. Another hand-written list is in fragile condition. This "Catalogue of the Egyptian Collection, Chicago Exhibit" lists all items exhibited by the Museum at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. There are also several lists of gifts to the collection in Stevenson's hand.

The financial series includes reports from Helen S. Ellis, Treasurer of the Egyptian section. There are disbursement and contribution lists with balances and some receipts.

***** Box one holds thirteen folders. Administrative correspondence is found in folders one and two. The letters in folder one, spanning 1891 to 1894, consist of communications to Stuart Culin and Talcott Williams from Sara Y. Stevenson. There are letters to Stevenson from Samuel F. Houston. Many of the letters from Williams do not have a year date. Folder two holds letters from 1895 to 1905. They include letters from Sara Y. Stevenson to Stuart Culin and Charles Rosher. Communication is in French with M. Amelineau and Victor Loret. Additional letters are from Arthur Evans of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Sir William Garstin, Under Secretary of State for Public Works, Cairo; Edwin A. Barber, Curator, Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art and M.S. Pritchard, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The next four folders, three to six, hold communications between Sara Yorke Stevenson and W.M. Flinders Petrie, archaeologist and Egyptologist, excavating in Egypt for the Egypt Exploration Fund as well as the American Exploration Society. The letters to Sara Y. Stevenson are hand-written and have been transcribed as have those by Stevenson. Both the hand-written and typed copies are in the folders. Topics include allotting funds to Flinders Petrie to secure items directly for the museum, his agreement to do so, specific types of antiquities desired, talk of donations of money, money sent to Flinders Petrie directly, how well the museum is doing and gossip about the Egypt Exploration Society. Folder seven holds letters to Sara Yorke Stevenson from Theodor Graf. Graf dealt in Oriental art, manuscripts and papyri in Vienna. The letters concern objects for purchase for the museum. Folder eight holds the communication from Yacoub Artin Pasha to Sara Yorke Stevenson. Pasha's letters are in French. In addition to the letters there is a hand-written biography of Pasha in Mrs. Stevenson's hand, also in French. A small card of introduction presents Stevenson to Yacoub Artin Pasha. The next three folders contain correspondence related to Stevenson's trip to Egypt in 1898. Folder nine holds preliminary materials necessary for the trip such as her appointment as a Special Commissioner of the American Exploration Society to represent its interests, a letter of introduction to the administrator of the Bibliotheque National and a letter from the Department of State introducing Mrs. Stevenson to the Agent and Consul-General in Cairo. Folder ten holds a letter from John Addison Porter, Secretary to President William McKinley which serves as a letter of introduction for Sara Y. Stevenson to the Diplomatic and Consular Officers of the United States. Additionally, there are calling cards for various dignitaries in Egypt, a small note that may be a Valentine and a letter from Charles F. Warwick, Mayor of Philadelphia stating that Mrs. Stevenson is a "Member of the Board of Trustees of the Philadelphia Museums" designated to visit Europe in the interest of the Museums. Folder eleven contains correspondence and ephemera from the Egyptian trip in 1898. The letters are from George Reisner, Thomas Skelton Harrison, Victor Loret, James S. Cotton and Yacoub Artin Pasha. Mrs. Stevenson's responses are included. An undated communication may be meant for William Pepper. The ephemera include calling cards and various receipts. There is also a "list of monuments to be recovered from Tanis by the American Exploration Society" written in Sara Yorke Stevenson's hand. Box two holds fourteen folders. Folder one contains correspondence with Armand de Potter and his wife Aimee de Potter. The letters concern the objects in his collection and the display of the objects at the museum. There is a list written in Stevenson's hand of the objects exhibited from the collection. A letter dated 4/4/1907, informs the museum that under the terms of de Potter's Will the museum cannot hold the collection indefinitely. The letter asks if the museum would like to purchase the collection. The de Potter collection eventually was purchased by the Brooklyn Museum. Folder two concerns communication from W. Max Muller. The letters deal with purchases for the Egyptian collection and translations of inscriptions. The Brooklyn Museum also writes to Stevenson to ask about Muller and his use of funds. In folder three are letters to Sara Y. Stevenson from Hermann Ranke. In addition, the "second statement"

given by Dr. Ranke in the controversy over Dr. Hilprecht's scholarship is in this folder. A reprint of an article by Ranke from Records of the Past, titled, "Business House of Murashu Sons of Nippur" is included.

Folder four contains communications between Sara Y. Stevenson and Thomas Skelton Harrison. There is also a copy, written in Stevenson's hand of a letter from M. Wanner to Harrison. Justus C. Strawbridge writes to Stevenson indicating he is happy that Harrison is showing interest.

Folder five contains letters from Dillwyn Parrish to Stevenson concerning his donation of objects to the collection. There are letters to John Sparhawk, Jr. relating to the donation of objects and also to an annuity and two agreements, 1900 and 1906, about the terms of the donation of the Dillwyn Parrish Collection. Shipping receipts are also present.

Folder six holds letters to the museum regarding a collection of "ancient stone implements" discovered by Seton-Karr in the Egyptian desert. There is a letter from the Smithsonian Institution regarding the implements. Three small cards, either from exhibits or calling cards are also placed in this folder.

Contained in folder seven are letters from John Wanamaker and Herman Lawford regarding objects purchased for the museum at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. There is a reply from Sara Yorke Stevenson and loose papers with lists of figures in her hand. Shipping and expense receipts are also included.

The collections information begins with folder eight holding a Catalogue dated July 1, 1890. This list is bound and titled "Catalogue of the Egyptian Antiquities in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania." The items numbered from 1 to 228 were "sent by the Egypt Exploration Fund." Items numbered 229 to 464 are from the collection sent by W.M. Flinders Petrie in January 1890. Additional donations from Flinders Petrie are listed from February 1893 and numbered 642 to 667. Items deposited by Stuart Culin are numbered 468 to 472. Additional listed items were presented by donors E.W. Lehman, Mrs. Bloomfield Moore, John Harrison, John Morris, and Dr. Thomas Biddle.

Folder nine holds hand-written material that is in fragile condition. This "Catalogue of the Egyptian Collection, Chicago Exhibit" lists all items exhibited by the Museum at the World's Columbian Exhibition under the following headings: "Sepulchral series", "Fayim", "Tell el Amarna", "Delta", "Specimens of Stone-work", and "Mediterranean."

In folder ten are undated lists in Sara Yorke Stevenson's hand. They include a list of Mrs. Thomas A. Scott's gifts, an Inventory of Egyptian Antiquities, a list of photographs, and other lists, some of which may have come from Stevenson's trip to Egypt in 1898.

Folder eleven holds a bound volume of translations by Max Muller. This is accompanied by several small note cards with writing and descriptions. A paper dated December 8, 1900 translates the text on a "Stela of limestone" from Abydos or Thebes.

Folders twelve and thirteen hold correspondence and lists related to the donation of artifacts to the museum, mostly from the Egypt Exploration Fund. Folder twelve also has a report, dated 1901, which talks about the material donated by Flinders Petrie and the Egyptian Exploration Fund from Abydos. There is a list of the contents of "18 cases" dated September 26, 1901, without further identification. A newspaper clipping from the Philadelphia Times, April 30, 1894, is in fragile condition and encased in mylar. There is a photocopy for reference.

In folder thirteen is a letter of thanks to Sara Y. Stevenson and the American Exploration Society for gifts to the museum dated 10/24/1907 and signed by B.F. Pepper. Other letters are from Armand de Potter, Joseph Cotton, Emily Patterson and Edward Robinson. Stevenson writes to Jane McHugh about the acquisitions. There are also two lists of objects.

The financial information is contained in folder fourteen in box two. It includes reports from Helen S. Ellis, Treasurer of the Egyptian section. There are disbursement and contribution lists with balances and some receipts.

Administrative Information

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July 2011

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Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

For information on the early records of the Museum see:

Board of Managers records

For information on the Egypt Exploration Fund see:

Egypt Exploration Fund records

For further information on Sara Yorke Stevenson see:

Sara Yorke Stevenson papers

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- American Exploration Society.
- Egyptian Exploration Fund.

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Egypt

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Flinders Petrie, William M.
- Muller, W. Max, 1862 to 1919
- Parrish, Dillwyn, 1894-1941
- Pepper, William, 1843-1898
- Ranke, Hermann, 1878-1953
- Stevenson, Sara Yorke, 1847-1921
- Wanamaker, John, 1838-1922

SUBJECT(S)

- Antiquities
- Archaeology--History

Collection Inventory

CORRESPONDENCE, 1890-1908.

	Box
Administrative 1891-1893.	1
Administrative 1895-1905.	1
W.M. Flinders Petrie (1 of 4), 1890-1895.	1
W.M. Flinders Petrie (2 of 4), 1895-1897.	1
W.M. Flinders Petrie (3 of 4), 1897-1900.	1
W.M. Flinders Petrie (4 of 4), 1900-1906.	1
Theodor Graf 1894-1904.	1
Yacoub Artin Pasha 1897-1906.	1
Egypt Trip (1 of 3), 1897.	1
Egypt Trip (2 of 3), 1898.	1
Egypt Trip (3 of 3), 1898.	1
Khedive of Egypt 1898.	1
William Pepper (in Stevenson's absence) 1898. .	1
Armand de Potter 1893-1907.	2

Max Muller 1898-1904.	2
Hermann Ranke 1904-1905.	2
Thomas Skelton Harrison 1902.	2
Dillwyn Parrish 1900-1908.	2
H.W. Seton-Karr 1900-1904.	2
John Wanamaker 1904-1905.	2

COLLECTIONS, 1890-1907.

	Box
Catalogue-Egyptian Collection, 1890.	2
Catalogue-World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.	2
Undated Inventory and Object lists.	2
Papyri translations, 1900.	2
Artifact donations (1 of 2), 1891-1900.	2
Artifact donations (2 of 2), 1902-1907.	2
Ghizeh Museum Greek Casts, 1893-1899.	
Henderson Khursi, 1898.	

FINANCIAL, 1892-1897..

**Box
2**