Henry Usher Hall (1876–1944), Curator of the General Ethnology Section from 1915 to 1935, undertook two expeditions for the Penn Museum in dramatically distinct areas of the world: he was in Siberia in 1914–1915, at the beginning of his career, and in Sierra Leone, West Africa, in 1936–1937, at the end of it.

Due to the tight financial situation at the Museum in the 1930s, Hall was laid off in 1935. The next year, however, the Museum re-employed him to lead an expedition to West Africa. The trip was supported in part by the American Philosophical Society, as well as, sadly, a sale of African objects from the collections, considered to be “duplicates.” Hall first considered going to Nigeria, because of its strong cultural heritage, but decided to make the somewhat shorter trip (again, due to financial constraints) to Sierra Leone instead, which was, like Nigeria, a British colony. He was accompanied by his wife, Frances, an artist, and a graduate of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

From December 1936 to May 1937 the Halls lived among the Sherbro, who inhabit the southwestern coastal region of the country. They worked specifically on Sherbro Island and in the chiefdom of Shenge on the mainland, where cultural traditions were more conservative. Henry Hall gathered ethnographic information, as well
as objects representative of Sherbro material culture. Frances, on the other hand, tended to the sick, managed supplies, and also collected information and stories from the Sherbro women.

In his publication *The Sherbro of Sierra Leone: A Preliminary Report on the Work of The University Museum’s Expedition to West Africa* (1937, Philadelphia: The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1938),

Baked Bananas Recipe

**Ingredients:**
6 Bananas, 3 tablespoons of butter, 2 tablespoons of soft sugar, 1 cup pitted cherries, 1 tablespoon of lemon juice

**Cooking Instructions:**
Peel bananas and halve lengthwise, arrange in a shallow baking dish. Sprinkle with lemon juice and sugar. Cover with cherries, dot with pats of butter. Bake in a hot oven, basting occasionally with cherry syrup until bananas are soft. Serve with cream. Enough for six persons.

**Above:** Baked bananas, prepared according to the Frances Hall recipe. Photograph by Kris Forrest.
Henry Hall thanks “…my wife, who, by patiently ministering to the needs of the many sick and maimed whom we encountered everywhere in the bush, did so much to inspire a general feeling of trustfulness and of willingness on the part of the natives to cooperate in the work of the Expedition.”

Frances kept a diary during the trip. In addition to a number of interesting observations, she also collected four recipes, two of which are reproduced here. The recipe for Baked Bananas has been prepared by one of the Penn Museum’s own staff, Kris Forrest, Finance Manager. 

—Alessandro Pezzati, Senior Archivist

### Banana Fritters Recipe

**Ingredients:**
4 Bananas, 1 egg, 2 tablespoons flour, 4 oz. sugar

**Cooking Instructions:**
Peel and mash bananas, beat the eggs, add in the beaten egg, sugar [and flour]. Heat the pan and put in about 2 tablespoonfuls of the batter at a time; fry until a nice brown, and then sprinkle sugar over. Serve hot.