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1874–1957

By J. ALDEN MASON

LEAFLETS OF THE
MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
HEYE FOUNDATION . NEW YORK
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THIS MEMORIAL TO GEORGE G. HEYE IS AUTHORIZED BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE MUSEUM AS A TRIBUTE TO HIS GREAT AND DEDICATED LEADERSHIP THROUGH FORTY YEARS, AND IN APPRECIATION OF HIS MUNIFICENT GIFTS AND BEQUESTS WHICH CONTINUE TO ENRICH THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTIONS AND TO SUPPORT ITS ACTIVITIES.

JOHN S. WILLIAMS
Chairman

E. K. BURNETT
Director
Si monumentum requiris, circumspice—"If you seek his monument, look around!" This Latin inscription in St. Paul's Cathedral to the memory of its architect, Sir Christopher Wren, might well be graven over the entrance to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, as a tribute to its Founder, George G. Heye. Seldom has a monument been more the inspiration and the labor of one man.

George Heye was fortunate in having had the means and the will to make the hobby of his youth his life's work. The student of the American Indian is likewise fortunate that the results of this work contribute so much to the enrichment of human knowledge. He is indeed indebted to this man for having gathered into one place the largest extant collection of objects illustrative of the cultures of the native peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

George Gustav Heye was born in New York City on September 16, 1874, at the family residence, 298 Lexington Avenue. His father, Carl Friederich Gustav Heye, was born in Quakenbrück, Germany, November 3, 1834, and came to this country as a young man. George Heye's paternal grandparents were Herman Gustav Heye of Crefeld, Germany, and Cattie Brottman Heye. The family of his mother, Marie Antoinette Lawrence Heye, who was born at Hudson, New York, June 7, 1845, had resided in New York State for several generations. Her great-grandfather, Christian von Stamler (1775–1862) was a dealer in cattle and is said to have been the "Armour" of his day. A great-great grandfather, Colonel Richard E. Lawrence (1728–1789), is reported to have been one of the most influential Loyalists of the Revolutionary War period, who helped to found King's College which later became Columbia University.

Carl Gustav Heye and Marie Antoinette Lawrence were married on January 5, 1869, and became the parents of two children, Marie Antoinette, who married Dr. James B. Clemens, an eminent physician in New York City, and George Gustav.

George Heye greatly admired his father—and with reason. The elder Heye must have been a man of great energy and ability. Soon after his arrival in the United States he entered the burgeoning petroleum industry and established the Economy Refining Company.
in the then center of production, Oil City, Pennsylvania. This operated efficiently and profitably for some years before it was absorbed by the Standard Oil Company in 1876. With the refinery property itself, Heye operated a pipe line to Rouseville, a few miles from Oil City.

The first John D. Rockefeller must also have admired and respected the abilities of the elder Heye, for in the contract of sale—the papers still exist in the Heye archives, signed by John D. Rockefeller as President and H. M. Flagler as Secretary—the Company "desires to avail itself of the services of Mr. Gustav Heye," and did so by continuing him as president of the subsidiary Economy Refining Company, with offices in New York, at, for those days, a considerable salary. Later, and until the time of his death, Gustav Heye was in charge of the Foreign Shipping Department of the Standard Oil Company and had much to do with the early development of the tankship system of transporting petroleum.

Carl Gustav Heye ever retained an interest in his fatherland and took a prominent part in the activities of the German colony in New York. He became a member of the German Society in 1867 and was its first vice president through the years 1888–1896. One of his hobbies was collecting clocks. A large number of these were housed in the family residence, then at 11 East 48th Street, all so carefully regulated and synchronized that each struck precisely on the split-second of its appointed time. A boyhood experience of hearing a bedlam of multitional chimes each quarter hour of the day and night might explain George Heye's later antipathy to all clocks and, in fact, to all persistent rhythmic sound. In later years he had clocks about his home—but hardly any of them were in operation, and he would not permit a clock in any part of the Museum where he spent any great amount of his time.

The elder Heye died at Lakewood, New Jersey, on February 8, 1899, at the age of sixty-five. Marie Antoinette Heye died in her residence at the Lorraine Hotel, New York City, on February 18, 1915, at the age of seventy.

Unfortunately for a detailed picture of George Heye's boyhood, he was neither a precocious diarist nor an enthusiastic raconteur of the
days of his adolescence. Only a few anecdotes told to his closer associates in later years are remembered. He did some early finding of arrowpoints around the shores of Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey, where the family spent several summers; he used to fish with chums along the banks of the Harlem River around 207th Street, a long trek in those days from the Murray Hill section of the city; he attended Berkeley School, from which he graduated in 1891, and on that March morning of the great blizzard of 1888 he never reached school but had to be pulled out of a snowdrift by passing workmen.

He lived the normal, semi-sheltered and somewhat pampered life of a child of well-to-do parents of the time when Victorian thought and Victorian manners were the rule among people of his class. His playmates and early school companions were found among the Fahnestocks, the Lefferts, the Russells, and other prominent families resident upon old Murray Hill.

His father's European business commitments made it necessary for him to visit that continent at least once a year, and the family, when the children were old enough, was always included in the trip. Thus George Heye, from the time he was six or seven, came to know the cities of the Continent and the British Isles as few children of his generation did. Much later, on several trips during the 1920's, he took one of his motor cars with him and toured Europe extensively. Scandinavia was ever a particular delight to him and he returned to its countries many times.

He never visited Europe after 1938, not wanting to see the devastation that World War II had wrought upon so many of the places he had loved since boyhood. The 1938 crossing was the fifty-third round trip of his lifetime over the Atlantic.

In 1890 he enlisted in Company I, Seventh Regiment, New York National Guard, and served about six years, most of them during his undergraduate days at Columbia. Through this time the regiment was called out once, in 1895, to preserve order during a street railway strike which tied up the whole Borough of Brooklyn. Heye was always proud of his connection with the “Seventh” and remained a member of its veterans’ association until his death.
In 1892, at the age of eighteen, he was admitted to the School of Mines of Columbia College and registered in the newly established course in electrical engineering. Columbia was then at the old building, Madison Avenue at 49th Street. There being no campus life or dormitory facilities, Heye lived at home, as did all other students, and yet he made lasting friendships; those with General Harrison K. Bird, Paul MacGahan, Professor Walter I. Slichter, and Herman A. Prosser continued through his life.

As a graduation thesis, Heye and MacGahan tested the lubricating qualities of various organic oils. Peanut oil, they demonstrated, was worthless, but castor oil excellent for machines operating at high temperatures. In the course of their experiments they also made the interesting discovery that lubricating the inside of a tin “growler,” which they sent by a freshman to have filled across the New York Central tracks on Park Avenue, resulted in more beer and less suds—a finding that remained constant at all times and under all thermic conditions.

One of the interesting experiences of Heye’s college years was serving, together with Harrison Bird, as assistant to the famous scientist Michael I. Pupin in his experiments which perfected long-distance telephony by means of induction coils, and resulted in some important contributions to the then recent discovery of the nature and use of the Roentgen rays. These experiments were done in the evenings following class hours, after which Pupin would take the two boys out to dinner.

Harrison Bird, during a recent interview with the present author, averred that the great inventor “must have liked the way we used our butter knives or the manner in which we wore our ‘boaters,’ for, most certainly, he couldn’t have selected us on any basis of scholastic attainment.”

In 1896 George Heye graduated with the degree of Electrical Engineer, a few months before his twenty-second birthday. Apparently he was employed in this profession for a few years, but exact data on his activities during this period are scarce and unsatisfactory. He mentioned from time to time his interest in the building
of a bridge over the Delaware River near Trenton, and as having been at work in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Utica and Binghamton. Much if not all of this activity was as an employee of the White-Crosby Company, later reorganized as J. G. White & Company.

It was while on assignment for the White-Crosby Company that he first became intensely interested in the American Indian. He was, according to report, traveling to the job in Arizona as assistant to the chief engineer, when the latter was stricken with appendicitis and had to be removed from the train for immediate surgery. Heye continued on in charge of the work. Let him speak for himself in one of the few written memoranda that he left:

"In 1897 I was sent to Kingman, Arizona, as assistant superintendent of construction for a branch track to a mine about seventeen miles distant. I obtained a number of Navaho Indians for use as laborers for grading the right of way.

"I lived in a tent on the work and in the evenings used to wander about the Indians' quarters. One night I noticed the wife of one of my Indian foremen biting on what seemed to be a piece of skin. Upon inquiry I found she was chewing the seams of her husband's deerskin shirt in order to kill the lice. I bought the shirt, became interested in aboriginal customs, and acquired other objects as opportunity offered, sending them back from time to time to my home at 11 East 48th Street. In fact, I spent more time collecting Navaho costume pieces and trinkets than I did superintending roadbeds.

"That shirt was the start of my collection. Naturally when I had a shirt I wanted a rattle and moccasins. And then the collecting bug seized me and I was lost.

"When I returned to New York after about ten months in Arizona, I found quite an accumulation of articles. These I placed about my room and I began to read rather intensely on the subject of the Indians."

In the ensuing few years, while traveling about the country on engineering jobs, his heart was doubtless more in his hobby than in trolleys, and he indubitably followed the scent of Indian objects wherever he went.

In January, 1901, George Heye joined with others to form the firm of Battles, Heye and Harrison, investment bankers, with offices in Philadelphia and New York. He remained active in its business until September, 1909, when the firm was changed to Battles & Company, but he withdrew from this association completely in June,
1914. By this time his Indian collection was much more important to
him than the mundane affairs of banking.

"I just thought 'Wall Street doesn't owe me anything'" he said
later. "So I quit."

It was during his Wall Street days, in 1904, that he built the
Hudson Theatre at 139–141 West 44th Street, New York. Operated
for a few years under his ownership, it was later sold.

He had become acquainted with Joseph Keppler, who through
Harriet Maxwell Converse had developed a deep interest in the Iro-
quois Indians, and as early as 1899 made a trip with him to the
Cattaraugus and Tonawanda Reservations in the New York Iroquois
country. This was the first of many such expeditions among those
natives who continued to hold Heye's special interest throughout his
whole later life.

About this time also he began to make the acquaintance of pro-
fessional ethnologists and archeologists, especially of George H.
Pepper, then on the staff of the American Museum of Natural History,
and of Professor Marshall H. Saville of Columbia University. It was
primarily from these two men that he learned the importance of
systematic collecting, scientific recording, and the proper preservation
of specimens. It must be noted, however, that his earlier recording
often did not meet present-day standards.

The year 1903 definitely marks the beginning of his great collection.
For six years prior to that time he had merely picked up single pieces,
generally from their Indian owners. In this year he purchased his
first large collection, several hundred pottery vessels excavated from
Tularosa Canyon, Socorro County, New Mexico, and formerly owned
by Harry E. Hale. The following year he bought another large col-
lection of pottery from the San Juan region of Arizona.

Collecting as a hobby was now at an end, and George Heye pro-
cceeded to fulfill that destiny which the Fates had ordained at his
birth. At the time of his death, nearly fifty-five years later, he and
his associates were able to see his purpose highly fulfilled, in the
most comprehensive collections of the American Indian in the world.
In geographical breadth they extend from Alaska, Arctic Canada
and Greenland to Tierra del Fuego; qualitatively, it can be said of them that almost all of the specimens on exhibition would grace any museum—an extraordinary record covering these many years of collecting; and quantitatively, the collections from many areas offer absolutely unique opportunities for study. As a collector, George Heye was blessed with keen judgment, vision, above-normal critical ability, dedicated and generous friends, and adequate financial means. His imaginative vision is well illustrated by the Museum’s ethnological collections, particularly those from the Northwest Coast and the Plains areas. He was surely an archeologist first, but he never ceased to labor in the ethnological field. The bulk of these collections are today irreplaceable.

Field research, which soon was to contribute so greatly to the advancement of knowledge of the American Indian, had its inception in 1904 when George Pepper excavated in the State of Michoacán, Mexico, and Frank D. Utley was sent to collect in Puerto Rico. In 1905 also there were some field activities, but these were overshadowed by preparations for the important expedition of 1906 to the Province of Manabí, Ecuador, under the direction of Marshall Saville. Heye’s mother financed this work. She took the greatest interest in her son’s scientific activities and encouraged them in every way.

This proved to be one of the most important, spectacular and productive expeditions ever sent to South America, revealing a high culture in a hitherto almost unknown region. Largely because of it, the Museum’s collection from Ecuador far surpasses that of any other institution outside of that country itself. Marie Antoinette Heye also made possible the publication of the magnificent two-volume report on the findings of the expedition.

Another area of George Heye’s earlier archeological interest was the Antilles, and investigations were conducted among these islands almost continually for several years beginning in 1907. Thus the West Indian objects, rare or non-existent in most museums in the United States, are in enormous quantity at the Museum of the American Indian.
Each year saw additions to the staff, more expeditions were sent out to collect or to excavate, and an increasing number of objects poured in to enrich the great and growing collection.

Upon his marriage in 1904, he moved his specimens to his new apartment at 667 Madison Avenue. Soon it outgrew the space available there and in 1906 a room was rented in the old Knabe Building on Fifth Avenue at 39th Street. Three years later a floor in a loft building at 10 East 33rd Street was obtained and, shortly thereafter, another floor was added. While at this address, the name “Heye Museum” was generally used.

But still there was not sufficient room to house the mass of material that poured in, and in 1908 an agreement was made with the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, whereby a major portion of the ethnological collections north of Mexico was transferred to that institution on loan. George Heye was elected a vice president, a member of the Board of Managers, and president-chairman of the Committee on the American Section. George Pepper, who had left the American Museum of Natural History, and Mark Raymond Harrington, who had joined Heye that year, became staff members in the American Section of the University Museum.

On Lincoln’s birthday in 1910 three large exhibit halls were opened to the public, the cases, installed under Pepper’s supervision, displaying outstanding specimens from the Heye Collection. A special guidebook was published and the exhibit attracted wide attention. Here it remained until it was withdrawn in 1917, to be housed in the great new building in New York.

It has been bruited about that George Heye made this withdrawal in a huff and that it resulted as the climax of a constant dispute with the authorities of the Philadelphia organization. This belief is hardly substantiated by his action in presenting the University Museum with a large and varied collection together with a letter “assuring you that it gives me genuine pleasure to send you these articles as a slight token of the appreciation for the manner in which I was treated by you and your institution during the many years I was associated with you.”

[14]
And, further, it is interesting, forty years later, to quote from a letter to Heye from President Charles Custis Harrison, dated December 24, 1917, expressing his sincere regret upon the former’s resignation as a member of the Board of Managers:

"It is now almost seven years since I began to work with you there, and during all these years I think that there has not been an unkind word spoken from yourself to any member of the Board, or from any member of the Board to yourself, and it must be a source of gratification to you, as it has been to us, that unusual progress has been made in the growth of the Museum in many of its departments.

"The agreeable words which you spoke at our November meeting, when you tendered your resignation, have left a very kindly and cordial feeling with them, and this was spoken of at the last meeting of our Executive Committee a few days ago. In your new work for the Museum of the American Indian you have our best wishes, as you have already told us that we have your own...."

In the years 1914 and 1915, those just prior to the legal formation of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, two important archeological investigations were made. That in 1914 was the excavation of a Munsee-Delaware cemetery on the upper Delaware River near Montague, Sussex County, New Jersey. Aside from the scientific data here obtained, the excavation brought George Heye a bit of amusing newspaper publicity and a lot of good-natured bantering from his friends.

He and his crew were arrested for grave robbing! The local court fined him $100.00 and each of his diggers $10.00. Fearing the extent to which this decision might affect future archeological excavations in that state, an appeal was carried to the New Jersey Supreme Court where the convictions were revoked and the fines remitted.

Late in the spring of 1915 excavation work was commenced at the great Nacoochee Mound in White County, Georgia, as a joint project between the Bureau of American Ethnology and the Heye group. This excavation was of greater than mere archeological import to George Heye. He was married that July to Thea Kowne Page at Atlanta, and they spent their honeymoon at the dig.
The Heye collection had by now grown to nearly half a million specimens, and it became necessary to plan for adequate quarters where the objects might not only be exhibited, but be made more readily available to the growing requirements of an increasing number of special students.

At one time it was suggested that the American Museum of Natural History create a wing to house the Heye Collection, but this proposal never was given serious thought, for George Heye would not consent to the integration of his material with that of the Museum, and the Museum could not consider exhibiting a private collection apart from its own galleries. Too, largely at the instigation of Franz Boas, it was proposed to make the collection a part of Columbia University, housed in a new building on the Morningside Heights campus. This died aborning; Heye would not agree to any such division of authority.

A new era in the history of the Heye Collection dawned when Archer Milton Huntington, who had had several earlier conferences with Heye concerning the disposition of his collection, offered a plot of ground adjacent to the building of The Hispanic Society of America and opposite that of The American Geographical Society at 155th Street and Broadway, for the erection of a building to combine proper exhibit halls with laboratory, research and office facilities. George Heye accepted this offer and, with typical energy and promptitude, took the legal steps necessary to the organization of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation.

On May 10, 1916, the final papers were signed by which Heye, as Grantor, deeded his entire collection to a Board of Trustees and settled a considerable endowment upon the Museum. He became Chairman of the Board and Director of the Museum's activities. Plans for the $250,000.00 building had already been drawn, and ground was broken early in June of the same year. The cornerstone was laid with due ceremonies on November 8 and the offices were ready for occupancy early in August of 1917. By November of that year the collections were being transferred from the 33rd Street lofts and other depositories, and exhibit installations commenced.

The official opening of the public halls was delayed, however, until
November 15, 1922. World War I had intervened, and two floors of the building on which exhibit cases had not been installed were given over to The American Geographical Society whose cartographers were employed in preparing maps and charts for the Navy. Also, several members of the Heye staff were in the Services in one capacity or another.

It had not been difficult for George Heye to gather from among his circle of friends men of vision, experience and means to serve as trustees. Prominent among the first group were Archer M. Huntington, James B. Ford, Minor C. Keith, F. Kingsbury Curtis, Harmon W. Hendricks and Clarence B. Moore.

As the years passed, many other similarly interested men accepted trusteeships through varying periods of time. None has served with greater dedication than Thomas Roberts, Heye's closest friend and confidant, who became a trustee in 1924 and is now completing his thirty-second year as Treasurer; and Blair S. Williams, who was appointed to the Board in 1930 and served as its Vice Chairman from 1947 until his resignation, because of failing health, in 1953. These two men, above all others, were bulwarks of strength and encouragement during the strains and stresses of the Museum's trying years.


Until 1928 the years were glorious ones—an anthropologist's dream years. No teaching load—nothing but field work, research and publication. Early additions to the original staff were Jesse L. Nusbaum, Marshall H. Saville, who became a full-time member in 1918, Frederick Webb Hodge, who resigned as Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology the same year, Amos Oneroad, Bruno Oetterking, and, in 1923, Melvin R. Gilmore and Samuel K. Lothrop.

Also the work of many others who were collecting for the Museum in the field was subsidized by monies supplied by Heye, or raised by him for these specific purposes. Among the group so supported were
such recognized investigators as Samuel A. Barrett, Thomas Huckerby, Philip Ainsworth Means, Edward H. Davis, A. Hyatt Verrill, T. T. Waterman, Frank G. Speck and William Wildschut.

Moreover, almost any anthropologist in the country with a good reputation could expect, if not a subvention for his desired expedition, at least the sale of the specimens acquired.

While Heye had no personal part in most of these expeditions, he selected the area and the tribe to be investigated and kept closely in touch with each of his representatives. Despite the great mass of material already in the collection, he knew exactly what types of specimens were lacking, and kept constantly driving his field men to greater efforts to obtain the needed specimens.

It does not seem expedient to list all of these field explorations here. A detailed account of the principal ones is to be found in HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM, Indian Notes and Monographs, Miscellaneous No. 55, published by the Museum in 1956.

Publication until now had been desultory and, except for Saville’s two-volume report on his explorations in Manabí, Ecuador, not particularly important until Hodge was appointed to the staff. Hodge was the outstanding editor in the field of anthropology and remained until his death one of the great authorities on the American Indian.

Archer Huntington had established a generous publication fund in 1918, and Hodge, with Heye’s confidence and blessing, demanded more and more scientific articles from the staff. These began to pour out. The annual reports to the Trustees for the years 1919–1921, for instance, note that thirty-seven books and pamphlets were published or prepared for publication within those fiscal periods in a total of 2,842 pages! A commendable achievement for a newly organized anthropological institution.

Even before the building was opened to the public it was found too small to house the specimens which flowed in from the expeditions and by purchase. Archer Huntington, ever a supporter, again came to the fore with the presentation of a six-acre plot in the Pelham Bay section of the Bronx upon which a three-story storage building was erected with monies personally subscribed by the trustees. The
"Annex" was completed and occupied on November 15, 1926, and all duplicate and excess material was moved into it by the summer of 1927.

These six acres of potent soil intrigued Melvin Gilmore, an outstanding ethnobotanist of the period who was a member of the staff, and he sought support for the development of an Indian garden in which might be grown the plants used by many of the tribes as food staples. He did not have to look far, for Thea Heye sponsored his every hope. The garden was planted, groups of children from the community schools were enlisted to cultivate the plots, and this activity was carried on until Gilmore left the staff.

Much later, in 1932, Heye collected two totem poles while on a trip to British Columbia, and the Bronx Annex grounds presented an ideal setting for their erection. Again later, two more poles were added, and he also had his staff construct replicas of several types of Indian dwellings on various parts of the grounds.

The Museum suffered two heavy blows in March of 1928. James B. Ford died on the 29th and Harmon W. Hendricks two days later. Even though both men were of advanced age, their deaths came as a great shock to Heye who had known them and relied on their judgment and financial support for years. The annual contributions of these two trustees had largely made possible the far-flung activities of a considerable staff, and, while each left the Museum generous bequests, the income from these endowments constituted but a small fraction of the amounts each had been accustomed to contribute annually.

The breadth of the generosity of these men covered not only the financing of expeditions, publications and operating expenses, but also magnificent gifts of material to the collections. Harmon Hendricks presented to the Museum such varied gifts as the William Penn Treaty wampum belts, magnificent gold objects from Colombia, archeology from the Southwest, Plains ethnology from the vicinity of Fort Laramie collected about 1850, and textiles from the Southwest and Mexico. James Bishop Ford gave, among other collections, turquoise mosaic objects from Mexico, archeology from California, the
West Indies and Guatemala, and post-Columbian Peruvian textiles. He also was the trustee most responsible for the Museum library. A large section carries his name, as it was he who made possible, among other gifts, the acquisition of the libraries of Marshall H. Saville and Frederick Webb Hodge. The Museum library was deposited in 1930 with the Huntington Free Library and Reading Room, in a new building donated by the never failing and ever generous Archer Huntington.

Without the generous support of Hendricks and Ford retrenchment was almost an immediate necessity. Expenses of maintaining and operating the Museum were cut to an irreducible minimum, the research staff had to be reduced, and the purchase of collections, sponsoring of expeditions, and the publication program all but eliminated.

The Museum had hardly adjusted itself to these curtailments when the financial crash of 1929 and the following depression still further decreased available income. In this the Heye Foundation was but in the same adversity as many similarly endowed institutions throughout the country, the staffs and activities of which were affected for many years.

The staff was still further reduced and Heye was forced to make many adjustments in his own manner of living in order to supply personal funds to keep the Museum open.

Of the early staff only a few remain alive and almost all of these have supplied factual data and anecdotal material which have made the inclusion of portions of this text possible. Mark Harrington in particular has written at great length many reminiscences of his twenty years (1908–1928) with “The Chief.” Many important missions were entrusted to Harrington’s supervision, and it is believed that his field work added more objects to the Museum collections than that of any other staff member.

A sound and lasting affection existed between the two men which continued through Heye’s long life, even though they had not been closely associated for nearly three decades. Harrington writes: “In all my twenty years in George Heye’s employ I found him a wonderful

[20]
man to work for. During all those years I had only one run-in with him." [An occasion when Heye, out of temper for some reason, gave Harrington and Skinner a dressing-down for something for which they were not to blame. They went home!] "A couple of days later," Harrington continues, "I received a letter from George, in a semi-humorous vein, saying in effect: 'I am hereby returning your self-respect by mail. I doubt if there will ever again be such an incident as took place in your office yesterday. I am looking forward to seeing you both back on the job the day after you get this.' Alanson received a similar letter, and George saw us both 'back on the job' the day after. The incident was never mentioned again.... I have many happy memories of my association with George G. Heye."

Although George Heye would stand for no "soldiering" on the part of any of his staff, and he would drive a member or a group until a given job was completed, he never demanded the impossible. He had trained himself in every chore on the curatorial docket from washing potsherds to the complete restoration of vessels, and so knew from long and first-hand experience just about how much time was needed for the proper completion of any given task.

Nor was it all work and no play with "The Chief" and "The Boys." A man of great size—he was slightly over six feet three and weighed over three hundred pounds in his prime, Heye had a great sense of humor and a hearty, rafter-rocking laugh. He enjoyed a joke on himself with the same gusto as when it was on the other fellow.

A former member of the staff, Donald A. Cadzow, writes:

"The Museum staff worked with George G. Heye, and not for him. He was very stubborn and proud. He often said: "When I am wrong regarding Museum matters I'm right until some of you fellows can prove me wrong." He did not resent being corrected; he was pleased when a staff member could prove that he knew more than the boss.

"To the outside world George Heye was a rugged character. To us who worked with him he was just the opposite. When you muffed a job in the field, no matter what it had cost, he was considerate of your feelings and tried to cheer you up. The sure way to have him ride you was to do a good job and be the least bit cocky about it; he loved to deflate egos. He demanded accurate field records from his men on all original work."

[21]
All the former members of the early staff remember especially the annual “Night-work Banquet” when, on a Saturday night, all returned to the Museum after supper and worked on the top floor until midnight when a grand banquet was served, catered from one of the city's great hotels. This was followed by a “bull session” in which anyone with suggestions or criticisms to offer was welcome to present them. The conference often lasted until well after daybreak Sunday morning. The Museum Mustard, a weekly typewritten publication, is also remembered. In it, Museum affairs were discussed in a humorous vein and there was a considerable amount of good-natured joshing, from which no one was spared.

As soon as practicable after World War I, George Heye resumed his annual trips to Europe and, through the 1920's particularly, made large purchases of collections from dealers and auctions both in London and Paris. Several important collections of pre-Columbian pieces from Latin America, which had been taken to Europe in the 1870's and 80's, thus recrossed the Atlantic to enrich the holdings of the Museum. His purchases always traveled on the same ship with him, and often there were cases and crates entered “in bond” of sufficient number and size to fill a large storage van to capacity. And he would not leave the ship until every piece had dock-clearance and was safely in the hands of his transfer agent.

Throughout his active life George Heye held the cataloguing of incoming specimens to be his own inviolable province. It is rather astounding to contemplate that one individual placed an acquisition number—mostly of six digits—on each of over three million specimens. This is a task that many institutional heads would be more than happy to slough off to some lesser personage. But not so “The Chief.”

His remembrance of specimens was fabulous. Many times he was known to have picked up an object from the storage collections, a piece he had not seen for years, and recounted every detail—with names, dates and places—involved at the time he procured it.

Experience in handling personally every specimen in the vast collection gave him such a catholic knowledge of them that his
decision was often sought by many outside institutions and individuals as the final word in the identification of a given object and its original provenience.

No one with George Heye’s drive, with his utter disregard for anything which intervened in his urge to build his collection even greater, could possibly accomplish what he did in his long life without gathering loyal friends to his standard and without expecting a number of critics at his elbows and heels.

Supplying his own funds, he could make immediate decisions as to the purchase of a collection, not delayed, as were most other institutions in his field, by the necessity to consult executive or purchasing committees before action could be taken. There was sometimes envy among some of his peers at the administrative and curatorial levels in other institutions, and a tendency among them at times to belittle Heye’s acquisitions as being scientifically unimportant. Checking through the years, it would seem that they all would be willing, somewhat belatedly perhaps, to acquire similar material.

As financial matters began to mend—about 1935–1936—collecting again became a growing urge in George Heye. There were no funds for a scientific staff, perhaps, but there were an increasing number of collections being offered by owners who themselves felt the pinch of the times, and Heye never rested a moment pursuing them and acquiring those of any importance.

Nor were field activities entirely forgotten during these later depression years. Beginning in the spring of 1933 and continuing for three seasons, an early Algonquian cemetery was excavated on the shore of Lake Champlain, in Addison County, Vermont. This proved a most important site and many interesting specimens were obtained. Through three years, 1939–1941, Heye had his field crew at work at various burial sites in several of the canyons along the coastal stretch of the Malibu Ranch in Los Angeles County, California, and in all of those years he spent some time during either the summer or autumn months at these sites.

Though George Heye had a fierce sense of possession for the objects he had acquired, when fair play indicated such action he was willing
to part with them. The most interesting of such occasions, and one that was widely publicized, occurred in January, 1938. The northern plains and prairie states were in the grasp of a great drought, and the Hidatsa Indians of North Dakota believed that the cause of it was the loss of their sacred "Water Buster" Bundle belonging to the Midipadi Band. This had been acquired by a missionary many years before and sold to the Heye Museum in 1907. It contained the skulls of two men who were regarded as incarnations of the sacred thunderbirds that protected the Hidatsa and brought recurrent cycles of rain. These Indians were convinced that rain would come with the return of the bundle.

In their mythology, Eagle Man had said: "I shall die soon. But before I die I make you a promise. My skull and my friend's skull shall be the Medicine of my Band.... Again, if drought shall come and the fields wither and dry up, let the keeper take down our skulls, mine and my friend's, and set them on a bunch of aromatic herbs (penny-royal) and sprinkle them with a little water, and there will be rain."

Learning that their sacred bundle was in the Museum of the American Indian, the Hidatsa sought its return through the mediation of the Office of Indian Affairs. Although it was one of the most prominently displayed and greatly prized possessions of the Museum, George Heye was agreeable to letting the tribe have its cherished relic back.

The actual exchange was a spectacular occasion. Two elderly leaders of the Band, Foolish Bear, 84, and Drags Wolf, 75, came to New York in full tribal regalia. At the Museum the proper speeches were made, the peace pipe smoked, and the bundle transferred to the Indian representatives; they presented a buffalo medicine horn in exchange, and conferred on George Heye the Indian name of Slim Shin, that of a former faithful custodian of the bundle. An amusing side light on the occasion is that Heye handed the Indians the contents of the bundle, skull by skull, much to their consternation, for the contents were cryptic, and had never been seen by any living tribesman. It is interesting to note that rain quickly followed the arrival of the bundle at the Reservation.
Almost every year until 1952 Heye went to the Pacific Coast. Including 1941 he went by motor, taking a chauffeur but driving every foot of the way himself—often covering over seven hundred miles in a day. On these motor trips, of course, all across the country in both directions, stops were made to visit dealers or to interview owners of collections. After 1942 he chose to travel by train, hiring a car in Los Angeles and making the rounds to tap old and new sources of acquisition over parts of Arizona and New Mexico and the whole of southern and central California.

E. K. Burnett, long associated with Heye, and his successor to the directorship of the Museum, tells with a chuckle of his Chief’s litany upon leaving each year for the West: “Don’t expect any shipments—no money this year—just going out to see old friends.” Burnett, knowing George Heye, had the porters clear the usual space on the fourth floor at the Museum and made sure that there were ample funds in the Freight & Expressage account.

In about two weeks after Heye’s leave-taking, brief notes would alert the Museum of the imminent arrival of “a few little things.” These alarms would continue in increasing number, and then the crates, cases, cartons and barrels would begin to arrive. Soon the overflow would have to be housed in the basement. When he was twitted about the dozens of boxes awaiting his return, he would puff contentedly on a cigar and allow as how he just couldn’t resist the bargain basements, and that he’d have to make up for his profligacy by giving up lunches. George Heye never ate lunch!

William F. Stiles, who came to the Museum’s staff in 1938 and who is still an active member of it, accompanied or drove Heye on thirty-odd trips through New England and the Middle Atlantic states. He tells of their reaching some small town for the night and “The Chief” making inquiry at once as to local collections of Indian material. George Heye found the most fruitful sources of such information the constable and the publisher of the local newspaper, if there was one. With equal regularity he would consult the town’s mortician, because he felt that that individual, having performed his professional rituals on several generations of the population, knew
what was hidden away in every attic in the community. And it is quite surprising what Heye conjured out of many such attics.

George Heye was never a "joiner." He became a pledge to Alpha Chapter of Zeta Psi and was initiated on October 22, 1892. He never was active in the organization other than to contribute financially to it. In 1897 he became a life member of the Lotos Club and in 1902 joined the University Club which he used occasionally for Museum dinners. He became a life member of the Explorers Club in 1905 and served as its president in 1923–1930. He was also a member of the Society of Forty-Niners of the Columbia Alumni Association, which consists of men who had attended Columbia College when it was located on 49th Street.

Because of his several gifts to that institution, he was made a life member of the American Museum of Natural History in 1906; several times in later years he augmented his donations. He was treasurer of the International Congress of Americanists at New York in 1928, and was a member of the Council of the American Anthropological Association from 1909 until it was disestablished. As to his Honorary Fellowship in the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, awarded in 1930, the present secretary writes:

"The Council of the R.A.I. elects not more than three Honorary Fellows each year, and all of these are well-known anthropologists who are not British subjects. It is the Council's way of giving recognition for particular services to anthropology to people generally resident abroad, and some care is taken over the nominations and elections so that the choice of a name really carries some weight."

The application for his Honorary Ph.D. from the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Hamburg was signed by Professors Doctors Thilenius, Lauffer, Meinhof and Florenz. The text of the diploma, freely translated from the German, reads:

Under the Rectorship of Heinrich Sieveking, Doctor of Law and Doctor of Philosophy, Professor in Ordinary and in Public of Social Economics, and during the Deanship of Justus Hashagen, Professor in Ordinary and in Public of History, the Philosophical Faculty of Hamburg University has
awarded the honor of Doctor of Philosophy to Mr. George G. Heye of New York, the founder of the Heye Foundation and the creator of the Museum of the American Indian, who carries out in a unique way, according to his own ideas and experience, the plan of a great scientific institution that treats exclusively of the ethnology of America. In this he constantly keeps in mind the making of systematic collections from reliable sources, as well as their scientific treatment and merited publication, and in his exemplary institution he also makes available to students from other countries the results of field research, while, at the same time, by careful selection and arrangement, displaying them to the lay visitor.

In testimony whereof, this document has been prepared, with the seal of the Faculty, and signed by the Dean.

Hamburg, January 18, 1929.

The Dean
Hashagen

This honor apparently came to George Heye as a complete surprise. Heye was a gourmet who was personally acquainted with many of the famous chefs on either side of the Atlantic. He never forsook his Edwardian approach to gracious dining, and his formal dinners, such as that of New Year’s Eve, were a challenge to the ingenuity of the culinary staff preparing them and to the belt lines and bodices of their consumers. He ate little breakfast and no lunch, but the evening meal was a tradition with Heye, commencing about 8:30 and continuing leisurely for a minimum span of two hours. He had a tremendous capacity for food and consumed such quantities that guests, not accustomed to their host’s gargantuan appetite, sat in some bewilderment through most of the meal.

In his own right he was a cook of no mean ability and some of his recipes are used regularly by several well-known restaurants. He once compiled a number of the famous recipes, obtained from great epicurean chefs, and was eager to pass these along to his cronies. Few found practical use for them, however. One was just apt to start: “Take three cleaned and dressed suckling pigs” or might carry an unusual detail such as: “Add four pounds of melted butter”—both a bit disconcerting for a family of two with no flair for fractions.

Except for most of the two decades between 1915 and 1935, George Heye’s personal life was beset with tragedy. His marriage to
Blanche Agnes Williams of Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, January 4, 1904, terminated in divorce nine years later. Two children came of this union, Mildred Agnes and Lawrence Williams. The son was killed in an automobile accident in Wyoming in 1932 and the daughter died in New York City in 1941. Neither was married. Mrs. Williams Heye had predeceased both, in 1924.

On July 8, 1915, George Heye married Thea Kowne Page of Virginia. For twenty years, until her untimely death, this woman was to inspire not alone Heye but many of the activities of her one rival, his ever obvious love, the Museum.

Wedded to the institution's welfare at Nacoochee Mound, where she spent her honeymoon in dungarees, Thea Heye never once deviated from her constant support of her husband and his interests. The expeditions she financed and the thousands of specimens which bear her name as donor upon display in the exhibition halls bespeak not only the use of her own monies, but attest as well to the generosity of other donors whom she interested in the growth of her husband's dream.

In 1933 Thea Heye was elected a trustee of the Museum—the only woman to enjoy that honor.

At his wife's death, on her birthday, May 12, 1935, Heye dismantled his Fifth Avenue apartment and took quarters at the University Club, where he had been a member since 1902. But he was accustomed to a home with a hostess to dispense the amenities of gracious living. He just could not stand club life and so, a year later, he married Jessica Peebles Standing, of California. This marriage ended in divorce in 1940.

At the time of his death George Heye's closest relatives were two nieces, daughters of his late sister Mrs. James B. Clemens: Mrs. L. D. Henry of New York, and Mrs. M. A. Moore of Virginia.

George Heye always wanted to die in harness at his table on the laboratory floor of the Museum numbering specimens. The Fates did not grant him that wish. He had been in failing health for some months when in October 1954 he suffered a slight cerebral hemorrhage. He rallied from this and after some weeks was able to come to his office
for a few hours, a day or two a week. His condition, however, slowly but inexorably worsened and on March 11, 1955, he visited for the last time the Museum he built and loved. He suffered a number of minor "strokes" and was confined to his apartment in the Ritz Tower, New York, until his death on January 20, 1957. His body was placed in the family mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery, New York.

So ends the man—but not so his achievement. His acquisitions throughout a long and dedicated life survive to bring enlightenment on the manners and customs of the First Americans to all who find interest in them. Ere this memorial comes from the presses the one millionth visitor will have crossed the threshold at Broadway and 155th Street.

And George Heye's contribution to the more serious students of early American cultures will continue to be increasingly important. They, of course, were his first concern—a concern expressed posthumously by his generous bequests to the Museum for its maintenance and the continuance of scientific research and public education.

Not long ago, at sunset, the present author stood with members of the Museum staff as a golden flood from across the Hudson brightened the room and rested upon the table and chair at which George Heye had spent so many of the happiest and most fruitful days of his long life.

To that table new specimens will continue to come to augment his collections. His chair can never quite be filled.
Publications


Field Work

Ethnological Expeditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iroquois, New York</td>
<td>Visits to Cattaraugus, Alleghany and Tonawanda Reservations through 45 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iroquois, Canada</td>
<td>1 visit to Grand River Reservation and 2 to Caughnawaga</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cherokee, North Carolina</td>
<td>1 visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sauk and Fox, Iowa</td>
<td>1 visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huma, Louisiana</td>
<td>1 visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crow, Montana</td>
<td>2 visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salish and Kwakiutl, British Columbia</td>
<td>3 visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit, British Columbia and Alaska</td>
<td>4 visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca, Osage, Wyandot and Kiowa, Oklahoma</td>
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<td>Diegueño, Luiseño and Kawia, California</td>
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Archeological Excavations

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<tr>
<th>Site</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruins of Hawikuh, New Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finger Lake Region, New York</td>
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<td>Montague, New Jersey</td>
<td>2 seasons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nacoochee Mound, Georgia</td>
<td>1 season</td>
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<tr>
<td>Channel Islands, California</td>
<td>4 seasons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coast of Southern California</td>
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Memberships and Honors

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Life Member</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Life Member</td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>Life Member</td>
<td>Order of the Liberator, Third Class, Venezuela</td>
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<td>1916</td>
<td>Life Member</td>
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<td>1917</td>
<td>Life Fellow</td>
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<td>1920</td>
<td>Corresponding Member</td>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>Honorary Member</td>
<td>Academia Nacional de Historia, Ecuador</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>Honorary Companion</td>
<td>Order of Indian Wars</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Honorary Doctor of Philosophy</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>1948</td>
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<td>Archaeological Institute of America. (Resigned, 1953)</td>
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Indian Names

O'owah — Seneca (Iroquoian) "Screech Owl"
Isatsigibis — Hidatsa (Siouan) "Slim Shin"

Frontispiece from a water color portrait
by Joseph Keppler, 1927