

Meteorite to Planetarium

The co-operation that exists between scientific and educational institutions in this city as well as those throughout the world, in the exchange of information, publications, materials for study, and in collaboration in research projects, is exemplified by the Museum's action recently in making a long-term loan of a meteorite to the Adler Planetarium.

The Planetarium had lacked an example, and urgently needed one to round out its exhibits pertaining to celestial phenomena. The Museum, having a collection which, in number of falls represented, nearly 800, is the most complete in the world, was able and pleased to fulfill the need of its sister institution. The specimen sent to the Planetarium is a 1,015-pound mass of fused iron and rock from Meteor Crater, Arizona. It fell some 50,000 years ago, scientists estimate.

SCRIMSHAWS

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The word "scrimshaw" originally applied to all trinkets made by whalers of the early nineteenth century out of the teeth or the bone of whales. Nowadays the term, as a noun, usually refers specifically to the teeth engraved by the whalers. The origin of the word is unknown, but scrimshawing was born of necessity during the months of unimaginable monotony and loneliness on long voyages. None of the recreational facilities now enjoyed by sailors were available to these men, nor was any amusement considered necessary to their well-being. They might cruise six to eight months out of sight of land, waiting at times three or four months without seeing whale or sail. Many of their voyages in the Pacific lasted for three or four years.

As sentimental thoughts of home traveled with the men on their long journeys, it was little wonder that so many articles for use by women were made. Carved teeth for bric-a-brac, bodkins, yarn-winders, combs, and toys were made from the sperm whale's large teeth. It was, no doubt, thoughts of New England pies that had an influence on the production of so many pie-crimpers, or jaggling wheels.

FAVORITE TROPHY

Though the lower jaw of the sperm whale brought not a cent of profit to the thrifty Yankee shipowner, it was always heaved aboard. It was an inviolable prerogative for all to share, from the captain to the cabin-boy. While the ivory of whale teeth was not the only medium used by the artist (other material being tortoise shell, mother-of-pearl, coconut shells, even emu egg shells) it was his first choice. The teeth of the sperm whale, which could crush thirty-

foot boats to splinters, were used because they afforded both a medium for art work, and a trophy of one of the most dangerous and romantic pursuits known to man.

The bone of the lower jaws of various kinds of whales took second place in scrimshaw work. Long straight sections of the great jaws of the sperm whale were excellent for canes and yardsticks, but this material did not have the polished ivory beauty of the teeth, and the bone had a tendency to splinter. Bone from other parts of the whale skeleton was used, but was rather unsatisfactory, being brown in color and without



GODEY LADY ON SCRIMSHAW

One of the whale's teeth with carved design by a sailor of the mid-19th century, exhibited in the Hall of Whales.

beauty of its own. The whalebone, from the jaws of the whalebone whales, was mainly used as inlay.

AN AMERICAN ART FORM

Some marvelously delicate and beautiful free-hand etchings were made with the crudest of tools. In decorating the teeth, the design was scratched on the smooth hard surface, and color, such as India ink, paint, or even soot was rubbed into the incised lines. Many sailors less artistically endowed traced designs by pin-pricks from magazines and illustrated papers. They followed standardized motifs mostly, and hence we find many Godey ladies, portraits of Napoleon, and stereotyped scenes of all kinds. While the more original etchings were often cruder, they were more interesting, showing authentic whaling scenes and scenes of home life.

Examples of scrimshaw work may be seen in the Hall of Whales (Hall N-1).

LAKE MICHIGAN "BARNACLES" ARE SOMETHING ELSE

Although there are no fresh water barnacles, Lake Michigan yachtsmen, after hauling their boats out of the water for winter lay-up, are usually busy for a time scraping the season's accumulation of "barnacles" from the hulls.

This has proved very disturbing to Dr. Fritz Haas, Curator of Lower Invertebrates at the Museum, who in addition to being a biologist is a language purist. Says Dr. Haas:

"One might think these sedentary animals, found only in salt water, had appeared in Lake Michigan, for I heard a sailboat owner here say it was time to clean his hull of barnacles. My curiosity was obligingly satisfied by the information that the barnacles were just an outgrowth of weeds and water plants.

"It seems that local yachtsmen, either not knowing what barnacles really are, or merely careless in their use of language, have applied the name to any kind of outgrowth on a boat's hull. This explanation satisfies the biologist's side of my mind, since it shows that barnacles have not really invaded fresh water, which, had it been true, would have been a fact of considerable scientific importance.

"But the linguistic portion of my consciousness is troubled. If the term 'barnacle' is accepted to designate any outgrowth on the submerged parts of boats, the language will suffer the introduction of an inexactitude. As fresh water growths consist entirely of plants, whereas barnacles are crustaceans and thus animals, such change from the original meaning, if unchallenged, may become a permanent, unfortunate and misleading misnomer."

Youth of 4-H Clubs In Annual Visit

Continuing their custom of many years' standing, the National Congress of 4-H Clubs sent delegations of selected young people from the farms of all parts of America on visits to the Museum during their sojourn in Chicago at the time of the Fat Stock Show. A group of 350 4-H girls came to the Museum on December 3, and some 300 4-H boys on December 4. Lectures and guidance were furnished by staff members of the Museum's James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures.

Distension of the ear-lobe, even with objects as large as round cigarette tins, is a fairly common form of African Negro ornament. In Hall E, Case 33, are some examples of round wooden ear-plugs and fine metal chains, worn in the ear-lobes of Akikuyu women of northeast Africa.



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