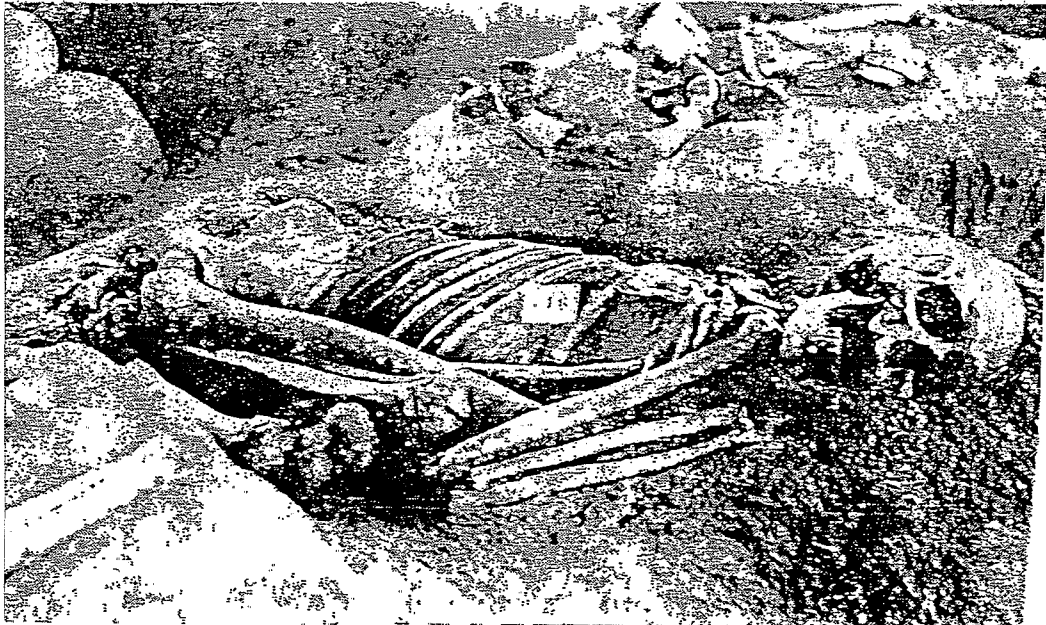


# A Brief Historical Survey of the Expropriation of American Indian Remains



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Cover Photograph: This is a photograph of one of the 146 dead Indians unearthed for public display at the "Indian Burial Pit" tourist attraction located near Salina, Kansas.

Photograph by courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| INTRODUCTION   | i-iii |
| EUROPEAN RACIAL THEORIES AND<br>AND AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC THINKING                       | 4     |
| SAMUEL G. MORTON AND THE BEGINNINGS OF<br>AMERICAN PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY               | 7     |
| PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHICS AT<br>MID-CENTURY                                     | 18    |
| MUSEUM COLLECTING IN THE LATE<br>NINETEENTH CENTURY                                    | 23    |
| PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE ARMY<br>MEDICAL MUSEUM: COLLECTING AS OFFICIAL<br>POLICY | 35    |
| COLLECTING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY  | 52    |
| THE CURRENT SITUATION  | 57    |
| ENDNOTES   | 63    |

## INTRODUCTION

This survey traces briefly the history of collecting Native American remains from the early nineteenth century to the twentieth century. In general it focuses on changing scientific thinking regarding Indian remains and the nature of this thought that emanated from Europe and reflected European social interests and cultural values. This report, however, does not explore the rich literature in both Europe and America that surrounded the debate over the origin of the American Indian, yet the question of who Indians were and what their potential for civilization was is very much a part of the history here presented.

Although Thomas Jefferson was perhaps the first to open an Indian grave, at least his archaeology seems the first recorded, this report considers the debate between monogenists and polygenists as the prime catalyst in the collecting of Indian crania in the early nineteenth century. Whereas monogenists believed in a single human creation and that humans were malleable and racial differences were produced by environmental causes, polygenists--arguing from skeletal remains--asserted that human malleability was exaggerated; that bones told a tale of little change over thousands of years. Thus Indians and blacks remained just as they were originally and separately created. For many polygenists, however, skulls revealed something else. Through the measurement of crania, both personality and intelligence could be determined. This enabled polygenists to devise an

intelligence ranking and assign non-whites to an inferior position on the scale. This early debate between monogenists and polygenists along with a history of the development of American ethnology is treated more fully in my work Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880 and in other articles.<sup>1</sup>

In the post-Civil War years, collecting Indian skeletal remains proved a preoccupation of museums. Here the Army Medical Museum played a significant role. A desire to make comparative racial studies of Indian tribes, led the Surgeon General to issue orders to Army medical personnel requesting them to collect Indian remains. And remains were collected from battlefields and from Indian graves. Other museums, like the Chicago Field Museum and the American Museum of Natural History, were also active in making similar collections.

The Eugenics movement beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth also stressed skeletal analysis. In its desire to create a perfect Cacaussian race, the movement advocated selective breeding among whites and encouraged laws to prevent race mixture. Skeletal remains, despite skepticism as to their value among some anthropologists, were used to stress the inferiority of non-whites.

In the post-World War II years, the 1950s, there seemed little interest in skeletal research. This disinterest was due, perhaps, to the remembered atrocities of the late war so vividly connected with racial studies. By the 1960s, however, such research again became important in physical anthropology. It was also in the 1960s that American Indians began to assert their

political presence on the American scene and eventually raised the issue of the repatriation of their ancestral remains from museums, universities and historical societies.

In the last few years, various Native American tribes, villages, families and organizations have vociferously demanded the repatriation of Indian human remains for reburial in accordance with their religious and mortuary traditions. National magazines routinely carry interviews with Native American leaders on this issue and articles, several are noted in the endnotes of this report, appear frequently in both newspapers and magazines informing the public on both sides of this debate. Most of this literature deals only with the contemporary scene. The main focus of this paper, however, is to elucidate the historical dimension of collecting the remains of deceased Native Americans in the context of changing scientific interests predominately in the nineteenth century.

1. Robert E. Bieder, Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986); "Scientific Attitudes Toward Indian Mixed-Bloods in Early Nineteenth-Century America," Journal of Ethnic Studies 8 (Fall 1980), 349-61; "Samuel G. Morton: Nineteenth-Century Craniology and the American Indian," Les Américains et Les Autres (Provence: Université de Provence, 1982), 7-19.

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A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE EXPROPRIATION OF AMERICAN  
INDIAN REMAINS

In 1788 Thomas Jefferson opened a burial mound near his home in Virginia and began an American preoccupation with digging and collecting Native American human remains and burial objects. Replying to a question put to him by the Francois Barbé-Marbois, secretary to the French legation in Philadelphia, on whether Indians had monuments, Jefferson related his investigations. Offering perhaps what was the first "scientific description" of such grave opening, he wrote "I conjectured that in this barrow might have been a thousand skeletons."<sup>1</sup>

Even before Jefferson, others were absorbed in research on Native Americans but primarily with the question of Indian origins. Rather than generate theories from bones, they drew upon skin color, hair, languages and customs to confirm their assumptions. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, efforts to explain the origins of the native people of the Americas originated often from the religious need to fit them somehow into the Biblical story. Most observers granted Native Americans their humanity but how they got to the Americas and why their physical appearance and customs should differ so much from what was known of the other peoples of the world, perplexed many. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this

religious concern faded, replaced by an on going debate between Americans and Europeans centering on the supposed inferiority of nature in America, especially the inferiority of American Indians and by a concern for Indian administration. The first led to an enthusiastic study of the American environment "measuring the American climate and its effect on humans, and, most especially, by investigations into the size, strength, and physical and cultural accomplishments" of American Indians. The second concern focused on whether Indians could change and become civilized, as defined by nineteenth-century American society. A popular scientific theory of the Enlightenment asserted that organisms were shaped by their environments hence it was possible by manipulating the environment to mold an organism (human, animal or plant) into an acceptable form. Change the Indian's environment and one could change them physically and culturally. This theory, known as environmentalism, drew upon the ideas of Jean Lamarck, the French naturalist who proposed that the acquired traits of animals were passed on to subsequent generations. This theory of environmentalism underlay in part both colonial and later U.S. governments' support for religious missions to Native Americans; missions that sought to overthrow native cultures through example, education and religious teachings.<sup>2</sup>

In an essay published in 1799, Benjamin Rush, the noted Philadelphia physician, friend of Benjamin Franklin, and member of the American Philosophical Society, emphasized this environmental influence on the mind.



The innumerable stimuli, with which [civilization, science and religion] abound, not only create mind, but from the variety and difference of force, in which they operate, they produce that variety in its forms, which renders the study and knowledge of its so agreeable and useful. . . . The facts which have been mentioned, serve further to refute the objection which has been urged against the Mosaic account of the whole human race being descended from a single pair, from the weakness of the intellects in certain savages and barbarous nations. This weakness is as much the effect of the want of physical influence upon their minds, as a disagreeable colour and figure are of its action upon their bodies.<sup>3</sup>

The Reverend Samuel Stanhope Smith, president of Princeton, was also at pains to point out in 1810 "varieties of character among different nations which, when fairly examined, are found to be the results only of moral [educational] or of physical causes." Thus environments determined not only physical traits but character and customs.<sup>4</sup>

In the second and third decades of the nineteenth century there was a certain shrillness in the defense of the environmental theory of change. Environmentalism and the many theories of Native American origins came under attack. Criticism aimed partly at government Indian policy but also at the work of philanthropic religious organizations, attacked the notion that Indians could ever change their ways. Supported by slave holders and frontier entrepreneurs, who would clearly benefit from a theory that supported non-white inferiority and inability to progress, critics pointed out that neither Africans nor Indians could ever advance beyond their allegedly low mental states and must either be kept in slavery or exterminated (or allowed to pass into extinction) in order to make room for progress.

For years pressure had been building on the theory of environmentalism to explain Indian resistance or seemingly inability to change. Critics pointed out that although the "child-like" African did show some progress under slavery, the Indian after two centuries of exposure to Euroamerican society offered less encouraging results. Indian response to civilization was not to embrace it and change, but to wilt in its presence and die. Social, economic and racial conditions in America were not the only influence race theory development.

#### EUROPEAN RACIAL THEORIES AND AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC THINKING

Racial theories generated in Europe also had an impact on American scientific thinking. In a work commissioned by the Smithsonian Institution, Samuel F. Haven, Librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, wrote in 1856, "in the very difficult operation of drawing lines of demarcation between the assumed varieties of mankind, some test more certain than color, or any merely external attribute, has been regarded as necessary." Osteological research seemed to answer the need. American scientists were drawn to this "department of inquiry by the philosophers of Europe." Haven noted that "[Peter] Camper and [Johann] Blumenbach advanced the idea more than a half a century ago that a comparison of crania was a principal requisite in such inquiries." <sup>5</sup> Why these theories arose in Europe at this particular time, do not concern us here. What is important to

note is how they arrived in America and the contribution they made to racial anthropology and the need to gather skulls in order to verify "scientific findings."

Blumenbach at the University of Göttingen drew attention to the usefulness of human crania for research into questions of race. From his study of crania obtained from various parts of the world, Blumenbach concluded that there were five basic races. Unlike some scholars who suggested that each human race represented a separate species--and hence with differing capabilities for civilization--Blumenbach believed races to be varieties of the same species although he did concede, based on the shape of the skull, that the most beautiful race was the Caucasian.<sup>6</sup> Neither did Blumenbach agree with the Dutch artist and anatomist, Peter Camper, that certain races appeared to be closer to the lower primates than others. Camper, who believed he had devised a system of analysis by which the crania of different nations could be compared, based his theories on the facial angle that measured the degree that the lower jaw protruded from the face. That this protrusion was a characteristic of apes and non-white peoples, led Camper to conclude that the latter were physically closer to lower primates and hence more primitive.<sup>7</sup>

In both England and France, these ideas were picked up, elaborated upon, and used to advance the science of "craniology" and the politics of colonial exploitation. The importance of human skulls to these endeavors lay in the assumption that each race possessed an uniquely shaped skull; that skulls did not

reflect environmental influence and therefore provided a more accurate measurement of the racial capabilities; and that cranial measurements provided an index of brain size and hence intelligence.

This latter correlation was the contribution of "phrenology," a study of the brain advanced by the Austrian, Josef Gall and the German, Johann G. Spurzheim. According to phrenological theory, the brain was divided into sections, or faculties, and respective sections determined aspects of personality, intelligence and behavior. The exercise of any of these sections would, as in a muscle, cause further physical development that would press against the skull causing it to protrude. Since, according to phrenologists, each race had what was called a "national skull" racial intelligence and primary behavioral and personality patterns could be discerned through a study of the shape of the skull.<sup>8</sup> However, as one phrenologist instructed, "every Indian head does not any more represent his tribe than does that of every French or German head." Yet, because "each tribe has a well marked national form of head, and between the several tribes there is frequently an immense difference of cranial configuration" numerous crania are needed for research.<sup>9</sup>

SAMUEL G. MORTON AND THE BEGINNING OF AMERICAN PHYSICAL  
ANTHROPOLOGY

Americans pursuing medical education in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, came under the influence of these ideas in craniology and phrenology. One who absorbed these theories in his studies at both Edinburgh and Paris was the Philadelphian physician, Samuel G. Morton, often referred to as the founder of physical anthropology in America. When Morton returned to Philadelphia in 1823, he assumed a teaching position at the Philadelphia Hospital and Pennsylvania College and discovered to his dismay that he had no skulls of different races for class use. His search for human skulls of all races and his subsequent investigations, led not only to the racial findings expressed in his Crania Americana, findings that would color racial thinking long after his death in 1851--but also laid the foundation for anthropological interest in the search for deceased Indians.<sup>10</sup>

Morton received numerous offers from collectors eager to send him Indian remains to advance the science of craniology. A Samuel Hildreth not only sent Morton Indian remains from the Ohio and Mississippi valleys but also urged friends from the upper Mississippi to likewise add to Morton's collection.<sup>11</sup> Some collectors realized Morton's need for more than one skull from a locality. As Edward Herrick of Connecticut wrote, "I hope to be able to procure more skulls from this locality, as it seems to me dangerous to draw general inferences from one specimen, since it is not always easy to distinguish between those points which

pertain to the race or tribe, [and] those which are peculiar to the person who once possessed the skull."<sup>12</sup>

In an 1837 letter explaining what he wished to do, Morton wrote to his phrenologist-physician friend Dr. John Collins Warren in Boston, "my plan. . .is to give a preliminary view of the Five Races of men as proposed by Blumenbach, and to illustrate each by genuine specimens. I shall then go on with the American series, in which, however, I am yet considerable deficient, but am promised assistance from so many different sources."<sup>13</sup> One of these sources to whom Morton sent a list of his crania needs was a Gerald Troost in Tennessee. Troost responded, "It seems from your list that you have no skull of the Cherokees[.] I am going to pay them a visit about the 1st of next month and I will try to get you one or more if I can, but those fellows do not like that anybody disturb the bones of their dead."<sup>14</sup>

Army medical doctors were often a good source for crania. One who provided Morton with crania was Zina Pitcher. Although he had resigned from the army by 1837 and entered private business in Detroit, he promised to send to Morton some Chippewa skulls since he was eager to help Morton build an "American Golgotha".<sup>15</sup> Another doctor who aided Morton in collecting was Dr. John Bachman of Charleston, South Carolina. Although they later disagreed sharply over whether Indians were a race or a separate species, in 1837 Bachman was anxious to aid Morton in his craniology. He wrote to Morton of "two Indian skulls" in the Charleston area. One was that of Mad Wolf. "There are some

points about the cranium of this grand rascal that I have no doubt some of your Phrenologists will make much of." The other belonged to an Indian killed in the Florida campaign. The artist, John James Audubon, however, wished to send Mad Wolf's skull of Mad Wolf to a friend in Scotland.<sup>16</sup>

Others in Europe were also interested in American Indian skulls and in the racial implications of Morton's work. The German explorer-ethnologist, Prince Maximilian Weid-Neuweid wrote to Morton in 1837, expressing his interest in receiving a copy of Morton's Crania Americana when it came out.<sup>17</sup> When in 1836 Maximilian was enroute to the Missouri, he noted that Charles Alexander Lesueur, the French naturalist then living in New Harmony (Indiana), "examined many of these tumuli [mounds], and sent part of the articles found in them to France." This perhaps began Maximilian's interest in collecting Indian skulls. Along with Lesueur, Maximilian sent Indian skulls, thought to be Mascoutin, to Blumenbach in Göttingen.<sup>18</sup>

Another collector in the South, William Powell, felt that Indian skulls might be valued in Europe. He wrote to Morton asking him to inquire of the Scottish phrenologist George Combe, then visiting and lecturing in America on phrenology, if by sending "400 to 500 Indian skulls" to Europe Powell would be providing a valuable scientific service to phrenology.<sup>19</sup>

As noted in the Troost letter, collecting Indian skulls was not without danger to the collector - a good indication about how Indians felt about having their graves looted. As one collector wrote Morton:

It is rather a perilous business to procure Indians' skulls in this country - The natives are so jealous of you that they watch you very closely while you are wandering near their mausoleums & instant & sanguinary vengeance would fall upon the luckless \_\_\_\_\_ who would presume to interfere with the sacred relics. . . There is an epidemic raging among them which carries them off so fast that the cemeteries will soon lack watchers - I don't rejoice in the prospects of death of the poor creatures certainly, but then you know it will be very convenient for my purposes.<sup>20</sup>

This proved not an isolated problem. Another collector in Iowa wrote to Morton that as soon as the Indians in the neighborhood are removed, he would be able to send Morton skulls of two of their eminent chiefs.<sup>21</sup> The promotion of science had its dangers.

Yet not all encountered this danger. Writing from Michigan, Douglas Houghton had little fear. "No difficulty will occur in obtaining you the skulls of a Pottawatomie, Winnebago and Chippeway, but it may require some little time to procure those of distinguished or known personages." He went on to state, "Dr. Pitcher. . .has promised to draw up a short sketch of the life of a noted Chippeway Chief whose skull we hope to be able to procure and forward [to] you."<sup>22</sup>

When Morton's Crania Americana<sup>23</sup> came out in 1839, it was well received in both American and in Europe. His analysis of crania capacity and, as he believed, intelligence buttressed popular racial prejudice. The crania were ranked in the following order:

|     |        |    |                 |     |   |      |    |    |       |        |
|-----|--------|----|-----------------|-----|---|------|----|----|-------|--------|
| 52  | skulls | of | Caucasians      | had | a | mean | of | 87 | cubic | inches |
| 10  | "      | "  | Mongolians      | "   | " | "    | "  | 83 | "     | "      |
| 147 | "      | "  | American Indian | "   | " | "    | "  | 82 | "     | "      |
| 18  | "      | "  | Malay           | "   | " | "    | "  | 81 | "     | "      |
| 29  | "      | "  | African         | "   | " | "    | "  | 78 | "     | "      |

Morton's friend Combe, stressed the point of size as indicative



of intelligence. "The exact coincidence betwixt the development of these skulls and the character of this people [Indians] would lead us to suppose that they represent a national shape. The general size is greatly inferior to that of the average European head; indicating inferiority in natural mental power."<sup>24</sup> This same theme was echoed by a writer in the American Phrenological Journal and Miscellany in 1841. Claiming that since the "moral and religious organs are comparatively small, and the animal and semi-animal ones proportionably large," civilization for Indians was virtually impossible. Consequently, Indians faced inevitable extinction: "The experience of more than two centuries has abundantly evinced, that that 'family,' as a body, can be neither civilized nor actually conquered and enslaved; but that their ultimate extinction is an event which is approaching, and whose accomplishment nothing earthly can prevent."<sup>25</sup>

Morton, although the most famous, was not the only doctor collecting Indian heads. The Indian Agent, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, in Michigan recorded a grisly tale of an incident that took place in Sault Ste. Marie on the night of September 26, 1826. As Schoolcraft reported, a soldier saw "Robert McKain deliver an Indian head wrapped in a handkerchief to the hospital at Fort Brady." The soldier claimed that he did not rob the Indian grave but that the head had been dug up by another soldier. Schoolcraft noted, however, that

Robert McKain has long had the reputation among his companions, of digging up dead bodies of Indians for pay. That sometime in the month of August last, between the 1st & 18th of that month, said McKain informed this deponent that he had been offered a

good price by Doctor Lyman Foot for bringing him three Indian heads, and proposed to this deponent to assist in digging them up, which (this deponent) promptly declined. This deponent further says, that on the night of the 2nd of September instant, a light was seen in the Hospital during the night, as was reported among the soldiers at the guard house on the following morning. It was further added, that some of the guards went to the Hospital windows, suspecting that the heads of the Indians were in preparation, and saw kettles on the fire. And the guards who were stationed near the Hospital that night complained that a most abominable stench was experienced by them during the night arising from the Hospital, and supposed to be the effects of boiling the Indian skulls.<sup>26</sup>

Clearly the collecting of Indian skulls appears to have been an "cottage industry" at some frontier military posts.

But the needs of craniologist Morton did not provide the only stimulus that sent Americans digging for Indian human remains. Phrenology, or rather the rise of phrenological societies, the establishment of museums, and the romantic American interest in the mounds and search for ancient civilizations, often made collecting human remains profitable.

Phrenological societies arose during the 1830s and 1840s. The largest were in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, but they also could be found in smaller places like Cincinnati. According to one report there were several skull collections in New York City.<sup>27</sup> Beginning as a "science" that many believed offered a window into the workings of the brain, phrenology soon degenerated into quackery and disrepute but not before it took root in American thought and contributed to American racial prejudice. By claiming to be able to determine personality by "reading" bumps or protrusions of the skull, phrenology was the poor man's psychology. Before slipping into disrepute, phrenological societies often included leading scientists and

medical men in their membership lists. Most of the societies maintained rooms where a "library" of human and animal skulls and plaster casts of heads was available for study by its members. The plaster casts were usually those of famous or notable personages from both Europe and America and were compared with the skulls of criminals, the insane, the indigent, Indians and blacks.

In A Catalogue of Phrenological Specimens Belonging to the Boston Phrenological Society, as listed for 1835, one finds descriptions of several Indian skulls and an assessment of their personality and attributes (which were generally extended to include the whole tribe) as read from the bumps on their skulls.

- 71. Esquimaux [skull]
- 72. Esquimaux [skull] - Tyloolik; accompanied Captain Parry as interpreter and draughtsman.
- 73. Flathead Indian [skull]
- 82. South American Indian [skull]<sup>28</sup>
  
- 363. North American Indian, who was shot many years since while prowling round a home in the interior of Massachusetts. [Traits of] Combativeness, Destructiveness, and Secretiveness uncommonly large. Benevolence deficient.
- 364. A Choctaw Indian, obtained about three hundred miles above Natchez. This is believed to be a fair specimen of this tribe of Indians, who are extremely degraded, manifesting [sic] in their no love of approbation.
- 365. A cast taken from the skull [sic] of an Indian of the Wyandot tribe, in Mr. Dorfenille's Museum, Cincinnati.
- 366. A cast taken from the skull [sic] of Pepick, a distinguished Winnebago Chief, who was killed at Chicago, in 1812, at the head of a party of his tribe by the American troops.
- 367. This cast was taken from one of three similar marked crania in the possession of S. Willis Pomeroy, of Cincinnati. He procured them five miles above the Great Kanawha on the Ohio River. There are good reasons for supposing it to be a specimen of the Shawnee tribe of Indians.
- 368. A cast of skull [sic] obtained from an Indian burying ground about two and half miles in the rear of Natchez. Several skulls [sic] were obtained at the same time; they were found in a horizontal position, with the right hand extended by the side,

and the left hand placed across the breast. They are supposed from various circumstances, to be the crania of the Natchez Indians.

369. A cast of a skull [sic] taken from a mound in Cincinnati, Ohio, and supposed to be a fair specimen of the crania which properly belong to the mounds of our country. It is called by Dr. W. B. Powell, to whom the Society is indebted for these valuable casts, the 'Monumental Indian.'

370. A Peruvian Indian. Obtained from a cemetery, in which no interments have been made since the conquest by Pizarro, near a Temple of the Sun, about twenty miles to the Southwest of Lima. The organization very closely resembles that of No. 369, which Dr. Powell calls the 'Monumental Indian.'

371. [Skull] Said to be that of a North American Indian. Probably Peruvian.

372. Indian skull [sic], found in an Indian burying ground in Georgia. Supposed to have been buried several centuries. Constructiveness large.

373. Skull [sic] of North American Indian.<sup>29</sup>

It seemed to be the practice of these various phrenological societies to loan out or exchange crania to other societies or to individual phrenologists or craniologists. This often led to damage or loss.

As late as 1856, books appeared on phrenology. One written by, Orson S. Fowler, clergyman, architectural innovator, and phrenologist, was quite popular. Fowler, who owned a large phrenological (skull) library in New York City, never tired of promoting the "science." Concerning the Indian skulls in his collection, Fowler noted "a general feature common to them all." The skulls were large in areas that denoted destructiveness, secretiveness, and cautiousness, and combativeness. "This combination of organs indicates just such a character as the Indians generally possess."<sup>30</sup> Fowler then, from his analysis of Indian skulls, contributed to popular prejudices by drawing an unflattering racial picture:

Their extreme destructiveness would create a cruel, blood-thirsty, and revengeful disposition--a disposition common to the race--which, in connexion [sic] with their moderate or small benevolence, would make them turn a deaf ear to the cries of distress, and steel them to such acts of barbarity as they are wont to practice in torturing the hapless victims of their vengeance. [Because of] their extremely large destructiveness combined with their large secretiveness and cautiousness. . . . we may expect them to glory in dark deeds of cruelty; in scalping the fallen foe, and in butchering helpless women and children.<sup>31</sup>

It is significant to note that those traits Fowler "discovered" in Native American crania coincided with the same negative traits which the public commonly identified with Indians.

Museums also manifested an interest in acquiring Indian remains. As noted above, Joseph Dorfeuille, who was the owner of Dorfeuille's Museum in Cincinnati, supplied to craniologists and phrenological societies casts of skulls that were in his museum. Some museums were mere "show shops" where along with skulls, animal freaks and other natural oddities were displayed. The Grave Creek Mound in what is now West Virginia, while not a museum, was developed as a "tourist attraction" in the early nineteenth century charging a fee to visitors who wished to tour the interior of a mound and view the skeletons there exhibited.<sup>32</sup> Other museums were very much devoted to science, such as the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard, founded by the famous Swiss born zoologist Louis Agassiz.

Agassiz proved a brilliant scientist and organizer. With a network of influential friends--including Samuel G. Morton--Agassiz was able to amass funds to support his various projects; under his direction and influence, the Harvard museum grew.

According to an Agassiz scholar, "Collectors sent in shipment after shipment of materials from all over the world, ranging from turtle eggs of Australia to photographs of European racial types and 'one head of a North American Indian, in alcohol.'"<sup>33</sup> At some point, Agassiz decided that the museum should increase its collection of Indian bodies for scientific study. Writing to Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton in January of 1865, Agassiz requested, "Now that the temperture is low enough. . .permit me to recall to your memory your promise to let me have the bodies of some Indians; if any should die at this time. . .All that would be necessary. . . would be to forward the body express in a box. . . . In case the weather was not very cold. . .direct the surgeon in charge to inject through the carotids a solution of Arsenate of soda. I should like one or two handsome fellows entire and the heads of two or three more'"<sup>34</sup>

By mid-century a noticable shift had taken place in scientific views of the Indian and other non-whites. Changes already brought about by the industrial revolution--already in progress before the Civil War--forshadowed even greater progress and further disruption in American society. Villages, cities, even the landscape, were being transformed. And as Americans looked around in bewilderment at the rapid pace of "progress," they saw in the Indian an unprogressive type. Whereas at the beginning of the century, environmentalism was the dominant scientific theory of change, by mid-century many "scientists" drawing their conclusions from the study of bones, or from the investigations of others, held a negative view of non-whites and

saw in them no possibility for progress. According to such thinking, they were innately inferior and their slavery or extinction could be attributed to biological circumstances. Again, Combe pointed out in regards to the Indian, "Even contact with European settlers, surrounded by arts and enlightened by intelligence, has scarcely communicated one spark of energy to this miserable race."<sup>35</sup>

It is true that not all "scientists" held these views but many who did were extremely vocal in their assertions of non-white inferiority and inability to change. Politicians like Senator John C. Calhoun found Morton's work on crania especially useful in arguing the southern cause for slavery. Undoubtedly, others also found such arguments effective for the perpetuation of slavery and/or the expulsion of Indians from lands coveted by Euroamericans. These theories undoubtedly contributed to the lack of sensitivity in viewing Indian people and led to statements such as those made on the Joseph Ives expedition to the Colorado in 1857-58:

A third Hualpais turned up this morning; he had features like a toad's, and the most villainous countenance I ever saw on a human being. Mr. Mollhausen suggested that we should take him and preserve him in alcohol as a zoological specimen. . . <sup>36</sup>

The theory of Morton and his followers--in what was termed the American School of Anthropology--was, by today's standards, overtly "racist" in nature and reflected the attitudes of large sections of the population. Members of this "school" were obstinate in their view of non-white inferiority. From their scientific perspective, racial types were seen as separate species and the study of bones yielded proof of their immutability and inferiority.

This racial theory was propagated all too often on stolen data. Given the difficulties and dangers involved in stealing Indian bodies from closely guarded graves, the impropriety of such acts were obvious to collectors. As early 1809, John Bradbury in his travels among the Mandan noted, "there were a great number of stages erected about a quarter of a mile from the village, on which the dead bodies were deposited, which, for fear of giving offence, I avoided; as I found, that although it is the custom of these people thus to expose the dead bodies of their ancestors, yet they have in a very high degree that veneration for their remains which is a characteristic of the American Indians."<sup>37</sup> Bodies on scaffolds were not forgotten. They were allowed to dry for one or two years and then the family would gather the bones, wrap them carefully and then bury them.<sup>38</sup>

Another traveler, John K. Townsend, in his travels on the Columbia River in 1833-34, visited Indian "tombs" and was "especially careful not to touch or disarrange any of the



fabrics, and it was well we were so, for as we turned to leave the place, we found that we had been narrowly watched by about twenty Indians, whom we had not seen when we landed from our boat. . . .I have been very anxious to procure the skulls of some of these Indians, and should have been willing, so far as I alone was concerned, to encounter some risk to effect my object, but I have refrained on account of the difficulty in which the ship and crew would be involved, if the sacrilege should be discovered; a prejudice might thus be excited against our little colony which would not soon be overcome, and might prove a serious injury.<sup>39</sup> Later, however, Townsend was able to steal his skulls:

I visited to-day some cemeteries in the neighborhood of the fort, and obtained the skulls of four Indians. Some of the bodies were simply deposited in canoes, raised five or six feet from the ground, either in the forks of trees, or supported on stakes driven into the earth. In these instances it was not difficult to procure the skulls without disarranging the fabric; but more frequently, they were nailed in boxes, or covered by a small canoe, which was turned bottom upwards, and placed in a larger one, and the whole covered by strips of bark, carefully arranged over them. It was then necessary to use the utmost caution in removing the covering, and also to be careful to leave everything in the same state in which it was found. I thought several times to-day, as I have often done in similar situations before: - Now suppose an Indian were to step in here, and see me groping among the bones of his fathers, and laying unhallowed hands upon the mouldering remains of his people, what should I say? - I know well what they Indian would do. He would instantly shoot me, unless I took the most effectual measures to prevent it; but could I have time allowed me to temporize a little, I could easily disarm his hostility and ensure his silence, by the offer of a shirt or blanket; but the difficulty in most cases would be, that in a paroxysm of rage he would put a bullet through your head, and then good bye temporizing. Luckily for my pursuits in this way, there are at present but few Indians here, and I do not therefore incur much risk; were it otherwise, there would be no little danger in these aggressions.<sup>40</sup>

Another traveler to the Columbia River country was more scrupulous. In his travels down that river in 1843, Thomas J. Farnham visited the "Island of Tombs" or, as it was also called, Sepulchre Island. There the graves covered by large cedar boxes attracted non-Indian visitors. "Underneath the undecayed bodies were many bones from which the flesh and wrappings had fallen, in some instances a number of wagon loads. Three or four of the tombs had gone into ruins, and the skulls and other bones lay strewn on the ground. The skulls were all flattened. I picked up one with the intention of bringing it to the States. But as Mr. Lee assured me that the high veneration of the living for the dead would make the attempt very dangerous, I reluctantly returned it to its resting place."<sup>41</sup>

Such quotes expressing Indian regard for their burials and the danger grave robbers faced could be multiplied. According to some early accounts, Indian "burial places are respected even by their enemies, and sites where they are located are sacred."<sup>42</sup> The French-born botanist, Jean Louis Berlandier, also noted the veneration Indians paid to the dead and claimed that "the Comanches, like almost every other nomadic people, are very scrupulous in their observance of this custom. Where they pass by the grave of a warrior they leave a few of their weapons, The women leave some fruit or a dish of something of which he was particularly fond."<sup>43</sup>

Obviously, robbing Indians' graves was offensive to Indian tribes. But it should be emphasized that grave robbing also offended Euroamerican norms and mores, at least it did in 1788, if the body belonged to a white person of middle class or above.

When King's College students in New York City needed bodies for dissecting (each student had to provide himself with a body) they obtained them illegally under the cover of darkness from two burial grounds: potters field and the black burial ground. Bodies in these cemeteries were easy to dig up and carry away since they were not buried in wooden coffins. As the need for cadavers increased, students became bolder and began to sneak bodies from the graveyard at Trinity Church. Although snatching corpses of the poor or of blacks went unprotested, taking them from the Trinity Church yard caused public indignation.

Throughout that spring the medical students, though severely criticized in the two weekly newspapers, continued their activities recklessly while public anger increased. The reports were exaggerated by countless rumors, and everyone recalled the harrowing details of the grave-robbing epidemic in Scotland and England during the first half of the century.<sup>44</sup>

On April 13, 1788, a small incident triggered a two day riot termed the Doctor's Riot or Anti-Dissection Riot that brought the city to a stand still, and caused those doctors and medical students, who did not seek safety in the jail, to flee. At the end of the riot, a grand jury recommended penalties for both doctors and students. Laws were passed in New York State during the winter and spring of 1788-89 that decreed not only what bodies could be used for research but also made it legal "for the courts to add dissection to the death penalty in cases of murder, arson, and burglary." These laws, Anatomy Acts of 1789, while legalizing certain bodies for dissection also established punishments for grave robbers. In 1790 Congress passed similar

laws for the nation. Unfortunately, "doctors and teachers in individual states, however, still encountered a great deal of difficulty in legally securing sufficient bodies, and body snatching continued in rural areas well into the 1800s."<sup>45</sup>

That American attitudes regarding the dead did not shift much by mid-nineteenth century is evident in the comments made regarding John Collins Warren's decision to leave his body to science. Warren, the physican-phrenologist noted above, left detailed instructions as to how it should be prepared for class use. This rather shocked his biographer:

When a cold-blooded sceptic, whose heart has never thrilled with a tender sentiment, and who has looked upon himself as a mere earth-clod stimulated into brief activity and to be resolved into thin air and lifeless dust, leaves orders to cheat the grave of its due, we feel disgust, yet no surprise. But Christian faith and the undying hope to which it gives birth attach a sacredness to the body which has been the tenement of an immortal soul, and none are so heedful of the rites of sepulture and the inviolableness of the tomb, as those whose belief in Christian verities is the most intimate and vital. This feeling is enhanced by the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which, no doubt with some latitude of construction, is an essential article of the creed of the Church to which Dr. Warren gave his allegiance. . . . We cannot but regard this bequest to his favorite science as a noble act of self-sacrifice; and while our intuitive sympathies are all arrayed on the other side, we feel constrained, by their instinctive recoil and shudder, to hold his memory and honor.<sup>46</sup>

For many this Christian revulsion did not extend to rifling the graves of Indians, blacks, poor and/or criminal whites. Their bodies were expendable for science in the early nineteenth century. Probably very few physicians or scientists had the courage of their convictions to flaunt custom and to demonstrate the fairness of Warren to dedicate their bodies to science. The

sanctity of the grave was as strong in mid-nineteenth-century America as it was in 1788 and in the early 1700s in England and Scotland.

#### MUSEUM COLLECTING IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the post Civil Wars years, the study of Indian shifted in focus. In archaeology, rather than a search for Indian racial origins, the emphasis now was on early human inhabitation in the Americas and on museum collecting. Events in Europe pushed American ethnology-anthropology in this direction. The publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species and the discovery of ancient human remains in Europe shattered the old time frame and greatly lengthened the period of human existence on earth; the search for early man in the Americas was begun. As archaeologist Robert Braidwood pointed out, "It appears to me that the prime hallmark of later nineteenth and early twentieth century prehistory was the notion of unilinear progressive evolution."<sup>47</sup> This he attributes to the influence of Darwin's works. Most of the searches for early humans in the Americas, however, proved unrewarding because, without a stratigraphy for dating the finds, there was no proof of age. Collecting of skeletal remains was driven perhaps by the debate between those who held that human evolution resulted in the increased growth of the brain and those who pointed to the assumption of upright posture. For those who linked brain size to progress, crania were necessary and Indian crania were vital to anthropologists

seeking to chart the development of progress for the American Indian.

According to one historian of archaeology, other reasons for digging may also have been involved. "Archaeological surveys and excavations were initiated with a definite purpose in mind and were no longer merely for the sake of discovering what lay beneath a particular mound of earth or heap of rubble. . . . The important thing to realize is that the digging of sites for specimens and other information had become an end in itself.<sup>48</sup> This suggests that the pure joy of digging for remains often motivated both professional and amateur archaeologists. If they could justify their activities by claiming such to be a "contribution to science" or for sheer profits, all the better.

Artifacts discovered in digging also had their importance and value. The "usual aim was an account of the artifacts recovered and their probable uses." That many of these artifacts were to be found associated with graves and were often listed in published accounts that drew attention to their value, probably contributed to the large number of graves that were rifled during this period. Both human remains and artifacts interred as grave offerings were sent off to museums or sold by enterprising farmers, amateur archaeologists, or others who recognized that the earth could be made to yield a profit without having to mine or farm it. In Utah, ranchers were hired by archaeologists to loot graves of funerary offerings. All too often, the "archaeologists" were "well-meaning Boy Scouts, bored farmers,

clerics, and country doctors; ladies-club lectures, journalists and publishers."<sup>49</sup> School teachers could also be added to the list.

The founding of museums, museum collecting and the competition between museums, contributed greatly to growing demand for artifacts and the digging of grave sites. European museums and their collections had long influenced European cultural and scientific life. In America, the founding of the Smithsonian Institution in 1846 and the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard in 1859 were major events for American science. Spurred by the example that these institutions presented and the demands of local pride, Chicago and New York soon followed with their own museums of natural history. Among these institutions competition for artifacts and human remains grew. The collecting often proved intense and generally indiscriminate. In many instances those who collected for museums were untrained. Indeed, there was little training available at this time. "Although a few museums maintained loose connections with universities, archaeology was not a classroom topic." Many of the collectors were "self-styled adventurers, more interested in enjoying travel, romance, and pseudo-scientific controversy than in attempting to establish archaeology as a science."<sup>50</sup> Partly the rather hasty and erratic collecting of American museums in 1880s and 1890s derived in part from a sense of injured nationalism and what they viewed as unfair competition from European museums absconding with American Indian artifacts and remains.<sup>51</sup>

Probably not the most notorious collector but certainly one

who employed a rather cavalier approach to collecting artifacts and Indian bones was Warren K. Moorehead. With his jaunty hat, dark moustache and good looks, Moorehead cut quite a figure in mid-west archaeology. Educated at Denison University, he served for a while on the staff of the Smithsonian Institution and eventually became curator and later director of the department of archaeology at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts.

"Largely self-taught, Moorehead sold antiquities to support his great passions, which were field work and collecting artifacts." Between 1891 and 1893, Frederic Ward Putnam of the Peabody Museum and Harvard University hired Moorehead to collect artifacts and Indian remains for Chicago World's Columbian Exposition.<sup>52</sup>

In his report of his expedition to southern Ohio, Moorehead seemed to flit with unusual speed from one burial mound site to another often hiring local help; "a force of men were employed to open graves and village sites along the banks of the Little Miami River, some three hundred feet below the level of Fort Ancient."<sup>53</sup> The funerary objects and occupants of these graves and many others were gathered for the Exposition. "From the river burials about thirty five good crania were secured. Numbers of diseased bones. . .and other osteological peculiarities were observed."<sup>54</sup>

In other Indian burials Moorehead found "splendidly preserved skeletons" and from a large mound that took "some ten men. . . engaged for nearly three weeks" to excavate, he "took a total of seventy nine skeletons."<sup>55</sup> Although Moorehead claimed that the "several hundred bones from all portions of the human



body" would be of interest to anatomists, no anatomist seems to have looked at them.<sup>56</sup> Even human remains which were badly decayed were removed and sent to the Chicago exhibit; "about one hundred skeletons were taken from the effigy, nearly all of which were badly decayed."<sup>57</sup> And later Moorehead reported that "a total of thirty-eight skeletons were taken from the Little Miami River bank. . . .[and] of these eighty-nine per cent have been saved entire for exhibition." Some, like "grave number five" were "preserved with a view to reconstructing it in the Department Exhibit."<sup>58</sup> After exciting the morbid curiosity of the public at the World's Columbian Exposition, these Indian remains were deposited at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago which was founded after the close of the fair.

Moorehead, who always had a sharp eye for artifacts, discovered that some of the graves contained exceptional works of art these were also sent on to Chicago.

With two of the skeletons whole pottery was found. . . .Several of the skeletons were remarkably well preserved, others lying near the surface in disturbed strata were as much decayed as those found in the South Fort Cemetery. . . .Upon the breast of Number sixty-one was a beautiful shell ornament carved from a fresh water ? shell. One remarkably preserved child some six or eight years old was secured for exhibition.<sup>59</sup>

In all, Moorehead shipped hundreds of Indian remains to Chicago for the 1893 Exposition. One notes in these reports that Moorehead was sorely disappointed in finding graves in which there were no artifacts since it was really the burial possessions that seemed to interest him most. "Several children's remains were discovered, but nothing of importance was found with

them." Contrast this to his enthusiastic discovery of a grave that included sheet copper, "beads," and a "cap or helmet of copper" crowned with wooden antlers. Here seemingly was a find of greater importance than Indian bones.<sup>60</sup> In a handwritten note appended to his reports, Moorehead states, "a most interesting illustrated monograph of great scientific value could be written upon the Hopewell group. It is to be hoped that some anthropologist will study the collection, - paying especial attention to the sheet copper designs, the crania and skeleton (to learn racial peculiarities) and give to the world such a publication."<sup>61</sup>

What value did Moorehead's collection serve to science? Very little. His "prizes" were poorly excavated and identified, the hundreds of skeletons collected were useless according to recent scholars who have examined them.<sup>62</sup>

There was, however, a more important goal in digging in the Ohio Valley and that was to assert one's institutional claim to an area. After the founding of the Field Museum, Moorehead wrote to George A. Dorsey, the curator of Anthropology at the Field Museum, warning him that the museum should not hesitate to assert its claims to the mounds and burial grounds of the Ohio Valley or other museums along with regional historical societies would. In competition with the Peabody Museum and the Smithsonian Institution, the Field Museum also had to contend with the Historical Society of Chillicothe and the Ohio Archaeological Society in Columbus for possessory rights. Staking out and

claiming mounds and burial grounds (often in the process involving elaborate secret negotiations) proved important for defining one's institutional reputation. The clandestine nature of these claims and the intrigue involved are emphasized in a series of letters written by Moorehead, Dorsey and others to proceed quickly to gain control of these vital mounds and burial grounds under stealth especially before the Ohio societies gained access to them. The human remains and artifacts of the Ohio Valley were important not only to round out collections but also as "prizes" in regional and national competition.<sup>63</sup> This competition is again sharply etched in the fight between the Field Museum and the New York's American Museum of Natural History over Northwest Coast artifacts and skeletal remains.

The founding of the American Museum of Natural History in 1891, grew out of a conscious rivalry with the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge and the Washington Smithsonian Museum. The use of American in its name indicated that the founders hoped that it would be the museum of natural history thus reflecting New York's self proclaimed status as the first city of America.<sup>64</sup> The competition with the Chicago Field Museum over anthropological collections developed later and out of a personal slight bitterly felt by the German-born American anthropologist, Franz Boas.

Arriving in the United States in the 1880s, Boas held a succession of positions before he became curator of anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History. His work in Berlin led him early in his American career to concentrate on the study of Northwest Coast cultures. In 1888, Boas was hired by the

British Association for the Advancement of Science to make a linguistic and physical anthropological survey of the Northwest Coast. In this task, as one historian noted "he devoted much of his energy. . . to physical anthropology, to measuring Indians (usually those in jail), and more especially to collecting skulls and skeletons. This he pursued with his usual zeal and, as with his ethnological collection in 1886, with speculative intent." Yet not without some misgivings. Boas found "it is most unpleasant work to steal bones from a grave, but what is the use, someone has to do it. I have carefully locked the skeleton into my trunk until I can pack it away." Yet even repulsive activities had their price. "Yesterday I wrote to the Museum in Washington asking whether they would consider buying skulls this winter for \$600; if they will, I shall collect assiduously. Without having such a connection I would not do it."<sup>65</sup> Short of money and eager to acquire funds to pay research expenses, Boas dug in a burial ground near Victoria and "on an island near Port Essington, (while a photographer distracted the Indians)," and at Saanich and Lytton.<sup>66</sup> He was little rewarded for his efforts.

He could collect only a dozen or so skulls himself and about the same number of skeletons, but he heard of a Cowichan collection of about 75 skulls that James and William Sutton had gathered for the American phrenological market. . . .When [Boas] received assurance from Washington that there was a market for such material, he bought the entire Sutton collection, bringing his British Columbia total to some 85 skulls and 14 complete skeletons. The Sutton brothers were willing to gather more and Boas, telling them of some sites he knew of, left an order for whatever they could find. Working both by land and sea, the Suttons gathered 48 skeletons complete with crania, one without, and 74 skulls - a total of 123 individuals in all.<sup>67</sup>

At the rate that Boas paid, \$20 for a complete Indian skeleton and \$5 for an Indian skull, the Suttons' collection was worth about \$1300. Yet it was a collection that caused some bad feelings. According to the Suttons, "the bones were 'in caves and such out of the way places' that he had had 'to buy some of the indians' at a dollar each to show him the sites." When word leaked out 'some half breeds at Fort Rupert started quite a distrubance and tried to incite the Indians to shoot them.'"68

At Alert Bay the police were notified and William Sutton worked quickly to prevent an investigation. Increasingly his collection of human remains was becoming an embarrassment and Suttons, fearful that the authorities would confiscate them, sought to get rid of them "'as soon as possible.'" When the Cowichan Indians later discovered that some of their graves had been open, Sutton was suspected.<sup>69</sup>

Boas paid \$1600 for his whole collection of Indian skeletons and crania which soon totaled about 100 complete skeletons and 200 crania. His attempt to resell them, however, proved difficult. This, however, did not prevent Boas for continuing to collect more. Even after he sold "a large collection" to Rudolf Virchow in Berlin, Boas's collection still totaled 238 items. About 179 of these were from the Northwest Coast, primarily Salish and Kwakiutl tribes. Eventually, the "collection" was sold to the Field Museum in 1894.<sup>70</sup>

In 1891, Boas was hired by F. W. Putnam, of the Peabody Museum, to mount the Northwest Coast exhibit for the World's Columbian Exposition. Boas also hoped that he would be selected

as curator of anthropology for the newly proposed Chicago Field Museum. The Field Museum, however, passed over Boas and selected William H. Holmes and then Dorsey. Boas was deeply embittered by this treatment. He eventually ended up at the American Museum of Natural History and saw his competition with the Field Museum for Northwest Coast artifacts and Indian remains as a kind of personal war.<sup>71</sup>

At the Field Museum, Dorsey, who had worked under Putnam at Harvard in archaeology, sought to expand the museum's Northwest Coast collection that the museum acquired at the end of the Columbian Exposition. With generous funding Dorsey was able to collect extensively and rapidly. On his first trip to the West for the Field Museum he set himself immediately to the task of collecting Indian crania and skeletons.

On his way to the Northwest Coast, Dorsey paused long enough among the Blackfeet to collect human remains and among the Kootenay he obtained two skeletons which he considered quite a rare find since the Kootenay, probably because of previous experience with grave robbers, were quite watchful of their cemeteries.<sup>72</sup> Reaching Vancouver, Dorsey hired a guide and set off for the Skungo burial cave reputed to be filled with Indian skeletal remains. On the way they stopped long enough at the Indian village of Yan to take a skeleton and two crania and at the village of Kung to empty a shaman's grave house. The same procedure was followed at "Georgie's Coffin House," as Dorsey called it, where another Indian skeleton was acquired.<sup>73</sup>

It was at Skungo cave, however, that the real "riches" lay. There Dorsey "rapidly scavenged the cave for all that was worth

taking, extracting 'a large collection of complete skeletons of both sexes and of various ages' along with 'many objects of ethnological interest.' The total haul was at least sixteen individuals and probably more."<sup>74</sup> From Skungo cave, Dorsey traveled northward to the abandoned Tlingit village of Old Tongass where he hoped find a shaman's grave. Since the Tlingit preferred cremation to burial, "it is no easy matter to secure osteological material from the Tlingits." At Old Tongass, however, Dorsey succeeded in discovering another grave house. As he describes it,

Removing a portion of one of the walls, we could see the body, which had been carefully wrapped in several cedar-bark mats, and tied into a neat bundle with stout cedar-bark rope. Over the bundle were branches of bog myrtle, and under the head was a box. Removing the wrapping still further, we disclosed the desiccated body of a woman doctor. In one hand she clasped a long knife, its steel blade entirely wasted away, leaving only the handle. In the other hand was a beautiful carved wooden pipe inlaid with finely polished abalone shells; but her real title to distinction lay in the immense wooden plug or labret which she still retained in her lower lip.<sup>75</sup>

Other Indian remains Dorsey collected, with as little finesse, in burial grounds at Port Essington and at Bella Bella.<sup>76</sup>

Boas, who encountered Dorsey on this trip, was sharply critical of Dorsey's superficial collecting. As historian Cole points out, Dorsey's collecting for the Field Museum was a "rip-and-run operation" and notes that even Dorsey himself likened it to "poorly disguised plunder." At one point, Dorsey was arrested for grave desecration. On Queen Charlotte Island so "flagrant

was the pillage" by Dorsey that a missionary reported angry complaints from the Indians. "They tell me that bones & other things have been removed wholesale, & that the perpetrators had not even the grace to cover up their excavations." Nearly every grave in the area was opened and the coffin boxes lay about. "In one case some hair, recognized as having belonged to an Indian doctor, and a box which had contained his body, were found floating in the sea." The missionary was incensed that an American collector for a museum could "so mecillessly ride roughshod over the susceptibilities of the Indians." that he sought to "expose the rascal."<sup>77</sup> Boas, who was delighted with these attacks on his rival, confidentially admitted having committed the same kind of grave robbing himself. He was, however, quick to point out that he never angered the Indians, although he did not mention the difficulties in this regard of his collectors, William and James Sutton.<sup>78</sup>

Despite the booty collected on this first trip, Dorsey still felt that the Field Museum still did not have a complete enough collection. He offered to buy from a Dr. C. F. Newcombe--later to become Dorsey's primary collecting agent in the Northwest--Indian skulls from five to twenty dollars each and up to twenty dollars for skeletons.<sup>79</sup> Correspondence between Newcombe and Dorsey over a period of several years attest to this obsession to collect more osteological remains. As revealed in their correspondence, one of the easist ways to collect was either during an epidemic or when the Indians left their village to hunt or fish. Newcombe, who owned a boat, boasted to Dorsey how he stored stolen grave goods and human remains in a locked



compartment, and when he had Indian help around, would keep them distracted while he hid the remains. Newcombe--not atypical of collectors in the area--at time resorted to theft, bribery and deception to gain skeletal remains. He even bought from gold prospector who discovered that digging up Indian burial ground could be easier and more profitable than mining for gold. In all this, Newcombe had Dorsey's blessing.<sup>80</sup>

#### PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE ARMY MEDICAL MUSEUM:

##### COLLECTING AS OFFICIAL POLICY

If competition between the Field Museum and the American Museum of Natural History was intense and led to stripping whole villages of both artifacts and human remains. The members of the Edward H. Harriman Alaskan Expedition of 1899 engaged in just such activities. Stopping at a nearly abandoned Tlingit village at Cape Fox, the members of the expedition, "with a feeling that what was unguarded was unowned, screens, boxes, crests, inside houseposts, and memorial poles went from shore to ship. The California Academy of Science, the Chicago Field Museum, the state universities of Michigan and Washington, and the Peabody Museum of Harvard all received examples of monumental sculpture."<sup>81</sup> They were not, however, the only museums collecting. European museums, French and especially Germans were active on the Northwest Coast as was the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>82</sup> As one historian said of this period:

In retrospect it is clear that the goods flowed irreversibly from native hands to Euro-American ones until little was left in possession of the descendants of the people who had invented, made, and used them. This situation, often regretted and sometimes deplored, in which the natives are divorced from the products of their heritage, has created some demands for repatriation, demands like those of the Greeks for the return of the Elgin Marbles.

If most exchanges were normal commercial transactions, the entire process can also be viewed as an unequal trading relationship, the product of a colonial encounter in which, in the long run, the terms of trade were stacked in favor of those who were part of the dominant economic system, tilted toward those whose economic system generated a surplus of the cash upon which all had come to depend.<sup>83</sup>

While the Field Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, the Smithsonian Institution, and other smaller museums sought to collect all aspects of American Indian life and material culture, another Washington museum sought in the second half of the nineteenth century to collect only Indian osteological remains. The Army Medical Museum, founded in 1862, sought human remains of all races but from 1865 through the 1880s gathered primarily Indian remains. On September 1, 1868, the Assistant U.S. Surgeon General sent out the following official order to all Army medical officers:

The Officers of the Medical Staff are informed that a craniological collection was commenced last year at the Army Medical Museum, and that it already includes 143 specimens of skulls. The chief purpose had in view in forming this collection is to aid in the progress of anthropological science by obtaining measurements of a large number of skulls of aboriginal races of North America. Medical Officers stationed in the Indian country or in the vicinity of ancient mounds or cemeteries in the Mississippi Valley or the Atlantic region have peculiar facilities for promoting this undertaking. They have already enriched the Mortonian and other magnificent craniological cabinets by their contributions and it is hoped they will evince even greater zeal in collecting for their own Museum. A list of

the crania now in the possession of the Museum will soon be published in the Catalogue of the Osteological Series of the Anatomical Section. It is sufficient here to state that 47 of the 143 specimens are Indian crania from the following tribes: Tsuktshi 1, Flathead, Chenook, Selipsh, Nisqually, 13; California, 2; Piegan, Spokane, Mandan, 3; Arickaree, Gros Ventre, 2; Sioux, Kaw, Minataree, Menominee, 6; Cheyenne, Kiowa, Arrapahoe, Wichita, 10; Navajo and Apache, 5; doubtful or mixed breeds, 5. These crania were collected by Brevet Lieutenant Colonels J. Cooper McKee, D. C. Peters, C. C. Gray, F.L. Town, Surgeon B.E. Fryer, Brevet Majors J.F. Weeds, W. H. Forwood, Acting Assistant Surgeons W. Matthews, and G. H. Oliver, Dr. George Suckley, Mr. George Gibbs, Lieutenant (now Brevet Major General) G.K. Warren, and Mr. Lloyd Brooke. Information has been received of the shipment of an interesting series of crania exhumed from an ancient Indian mound near Fort Wadsworth, Dakota Territory, by Acting Assistant Surgeon A. I. Comfort, and of many crania procured at the instance of the Medical Directors of the Department of Columbia and the District of Texas.

While exotic and normal and abnormal crania of all descriptions are valued at the Museum for purposes of comparison, it is chiefly desired to procure sufficiently large series of adult crania of the principal Indian tribes to furnish accurate average measurements. Medical Officers will enhance the value of their contributions by transmitting with the specimens the fullest attainable memoranda, specifying the locality whence the skulls were derived, the presumed age and sex, and, in the case of 'Mound' skulls, or of those from cemeteries, describing the mode of sepulture, and any traces of weapons, implements, utensils found with the specimens, or any other circumstance that may throw light on their ethnic character.

The subject is earnestly commended to the attention of the Medical Officers of the Army.

By order of the Surgeon General<sup>84</sup>

As with Samuel G. Morton earlier, military and especially medical military men were requested to collect Indian osteological remains. The response was favorable. By 1873 Surgeon General J. K. Barnes could write,

The Medical Officers of the Army have collected a much larger series of American skulls than have ever before been available for study. The collection embraces many ancient crania from caves and tumuli, from Greenland and Alaska, to Florida and Arizona, and specimens from the majority of the existing tribes

of Indians, and of the extinct races of the historic period. These as well as a sufficient series of skulls of the white and black races, have been carefully measured and figured by orthographic drawings so that the dimensions may be verified.<sup>85</sup>

A letter from one such surgeon is characteristic. "In 1869 when serving at Ft. Randall[, ] D. T. as A. A. Surgeon I received an order from your Dept. to make a collection of Indian Skulls for the Nat. Med. Museum. I complied with that order to the utmost of my ability."<sup>86</sup> Obviously, the order of 1868 was not the only request sent to posts around the country.<sup>87</sup>

Stationed at military posts in the West, and often near the scene of fighting, army medical personnel were in a good position to acquire Indian remains and to provide appropriate biographical and historical context. This is seen in a letter from Surgeon B.E. Fryer, writing from Fort Harker, Kansas in 1869:

I had already obtained for the Museum the skull of one of the Pawnees, killed in the fight you speak of, & would have had all had it now been that immediately after the engagement, the Indians lurked about their dead and watched them so closely, that the guide I sent out was unable to secure but one - Until within a day or two the snow has prevented a further attempt - Yesterday I sent a scout who knows the spot & think[s] I can get at least two more of the Crania - that number being reported to me as left unburied by the Pawnee, & it may be that if the remaining five (eight not seven were killed) are buried or have been hid near where the fight took place - about twenty miles from here - I can, after a time, obtain all - I shall certainly use every effort -<sup>88</sup>

Army physicians also had the medical facilities to "prepare" the bones and the means to send them to Washington. This is revealed, for example, in the writing of one contributor. Referring to the head of a recently killed Kiowa Indian, "his

scalp and the soft parts of the face and neck were carefully dissected up from the skull, atlas and axis, and these were subsequently boiled and cleaned for the Army Medical Museum. The skull was carefully cleaned and then steeped in solution of lime for 36 hours. . ." <sup>89</sup> And not just bones were prepared and preserved. "I have at last (today) secured a fresh Indian brain for the Museum. It is now being soaked in Erlick's fluid and will be ready for shipment in a week. . . .It comes from a full-blooded adult male Apache."<sup>90</sup>

Not all, however, who contributed Indian skulls to the Army Medical Museum were army medical personnel. After his trip to the Northwest Coast, Boas also sold some of his collection to the Army Medical Museum netting him a total of ten dollars for three Indian skulls.<sup>91</sup> Another was William A. Collins, who sent in the skeleton of an eight foot Indian that he hired someone to steal from its grave. "I took the body to a rendering establishment and with the assistance of the proprietor boiled the flesh and grease out of the bones in a clean kettle, so that no bone was lost or none added."<sup>92</sup> One physician sent in the skull of his patient, a Sandwich Islander "It is genuine- for 'I knew him well', attended him in his last illness, and made his head responsible for his medical bill - It has now served my purpose, and I turn it over to you. . ."<sup>93</sup>

The official reason given by the Army Medical Museum gave for collecting osteological remains of American Indians was for comparative racial study. It sought to demonstrate racial characteristics. After his examination of "osteological peculiarities," Dr. George A. Otis of the Army Medical Museum

announced in 1870 that data indicated that American Indians "must be assigned a lower position in the human scale than has been believed heretofore." These findings pricked the interests of not only U.S. physical anthropologists but anthropologists engaged in human biology world wide.

Anthropologists in different parts of the world are anxious for the data thus accumulated for comparison with similar data published in Sweden, Russia, Germany, Italy, France and England. The French government thro' its legation here, after making repeated applications for the tables of cranial measurements, employed an artist to make casts and take photographs of a series of typical skulls; and a professor of Bonn made the study of the collection the object of a trip across the Atlantic.<sup>94</sup>

The rapid rise of physical anthropology after the Civil War was rooted in a national sense of human progress both culturally and biologically; it also grew out of the fascination with statistical methodology and its usefulness in anthropometric investigations. The statistical search was on for the "average man" and his future development. Writing in 1869, Benjamin A. Gould, a member of the National Academy of Sciences and president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, noted:

Indeed the external form of this average man may legitimately be adopted as a standard of beauty and a model for art. The eminent scientist [Lambert Quetelet] has shown that we may discover not merely the outward semblance of this abstract being, but his needs, capacities, intellect, judgement, and tendencies; and Quetelet may thus be regarded as the founder of statistical anthropology, indeed of social science, in the true significance of the word, according to which science depends upon the investigations of laws, not upon the consideration of isolated facts, nor the dissemination of correct principles.<sup>95</sup>

Through the use of statistics scientists hoped to discover a way to redesign man. Measurements were made of body size and head size. To measure the Indian was to know the Indian; to know his capabilities and weaknesses; and to possibly reshape the Indian into a being able to survive in civilization as Americans defined it. Although voluminous measurements were indeed made of living Indians, Indian remains continued to be vital in research.<sup>96</sup>

This statistical preoccupation with physical characteristics was to underscore the work of the Bureau of American Ethnology. In a draft of a letter written by Samuel P. Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution to William H. Holmes, Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Langley was sharply critical of the Bureau's work and reminded Holmes that the Congress expected something more practical from the Bureau and suggested, among other things, the "application of methods of anthropometry and in general physical anthropology to the American Indian. . . .This to include the study of the mixture of the Indian with white and other races and its results, as far as possible." Such osteological data, along with examples of Indian art and industry should be "secured, arranged and placed on display" and would not only illustrate the history of the American Indian but also aid the government in formulating Indian policy.<sup>97</sup>

The racial characteristics of Native American remains seemed uppermost in the minds of some collectors. One, collector from Camp Robinson, Nebraska, wrote "the skull is in good condition and in my opinion shows the race peculiarities quite markedly. .

. .[it is]the complete skeleton of a very young squaw, say about 16 years old. . . .the markings and race characteristics are. . .not so well shown as in the previous specimen."<sup>98</sup> Sometimes physical beauty in life induced one collector to retrieve a skull for the Museum. Such was the case of a "squaw having remarkable beauty" and who had been the mistress of two soldiers at Fort Randall. Upon the death of this young Yanktonnais woman, the post surgeon located her grave and removed her head, proudly proclaiming the acquisition of "a fine specimen" for the Museum.<sup>99</sup> Such also was the case of a Commanche woman "of middle age, good physique, etc." that the surgeon at Fort Concho Texas "dissected" for the Museum.<sup>100</sup> That these bones lost any respect as human remains and had just become objects of natural history is evident when a barrel containing "the heads of the four Modoc Indians, Capt. Jack, Schonchis, Boston Charley and Black Jim" arrived at the Army Medical Museum and labeled merely as "specimens of natural history."<sup>101</sup>

But there were other reasons for collecting skulls. The prospect of the complete disappearance or extinction of American Indians prompted some to gather up Indian skulls fearing their loss to science. As one collector wrote to the Surgeon General regarding a Flathead Indian skull, "this tribe of Flathead Indians is so rapidly passing away, it is thought the specimen [skull] may be of value to your museum. . .."<sup>102</sup> A more gothic note is sounded in a letter of Spencer F. Baird of the Smithsonian to someone in the Anatomical Section of the Army Medical Museum. "Some one by the name of Dodge from the



Agricultural Department in sending in some skulls from Montana requests 'a spare human cranium' he would 'like to present to a college society at Yale [Skull and Cross Bones Society?] of which he is a member. I told him we had none but that you could perhaps spare one. If you have a cranium. . .I would be glad if you could oblige him."<sup>103</sup>

Given the Army Medical Museum's idea of the usefulness of skulls for comparative study of race or even of different tribal groups, how valuable were the skulls in settling such questions? If the focus of research lay not on Indian origins but on racial typology and intelligence as measured by brain size, then the identity of the skull was important. Some letters throw doubt on both the identity and the usefulness of collections to achieve these ends. One correspondent noted that it was difficult to obtain skulls representative of particular tribes. "The different tribes get so mixed up by adoption, by capture, and by the habits of promiscuous intercourse of many of the women, that it is already difficult to find pure specimens of each tribe."<sup>104</sup>

One major problem, of course, was the identity of the skull, or skulls, in question. Not every collector could discover the tribal provenance of the Indian remains he collected. Sometimes confusion regarding the identity of a Native American skeleton often led to it being disposed of as was the case of one skeleton thought to be Indian slave. According to a second report in the above case, "This skeleton has also been said to be from a late warrior; its identity is therefore a question; and the bones, as they do not show anything but the juvenility of the subject and are much earth stained[,] are not kept."<sup>105</sup> Just how they were

disposed of was not indicated. In another case the identity of a skull was open to a vote. A skull dug up in Texas led to a dispute and was put to a vote among border Texans, Mexicans, and soldiers as to whether the skull was Commanche or Kiowa. The vote gave it to the Commanches but later, other information strongly suggested Kiowa and clouded the whole issue.<sup>106</sup> For their study of comparative tribal crania, such skulls were useless.

Native American skulls could be traded and many were. Indian crania from a mound near Vicksburg were sent to Rudolf Virchow in Berlin and a Flathead skull was sent to a Professor E. De Bois Reymond, Director of the Physiological Institute of Berlin. Some Indian skulls were traded to a R. Forrer in Strassburg in exchange for some Roman skulls.<sup>107</sup>

As the Indian agent among the Chippewas of Lake Superior reported, "There is probably no people that exhibit more sorrow and grief for their dead than they."<sup>108</sup> Like all peoples, Indian felt natural grief at the loss of loved ones and expressed this grief in the many tribal religious ceremonies of farewell to the departed. Although Indians were vigilant in guarding their dead, this, at times, proved impossible. Tribal hunting and fishing expeditions often required extended absences from village cemeteries and burial grounds. Epidemics that swept through villages often prohibited performances of customary funerary rites; indeed, epidemics often so desimated a village the inhabitants had no opportunity to guard or bury the dead who were then were easily acquired by those who sought to profit from

Indian misery. In repeated instances during the late nineteenth century, the government removed entire tribes to reservations far from their burial grounds.

Still collecting Indian remains could be as dangerous on the Plains and in the Southwest as it was on the Northwest Coast. Repeatedly, the letters of the collectors speak of the danger they braved robbing the graves and/or scaffolds. From the Dakotas, one graver robber writes, "I have the honor to report that I have forwarded to you a box, containing 25 Indian crania, and other specimens. . . .In making this collection, I could get the co-operation of no one, except my guide Hecke. . . .on account of the hazardous nature of the undertaking."<sup>109</sup> A Fort Randall collector noted his fear of having been observed by passing Indians when he was in the process of digging a grave and on another occasion of stealing a skull from a scaffold. This same individual seemed particularly proud of his daring, for on yet another grave robbing expedition, he writes:

The skull of an old Indian whose father was a Yankton and mother a Brule. Died at this post on the 7 day of Jan, 1869 and was buried in his blankets and furs in the ground about a half mile from the Fort, within a few rods of the tippees [sic] occupied by his friends, I secured his head in the night of the day he was buried. From the fact he was buried near these lodges, I did not know but what I was suspected in this business, and that it was their intention to keep watch over the body. Believing that they would hardly think I would steal his head before he was cold in his grave, I early in the evening, with two of my hospital attendants secured this specimen.<sup>110</sup>

As usual, dark nights were preferred for stealing Indian remains. One collector calculated that he traveled 60 miles at night on foot over a period of time to collect fifteen skulls. "I

collected them in a way somewhat unusual: the burial place is in plain sight of many Indian houses and very near frequent roads. I had to visit the country at night when not even the dogs were stirring. . .after securing one [skull] I had to pass the Indian sentry at the stockade gate which I never attempted with more than one, for fear of detection." His adventure deserve fuller consideration:

On one occasion I was followed by an Indian who did not comprehend my movements, and I made a circuitous route away from the place intended and threw him off his suspicions. On stormy nights-rain, snow or wind & bitter cold, I think I was never observed going or coming, by either Indians or dogs, but on pleasant nights - I was always seen but of course no one knew what I had in my coat. . . .the greatest fear I had was that some Indian would miss the heads, see my tracks & ambush me, but they didn't. I regret the lower maxillae are not on each skull, I got all I could find, and they are all detached save one. There is in the box a left radius & ulna of a woman, with the identical bracelets on that were buried with her. The bones of themselves are nothing, but the combinaton with the ornaments make them a little noticable.<sup>111</sup>

American Indian expression of grief for the dead was, and still is, obvious in the funeral ritual and preparation of the dead. Anthropologist David Bushnell writing in 1927, having surveyed the historical literature on the burial practices of the Siouan, Caddoan and Algonquin peoples, confirmed the importance of funerary rites for these tribes.<sup>112</sup> Great ritual care was expended in preparing the dead and providing for their future spiritual existence. Among some groups like the Aleutian Islanders, "they embalm the bodies of the men with dried moss and grass; bury them in their best attire, in a sitting posture,

in a strong box, with their darts and instruments; and decorate the tomb with various coloured mats, embroidery and paintings." For some, it was difficult to give up the dead. "A mother will keep a dead child thus embalmed in their hut for some months, constantly wiping it dry; and they bury it when it begins to smell, or when they get reconciled to parting with it."<sup>113</sup>

One sea captain, sailing for the Alaska Commercial Company, learned from the Aleuts living on an island north of Ounalaska of a burial cave on Kagamale Island. Curious, and thinking he could make a contribution to science, the captain sought out the cave. His story provides a memorable account of the care the Indians devoted to their dead.

The cave smelt strongly of hot sulphurous vapors. With great care the mummies were removed, and all the little trinkets and ornaments scattered around were also taken away. . . . In all there are eleven packages of bodies. Only two or three have as yet been opened. The body of the chief is inclosed in a large basket-like structure, about four feet in height. Outside the wrappings are finely-wrought sea-grass matting, exquisitely close in texture, and skins. . . . The body is covered with the fine skin of the sea-otter, always a mark of distinction in the internments of the Aleuts. . . . The bodies of a pappoose and of a very little child, which probably died at birth or soon after it, have sea-otter skins around them. . . . The relics obtained with the bodies include a few wooden vessels scooped out smoothly; a piece of dark, greenish, flat stone, harder than the emerald, which the Indians use to tan skins; a scalp-lock of jet-black hair; a small rude figure, which may have been a very ugly doll or an idol; two or three tiny carvings in ivory of the sea-lion, very neatly executed, a comb, a necklet made of birds' claws inserted into one another, and several specimens of little bags, and a cap plaited out of sea-grass and almost water-tight.<sup>114</sup>

It should also be noted that Indians attached great significance to the bones of their departed kin. Bones were

removed from scaffolds, carefully bundled and buried. A Mandan example is illustrative of this care.

An Indian who resided on the Mississippi hearing that his son had died at this spot, came up in a canoe to take charge of the remains and convey them down the river to his place of abode, but on his arrival he found that the corpse had already made such progress toward decomposition as rendered it impossible for it to be removed. He then undertook, with a few friends, to clean off the bones. All was scraped off and thrown into the stream, the bones were carefully collected into his canoe, and subsequently carried down to his residence.<sup>115</sup>

Examples could easily be multiplied of the respect Native Americans bestowed on the bones of their departed. Thus when Indians found the graves of their dead desecrated, the parts or all of the skeleton missing, there was undoubtedly anguish and acute emotional suffering as one would naturally expect in any culture that loved and respected the dead and clothed their departure in religious ceremony. "The violation of the grave was always regarded as an offense of the first magnitude and provoked severe revenge." As a Captain Belcher pointed out regarding one tribe on the Northwest Coast: "Great secrecy is observed in all their burial ceremonies, partly from fear of Europeans, and as among themselves they will instantly punish by death any violation of the tomb or wage war if perpetrated by another tribe, so they are inveterate and tenaciously [sic] bent on revenge should they discover that any act of the kind has been perpetrated by a white man."<sup>116</sup>

Perhaps the saddest account of museum sponsored "grave robbing" is that of Minik, an Inuit (Eskimo). Boas, when on the staff of the American Museum of Natural History, requested of the

Arctic explorer, Robert Peary, to bring back an Inuit who could remain in the U.S. for a year or two. Peary brought back six. Within months four of them died. One, of the two remaining, made his way back to his Greenland. Mimik, the other survivor and the youngest of the group, was raised as an orphan in New York City. When Mimik's father--one of the original six Inuit--died, a mock funeral was held on the Museum's grounds in order to convince the young Mimik that proper funeral rituals were being observed and that his father was buried according to Inuit custom. Neither Mimik's father nor any of other Inuit, however, were buried but were "processed," along with an eleven year old Inuit girl from Alaska, in upstate New York and their bones returned to the American Museum of Natural History. When a teenager, Mimik inadvertently discovered that his father had not been buried in the museum ceremony and that his father's bones were on display in the museum. Through several years of severe depression brought on by this knowledge, Mimik tried to reclaim his father's bones for burial but his petitions were denied.<sup>117</sup>

As the Mimik's case and that of the young Alaskan Inuit girl who died became known to the public, there was an outcry. Letters and articles accused the Museum of insensitivity and illegal possession. One angry correspondent argued that the young girl had not willed herself to the Museum. "Except in the cases in which a right to dissect is expressly conferred by law, 'says section 306 of the Penal Code 'every dead body of a human being, lying within this State, must be decently buried within a reasonable time after death.' And the same statute imposed the

requirement of burial in respect to the remains of a human body after dissection."<sup>118</sup>

In response to such criticism, a Dr. Bern B. Gallaudet of Columbia University, lashed back, "We think the body of the girl will be an interesting study--an Eskimo, you know--and we would like to examine the internal organs to see how they compare with those of persons reared under other conditions and in other climates. Just what will be done with the body I don't know, but we. . .can do what we please with it.'" As Boas would say, it "'is in the interest of science.'"<sup>119</sup>

Looking back on the nineteenth century, it is now possible to delineate certain trends in the study of the Native Americans. To some, Indians were less than human; they were an inferior species doomed to extinction. To others, who represented the majority at least among scientists, the Indian was merely a childlike barbarian who had yet to grow to the adulthood of civilization. As the foremost anthropologists of the late nineteenth century put it, "they have the skulls and brains of barbarians, and must grow toward civilization. . ."<sup>120</sup>

Either way, crania collections were considered necessary. If one accepted the first premise, than Indian skulls should be represented in museums along with the skeletal remains of other creatures who had passed into extinction. If one accepted the second premise, then Indian skulls were needed to aid the scientists and the government to facilitate learning more about the capabilities of Indians through cranial measurements. While it seemed impossible to learn how long Indians had lived in the Americas--the techniques to discover micro culture change were



still not worked out in American archaeology--measurement of Indian skulls at least seemed to offer a way to predict the racial potential of the Indian to achieve civilization. As one writer on the history of physical anthropology noted, "during the nineteenth century, physical anthropology established its classic techniques for measuring the human form; they remained the primary instruments for its research until well into the twentieth century." By the end of the nineteenth century a greater sophistication in statistics and use of samples developed. To draw their conclusions, physical anthropologists (both in osteometry and anthropometry) continued to need larger and larger collections of "data."<sup>121</sup> The digging, buying or stealing of skulls and other skeletal remains continued. Physical anthropology still remained focused on questions of race.<sup>122</sup>

Yet by the turn of the century within the field of anthropology, criticism regarding the value of cranial measurement began to mount. Although not a decisive indicator, the Army Medical Museum in 1898 transferred to the U. S. National Museum over 2000 crania.<sup>123</sup> More significant was the criticism of Franz Boas. Boas, who, as noted, actively collected human remains, openly questioned in 1894 the usefulness of osteological collections. He admitted that even though much of the then current anthropological knowledge was based primarily on collections such as the Morton collection at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, the prehistoric collection at Peabody Museum in Cambridge and the largest collection of all at

the U.S. Army Medical Museum, none were sufficient to "delineate in a satisfactory manner the distribution of types of man in North America. . . . Investigations on osteological material, particularly on material collected among modern tribes, are always unsatisfactory in that the identification of the skull, regarding its tribe and sex, often remains doubtful." He added that questions also remain as to whether the skulls belonged to full-bloods or to "half-breeds." "It appears, therefore, that for a more thorough investigation of the anthropology of North American Indians an investigation on living individuals is indispensable."<sup>124</sup>

Yet even working with living subjects had its dangers as Boas discovered in 1891. Attempting measurements of Worcester school children, Boas was vilified in the local press "which was horrified that an 'alleged anthropologist' with 'visage seamed and scarred from numerous rapier slashes' might contaminate the unclothed innocents of Worcester."<sup>125</sup> Indians, however, without access to the press and public opinion were compelled to submit to measurement by government pressure.<sup>126</sup>

#### COLLECTING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the twentieth century, the infatuation with statistics continued as extensive measurements of Indian (and other races) were published in journals like Biometrika. Physical anthropology, as one of its practioners defined it, "is a system of techniques. It is the systematized art of measuring and

taking observations on man, his skeleton, his brain, or other organs, by the most reliable means and methods, for scientific purposes."<sup>127</sup>

Although this paper is not meant to be a social-scientific history of the period, it cannot be ignored that the early twentieth century was a period of heightened American awareness of ethnicity and race. Concern over immigration from southern and eastern Europe frightened many Americans who viewed these "unwashed masses" surging into eastern cities with alarm. Fears of "bad-blood" diluting good Yankee stock prompted Congress to pass immigration restriction legislation.<sup>128</sup> While the government was deciding on what kind of people to let into the country and from where, Congress nodded to the original Americans--who were not doing a good job in disappearing--and made them citizens.

In the 1920s racial and ethnic fears combined with a fear of communism and prompted research in how to identify with more precision racial types. More exact body and head measurements seemed to offer an answer. During the 1930s, those seeking status as Indians in order to qualify for Bureau of Indian Affairs programs in areas such as school aid and health care were measured by physical anthropologists to determine whether they were true Indians or "half-breeds." The criteria of who was an Indian was biological and was drawn from Indian skulls in museums and university collections.<sup>129</sup> As Karen Blu in her book on the Lumbee notes, anthropologists William C. Sturtevant and Samuel

Stanley criticized this "pseudo-biological criterion" for identifying Indians as "both arbitrary and misleading."<sup>130</sup>

Legal and culture criteria here [in defining Indianness] as elsewhere are supposedly biological ('racial') but the fact that the actual criteria are social (caste-like and in terms of self identification) is made very obvious by the complex modern situation in the Eastern States. . . . It would be most unfortunate to strengthen the popular American definition of social caste membership as based on biological criteria; what should be attempted is to increase the recognition that such criteria are either false, or harmful and antidemocratic.<sup>131</sup>

It is possible that the continued reliance on biology--head measurements and shape of Indian skulls--helped to perpetuate the racial classification and stigmatization of Indians in the public mind.

In the early twentieth century, a recent scholar observes, "class differences were often viewed in racial terms and scientifically justified on biological grounds."<sup>132</sup> The eugenic movement sought to control the direction of human--and hence social--change. This was to be the great hope for humankind.

From now on evolution will no longer be left entirely to nature, but it will be assisted. . . and even regulated by man himself. This is into what we are coming, and I think it will be one of the greatest manifestations of humanity - the fact of assisting intelligently in its own evolution along the right lines, and thereby doing away with the immense waste which would otherwise happen. . . This particular line of activity is known to-day under the name of Eugenics, which is not, as is often supposed, a separate branch of science; it is merely applied anthropological and medical science - applied for the benefit of mankind. . .<sup>133</sup>

In 1939, a few years before Nazi experiments with shaping humanity were performed, the American physical anthropologist, Ales Hrdlicka, himself an immigrant from Bohemia, announced:

Some day some state will become enlightened enough to institute, as a regular and important part of its existence, periodical--say 50 year--anthropometric surveys of its population, to ascertain whether and how its human stock is progressing or regressing, both as a whole and in various environmentally or otherwise different parts of its territories. . . .Aside of Russia no country is more suitable for this purpose than the U.S.A. There are not only great regional and environmental differences in the abodes of the American population, but also difference in blood, economical conditions, and habits. There are plain evidences already that the American population is not developing physically equally in all the regions, but sufficient and reliable data on the subject and on the progress of matters can only be secured by a definite, periodic anthropometric census of the population.<sup>134</sup>

Hrdlicka did not state what the criteria of perfect human stock would be or who would make the decision! He did, however, vigorously advocate the training of physical anthropologists and the collecting of skeletal material. Hrdlicka, himself, was very active in collecting Indian remains in Alaska where he often encountered Indian resistance and un-coöperativeness.<sup>135</sup>

For awhile after 1940, skeletal remains became less important in physical anthropology. <sup>136</sup> The cause is unclear but may be rooted in the reaction to Nazi human experiments and creation of skeletal museums. This does not mean that archaeology and collecting of Indian skeletal remains no longer continued. It did but the acquisition of Indian physical remains seemed a low priority. In a recent article, Douglas H. Ubelaker and Lauryn Guttenplan Grant, point out that "in the Plains area of the United States. . .in the middle to late 1950's most archaeologists did not bother to preserve human skeletal remains, apparently for lack of awareness of their research value."<sup>137</sup>

Recently Indian skeletal remains have drawn greater attention as research priorities have changed.<sup>138</sup>

From the perspective of today, it is possible to see that anthropology (or the science that was to become anthropology) throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries--but even into the twentieth century--not only shared the racial assumptions of the general public, but often reinforced and promoted those racial views with its findings. The choice of theories to pursue, the data collected, the investigations conducted and conclusions reached were often generated by the racial concerns prevalent in the society in which the scientist worked and to which he or she undoubtedly subscribed.<sup>139</sup>

It is, of course, granted that this is only natural, but the results of these investigations leave a residue of old ideas or discarded assumptions as science moves on in different directions. The residue of old theories, still carry heavy social and emotional costs for some minorities such as the American Indian. This is especially true in the area of racial studies where out-of-date ideas continue with a folklore-like authority to shape popular thought and measure public response. Native American remains lying in display cases or stored in back rooms of museums, universities and historical societies, can symbolize for Indians a long chapter of insensitivity and racial bias and for non-Indians fuel public disrespect. In their continued display the social and psychological costs are great not only for Native Americans but for all Americans. The displays promote within the general public a perception that Indians can be so exhibited because they are different and that

difference, for many, is rooted in a sense of Indian cultural and perhaps physical inferiority. In a world that needs and seeks tolerance, the holding of Indian remains and their tasteless display sends a negative message freighted with lingering racial overtones and prompt both pain and anger in Native Americans.

#### THE CURRENT SITUATION

The rising tide of anger over what many Indians see as the desecration of their ancestors prompted some scientific organizations to rethink the whole issue and formulate policies that would both safeguard their own research objectives and also meet many of the Indians' demands. The Department of Interior, the National Park Service, the United States Forest Service, the Council on Historic Preservation along with some states, are just a few of the organizations and government bodies that, along with the American Association of Museums, have begun to move in this direction.<sup>140</sup>

The Council of the American Association of Museums announced in January of 1988, that as part of this new policy "in cases where the methods of acquisition of remains may have been technically legal at the time of acquisition but which may have been unethical by standards either then or by standards since, museum should weight both legal and ethical considerations when considering requests for repatriation and discuss with the requesting parties the specifics of these considerations. . . ." The policy further stated that "unless there are compelling and

overriding reasons to retain human remains under these conditions, museums should work with legitimate Native American descendants to return such remains."<sup>141</sup> Although many Indians consider this a step in the right direction, they feel the policy does not go far enough. Who, for example, determines what is "compelling" and "overriding"?<sup>142</sup>

Complicating this issue even more is the wide range of scientific responses to the repatriation issue. Symptomatic of this state of affairs are the spate of articles arguing pro and con on the issue.<sup>143</sup> One of the many articles is "Skeletons in Our Museums" by Douglas J. Preston. When this article appeared in the February 1989 issue of Harper's Magazine it attracted the attention of the museum community. The article focused on the large osteological collection in the American Museum of Natural History, and raised significant ethical issues and some troubling questions. <sup>144</sup>

In a letter to Harper's Magazine, Robert McCormick Adams, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, acknowledged Preston's "fair minded analysis" and pointed out that the issue of repatriation was complicated and freighted with legal as well as ethical considerations. Adams pointed out that while the Smithsonian's policy on repatriation of bones was still evolving, "known descendants, under both law and elementary morality, have the prerogative of reclaiming and reburying their ancestral remains. Although the attempt to establish the link of descent often requires patient work with old, ambiguous documents, the right of reburial is clear." Adams acknowledged that the Smithsonian Institution "deeply regrets the circumstances in



which too many of those remains were acquired," he resisted, however, the call by a tribal attorney to curtail the activities of physical anthropologists. "Apparently he [the lawyer] is among those who think that the claims of a particular religion-- unsupported by an established legal standing such as demonstrated descent--should supercede the claims of science. . ."145

Adams's letter brought a response from Raymond D. Fogelson, professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago who took exception.

The insistence on "known descendants," "links of descent," ascertainment of tribal affiliation, and continuity of residence begs several questions. First, it assumes that Native Americans routinely reckoned descent beyond three generations and traced family lines in a manner comparable to Euro-American genealogists. Second, the statement implies that "tribes" were primordial forms of social organization and not the product of Indian-White historical interaction. Third, proof of residential continuity seems an unduly restrictive criterion for release of skeletal remains. . . .Secretary Adams clearly does not deny the collective identity of the prehistoric and historic bones in question as ancestral to contemporary Native Americans. This, it seems to me, should be the central premise on which policy should be based. In the vast majority of cases where specific identification cannot be made, the bones should be returned for proper reburial to responsible Indian organizations in the regions where they were first discovered. . . .As an anthropologist with some training in physical anthropology, I believe the scientific justification for retaining Indian skeletal remains is exaggerated. Anthropometric measurements and use of modern photometric and x-ray techniques before reburial can form a data base for most physical anthropological research. Procedures for dating bones and for reconstructing diet, which require destruction of osseous material should only be undertaken with informed consent of responsible Indian organizations. Negotiations with such organizations to release small samples of bones may be possible, if they can be convinced of the relevance of such research. . . .Ethnological and archaeological investigations indicate that many Native American groups endowed skeletal remains with special spiritual significance. Bones were believed to be imbued with power and vital properties. At the risk of being rebuked as a religionist and a traitor to positivistic science, I believe the religious rights of Native Americans past and present should be respected and in this

instance "supersede the claims of science in dictating the contents of a natural history museum." Can a nation that erects tombs to unknown soldiers, that spares no effort to retrieve unidentified bones of those missing-in-action in Korea and Viet Nam not appreciate the concerns of Native Americans whose ancestors remain as spiritual hostages in natural history museums?<sup>146</sup>

Although Fogelson's letter was never published it was circulated at the Smithsonian Museum where it evoked concern. Considered a harbinger of an anti-science drift among "fellow anthropologists," Fogelson's letter, for some, adumbrated the opening of a "door to a whole series of anti-scientific, religiously based initiatives that would undermine future scientific research in several anthropological disciplines."<sup>147</sup> Unfortunately, this misrepresents the issue. The issue is not anti-science nor anti-intellectualism; the issue is who should have control over the Native American remains and the power to decide how they should be handled.

This report has attempted to elucidate--in accordance with the policy set forth by the Council of the American Association of Museums as noted above--the unethical and perhaps illegal conduct practiced in collecting Indian remains in the past. Undoubtedly, most Indians, like non-Indians, strongly objected to the molesting and desecration of the graves of their deceased. The ethnographic literature notes that such an offence by a tribal member was met with horror and deadly reprisal. Such behavior was considered unethical from a religious point of view and an insult to the dead. With the limited means available, Indians attempted--and the documented cases can be easily multiplied beyond those noted in this report--to guard against

such pillage of their graves by non-Indians. But the report also demonstrates that "grave robbing" for medical research or other purposes was both distasteful and illegal in Euro-American society. This still appears to be true.

Arguments throughout the nineteenth century emphasized that Indian remains--along with those of blacks and whites--were necessary for science. Yet as it has been noted above, and in other sources, such "science" tended to victimize both Indians and blacks by justifying public intolerance and prejudice toward them.<sup>148</sup> Government Indian policy, during this time, seemed little affected by the analysis of Indian remains despite the expectations of S. P. Langley of the Smithsonian Institution.

By inclination, if not by training, most anthropologists and archaeologists, are sensitive to Indian feelings and concerns. Some noted archaeologists have recently questioned the need for the continued collection of Indian skeletal remains.<sup>149</sup> Others have suggested that permission should be sought from tribal groups to dig, examine the bones and then return them to the tribe for reburial. Most are against the disturbance of graves by "amateur archaeologists" or "pot hunters" who wantonly blitz burial grounds emptying graves, scattering and destroying remains solely for profits they can reap from private collectors both here and abroad. The often cavalier attitude toward Indian remains that dominated earlier archaeology is beginning to give way as new codes of ethics are drawn up by anthropological and archaeological organizations and a greater sensitivity to Native American feelings is displayed in American society.<sup>150</sup>

Today the bones of all races are used in research. Yet the perception continues among Indians and others that certain races are targeted for study. This perception is very real because of the history of Indian grave robbing and the belief that the largest collection of osteological remains in museums and universities are Native American. This imbalance and the callous, disrespect still often accorded to Indian bones in many institutions continue to aggravate Native American sensibilities.

At Pow wows today, the "Give-a-way" dance is an important part of the social gathering. Native American cultures have a long history of generosity. Even when dispossessed of their lands, they have fought in America's wars and served the country in peace time. Indians, like all races, do not want to retard real scientific progress which has the potential of helping all peoples, but they do demand the respect and consideration that is due to them as a people and as part of humanity. Many Native Americans may be willing to contribute to scientific and medical research but they want to be asked. Today Native Americans demand, as do other groups, that permission be sought and granted before experiments and research begins.

The respect and honor of their dead has for them, as for most people, a real religious dimension. Their right to religion is not a right that the government can grant, it is a human right, but the government does have the responsibility, the obligation, to safeguard this right as it does for other races and religions. A part of this religious right is the protection of human remains and the graves of the dead.

## Endnotes

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| APS     | American Philosophical Society                        |
| MHS     | Massachusetts Historical Society                      |
| LCP     | Library Company of Philadelphia                       |
| MCZ     | Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge              |
| NA      | National Archives                                     |
| BAE     | Bureau of American Ethnology                          |
| AMM-NAA | Army Medical Museum-National Anthropological Archives |
| FM      | Field Museum  |
| NMNM    | National Museum of Health and Medicine                |

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70. Ibid., 121, 168.

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72. Ibid., 170.

- 73. Ibid., 170-71.
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CURRENT RESEARCH/WORK IN PROGRESS

A Social-Cultural-Scientific History of the Zoo in  
America (book)

"The Continuing Historical Significance of Mr. Lewis H.  
Morgan's Trip to Europe" (article)

Wanderings of an Amateur Scientist: Johan Adrian Jacobsen  
and the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie,  
Ethnologie und Urgeschichte (book) with Hilke Thode-Arora

"The Ethnographic Zoo" (article)



## MAJOR ARTICLES

- "A Curious Affair: The Boone and Crockett Club and the Founding of the New York Zoological Park," in Les Etats-Unis Images du Travail et des Loisirs (Aix-en-Provence 1989): 77-90.
- "Comments and Observations on the Writing on American Culture Past and Present," in The United States and Malaysia: The Socio-Cultural and Legal Experience Pamela Soddhy, editor (Kuala Lumpur 1988), 6-19.
- "Introduction" to Felix M. Keesing, The Menomini Indians of Wisconsin: A Study of Three Centuries of Cultural Contact and Change, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, ix-xvi.
- "Samuel G. Morton: Nineteenth-Century Craniology and the American Indian," Actes du GRENA Groupe de Recherches et d'Etudes Nord-Américaines 1981 (May 1982), 7-19.
- "Anthropology and History of the American Indian," American Quarterly 33 (1981), 309-26.
- "Annuity Censuses as a Source for Historical Research: The 1858 and 1869 Tonawanda Seneca Annuity Censuses," co-authored with Christopher Plant, in American Indian Culture and Research Journal 5 (1981), 33-46.
- "The Grand Order of the Iroquois: Influences on Lewis Henry Morgan's Ethnology," Ethnohistory 27 (Fall 1980), 349-61
- "Scientific Attitudes Toward Indian Mixed-Bloods in Early Nineteenth-Century America," Journal of Ethnic Studies 8 (Summer 1980), 17-30.
- "From Ethnologists to Anthropologists: A Brief History of the American Ethnological Society," co-authored with Thomas Tax, in American Anthropology: The Early Years, 1974 Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society, John V. Murra, editor (St. Paul 1976), 11-22.
- "Albert Gallatin and the Survival Enlightenment Thought in Nineteenth-Century American Anthropology," in Towards a Science of Man, Essays in the History of Anthropology, Timothy H.H. Thoresen, editor (The Hague 1975), 91-98.
- "Kinship as a Factor in Migration," Journal of Marriage and the Family 35 (1973), 429-39.

## PAPERS

### CONFERENCE PAPERS

"A Curious Affair: The Boone and Crockett Club and the Founding of the New York Zoological Park." Conference on Work and Leisure in America, Aix-en-Provence, April 1989. Also given at the World Wildlife Preservation Trust, Jersey, March 1989.

"Indian Youth in the Cities." Conference on America and Youth, Berlin, October 1988. Also given at the University of Genoa, April 1989

"'We Have Lost Our Memory and Have Bad Dreams': Communities of Despair in Territorial Wisconsin." Conference on the Sesquicentennial of Wisconsin Territory, University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, September 1986.

"American Indians and the Urban Experience." Conference on America at the Beginning of a New Decade, Berlin, June 1981.

"Some Underlying Assumptions in the Writing of American Indian History." Conference on the American Indian Today, Copenhagen, Denmark, November 1980.

"Isaac Hurd, Lewis Henry Morgan and the Ethnology of the Grand Order of the Iroquois." Annual Meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory, Albany, N.Y., October 1979.

"Scientific Attitudes Toward Indian Mixed-Bloods in Early Nineteenth-Century America." International Congress of Americanists, Vancouver, August 1979.

"Power Without Glory: The Role of Mixed-Bloods on the American Frontier." American Studies Association Meeting, Minneapolis, September 1979.

"The Concept of Degeneration: Early Nineteenth-Century Ethnologists Ponder the American Indian." American Anthropology Association Annual Meeting, Mexico City, November 1974.

"From Ethnologists to Anthropologists: A Brief History of of the American Ethnological Society, 1842-1871." With Thomas G. Tax. American Ethnological Society Annual Meeting, Worcester, 1974.

"Albert Gallatin and the Survival of Enlightenment Thought in Nineteenth-Century American Anthropology." IX International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Chicago 1973.

## OTHER PAPERS

- "Nineteenth-century American Ethnology." University of Turin, April 1989.
- "The Continuing Historical Significance of Mr. Lewis Henry Morgan's Trip to Europe." University of Vienna, December 1988.
- "The Writing of Indian History." University of Vienna, December 1988. Also given at the Kennedy Institute, Free University Berlin, October 1988.
- "The Application of Ethnological Theory to Nineteenth-Century Indian Reforms." Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, October 1987.
- "Indians in Tough City: Urban Reservations." Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand, October 1987. Also given in Berlin, June 1981; and at the University of Frankfurt, July 1981.
- "The Current State of American Indian Studies in the U.S. in the Fields of History and Anthropology." University of Basel, August 1986.
- "Albert Gallatin: A Swiss Contribution to American Ethnology." University of Basel, December 1984.
- "The Lewis and Clark Expedition: Jeffersonian Science Beyond the Frontier." Instituto de Estudios Norteamericanos, Barcelona, December 1984.
- "American Indians and American Society: Some Causes for Concern." University of Paris-Nanterre, March 1981. Also given at the University of Odense, November 1980; the University of Kassel, November 1980; University of Nottingham, March 1981; University of East Anglia, March 1981; and in Dubrovnik, October 1980.
- "Henry Rowe Schoolcraft: Early Government Anthropologist," Anthropological Society of Washington, Washington, D.C., October 1975.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Numerous reviews in history and anthropology journals including: American Historical Review, Journal of American History, Ethnohistory, Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, and The Western Historical Quarterly.

## MAJOR GRANTS, AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS

Indiana University Faculty Research and Development Grant, 1987  
National Endowment for the Humanities Travel Grant, 1985-86  
American Philosophical Society Grant, 1984-1985, 1971-72  
Newberry Library Postdoctoral Fellowship, 1975-1976

## MOST RECENT TEACHING APPOINTMENTS

Freie Universität Berlin, 1988-1989  
Senior Fulbright Lecturer in History

Indiana University  
Associate Professor in History Indiana University-Malaysian  
Program, 1987  
Visiting Associate Professor History, 1985-  
Visiting Assistant Professor History, Summer 1983, 1985  
Visiting Assistant Professor Anthropology, Summer 1982

Universität Mainz, 1980-1981  
Senior Fulbright Lecturer in Ethnology and American Studies

University of Illinois, Chicago, 1977-1980  
Assistant Professor of Native American Studies

## ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

The Newberry Library, 1973-75  
Associate Director of the Center for the History of the  
American Indian, 1974-75.  
Assistant Director of the Center for the History of the  
American Indian, 1973-74.

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

### ELECTED NATIONAL OFFICE

Executive Council, American Society for Ethnohistory,  
1984-86

### MEETINGS

Chair of session American Historical Association convention  
(1974)

Co-Chair of session Social Science History Association  
convention (1976)

Served as commentator  
Organization of American Historians convention (1976)  
American Society for Ethnohistory convention (1984, 1985, 1986)

## EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE

Book Review Editor

American Historical Review, 1983-84

Co-founder and Member of the Board of Editors

History of Anthropology Newsletter, 1973-present

Member of Board of Editors:

American Indian Culture and Research Journal,  
1974-present

American Indian Quarterly: A Journal of Anthropology,  
History and Literature, 1974-1976.

Editor:

Meeting Ground: Newsletter for the Center for the  
History of the American Indian Vol. II (Fall 1974 and  
Spring 1975).

American Indian Bibliography Series, Center for the  
History of the American Indian, 1975.

## CONSULTANT

Historical Consultant for The Newberry Library's exhibition  
"German Science and the American West," 1988.

Research Historian and Expert Witness for the Departments of  
Justice and Interior and the Sault Ste. Marie Ojibwas in  
"The City of Sault Ste. Marie v. Andrus," 1979-1983.

Unpublished report: "City of Sault Ste. Marie vs Cecil  
Andrus," May 1980, 1-78

Historial Consultant for the Native American Rights Fund on  
American Indian bone repatriation case, 1989-1990.

Unpublished report: "A Brief Historical Survey of the  
Expropriation of American Indian Remains," March 1990,  
i-iv, 1-73.