

Elephant Pipes and Israelite Tablets: the controversy between the United States Bureau of Ethnography and the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences

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The Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences, founded in 1867, is a classic example of the small urban-based associations that characterized the democratic spread of knowledge throughout the United States in the post-Civil War era. Among their missions was to promote the gospel of scientific truth among the citizens of America. Members facilitated research, sponsored lectures and introduced responsible data collection. They sought to turn relic hunters and ‘arrow head’ collectors into serious archaeologists (C. E. Putnam 1885: 35–36) who would ‘share their wealth’. In the words of W. H. Pratt, one of the four founders: ‘Personal proprietorship is rather antagonistic to a liberal public spirit and true interest in the increase and diffusion of knowledge’ (McDonald 1992: 4). Therefore, the establishment of a museum became one of their missions.

So successful were Davenport Academy members in gathering collections for their museum that Frederick Starr in his widely read article *Anthropological Work in America* places the Davenport Academy Museum on the same list as museums in Cambridge, New York, Philadelphia and Washington (Starr 1892: 292). Today, the successor to the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences is known as the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science. McKusick (1991: 99) refers to it as, ‘the largest and finest public museum in the state [of Iowa]’.

Unfortunately, in their zeal to add to their collection and achieve national prominence members of the Davenport Academy became involved in ‘The Davenport Conspiracy’ (McKusick 1970, 1991). This conspiracy on the part of certain members of the Davenport Academy attempted to hide the evidence that tablets and a pipe excavated from local mounds were frauds. The tablets were inscribed with zodiac and alphabetic signs and the pipe, one of two, was carved with the image of an elephant. In the national debate that ensued the Davenport Academy found itself pitted against the powerful, often arrogant leaders, of the Smithsonian Institution’s Bureau of Ethnology.

The debate over these relics was intensified by their relevance to the two most prominent issues in nineteenth century North American archaeology: the identification of the Mound-builders, and the antiquity of prehistoric man in the Americas. If authenticated, the tablets and pipes of the Davenport Academy would strongly support the disjunction between the ‘civilized’ ancient Mound-builders and the ‘savage’ Indians encountered by the European explorers and settlers. The elephant pipes would also support the co-existence of man and mammoth during a proposed American Pleistocene/Paleolithic era. Unfortunately for the Davenport Academy, the Bureau of Ethnology (later to become the Bureau of American Ethnology) led by Major John Wesley Powell, promoting and protecting their own position on these issues, came down hard on the side of the tablets and pipes being forgeries and outright fakes. As Silverberg (1968: 189) succinctly remarks, ‘... archaeologists who spoke for the Smithsonian were indeed able to demand and receive absolute allegiance to their ideas, not always with beneficial effect. The outraged cry from Iowa was a valiant but futile attempt to halt the new juggernaut.’

Charles Edwin Putnam, the protagonist for much of ‘The Davenport Conspiracy’, was a brilliant and

successful lawyer, bank president, corporate executive and ‘first citizen of Davenport’. He and his family were the chief sustainers of the Davenport Academy. From C. E. Putnam’s perspective (1885: 34–35): ‘The Bureau of Ethnology not only seems to regard them [local organizations facilitating archaeological research] with disfavor, but makes no secret of its hostility to these independent methods of research. It is clearly contemplated that all these local organizations should be resolved into mere conduits to the Smithsonian Institution: that all exploration of mounds and earth-works should be under the direction of its Bureau of Ethnology: and that all relics obtained should be deposited for safe-keeping in the National Museum.’

It would appear that Mr. Putnam’s views represent the majority of non-governmental scientists. Starr (1897c: 83) summarizes his own views at the beginning of his historical sketch of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences by stating: ‘The scientific work of our Government bureaus and of the great universities of our country is of supreme importance and justly arouses the pride of every American. It is not likely to be overlooked. The work of local societies is less imposing, but is of the highest importance and calls for more than a passing word... Few persons realize how much such local organizations, supported by private means and personal enthusiasm, are doing for the cause of science.’

Apparently Williams (1991: 86) would agree. He remarks that ‘... the individuals in Washington seemed to have lacked a sensitivity to the national role they were seen as playing. The affect was not always productive in furthering knowledge and promoting important interchanges between the growing ranks of the true professionals and the enthusiastic amateurs to whom they owed some appropriate responses.’

In the growing split between Washington and local and regional organizations at least two true professionals, William Henry Holmes at the Smithsonian and Frederic Ward Putnam at Harvard’s Peabody Museum chose not to engage in the controversy, and Frederick Starr prevaricated and further alienated himself from government anthropology. Their detachment indicates that the ranks in Washington were not as closed as Powell might wish, and that the Peabody was free to follow its own course.

William Henry Holmes¹ was quite familiar with the Davenport Academy and its collections. He had studied the Captain Hall collection of Mississippian pottery from Arkansas and published his description in (1886) in Volume IV of the Academy’s *Proceedings*. This paper was the basis of his well-known ‘Aboriginal Pottery of the Eastern United States’ later published in the Bureau of Ethnography’s 1903 *20th Annual Report* (see Starr 1897c: 91). Although Holmes was Powell’s protégé, and later succeeded him as Chief of the Bureau in 1902, he remained publicly silent. Perhaps it was too early in his career for him to take a public stance on this increasingly sensitive issue. It is more likely that Holmes, who started his career as an artist, had already committed himself to the aesthetic merits of the Mound-builder artifacts. As Starr writes (1892: 301): ‘W. H. Holmes is an artist, and his papers upon art in pottery and textile fabrics are among the most delightful in American archaeology’. Both Henshaw and Powell had hit hard on the point that there was no difference in quality between the artifacts produced by historically identified tribes and those of the prehistoric past.

The lack of response to the controversy by Frederic Ward Putnam, director of Harvard University’s Peabody Museum, is puzzling. Even though he was C. E. Putnam’s second cousin (McKusick 1991: 31; W. C. Putnam 1899: 4) it is baseless to speculate that family relations kept Putnam silent. Williams (1991: 96) points out that there are photos of the tablets in the collection of the Peabody Museum with notes that they are fraudulent, and that Putnam wrote of his opinion to Robert J. Farquharson, an early member and past president of the Davenport Academy. Certainly Putnam knew the Davenport Academy and its work, and his former colleague at Harvard, Louis Aggassiz, had lectured in Davenport in 1864, and had returned in 1866 to accept Professor W. H. Barris’ fossil collection for Harvard’s Museum (Roba 1986: 79). Perhaps, Putnam also felt uneasy publicly challenging the

authenticity of the pipes and tablets and disregarding his own assessment of the exotic nature and high quality of 'Mound-builder' artifacts he had excavated from the Turner Site mounds (F. Putnam 1884: 344).

Starr's 'equivocations' are much easier to explain (see McKusick 1970: 77–78). When he was at Coe College Starr was the anthropologist who most strongly supported the Davenport Academy. He continued his relationship with the Davenport Academy and the Putnam family well into his years at the University of Chicago, serving as their chief scientific advisor. As a 'missionary for anthropology' (Evans 1987) the Davenport Academy offered Starr more opportunities to spread his gospel than his academic position at the University. Evans observes that 'to declare the Academy guilty of fraud would also have been counterproductive to his [Starr's] work in popularizing anthropology.'

'The Davenport Conspiracy', as an incident in the history of archaeology, has been thoroughly reviewed by Marshall McKusick in his exemplary publications *The Davenport Conspiracy* (1970) and *The Davenport Conspiracy Revisited* (1991). It has also appeared in many books considering fakes, frauds and myths in archaeology (Feder 2006: 147–174; Williams 1991: 90–96; Silverberg 1968: 162–165, 181–182, 185–189). If the case of 'The Davenport Conspiracy' is closed why should any more be written about it?

First, rather than focusing on the conspiracy within the Davenport Academy that tried to obscure the discovery of the fraudulent relics, this paper is concerned with the larger issue of the growing tension between an ever expanding centralized government and the citizens of towns and their rural hinterlands that founded and supported local learned societies. Second, the controversy brings forward issues in the history of science and the costs of the professionalization of anthropology to popularizers and backers of amateur scientists. Finally, although the issues in the controversy may be very familiar to those who have taught Americanist archaeology and have studied eastern North American prehistory, the incident and the debate it provoked may not be familiar to colleagues in other fields of research and traditions.

During the course of archival research for a biography of Frederick Starr, I came upon numerous letters (SP, GC, B1, fs. 5–7, 1886–1900) from W. H. Pratt, written to Starr during 'The Davenport Conspiracy'. So angry and bitter was Pratt's letter of January 7, 1890 that I felt compelled to contextualize the Davenport Conspiracy as an example of the controversy between the Bureau of Ethnography and local learned societies, and to clarify Pratt and Starr's role in it.

W. H. Pratt was one of the founders in 1867 of the Davenport Academy, and served continually in one office or another, including as its president from 1880–1881. He arrived in Davenport in 1857 to operate a business college. Two years later he became sole proprietor of the Davenport Commercial College which he sold in 1865. He remained as a 'Professor of Penmanship'. For the next several decades he devoted his life to the Academy becoming its first full-time paid museum curator shortly after he served his term as president. He left Davenport and 'removed' to Minneapolis for permanent residence in the fall of 1890 (cf. Downer 1910: 953).

From his involvement with the Davenport Academy, Pratt intimately knew the men under suspicion for conspiracy, the controversial specimens and the affairs of the Academy. When called upon his testimony 'carried weight' (McKusick 1991: 71). Throughout the conspiracy Pratt felt battered. In 1886 his testimony was challenged, his emotional stability was questioned, and he was accused of turning a blind eye to the production of fraudulent pipes on the premises of the Academy. Throughout the attempted cover-up he helped C. E. Putnam defend the Reverend Gass, the alleged conspirator and excavator of the pipe and tablets. Pratt also helped defend the various fraudulent artifacts against attacks from the Smithsonian Institution staff (McKusick 1991: 143). As a man in his sixties and in declining health his dedication to duty was awesome.

Pratt was much more than a 'curator'. He seems to have been in charge of everything from arranging

programs to keeping accounts. A constant theme in his letters is how overworked and underpaid he is as the *only* paid employee of the Davenport Academy. His health is a constant issue (e.g. Pratt to Starr 6/7/1889 GC, B1 [f.6]). Yet it was through the dedication of men (and occasionally women) like Pratt that community learned societies initially survived the onslaught of research universities, government bureaucracies and the growing gulf between professionals and popularizers as the disciplines of archaeology and ethnology were redefined in the twentieth century.

The missive from Curator Pratt to Professor Starr (SP GC, B1 [f.7]) captures the bitterness of the debate between Davenport and Washington. It further contextualizes the ‘conspiracy’, and reveals the depths of anger unleashed by the Bureau of Ethnography’s continual assaults on the Davenport Academy. It is difficult to explain why, as late as 1890, three years after C. E. Putnam’s untimely death, Powell attacks again with cutting critical remarks and put-downs. This was the last straw for Pratt.

[Passages in Pratt’s letter referring directly to Powell’s and Henshaw’s publications are in bold face as are the comparable passages in the government publications. The editor’s comments are in the footnotes.]

Jan. 7, 1890

Prof. Starr,

Dear Friend,

Your very kind & pleasant letter was duly received. Glad to learn that you are established in your new work, & enjoying it. Go on – the world is before you, no telling what positions you may yet attain, & I wish you success most heartily.

I have just come across the January Forum. I think you must be amused – as any one who knows anything whatever about mounds must be – amusement mingled with contempt at the paper on “Prehistoric Man in America” [Powell 1890]. Amusement at the labored effort to reach around to strike at us – contempt for the want of candor & for the absolute falsehoods. ‘**Intrusive burials,**’ which you & I & every man know to be universally common, are ‘**easily invented explanations**’ to support a theory!

[*Powell*: Now, the very first students of this subject, who ran wild with theories, discovered these things, that is, Indian relics; but, having postulated an ancient mound-building race, they **easily invented an explanation** for the facts which were discordant with their theory. They said, ‘**These are modern intrusions**’ (1890: 492).]

Where are the **Elephant Pipes** ‘**sold at high prices to wealthy amateurs**’ & *where* are the **manufactories now flourishing?**’

[*Powell*: So it chanced that to-day unskilled archaeologists are collecting many beautiful things in copper, stone, and shell which were made by white men and traded to the Indians. Now, some of these things are found in the mounds; and bird pipes, **elephant pipes**, banner stones, copper spear heads and knives, and machine-made wampum are collected in quantities and **sold at high prices to wealthy amateurs**, who make ostentatious display of their love of science. But worse than this, the greed for the spurious has grown so great that **manufactories of the ‘antiquities’ are now flourishing** (1890: 493).]

A local society ‘**had two elephant pipes the antiquity of which was questioned in a passing sentence of an article by one of the most skillful [sic] archaeologists of the country.**’

[*Powell*: Not long ago a **local society** had in its possession **two elephant pipes, the antiquity of which was questioned, in a passing sentence of an article, by one of the most skillful archaeologists of the country** [Henshaw 1883] (1890: 493).]

The society ‘**held meetings**’ (admitted that that of course was very wrong), ‘**in the interest of science.**’ No, it was done in the interest of honor, truth, justice, & defense of personal character so basely calumniated: ‘**the high antiquity of Man**’ – he is the man who claims such high antiquity we took no ground on one or the other side: ‘**the exaltation of the ancient Mound builders**’ – we presented no theory as to the age or race & and he knows it.

[*Powell*: **Thereupon the society held meetings**, and had their attorney [C. E. Putnam] make a careful investigation to see if the offending scientist could not be successfully prosecuted for libel. And all of this was **in the interest of science, the high antiquity of man, and the exaltation of the ancient Mound-builders!** (1890: 493).]

He ‘dared not’ say this while Mr. [Charles E.] Putnam lived – he prudently kept still. Now has begun a series of articles which – more & more aggressive no doubt – will flood the nation through the magazines & popular journals.

So be it – let the people believe what they will – what matters it? I for one, can not, but I despise the man who can stoop so low, who in such nominally high position, & really with great influence at his command cannot afford to be honest.

The ‘**passing sentence**’ is a labored article of *four or five pages* headed with the running title: ‘Elephant Pipes!’ This – ‘**one of the most skilful [sic] archaeologists of the country**’ was then, by the truthful Major’s [J. W. Powell’s] own indorsement [sic] in the introduction to that Report ‘**a skilful naturalist. Especially an ornithologist.**’

& though referring to his *archaeological* paper, no pretence of any attainments or experience in archaeology was even hinted at!

[*Powell*: Mr. H. W. Henshaw, **skilled as a naturalist, especially as an ornithologist**, and familiar by personal exploration with a large part of our national territory (1883: xxxii)]^A

Such a man can call Squier & Davis & other honest, intelligent workers ‘**pseudarchaeologists**’ (and with especial safety if they are dead).

[*Powell*: “They (artificial mounds) did not attract great attention, however, until the science of archaeology demanded their investigation. Then they were assumed to furnish evidence of a race of people older than the Indian tribes. **Pseudarchaeologists** descanted on the ‘Mound-builders’ that once inhabited the land, and they told of swarming populations who had reached a high condition of culture, erecting temples, practicing arts in the metals, and using hieroglyphs (1890: 491).”]

‘The past ten or fifteen years has put this subject in a proper light.’

^A Henry Wetherbee Henshaw, one of Powell’s right hand men in the Bureau, was a specific target of the Academy’s rage. As McKusick (1970: 74–75) comments, the feeling against Henshaw and general abuse ‘... are simply beyond belief’. Although Henshaw was educated as an ornithologist, like Frederick Starr he broke new ground as anthropologists who came from a natural science background (Meltzer 1985: 250). Henshaw’s paper is particularly valuable because as a zoologist he was able to carefully compare the images carved on pipes (or built as earthen mounds) with the anatomical characteristics of the species claimed to be represented in ‘Mound-builder’ artifacts. As Henshaw states at the beginning of his article: ‘If it shall prove, as is believed to be the case, that serious mistakes of identification have been made, attention will be called to these and the manner pointed out in which certain theories have naturally enough resulted from the premises thus erroneously established’ (Henshaw 1883: 124). Unfortunately Henshaw made an error in his discussion of the elephant pipes. Even though photographs had been sent by the Davenport Academy to the Smithsonian, he failed to consult them and used an inferior illustration for his criticism. One of his strongest points, aside from the fact that the elephant images had no tusks, was that the elephants lacked tails. Indeed they did not, and Henshaw’s critics leaped on this point to discredit him.

Yes – read Prof. [F. W.] Putnam, Dr. [Charles C.] Abbott & many others who have no government office at the capital – B

I have already met with several articles in scientific & popular newspapers as well – sharply dissenting from the doughty major’s dicta.^C

Who disputes that ‘**some mounds have been built in modern times**’? I have one in my front yard, we built it ourselves, ergo ‘**the white people built the mounds.**’ All right –

[*Powell*: That some of these **mounds were built and used in modern times**, is proved in another way. They often contain articles manifestly **made by white men** ... (1890: 492).]^D

We do not propose to contest the question or renew the controversy. Time and increased knowledge of the subject will correct misapprehensions & if not what then? Only those who refuse the light thrown on the subject by these objects are the losers & they are, & are likely to be, a minority – but again – no matter if they were not. I don’t suppose the ancient laborers who constructed these tumuli care much whether Major Powell – & even others following his lead – repudiate them or not.

Watch now & see where his next shaft strikes & the next & so on until his admirers are ashamed of him.

No one who has knowledge of Henshaw’s article & Powell’s remarks upon it can fail to see his disingenuousness & falsity: no one who reads Mr. [C. E.] Putnam’s paper can misunderstand our position.

It was proper & natural surely for the President of the Academy [C. E. Putnam] to defend it & refute the calumny: perhaps he even had a right to be a lawyer by profession.^E

‘If anything was [is] found in a mound in conflict with [Powell’s] favorite hypothesis’ what then? **‘Spurious find’ of course.**

[*Powell*: No fragment of evidence remains to support the figment of the theory that there was an ancient race of Mound-builders superior in culture to the North American Indians ... **If anything was found in a mound in conflict with the favorite hypothesis** [*editor* of those who ‘postulate an ancient mound-building race’], it was held to be but the better evidence of

B. Abbott was committed to the great age of human occupation in the New World. Putnam sponsored some of Abbott’s work in the Trenton Gravels of New Jersey (Willey and Sabloff 1993: 52). Powell, on the other hand had taken the opposite side on human antiquity and his 1890 article was in part devoted to his conclusions on this topic.

C. One of the most virulent was published by Warren Watson in the *Naturalist*, the monthly publication of the Kansas City, Mo. Academy of Sciences. He titled it ‘Those Elephant Pipes Again’ McKusick (1970: 74) quotes the following passage, ‘... the brutal unfairness exhibited by Maj. Powell and his pseudoarchaeologist, Mr. Henshaw; especially when we consider that it is the money of the government and the prestige of official position that gives their attack a force and currency above that of mere personal opinion. If the power placed in Maj. Powell’s hands is to be misused and prostituted to the furtherance of his own hobbies, instead of the interests of science, a concerted action should be taken by all interested in scientific pursuits, looking to an investigation by Congress into the policy, methods and expenditures of the Bureau, to the end that the liberal sums appropriated from the public funds in aid of ethnological inquiries may not be diverted to the exploitation of personal hobbies and the aggrandizement of servile followers’ (Watson 1890). Obviously the sentiments of the Davenport Academy were shared by comparable Midwestern institutions.

D. Powell is pursuing two lines of evidence to prove that the mounds were of relatively recent vintage and built by the immediate predecessors of historically known Indians: 1). based on Henshaw’s work that carvings of birds and animals are ‘so rude that, though a bird may well be identified as such, it can rarely be recognized as any specific bird...’; 2). that the mounds contain articles manifestly made by white men ...”.

the antiquity of mound-building but worse than this, the greed for the **spurious** has grown so great that manufactories of these ‘antiquities’ are now flourishing (1890: 492–493).]

Various works ‘**built thousands of years ago**’: may have been ‘**built by the ancestors of existing tribes & their congeners**’ (Definite isn’t it).

[*Powell*: The earliest may have been **built thousands of years ago**, but they were **built by the ancestors of existing tribes and their congeners** (1890: 494–495).]F

Well, we have no objection, never had, never offered any; we are willing the ‘Indians’ should ‘build mounds’ now, or thousands of years ago or ages hence, why attack us and call us impostors on that account? When Major Powell says ‘**The Mound builders were the Indian tribes discovered by white men,**’ don’t step out of doors, for he is going to hit the first head he sees without waiting for a word.

True, he contradicts himself in the next ‘passing sentence,’ but then – he is Major Powell! Those ‘**extinct tribes**’ were the ones ‘discovered by white men.’

[*Powell*: **It is enough to say that the Mound-builders were the Indian tribes discovered by white men.** It may well be that some of the mounds were erected by **tribes extinct** when Columbus first saw these shores, but they were kindred in culture to the peoples that still existed (1890: 494).]

We never had anything to say about ‘higher culture,’ he is all the time hammering away at works published by the Smithsonian Institution [Squier and Davis 1848].

I believe the ‘**inscribed tablets**’ designated by him as ‘**spurious finds,**’ will one day cover him, or his memory with the shame of ignorance, presumption & insincerity.

[*Powell*: ... but one class of **spurious finds** deserves mention. These are the **inscribed tablets** said to be found, now here, now there” (1890: 502).]

By the way, what has become of the Secretary of the Smithsonian? There is one I believe? Has the Major overshadowed him & paled his lesser light?G

Yours truly W. H. Pratt

E. Outside of Davenport, Mr. Putnam is best remembered for his extended treatise *A Vindication of the Authenticity of the Elephant Pipes and Inscribed Tablets in the Museum of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences from the Accusations of the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution*, first published in 1885 and then reprinted with correspondence and commentaries in the IV Proceedings of the Academy (C. E. Putnam 1886: 253–299; correspondence 300–332; criticism and scientific journals 332–341; Smithsonian 342–343). As has been remarked, if it were not for Putnam’s closely reasoned and eloquently stated defense, the controversy might have dissipated years earlier. Putnam was as capable of skewering with sarcasm as were his adversaries at the Bureau. In response to accusations that the tablets and pipes were manufactured fakes he replied, ‘The modern manufacturer of ancient relics may turn his back upon our mendicant Academy and offer his wares to these scientific capitalists [Powell and colleagues]’ (Putnam 1885: 25).

F. Powell is specifically referring to Pueblo ruins in the south-western portion of the United States. He is making the point that ‘... no ruin has been discovered where evidences of a higher culture are found than exists in the modern times at Zuñi, Oraibi, or Laguna’ (1890: 494).

G. Pratt is referring to the history of positive interactions with Secretary of the Smithsonian Joseph Henry and his Assistant Secretary Spencer Fullerton Baird. Baird early on had appeared to support the authenticity of the Davenport relics.

For an excellent review of the role played by the first secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry, and his assistant secretary Spencer Fullerton Baird in promoting the engagement of local citizens (‘correspondents’) in their scientific endeavors see Goldstein (1994) and Hinsley (1981). Goldstein (1994: 596) also marks the

Conclusions

What can be learned from the 1890 letter that Curator Pratt wrote to Professor Starr? What does a comparison of the contents of the 1890 letter with the two publications by Powell and Henshaw reveal? Are there hidden agendas in this rather nasty discourse? What lies behind these agendas and are they characteristic of the times?

All who have examined the documents reviewed above have concluded that the Bureau's attack on the Davenport Academy was uncalled for and unjust. As McKusick (1991: 50) concludes, 'Even today, one gains the impression that Smithsonian experts were in fact distorting evidence and plotting to destroy the amateur research academies'. The use of sarcasm and demeaning terms would not be considered professional today and should not have been in the late nineteenth century. Even Starr (1897c: 93), not willing to admit that the Bureau intended harm, concludes that the attack on the elephant pipes in effect harmed the Academy that was already weakened by the death and removal (and expulsion!) of active members. Something must have been perceived as highly detrimental to the progress of archaeological science as defined by Powell and his cohorts.

Was this a specific, if extreme, case of a growing animosity between professionals and amateurs; an animosity that was a necessary concomitant of the process of professionalization? What harm could the members of the Davenport Academy actually perpetrate on a national level? How could they be worthy opponents if this was a battle for control of scientific resources and authority? Was it a determination to keep possible rebels in their place and achieve a national unity. For a government less than a generation removed from the Civil War and for Powell, a Civil War hero, the threat of disunity might have been a subject of greater sensitivity than it would be several generations later.

There was a real potential for competition for resources and authority. A report submitted by the National Academy of Sciences specifically warns against that competition (*Science* 1885: 49–50):

'We conceive it to be a sound principle, that Congress should not undertake any work which can be equally well done by the enterprise of individual investigators. Our leading universities are constantly increasing the means of scientific research by the professors and students, and while the government may with propriety encourage and co-operate with them, there is no reason why it should compete with them. The scientific work of the government ought not, therefore, to be such as can be undertaken by individuals'.

Perhaps C. E. Putnam and his cohorts, wealthy and well-connected politically, could be seen as offering a potential threat to the Bureau's agenda funded by the federal government.

It is possible that the 'clubby' nature of the local societies, usually led by local elites, could have rubbed the austere men of the congress-dependent Smithsonian the wrong way. McKusick (1970: 70) remarks on the many attributes of a social club exhibited by the Davenport Academy. Sloan (1980: 76) looking at science in New York City during the last decades of the nineteenth century portrays the club-like aura of amateur scientists, and their pride in lecture halls and exhibit rooms, but concludes that although their 'conceptions of science' were essentially different from those that followed they possessed an integrity and meaning in their own right (cf. Roba 1986: 82).

Were the government's policies toward the American Indian relevant to Powell's extraordinary dislike

decline of both amateur and professional contributors throughout the regions of the United States in the 1880s. He proposes that once the Smithsonian Institution completed its collections and could no longer afford to supply publications to Baird's network of naturalists in almost every field, it ceased encouraging broad scale participation by local societies and rural residents. These decades, 1860s through the 1880s neatly bracket the rise and fall of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences as an active player in the advancement of scientific research in America. McDonald (1992: 9) observes that by the end of the 1880s the Academy decided it 'didn't have the expertise to continue field collecting, It shifted its emphasis to preservation and education ...'.

of the Davenport Academy's support of the Mound-builders hypothesis? After winning the Indian Wars and forcing most tribes onto reservations, were government anthropologists overly sensitive to any organization that was thought to promote theories that further undermined what little viability the 'wards of the government' retained?

The issue of how driven were the proponents of the 'Mound-builders myth' by the 'sentiments of a nation then engaged in genocide' needs to be reexamined. Silverberg (1968: 159–160) concludes that the 'controversy over the origins of the mounds was not merely an abstract scholarly debate, but had its roots in the great nineteenth century campaign of extermination waged against the American Indian' (cf. Meltzer 1982: 12). As part of a grand narrative Silverberg's conclusions have been uncritically accepted.

But what about the members of the Davenport Academy? Were they really being led on by a conscious or even unconscious racist bias? Or were they operating within their understanding of the scientific world-view? As Meltzer (1982: 11) has remarked, 'proponents of early man were not a collection of provincial hayseed and bumpkins' (cf. Goldstein 1994: 574). In particular, the men (and women!) of the Davenport Academy were a remarkable collection of widely traveled and experienced cosmopolitan individuals, including true men of science, residents of a city little removed from the frontier. Davenport had a long tradition of tolerance including its relationships with the Sauk and Fox.

At the time the Mound-builders hypothesis was widely accepted, a comparison of the material culture and social organization of the well-known Sauk and Fox with the sophisticated artifacts recovered from the mounds would make the gulf between the simple Indians of the Midwestern Prairies and the civilized builders of the mounds only too obvious to the citizens of Davenport.

Archaeological method does not appear central to most surviving documents that address the controversy. And yet, it may be just below the surface. The 'archaeology' practiced by the Rev. Gass and other Davenport Academy members and friends is horrific by today's standards and already beyond the professional pale at the turn of the nineteenth century. Data were haphazardly destroyed and scattered as mounds were torn apart by eager relic seekers. Equally appalling was the follow-up to the looting of sites. Artifacts without context were bought and sold on the open antiquities market and as values increased numerous frauds were produced. This certainly was the case in east central Iowa where the Davenport Academy accepted and perhaps unintentionally supported participants in the looting of antiquities and the commerce in frauds. Ironically, the Academy also wound up being the holder of large quantities of fake platform pipes (McKusick 1991: 103–118).

If the Davenport Academy and its members and supporters were proven to be perpetrators of site destruction, looting and encouraging the commerce in artifacts both genuine and spurious, and if they were also guilty of supporting theories detrimental to government efforts to reduce prejudice against American Indians, is it surprising that the Bureau would go on a campaign to destroy the credibility of this local society with its illusions of national prominence? In turn is it surprising that the Davenport Academy, led by C. E. Putnam a lawyer skilled in libel law and driven to a state of paranoia by unjustified attacks that he took personally, would respond as it did to the Bureau's assault? His defense of the Davenport Academy and its members was soon supported by the citizens of Davenport and its sister cities; many of these worthy bourgeoisie were already deeply suspicious of the growing size and power of federal government and the formation of huge financial empires that threatened their independence and security.

Perhaps the controversy reveals as much about the state of American culture at the end of the nineteenth century as it does about the professionalization of archaeology.

Notes

1. It is confounding that another W. H. Holmes, who died in 1890, was a prominent early member of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences, a trustee and a close associate of W. H. Pratt. Even McKusick (1991: 88–89) confused the two W. H. Holmes.

References

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Christopher Hawkes and the International Summer Courses of Ampurias

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Introduction: About Remembering

This article aims to provide an initial analysis of the early connections between Christopher Hawkes and Spanish archaeology in the context of his participation in two of the international summer courses in Ampurias in 1947 and 1950. The documentation used for this article comes mainly from the Pericot Archive in the Library of Catalonia, in which there are 43 letters from Hawkes to Pericot between 1940 and 1975. In addition, other correspondence in the British Museum and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be mentioned. This study forms part of a larger project of recovering the memory of twentieth-century British-Spanish relations, of which a first phase has centred on the assessment of Gordon Childe's contacts with Spain (Díaz-Andreu 1998; forthcoming-a; forthcoming-b). As in Gordon Childe's case, all memory of Hawkes' visits, and indeed of his relationships with Spanish archaeologists, has since been lost. Unfortunately, this situation is not exceptional: most of the links between Spanish archaeologists and British and American archaeologists in the twenty years around the Spanish Civil War have dropped out of archaeological memory. To the names mentioned in a recent seminar (Gordon Childe, Edward Thurlow Leeds, Eoin MacWhite, Hubert Savory) (Armada Pita 2006), many others could be added. As this article will show, however, there were many contacts and these help to explain some developments in the archaeological thinking and practice of the participants involved in these exchanges, as well as some events in the international organisation of archaeology.

The story this article explains has been buried in the lost memory of the history of archaeology. Neither the Ampurias summer courses nor many of the protagonists of these events are mentioned in world histories of archaeology. Perhaps this is not surprising as history is inevitably selective. A few years ago Chris Evans lamented the fact that in *A History of Archaeological Thought* Hawkes had been mentioned only once in contrast to the 44 references to Childe (Evans 1998: 399). I would like to