



## History of Anthropology Newsletter

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# The First American Anthropological Association

George W. Stocking Jr.

Stephen D. Peet

run of their scheme of life. At the seaports, where intercourse with Europeans prevails, old usages may have been modified; but in the interior of these Islands which it is the intention of the expedition to visit, the real facts of their condition can be found. It is such a grand opportunity that I cannot express to you how anxious I am to have before the world the results of an investigation of these subjects, which you could make. I think the growth of the family is destined to be a prominent question in Ethnology for some years to come...

Yours truly,

L. H. Morgan

The Woodruff venture was conceived as a combination research expedition and floating college, with a faculty drawn from various disciplines and several major American universities. Despite the endorsement of Joseph Henry, Asa Gray, and the presidents of Cornell, Michigan, Rochester and Yale, the expedition was called off for lack of students. By that time, however, Fison had already indicated that his family obligations would make the project impossible for him. (Cf. Final Announcement of the Woodruff Scientific Expedition Around the World, Indianapolis, 1877; and other letters in the Lewis Henry Morgan papers.)

CLIO'S FANCY--DOCUMENTS TO PIQUE THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

THE FIRST AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Although many of our readers will doubtless be surprised to learn it, the American Anthropological Association which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year is not the first organization to bear that name. During the first centennial year of American independence, the following printed notice went out from the Midwest announcing the formation of a new national society:

American  
Anthropological  
Association

Ashtabula, Ohio, U.S.A., October 1st, 1876

Sir:

Obedient to a call signed by several prominent scientific gentlemen, in conjunction with a committee previously appointed by the "State Archaeological Association of Ohio," An INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS assembled at Philadelphia on the 4th of September, ult. Gentlemen were present from various sections of the United States and from foreign countries; the latter being chiefly persons representing the different commissions connected with the Centennial Exposition.

The meeting was called to order by Gen. R. Brinkerhoff, the President of the State Archaeological Association of Ohio. Prof. E. T. Cox, of the Archaeological Association of Indiana, was elected Temporary Chairman, and Rev. S. D. Peet, of Ohio, appointed Secretary.

Delegates reported from the following Societies: The State Historical Society of New Hampshire, the Natural History Society of Nova Scotia, the Academy of Sciences of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the Academy of Sciences of St. Paul, Minnesota.

Communications were received from the Secretary of the Congress International des Americanistes; from Senor Luciano Cordeiro, Secretary of the Geographical Societies of Lisbon and Portugal; and from various gentlemen of the United States and Canada.

An address of welcome was delivered by Prof. S. S. Haldeman, in the absence of Prof. Joseph Henry, LL.D., and suitable responses were made by Senor Castellani, of Rome, Italy, and Dr. Heinrich Frauberger, of the Museum of Industrial Art at Brunn, Austria.

A permanent organization was effected under the name of THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, and the following officers were elected:

PRESIDENT.

Hon. Charles C. Jones, Jr., New York City

VICE PRESIDENTS.

Col. Chas. Whittlesey (Cleveland, Ohio)	Maj. J.W. Powell (Washington, D.C.)
Prof. Spencer F. Baird (Washington, D.C.)	Prof. Charles Rau (New York City)
Gen. R. Brinkerhoff (Mansfield, Ohio)	Dr. Thos. E. Pickett (Maysville, Ky.)
Prof. E. T. Cox (Indianapolis, Ind.)	Col. L. J. Dupre (Austin, Tex.)
Hon. S. Murdock (Ia.)	

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

Rev. S. D. Peet (Ashtabula, Ohio)

PERMANENT SECRETARY

Prof. W. H. B. Thomas (Mont Holly, N.J.)

TRUSTEES TO SERVE FOUR YEARS

Judge Wm. B. Sloan (Port Clinton, Ohio)

J. F. Williams, Esq. (St. Paul, Minn.)

Prof. F. W. Putnam (Cambridge, Mass.)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Prof. M. C. Read (Hudson, Ohio)

TREASURER

Wm. S. Vaux, Esq. (Philadelphia, Penn.)

TRUSTEES TO SERVE TWO YEARS

Dr. S. S. Haldeman (Chickies, Penn.)

Dr. C. C. Abbott (Trenton, N.J.)

Maj. W. H. Dall (Washington, D.C.)

The opening address was delivered by the President, Hon. Charles C. Jones, Jr., his subject being "The Antiquities of the Florida Tribes."

During the session of the Association, the following subjects were discussed: "Ancient Trails among the Rocky Mountains," by N. W. Byers; "The Myths and Myth Makers of the Far West," by Maj. J. W. Powell; "Palaeolithic Remains in New Jersey," by Dr. C. C. Abbott and Prof. F. W. Putnam; "The Copper Relics of Wisconsin," by Jas. D. Butler; "Mounds and Mound Builders of the Mississippi Valley," by Col. L. J. Dupre;

"Ancient Earthworks of the Mississippi Valley," by Dr. M. W. Dickenson; "Antiquities at Porto Rico," by Prof. D. M. Gabb; and "Arrows and Spear Points," by Dr. S. S. Haldeman. Papers were presented by Rev. S. D. Peet, on "The Archaeology of Europe and America Compared," and "Sources of Information Concerning the Pre-Historic Races of America;" and by Dr. W. J. Hoffman, on "Various Customs of the Indian Tribes."

The Association adjourned on the 7th of September last, subject to the call of the President, at a time and place to be hereafter designated by the Trustees.

THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION has for its special object the study of the History, Conditions, Relations and Antiquities of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of North and South America, and the adjacent Islands, embracing their physical characteristics, religious conceptions, mythology, traditions; social, civil and political organizations and institutions, languages, literature, arts, manufactures, monuments and relics, modes of life and customs, migrations, origins and affinities, their trade relations, and the changes engendered by contact with European civilization.

The widest range of intelligent discussion will be allowed, and it is the object of this Association to stimulate inquiry and accurate research, particularly in partially known or unexplored American fields.

By judicious publications, this Association hopes to utilize investigations made on this continent, and by correspondence to secure the results of investigation in other continents. The co-operation of all persons and Societies interested in any of the subjects above enumerated is cordially invited.

The initiation fee has been fixed at five dollars, which entitles a member to a copy of the Proceedings of the late Convention, and of such bulletins or publications as may be issued by the Association during the year.

Application for Membership may be made to the Trustees or either of the Secretaries.

Of the time and place of the next session, due notice will be given.

Respectfully,

STEPHEN D. PEET,  
Corresponding Secretary.

At this point, the local institutional structures of anthropology were perhaps not strong enough to provide the basis for a separate national scientific organization, and Ashtabula would seem to have been an unlikely center from which to organize it. Be that as it may, the Association must have died shortly after its birth, leaving virtually no trace. In 1878, when the Reverend Peet founded the American Antiquarian: A Quarterly Journal Devoted to Early American History, Ethnology and Archeology there was no hint in its pages that an American Anthropological Association had ever existed.

Although several of the officers of the first Association are recognizable today as anthropologists, most of them are not. Peet himself, the author of a five volume work on Prehistoric America (Chicago, 1892-1905), is barely mentioned in published historical accounts of American anthropology (cf. however, Thomas Tax, "The Development of American Archeology, 1800-1879," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, Department of History, 1973, pp. 303-304.) One exception is Robert Silverberg's Mound Builders of Ancient America (Greenwich, 1968), where he is described on pages 222-24 as "a member of the professional Establishment" and his journal (actually a personal organ) is misassociated with the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester. One cannot help wondering about the nature of the "professional Establishment" in later nineteenth century American anthropology, and about that fashionable concept, "professionalization."

Peet himself harks back to the old biblically-based ethnological tradition. One of his early articles was entitled "The Bible Narrative and Heathen Traditions: The Traces of the Facts in Genesis in the Traditions of all Nations" (I, #2); and in 1883 the American Antiquarian, as if to symbolize an underlying Noachian assumption, merged with the Oriental and Biblical Journal to become the American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal. Nonetheless, Peet did keep more or less au courant: Morgan's Ancient Society got a favorable review, though an attempt was made to reconcile its view of primitive society with the "patriarchal" notions of Mommsen and Niebuhr. Beyond this, Peet and the Antiquarian played a role in the exposure of the Davenport Conspiracy (cf. Marshall McKusick's book of that title, Iowa City, 1970, pp. 37-38, 64-66). Indeed, for many years his journal attracted a wide range of anthropological writers--a large number of Reverends and middle-western citizen-archeologists, to be sure, but also such men as Gatschet, Dorsey, Bandelier, McGee, Wake, Brinton, Hale, Starr and even Franz Boas (although perhaps significantly, no student of Boas' other than A. F. Chamberlain, who stands apart as the only Ph.D. of Boas' early stint at Clark).

By 1910, when J. D. Kinnamon, the dean of Benton Harbor College, had taken over as editor, the Antiquarian had lost virtually all pretense of speaking for any group that might be considered "professional", proto- or otherwise, and within three years it was defunct. But for a time in the 1880's it seems to have been the only regular anthropological journal in the United States, and even after the first series of the American Anthropologist began appearing in 1888, the relative "professionalism" of the two journals was not so disparate as one might expect.

Although there is perhaps risk that further research might be purely "antiquarian", it is worth considering the possibility that the study of "professionalization" would benefit by more serious consideration of some of the "losers" in the process.