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Department of Ethnology - Section of Aboriginal Pottery: Annual Report 1886 - 1887

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Department of American Aboriginal Pottery

Report of the Curator. June 30th '87

The work of the Department of aboriginal pottery has been carried forward in the lines indicated in the report of the preceding year. A number of new cases have been constructed and series of representative groups of relics have been transferred to them from the Smithsonian Hall.

Accessions have been numerous and important but not equal in value to those of the years immediately preceding. The agencies through which the acquisitions were made are first, those of the Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum including donations, purchases, and the products of original research; and second, those of the Bureau of Ethnology through corresponding channels. A series of Pueblo pottery, Ancient and Modern, collected in 1886 by Mr. James Stevenson of the Geologic Survey was turned over to my department during the year,

Amongst the 160 numbers are some extremely fine specimens of the white and the polychrome wares of Ancient Tuzayan. A small series of vessels of the ancient white ware were secured by purchase from Mr C. M. Landau of Lawrence, Kansas. Captain J. G. Bourke of the U. S. Army presented a series of small plain and coiled vases obtained by him from cliff dwellings and caves in Arizona.

A few small collections were made in the Mississippi Valley and ⁱⁿ the eastern states by Dr Cyrus Thomas and his assistants.

From Mexico some interesting accessions have been made. Dr Edward Palmer obtained from the State of Chihuahua a number of vases and fragments of ^{ancient} earthenware besides ~~a~~ ^a series of modern works and a most instructive set of pottery making utensils. This collection was purchased for the Museum by the Bureau of Ethnology. A small number

of interesting pieces of ancient ware collected in the valley of Mexico were acquired by purchase from Mr. Ward Bachelier.

By exchange with Museums in France, through the agency of ^{Mr} Louis Durand, we have acquired a number of interesting pieces of Mexican ^{and} ^{ancient} pottery. A valuable collection of vases and other earthenware relics from the Graves of Ancón, Peru, was purchased by the Bureau of Ethnology from Mr W.E. Curtis and is now exhibited in the pottery Court.

¶ Beside these above mentioned accessions I may mention small series of earthen relics ~~also~~ obtained through ^{Mr} J. Baker, C. J. Herring, A. A. Felsing, J. K. Watson, J. H. McComb Jr., W. A. Dafford and E. M. Kirkley.

This enumeration includes only those acquisitions that were turned over directly to the Curator of the department. Other accessions of objects of clay are included in series & or sets entrusted to other departments. ¶ The first entry for the year is number 131934 and the last 132955. The whole number of accessions is 611.

The Curator has been occupied during the year in completing his studies of the collections from Chiniqui and in taking preliminary looking towards the discussion of the Ceramic Art of Mexico. A special paper upon a remarkable

Group of spurious antiquities from Mexico
has been prepared and turned over to the
Smithsonian Institution for publication. It
is shown in this paper that for more than
half a century the manufacture of pottery
and certain other classes of objects has
been extensively carried on and for no
other purpose than to profit by sales to
collectors of antiquities. It is also shown
that museums in all parts of the world
are well supplied with these spurious ar-
ticles and that a number of pieces have
found their way into literature as genuine
antiquities. Some twenty illustrations
are given. They are taken from the
most striking pieces in the National
Museums of Mexico and the United States
and from published illustrations.