

EGYPTIAN BURIAL EXHIBIT

By T. GEORGE ALLEN
Assistant Curator of Egyptian Archaeology

An actual-size representation of a pre-dynastic burial of Egypt, containing the remains of an Egyptian woman who died some time before 3500 B.C., surrounded by various original artifacts found in such ancient graves, has been placed on exhibition in the hall devoted to Egyptian archaeology (Hall J, ground floor).

This type of burial preceded the development of mummification and the periods in which elaborate tombs were built. The exhibit shows a shallow pit such as was dug in the desert sands that lay beyond the fertile strip of soil deposited by the Nile. In such pits there was first placed a grass mat held together by twisted cords of flax, heavily coated with a pitchlike substance. On this rested the body, with its limbs flexed in the so-called "embryonic posture." Over the body was thrown a garment of skins pieced and stitched together with the short fur on the inside. This in turn was covered by a woven linen cloth.

A second grass mat constituted the final protection against the sand with which the pit was to be refilled after burial. The head was usually toward the south. Around the body were set jars of food and drink. Tools and weapons might also be present. Even toilet requisites were provided, such as a diamond-shaped slate palette on which cosmetics were ground with a flint pebble, which is shown in the Museum exhibit. Black-topped pottery and other equipment included in the exhibit were typical grave contents.

Early bodies such as that shown, dried by nature in their sandy pits, were often better preserved than were later ones buried within solidly built tomb chambers and more elaborately equipped. The less favorable conditions surrounding the later modes of burial led to the development of mummification, the practice of which appears to have begun under the second dynasty.

The body and the slate palette in the Museum exhibit were obtained by the late Edward E. Ayer, first President and for many years a Trustee of Field Museum. The pottery shown is from the Haskell Oriental Museum of the University of Chicago.

AN ANCIENT DELICACY

By J. ERIC THOMPSON
Assistant Curator of Central and South American Archaeology

In the literal sense, hot dogs have been eaten in America for the past three or four thousand years. They were, of course, quite different from "hot dogs" of today in the sense indicated by quotation marks.

The Mayas, the Aztecs and the natives of Cuba bred dogs in large numbers for hunting, for sacrifice—and for eating. The old native breed used as food was hairless and unable to bark. This species is referred to in the diary of Columbus. An early seventeenth century description of these dogs reads as follows:

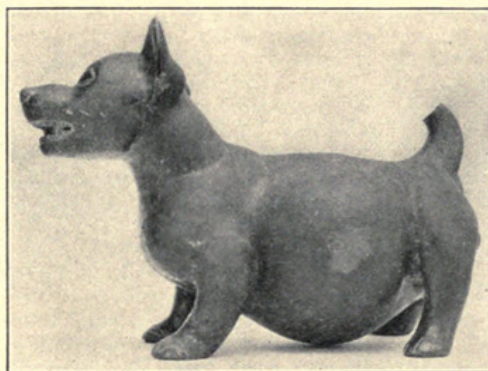
"For want of children they (the natives) sacrifice dogges: they nourish also dogges to eate, as our nation doth conies: which dogges cannot barke, have snouts like foxes, . . . and growe marvellous fat."

Field Museum possesses (on exhibition in Hall 8) a number of pottery dogs from western Mexico, and one of them is certainly

"marvellous fat." These were found interred with the dead. The Mexican natives believed that dogs would guide them in their long journey to the next world, and usually killed a deceased man's favorite dog and buried it with him to this end. Vermilion-colored dogs were believed to be the most efficient at this task. In this connection it is interesting to note that the finest of the Museum's pottery dogs is painted bright red.

Dogs were considered very good eating, and were a favorite dish among both the Mayas and Mexican natives. The gods, too, appear to have been fond of hot dogs, for the animals were frequently sacrificed, particularly if they were appropriately marked. A dog with chocolate-colored markings, for instance, was reserved for sacrifice to Ek Chuah, the Maya god of the cacao trees.

In contrast to the dogs fattened for eating, hunting dogs were kept as thin as possible,



Pottery Dog from Mexico

Type of dog used for food by early Americans, as represented in pottery among American archaeological collections at Field Museum.

so that hunger would urge them to greater efforts when pursuing game with their masters.

8,000 AMAZONIAN SPECIMENS

More than 8,000 specimens, representing the flora of the Amazon valley, were collected by the Peruvian division of the Marshall Field Botanical Expedition to the Amazon, which has completed its work. Division Leader Llewellyn Williams, Assistant in Wood Technology on the Museum staff, returned to Chicago on May 16. Many of the specimens obtained represent previously unknown species, Mr. Williams reports. Included are many exotic woods, some of which were largely used by the Incas in building their houses and making furniture. Some of these woods are unrivaled for their beauty of color and resistance to decay.

Another division of the expedition, led by Dr. B. E. Dahlgren, Acting Curator of Botany, returned some time ago.

In the collection of his specimens, Mr. Williams made several long journeys through the equatorial forests extending to the foot of the Oriental Cordilleras of the Andes. He crossed several sierras, and followed the courses of the Amazon and some of its tributaries for thousands of miles. Traveling was done largely in native dugout canoes, and often there were stretches of five to eight days afoot, at times through totally uninhabited regions where circumstances made necessary reduced rations, and many hardships and perils. The region explored contains one of the world's richest floras, much of which has been practically unknown to botanists because of its inaccessibility.

A taxicab stand is maintained at the north entrance of the Museum.

THE NESTING BIRDS OF JUNE

By COLIN CAMPBELL SANBORN
Assistant in the Department of Zoology

June is the nesting month among birds of the Chicago area. At least seventy-five species are busy building, incubating, or rearing young at this time. Some of the hawks are just getting the young out of the nest, while seven of the warblers (yellow, prothonotary, blue-winged, prairie, ovenbird, Maryland yellow-throat, and redstart) and two of the vireos (red-eyed and warbling) are beginning to build, and to lay eggs. Fifteen of the sparrows are to be found nesting, some raising the second brood of the year, and all the swallows (six varieties) are busy with their homes. Of the flycatchers of the region, five are now nesting.

Those who wish to wade about in the cat-tail swamps can find ten species of water birds' nests. These are the king, Virginia, and sora rails, coot, gallinule, mallard (and perhaps blue-winged teal), bittern and least bittern, black tern and pied-billed grebe, the latter two with floating nests. The green heron commonly nests here, and the black-crowned night heron in restricted areas. Along the beaches the spotted sandpiper, piping plover and killdeer have their nests hidden. The upland plover nests in fields as its name suggests.

Some of the late migrating warblers and sparrows are often seen early in June, and during the month shore birds and gulls which do not breed here are met with. Most of the nesting birds of the area may be seen in the systematic series in Hall 21 of the Museum, and in Hall 20 there is a group of marsh nesting birds.

NATURE STUDY COURSES

Under the auspices of the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures, a nature study training course was given at the Museum last month for boy scout leaders of the Chicago Council of Boy Scouts of America. About 125 scoutmasters were enrolled in the course, which consisted of five three-hour sessions. One hour of each was devoted to a lecture by members of the Raymond Foundation staff, one hour to a discussion conference, and one hour to viewing Museum exhibits illustrating the subjects of the lecture and discussion. The course was designed to equip the men for teaching the boys who will be under their supervision this summer at various camps and elsewhere.

Dr. Hellmayr on Research Mission

Dr. C. E. Hellmayr, Associate Curator of Birds, has gone to Europe on an ornithological research mission for Field Museum. He has taken a number of rare bird specimens collected by the Crane Pacific Expedition, the Marshall Field South American Expedition, and others, for comparison with type specimens in museums of Great Britain, France, Germany and other countries.

Dr. Osgood Returns

Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Curator of Zoology, has returned from London where he has been engaged in research at the British Museum in connection with specimens of rare animals obtained by the William V. Kelley-Roosevelts Expedition to Eastern Asia for Field Museum.

Photographs and picture postcards of Museum exhibits are on sale at the north entrance.



Waltz, Norman. 1930. "The Nesting Birds of June." *Field Museum news* 1(6), 3-3.

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