

### TABLET FOUND AT KISH HOLDS PART OF EPIC

A tablet, about 4,000 years old, inscribed with some fifty of the missing lines of the famous epic of Gilgamesh, oldest adventure narrative in the world and one of the most important literary products of ancient Babylon, has been discovered by the Field Museum-Oxford University Joint Expedition to Mesopotamia, according to a report from Professor Stephen Langdon, director of the expedition.

Gilgamesh was the favorite Babylonian hero. His story tells of battles with fearful monsters, crossing the waters of death, finding and losing again the weeds which make the old grow young, and many other marvels.

"Most of our knowledge of this epic is gained from a set of tablets once in the possession of a king of Assyria who lived about 650 B.C.," states Professor Langdon. "Some of these are very fragmentary, so that only about one-half of the epic is known. The tablet now found by the Museum excavators on the site of the ancient city of Kish is apparently from a very much earlier edition and will help to clear up unknown and obscure points in this ancient literary work."

The expedition has completed its season's work at Kish. Its earlier accomplishments have been reported in the February, April and May issues of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS.

### EXHIBIT OF COPPER OBJECTS FROM HOPEWELL MOUNDS

BY PAUL S. MARTIN

Assistant Curator of North American Archaeology

One of the most interesting and most mysterious of prehistoric American cultures is that of the mound builders of Ohio and the Mississippi Valley. Their artifacts prove that they had reached a high state of development, but it has been possible to trace only a few facts concerning them.

In Mary D. Sturges Hall of North American Archaeology (Hall 3) are exhibits (Cases 9 and 11) of their products in bone, shell, stone, mica, and copper, which show excellent workmanship, and occur in most surprising shapes and intricate designs. These particular objects come from the famous Hopewell mounds in Ohio. While there are some differences between them and the artifacts obtained from mounds in Illinois and elsewhere, there is nevertheless a general relationship between the work of all mound builders.

These remarkable objects arouse much curiosity and speculation as to who were the artisans who fashioned them, how long ago these people lived, and what became of them. All that can be definitely said in this respect is that the people who built the mounds of Ohio, as well as those in other middle western states, were Indians whose descendants were roaming this country when Europeans first arrived. Exactly what tribe or group of Indians was responsible for the Hopewell culture it has not been possible to ascertain. Some anthropologists think that they must have belonged to the Siouan linguistic family.

It is also impossible to state how long ago the Hopewell culture flourished. All that can be surely said is that it had died out at the time of the discovery of North America. Whether it had existed 500 or 1,000 years before that has not been determined.

Of all the artifacts of these people, the copper ornaments are probably the most interesting, and they attract special atten-

tion because of the wonder they arouse as to how a primitive people with nothing but crude tools could produce such elaborate designs. For years many authorities held that it would be impossible for the Indians to manipulate the metal so skillfully, and argued that such ornaments must have been made in Europe and traded to the American



#### Mound Builders' Art

Representation of a strange bird, made of copper. From Hopewell mounds in Ohio. Many such artifacts are exhibited in Mary D. Sturges Hall.

aborigines. Recent studies, however, have shown that the Indians not only used native American copper, but were also capable of manufacturing the most elaborate objects of it with the crude tools and methods available to them. Several anthropologists have made exact copies of the mound builders' articles, using native copper and nothing but bone and stone tools.

Moreover, exhaustive chemical analyses have been made to determine whether the metal used by the Indians was of American origin, or copper produced in Europe and brought in by traders. The results demonstrated conclusively that the ornaments found in mounds of undoubted antiquity (that is, those built before the advent of the white man) were made exclusively from native American copper.

#### Fossil Bison Bones Shown

An exhibit comprising a collection of skulls and other bones of prehistoric bison, and similar specimens of modern bison for contrast, has been added to Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38).

One of the prehistoric bison skulls was excavated from the famous asphaltum pits near Los Angeles, and another from the Pleistocene gravels of Point Barrow, Alaska. These animals lived approximately 1,000,000 to 1,500,000 years ago, according to Elmer S. Riggs, Associate Curator of Paleontology. Included in the exhibit is a painting restoring the fossil animal as research indicates it must have appeared when living.

#### Gifts to the Museum

Following is a list of some of the principal gifts received during the last month:

From American Friends of China—an archaic jade scraper, China; from Mr. and Mrs. Edward Deburgenie—an ax of Chellean type, Portugal; from George Harris—2 prehistoric flint scrapers and 4 prehistoric flint knives, Texas; from Cadwallader-Gibson Company, Inc.—4 panels of Philippine woods; from James Zetek—115 herbarium specimens, Barro Colorado Island; from Craftsman Wood Service Company, Inc.—a panel of West Indian boxwood; from Dr. Fortunato L. Herrera—128 herbarium specimens, Peru; from J. H. Smith Veneers, Inc.—3 panels of foreign woods, Italy, England, and Africa; from J. M. Caballero—6 panels of Mexican woods; from W. E. Bletsch—29 polished hand samples of foreign woods, Chile, Cuba, Hawaii, and British Honduras; from H. C. Benke—778 herbarium specimens, United States; from United Fruit Company—7 panels of foreign woods, Honduras; from Lieutenant-Commander J. H. Keester—3 specimens lava and ash, volcano of Katmai, Alaska; from Dr. Mabel A. King and Miss Bertha F. Gordon—11 specimens fossil leaves, Illinois; from H. B. Conover—3 pectoral sandpipers; from the University of Chicago—12 birds, 279 lizards, 37 fishes, and 91 specimens snakes, turtles, frogs, toads, etc.; from James J. Mooney—2 salamanders and a least weasel, Illinois; from Alfred C. Weed—34 snakes, Illinois; from P. C. Boomer—one polished azurite, Arizona.

### JUNE GUIDE-LECTURE TOURS

Conducted tours of exhibits, under the guidance of staff lecturers, are made every afternoon at 3 P.M., except Saturdays, Sundays, and certain holidays. Following is the schedule of subjects and dates for June:

Wednesday, June 1—Animal Families; Thursday—General Tour; Friday—Homes in Many Lands.

Week beginning June 6: Monday—Reptiles, Past and Present; Tuesday—Primitive Musical Instruments; Wednesday—Hall of Plant Life; Thursday—General Tour; Friday—Gems and Jewelry.

Week beginning June 13: Monday—Art of the Chinese; Tuesday—Plants and Animals of Long Ago; Wednesday—Woodland Indians; Thursday—General Tour; Friday—Blankets and Baskets.

Week beginning June 20: Monday—The Story of Man; Tuesday—Mines and Ores; Wednesday—Mummies; Thursday—General Tour; Friday—Coal, Oil and Peat.

Week beginning June 27: Monday—Palms and Cereals; Tuesday—Birds of Gay Plumage; Wednesday—Ancient Mexican Art; Thursday—General Tour.

Persons wishing to participate should apply at North Entrance. Tours are free and no gratuities are to be proffered. A new schedule will appear each month in FIELD MUSEUM NEWS. Guide-lecturers' services for special tours by parties of ten or more are available free of charge by arrangement with the Director a week in advance.

#### Scenes in Egypt Pictured

A miniature "tour," in colored pictures, of the principal ancient ruins to be seen in Egypt is a new feature of the exhibits in the hall of Egyptian archaeology (Hall J). This fits in with and supplements the collections of antiquities in the hall.

The pictures, of a size large enough to give a clear impression of the scenes, are painted in colors on glass, and set in a series in one of the walls. They are electrically illuminated from behind, bringing out to the best advantage the natural colors, and the many details.

#### NEW MEMBERS

The following persons were elected to membership in Field Museum during the period from April 16 to May 16:

##### Associate Members

Mrs. A. G. Becker, Webster H. Burke, Dr. Loyal Davis, John A. Manley, Mrs. S. Arthur Walther.

##### Non-Resident Associate Members

Edmund W. Stevens

##### Annual Members

Mrs. Henry G. Barkhausen, John F. Caine, Mrs. James A. Cathcart, Mrs. Adelbert E. Coleman, Hugo Dalmat, John Doctoroff, Dr. Edna M. Forsyth, John Wyatt Gregg, Howard B. Hare, Edmund G. Johnson, Howard B. Jones, Mrs. George I. Keefe, Father S. Radniecki, Mrs. Joseph K. Salomon, Dr. Henry J. G. Schmidt, Miss Eloise R. Tremain, Mrs. Leon Weil, Joseph R. Willens, H. E. Wills.

#### MEMBERSHIP IN FIELD MUSEUM

Field Museum has several classes of Members. Benefactors give or devise \$100,000 or more. Contributors give or devise \$1,000 to \$100,000. Life Members give \$500. Non-Resident (Life) and Associate Members pay \$100. Non-Resident Associate Members pay \$50. All the above classes are exempt from dues. Sustaining Members contribute \$25 annually. After six years they become Associate Members. Annual Members contribute \$10 annually. Other memberships are Corporate, Honorary, Patron, and Corresponding, additions under these classifications being made by special action of the Board of Trustees.

Each Member, in all classes, is entitled to free admission to the Museum for himself, his family and house guests, and to two reserved seats for Museum lectures provided for Members. Subscription to FIELD MUSEUM NEWS is included with all memberships. The courtesies of every museum of note in the United States and Canada are extended to all Members of Field Museum. A Member may give his personal card to non-residents of Chicago, upon presentation of which they will be admitted to the Museum without charge. Further information about memberships will be sent on request.





1932. "Fossil Bison Bones shown." *Field Museum news* 3(6), 4-4.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25722>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/350709>

**Holding Institution**

Field Museum of Natural History Library

**Sponsored by**

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the Chicago Field Museum.

For information contact [dcc@library.uiuc.edu](mailto:dcc@library.uiuc.edu).

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.