CAROLINE G. DOSKER

An interview in 1908 with Dr. George Byron Gordon, Curator of North American Archaeology at The University Museum, began Mary Louise Baker's 30-year association with Maya art. Her first assignment for the Museum was to draw the Maya pots in the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. Later she traveled to Europe and Central America to locate and draw pieces in both private and museum collections.

Born in Alliance, Ohio, on August 4, 1872, she was a descendant of Quaker families of Chester County, Pennsylvania. She completed her education in Pennsylvania before the end of the last century, and taught there in a number of one-room schools. In 1900 she determined to study art and entered the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art at Broad and Pine Streets in Philadelphia.

As a free-lance artist in the early years of this century, she taught at George School in Newtown, Bucks County, made scientific drawings for Clarence B. Moore at the Academy of Natural Sciences, and did commercial illustration. The drawings, charts, architectural plans, and restorations she did attest to her versatility as an artist.

The strikingly attractive water-colors of Maya pottery she had begun in 1908 were finally published by the Museum in 1925 in *Maya Pottery in the University of Pennsylvania Museum and in Other Collections* (edited by G. B. Gordon). In 1931 she was granted a leave of absence and commissioned which had been discovered by Frans Blom. These pieces had been selected by J. Alden Mason, Curator of the American Section of The University Museum, for inclusion in a catalog on Maya pottery.

From New Orleans she went to Yucatan, Guatemala, Honduras, and San Salvador, returning to Philadelphia in September. In a newspaper interview published in December she said:

> No woman before me was ever sent on such a trip and I adored every minute of it. You see, my three interests are art, archaeology and aviation, and I was able to combine all three on my visit to the jungles. . . . It was my job not only to make drawings of the pottery, but to find good and valuable examples. I did this by getting information from the natives wherever I went. I would sketch one jar and the people who watched me work would tell me of someone miles away who had a beautiful vase that had been in the family for centuries. Sometimes the places were many miles distant over roads that would take me days and weeks by boat and mule. Here is where the airplane came in handy. [Detroit Free Press, Dec. 17, 1931]

(It was in 1930–31 that The University Museum sent out the Central American Expedition to do an
aerial survey of the land of the Maya.

During this same period, J.
Alden Mason and Linton Satter-
thwaite were excavating at the site of
Piedras Negras in Guatemala and
were sending monumental Maya
sculptures back to the Museum.
Among the important pieces sent
on loan from the Guatemalan Gov-
ernment was a carved stone lintel.
Baker made a reconstruction
drawing of the lintel which was
published in her only article for a
Museum publication, “Lintel 3 Re-
stored...and Why” (University
Museum Bulletin Vol. 5, No. 4
[1936]). Because of the fragmentary
condition of the lintel, sculptured
figures were missing and bodily

Cylindrical vase of polished red clay,
with yellow slip and design painted in
red, black and white. Chama,
Guatemala. H. ca. 19.8 cm. Pl. IX
by Mary Louise Baker from Maya
Pottery in the University of
Pennsylvania Museum and in Other
Collections.

Bond of red clay with straight sloping
sides; red surface with decoration in
black outlined by incised lines.
Quiche, Guatemala. H. ca. 9.5 cm.
Pl. XIV by Mary Louise Baker from
Maya Pottery.

connections lost. Baker had friends
sit on a low platform on the floor in
various positions so that she could
understand what was anatomically
possible in order to fill in the
missing portions. She writes in the
article:

The seated figures are very
human in manner and detail.
The left dignitary gently pokes
the friend in front to ask what it
is all about; the friend, willing to
accommodate, vainly tries to
peer over the intervening mass
of feathers, bracing himself on
his foot, in his effort to see—a
taut neck-line giving the cue; the
next man complacently toyed with
his tassel, his sleek, round body
outlining contentment; the fourth
in line is a lean, capable young
man, to whom the Chief is evi-
dently directing his words and
attention; the fifth, the Patriarch
of the row, has slumped in the
shadow of his Master, his fan ar-
rested in mid-air; the sixth,
holding his vase upon his knee,
Baker's painstaking and beautiful depictions of Maya pottery continue to aid scholars in iconographic and glyphic studies of Maya culture. Fittingly, her association with this institution, begun with paintings of Maya vases, ended with a tribute from an eminent Maya scholar. She died July 15, 1902, a few weeks short of her nineteenth birthday.

A graduate of Mount Holyoke College, Caroline G. Deker did graduate work there, at Bryn Mawr College, and at the University of Pennsylvania. She then came to The University Museum where the care and feeding of collections and negatives as Assistant Registrar. Five seasons as Field Registrar for the Hasselb Project, and twenty odd years working with volunteers, especially the Museum Museum Directors, occupied the next thirty years. At present, she works in the Archives; her many years with the Museum make her an important link between the present and past history and staff of the institution.