Conservation and Teaching Labs to Open Fall 2014

A new commitment from longtime Penn Museum benefactors A. Bruce and Margaret R. Mainwaring has completed funding for a full renovation of the conservation and teaching laboratories on the first floor of the West Wing of the Museum’s original 1899 building. Construction on the renovated spaces began in January 2014 and is scheduled for completion by the beginning of the Fall 2014 semester, in time for the launch of the new Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM)—one of three major initiatives of the Museum’s new strategic plan, and a key collaboration between the Museum and the School of Arts and Sciences. Other lead donors to the renovation of the laboratories are the late Crawford H. Greenewalt, Jr., Charles K. Williams II, Daniel G. Kamin, Frederick J. Manning, Carrie and Ken Cox, Joseph and Bonnie Lundy, and Frances and Bayard Storey.

Renovated lab spaces within the West Wing suite will include a large conservation workspace with smaller, shared rooms for x-ray and photography, mount-making and brazing, and matting and packing; a large, general-purpose teaching and research dry/clean lab with fume hood; a large lab designed for the teaching of Human Skeletal Analysis which can also accommodate some other specialties; and a smaller general-purpose wet lab. Other teaching spaces will include a seminar room with digital capabilities accommodating up to 12 people, and a classroom adjacent to the Human Skeletal Lab with open storage for the famed Morton Collection of Human Crania, which will accommodate 25-30 and also have digital capabilities.

Guided by a Faculty Steering Committee and staffed by teaching specialists, CAAM will focus primarily on Ceramics, Digital Archaeology, Archaeobotany, Archaeozoology, Human Skeletal Analysis, Lithics, Archaeometallurgy, and Conservation. Courses, independent studies, and mentoring will be offered from introductory to advanced levels, enabling both undergraduate and graduate students to develop from their first experiences with laboratory-based analysis into independent researchers. CAAM teaching specialists will make contributions to a wide array of courses in a range of departments and will support the research mission of the Museum.

The commitment from Bruce and Peggy Mainwaring will also fund the first CAAM teaching specialist.

The Penn Museum is deeply grateful to the Mainwarings and all of the project donors and looks forward to recognizing them at a dedication ceremony in Fall 2014.

NAGPRA Repatriation Visit

On behalf of the University, the Penn Museum’s NAGPRA Committee transferred the human remains of six Cherokee individuals to tribal representatives of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina on September 24, 2013. Tyler Howe, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and James Griffin, Cultural Specialist, received the remains on behalf of the Cherokee Nation, the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.
Renovation of Rainey Auditorium Completed

Over the December/January break, the Penn Museum’s Rainey Auditorium was refurbished with new seating, carpeting, and railings thanks to a generous challenge grant from Annette Merle-Smith and prompt responses from her fellow Penn Museum Overseers Josie Hueber, John R. (Rick) Rockwell, Bruce Mainwaring, Bill Conrad, Eric Schoenberg, Carlos Nottebohm, Mary Bert Gutman, and John Hover.

Named for the renowned archaeologist and former Museum Director Froehlich Rainey, the Auditorium is the most frequently programmed of the Museum’s event and lecture spaces. During the last fiscal year it was used for over 70 Penn Museum public events, including lectures, World Culture Day presentations, film screenings, exhibition opening programs, children’s programs, and member events. It was also used for more than 30 additional Penn public events including those offered by the Penn Humanities Forum and Student Performing Arts, and is used for over 350 hours of Penn classes annually.

Students Learn about Mummification

*Mummy Makers* is a popular new hands-on workshop developed by the Museum Learning Programs Department. This program is available both for students visiting the Museum and for those who dial in via our Distance Learning Program. In the 45-minute workshop, students receive an in-depth look at Egyptian mummification, investigating not only its scientific aspects, but also the religious significance of the process. The workshop features two fabricated life-like bodies, showing our “deceased” model, Mr. Ulysses Penn, in different stages, before and after the desiccation (drying out) process. Students witness each step of the mummification process including brain removal (using jello brains), evisceration, desiccation, and wrapping. The program contains the perfect combination of science, math, and the study of ancient history with just enough of an ick factor to keep students engaged and interested. *Mummy Makers* has quickly become a staple of our outreach offerings and its participant numbers continue to grow.