THE PEABODY RENOVATES!

The Hall of the American Indian and second floor are cleared for renovation. Photos: Hillel Burger.
The Peabody Renovates
First major reconstruction in 117 years addresses collections needs
C.C. LAMBERG-KARLOVSKY

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A frequent contributor to archaeological journals he has written numerous articles on aspects of Near Eastern archaeology. Professor Lamberg-Karlovsky has edited and/or written a number of monographs and books including most recently Ancient Civilizations: The Near East and Mesoamerica (with Jeremy A. Sabloff), Benjamin/Cummings Press (1979), and Hunters, Farmers, and Civilization, (ed.) W.H. Freeman (1979).

In 1977 when I assumed the Directorship of the Peabody Museum, I set as my primary objective the storage, in an adequate, modern facility, of the vast collections of this Museum. This goal had already been singled out as an essential need of the Museum by my predecessor, Professor Stephen Williams. He had, in fact, brought to completion (on the design board) a wide-ranging program for renovating the Peabody. His Directorship saw the construction of the Tozer Library, which is surely one of the most comfortable and efficient libraries in the University, a building worthy of housing the world's largest anthropological library. His tenure as Director concluded before the enormous task of rehousing the collections was begun. The current undertaking has required a wholly new formulation from that of earlier designs. The decision to focus on the problem of storage of the collections was necessary for several reasons. First, during the past decade an increase in both the Faculty of the Department of Anthropology residing in the Museum and the research staff of the Museum resulted in the closing of a number of exhibit galleries and storage areas to accommodate office and research needs. This placed great pressure on the already overcrowded storage facilities, jeopardizing not only the accessibility of the artifacts for study, but their preservation as well. Second, the museum entirely lacked adequate temperature, security, fire and humidity control. All of these factors had been shown in recent years that ethnographic collections deteriorate at a rapidly increasing rate because of inadequate environmental conditions brought about by pollutants in the air (sulfur for example).

I received from Harvard President Derek Bok (in 1977) permission to explore the feasibility of totally modernizing the storage and security systems of the Museum. It soon became apparent that such an undertaking would be a very costly one. In order to partially subsidize this project, the Peabody Faculty (the governing board of the Museum chaired by President Bok) unanimously agreed to sell a number of paintings in the Peabody Museum collections. The decision of a museum to sell an item from its collections (in the museum world, this is referred to as "deaccessioning") is a very serious decision and one that is never taken lightly. After months of cautious deliberation, it was unanimously decided to sell a collection of American Indian paintings done by nineteenth century portraitist Henry Inman. (These paintings are copies of a famous group of portraits of Indians by Charles Bird King, which were on exhibit at the Smithsonian for many years. The original Kings were destroyed when the Smithsonian's gallery of American Indians burned down in 1865.) The Peabody lacked adequate exhibit space for the collection of 106 Inman portraits. In fact, many had never been exhibited, and they were all in very serious need of conservation. It was deemed appropriate to sell this collection if certain stipulations could be met. A most important one was an assurance that the paintings be acquired by a public institution that would display and conserve them. Additionally, the sale had to conform to the rigorous stipulations set forth in the "Policy Statement for the Acquisition and Deaccessioning of Museum Collections" adopted by the President and Fellows of Harvard University in 1979 and published in the Harvard University Gazette (2/16/79) and the Peabody Museum/Department of Anthropology Newsletter, (Winter 1979).

The collection of Inman portraits was consigned for sale to the galleries of Hirschl and Adler in New York City. In addition, a number of items were sold to the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa. The latter (watercolors, oils, and drawings) directly pertained to the history of Canada and were considered by Canadians to be part of their National Trust. They were acquired by the Canadian government in 1980/81. As difficult as it was to make the decision to sell these items, it was deemed more appropriate to have them acquired by concerned public institutions able to care and exhibit them to the public than to keep them at the Peabody Museum, which was unable to do so. Monies from their sale, together with funds from the Harvard Capital Campaign, would allow us to undertake the much-needed renovation program that would assure the accessibility, preservation, and security of the entirety of the Peabody Museum's archaeological and ethnographic collections.

The Peabody Museum today maintains a complete photographic record of all items placed in the National Archives of Canada and at the galleries of Hirschl and Adler. The quality of the photographs is fully adequate for the purposes of anthropological teaching and research. Such could not be said about photographs of three-dimensional objects that characterize our ethnological and archaeological objects; the deaccessioning of any of these objects would most assuredly not be in the best interest of this museum for it would jeopardize the very research strength of which the institution is rightfully proud.

The Peabody Museum has necessarily had to compete with other Harvard facilities and institutions for financial support. University resources are finite, and the demands upon them are almost infinite. Efforts to establish excellence are indeed very expensive, and we are not alone in the University in our efforts to establish such a standard. One cannot deny that museums are expensive to maintain. It seems more absurd to deny that their expense exceeds their value, particularly in a University environment. The presence of the Peabody collections has enhanced the training of generations of anthropologists who have graduated from this University. The archaeological and biological anthropology collections in the Peabody Museum remain greatly utilized. One must admit, however, that in the past two to three decades ethnographic collections have been less utilized for scholarly research, yet there can be little doubt of a resur-
Hall of the American Indian before renovation (top). The second floor is exposed as work begins. Only a portion of the first floor gallery will remain two stories high after project is completed.
gence in recent years of an interest in material culture by social anthropologists. Universities have been slow to recognize the extraordinary contribution made by the presence of museums in their environment. Museums provide, to their various scholarly departments, the analogous strength that libraries provide to academic disciplines. Arguments involving the extent of the use of museum collections are as spurious as arguments involving the degree to which books circulate on loan from a library. A great library or museum is not to be judged by the extent of its use but by the fact that its collections have the established breadth, the mere presence of the item, to serve scholars in their research goals. The Peabody collections are a unique resource. At a time of fiscal stringency one must responsibly set a priority of goals. In the past, the Peabody Museum has directed its energy toward the primacy of teaching and research. It will continue to do so in the future. It remains, today, true to the original objective of its founder, that of being a research institution. A vibrant institution, responsive to its anthropological discipline, must continually examine its direction and purpose. Teaching and research must necessarily be at the very heart of the Peabody Museum’s concerns. Its anthropological collections, ethnographic, archaeological, and biological, are at the very center of this museum’s research involvement.

And so we come full circle to the very volatile issue of selling some paintings to partially finance the renovation program. I suggested this approach, which was eventually to win the unanimous support of the governing board of the Peabody Museum. Without the proceeds derived from this sale the renovation of the Peabody, whose facilities were neglected for decades, was simply reckoned to be beyond the ability of the University to support. The fact is, Harvard is financially hard pressed to maintain the excellence to which it strives despite its fabled endowment. Painful alternatives, after the establishment of priorities, are at times essential ingredients of sustaining a measure of excellence. If the Peabody was to sustain, or perhaps reestablish, its position of leadership in teaching and research it was absolutely essential to undertake this renovation project. Cramped quarters, inaccessibility to collections, inadequate collections management and security control, as well as the deterioration of collections demanded such a renovation. The paintings by Henry Inman, as well as the items sold to Canada, were, in our estimation, simply not items absolutely central to the archaeological and ethnological collections of the Peabody Museum, nor, in fact, to its research or teaching interests. Placing these paintings in responsible museums that would exhibit and care for them seemed more appropriate than allowing them to remain hidden away in the storage facilities of the Peabody in a state of continuing deterioration. This fact, in conjunction with the determination that fine arts paintings do not, and have not, in their original format served either the teaching or research function of the Peabody Museum, motivated us to sell these paintings and utilize the proceeds to bolster the very charge of the Peabody Museum: anthropological research and teaching.

It must be pointed out that Harvard has admirably assisted the Peabody over the past half-decade by upgrading our research and teaching facilities. The University not only subsidizes the entirety of our considerable energy and building maintenance costs but has, with the support of Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Henry Rosovsky, fully renovated substantial areas of the Museum for research in biological anthropology and archaeology (Center for Archaeological Research and Development).

In 1980 we held a competition among architectural firms for the contract involving the Peabody renovation project. After months of discussion, four firms were invited to provide presentations. Finally, the firm of Crissman and Solomon, located in Cambridge, Mass., was selected. During the past two years Larry Bauer of Crissman and Solomon has served as architect in charge of this project. At the Peabody, a Building Committee was appointed and charged with the task of outlining the scope, needs, and priorities for the development of the renovation. The committee consisted of Larry Bauer (architect), Professors David Maybury-Lewis, K.C. Chang (Chairman, Department of Anthropology), and Stephen Williams, Mr. George Oommen (Project Manager, Vice-President’s Office for Development), Mr. George Homsy, Ms. Sally Bond (Administrator of Collections), Ms. Linda Merk (Conservator), Dean Frank Lawton (Faculty of Arts and Sciences), Dr. Garth Bawden (Assistant Director of the Peabody Museum), and myself as Chairman. This committee, in frequent consultation with other members of the Anthropology Department and Museum staff, held primary responsibility for the development of the entire project. The Committee met frequently during the course of the year 1980/81 and brought to completion this extraordinarily difficult task in the spring of 1982. Outlined below is the manner in which we tackled the development of this program and the splendid results that I believe we have seen to date.

The Peabody Annex

From the very first, we faced the insurmountable problem of placing a modern storage facility within the Peabody, a space already too small to house the collections. How were we to design a new facility in this limited space and avoid the very reasons for our undertaking the project: overcrowding, inadequate collections management, and poor security? The problem was resolved for us by Assistant Dean Frank Lawton, who is, in part, responsible for the management and development of the facilities of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Dean Lawton suggested we take over a part of the CEA (Cambridge Electron

Graduate students and staff establish squatters’ rights for available space in this “closed exhibition storage” area on the second floor.
Accelerator) building. This building, which is approximately a block from the Peabody Museum, was vacated years ago by Harvard atomic physicists. It has been utilized in recent years for the storage of outdated instrumentation and unused University furniture. The portion of the building assigned to us consisted of an open space with a floor surface of approximately 6,000 square feet. Within this area it was possible to build a permanent structure, which would provide a very considerable area for our storage needs. Through the good services of Dean Lawton, an agreement was reached with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the building became the Peabody Annex. The architects designed a three-story steel superstructure to be constructed within this space. This facility, custom-built by Republic Steel, has more than 10,000 slots for our standard-sized museum trays (18" x 27") and hundreds of square feet of open shelving.

Today, the Peabody Annex, housing approximately twenty percent of the collections of the Peabody Museum, is entirely devoted to the storage of archaeological collections. It is, I believe, an extraordinarily successful facility, and despite limited growth potential it has more than adequate study-research space for the analysis of the archaeological collections. The archaeological collections in the Peabody were previously scattered throughout six floors of the building. Locating their whereabouts, estimating their volume, differentiating between storage needs for complete pots versus sherds and flint, and seeing to it that their storage in the Annex was sensibly done, fell to Ms. Sally Bond, Administrator of Collections, and her staff. This was an incredibly complex problem requiring thoughtful and constant control. Ms. Bond assisted by Ms. Victoria Harding and Ms. Melissa Banta monitored the project on the newly acquired computer at the Peabody. The collections (10,000 trays of sherds and flints and 10,000 whole pots) were moved to the Annex by Fine Arts Movers (of Wellesley), whose concern is evident by the fact that not a single object was damaged. Once again, the move itself was supervised by Ms. Bond and her staff, who reduced this complex and difficult task to an efficient and remarkably successful undertaking.

Today it is possible to go to the Peabody Annex and see in a single place the rich archaeological collections of the Museum. One can scan the open shelves and see hundreds of complete pots from Egypt, Peru, the American Southwest, and elsewhere; or systematically review the more fragmentary archaeological remains placed in trays. The Annex was completed in September and has already enriched the teaching of archaeology by providing access to the collections for both study and research.

Following the removal of the majority of the archaeological collections from the Museum to the Annex, we were in a position to begin the renovation of the Museum itself. The renovation, although affecting every one of the six floors and the basement, impacts most significantly upon the basement, second, fourth, and sixth floors.

The Peabody Museum

If the task of moving the archaeological collections to the Annex was a considerable challenge, it provided only an introduction and warm-up for what was ahead: the packing and storing of the rest of the collections of the Museum, save for objects exhibited in a few public galleries. The task was made more difficult given the nature of the collections to be stored, from fragile Hawaiian feathers, pigmented New Guinea shields, beaded American Indian clothing, to large totem poles and Maya stelae. The materials were packed and stored in what used to be the public galleries of the Museum with only a single incident: in the winching of a large plaster cast of a Maya stela, a rope gave way, causing
Wood and steel storage units specially designed for the Peabody Museum by the architectural firm of Crissman and Solomon, Inc., of Cambridge, Massachusetts.
the stela to fall and crack. A most unfortunate accident; it is reparable. Given
the enormity of the scope of this undertaking, it is to the great credit of the
Museum staff that the single accident that did occur fell outside of their
responsibility. Few museums have undertaken a project of this size, affect-
ing the entirety of their collections; I am certain that none has a more devoted
and competent staff. By the early fall of this year the collections of the Museum
were packed and stored within areas of the museum not affected by the renova-
tion project. Only one public gallery, "The Andean Heritage" on the first
floor, is open; for all practical purposes the rest of the Museum is closed, and
the staff has turned its attention to the renovation project. Our project manag-
er, Mr. George Oommen together with Mr. George Homsy have been both
admirable and adamant in keeping a watchful eye on quality control, budget,
and schedule. We have been informed that the project should be completed
within an eighteen-month-period, beginning this past September.
Renovating the Peabody Museum involves four distinct steps, of which we
have accomplished the first two: (1) packing all of the museum collections
that were in storage as well as those from several exhibition halls, (2) moving
them to temporary storage areas within the museum or to the Annex, (3) fully
renovating large areas within the museum (presently in progress), and (4)
unpacking and restoring the collections in the new facilities.
We were first faced with having to
assess the collections in terms of size, as
well as specific nature. For example, we
had to measure the overall space
requirements for the storage of our Afri-
can collections and make accurate pro-
jections for the amount of space needed
for African masks as opposed to African
metals or textiles. This had to be done
for each geographical area and for the
different varieties and types of materials
within each area. The success of rehous-
ing the collections in an adequate facility
depended in no small part upon the
accuracy of these projections: including
linear and volumetric requirement, and
environmental conditions.
After determining the extent, nature,
and needs of our collections, we used
the computer to assist us in projecting
our storage needs. (In 1981 the Peabody
purchased its own computer system,
an Onyx C8000, which serves today as
an invaluable tool, not only for this pro-
gram but for our Photographic Archives
Project, Publications Program, Institute
for Conservation Archaeology, and indi-
vidual researchers within the Museum.)
The success in estimating space needs
has yet to be tested. That can only be
done when it comes to unpacking the
collections and placing them in the new
storage facility. The procedure used,
however, was effectively the same as that for the move of the archaeological collections into the Peabody Annex. It can only be hoped that the final disposition of the Peabody collections will meet with the same success as has the Annex. I shall now briefly describe the scope of the project and the impact it will have on the Museum.

Conservation Laboratories
The sixth floor of the Peabody was, prior to this renovation program, referred to as “the Attic.” Though never intended for this purpose, it had become one of the major storage areas of the Museum. It was also an acknowledged disgrace. Poorly lit and grossly overcrowded, the Attic reached temperatures in the nineties and above in summer and in the forties or below in winter. The entire attic has now been gutted, is being fully renovated, and will be a thoroughly habitable and functional sixth floor, housing conservation laboratories and an ethnographic storage facility with full temperature and humidity controls. Those collections whose preservation needs require the most controlled environment and security will be stored on this floor. Additionally, a special room will be constructed in the Museum for high-security storage. A new double elevator is being installed to provide staff and visitors with ready access to the seven floors (including the basement) of the Museum.

In 1980/81 the Peabody received two generous gifts from benefactors to establish a new conservation laboratory and to purchase badly needed instrumentation. The support of Dr. Doris Stone and Mr. Vasco McCoy has made possible these new conservation laboratories. The laboratories will greatly increase our ability to handle the conservation needs of the collections. This new facility admirably meets the needs of a professional conservation staff dedicated to developing and maintaining an active program of ethnographic and archaeological conservation science. The long overdue professionalization of the conservation staff and facilities is becoming a reality at the Peabody.

Compactor Storage
The conservation laboratory was previously located in the basement of the Museum. Today, the majority of the basement area, like the old attics, has been totally gutted. The basement will, in its renovated areas, be used for compactor storage. This compactor storage system will consist of totally accessible custom-designed cabinets on moveable tracks. This system will provide two-thirds more storage capacity than our present stationary “system.” Stationary row-shelving necessitates sufficient space for passage of an individual plus the distance of an extended tray the object sought being at the back of said trays.

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Perishable artifacts, such as American Indian baskets, endured extreme temperatures in the Attic.

Renovated storage areas will have modern fire detection and control systems.

Construction well underway on the sixth floor will result in new conservation laboratories and temperature and humidity controlled storage areas.

tray — always) for a total of about six feet — of wasted storage space! We have ordered one million dollars' worth of these custom cabinets for the basement and the second floor storage area. This compactor facility is being built by Drummex, Inc., of Montreal, Canada. Compactor storage systems have been adopted by only a limited number of museums and libraries. In planning for the adoption of this system, we benefited greatly from the experience of these other institutions (especially the Field Museum in Chicago) and from consultants familiar with their use. The compactor storage facility in the Peabody will house approximately thirty-five percent of the entire collections of the Museum. This type of facility assures greater accessibility to the collections and enhances both their security and preservation. The Peabody will be at the forefront of museums in respect to the storage and care of its collections.

The Second and Fourth Floors

Major renovation of storage areas will involve approximately 8,280 square feet on the second and fourth floors. These areas are ones in which ethnographic collections were stored in exhibit cases that formed part of the public galleries until the mid 1950s, at which time they were closed to the public. At best, one could call this storage system "closed exhibition storage," one in which graduate students and staff established squatters' rights between exhibit cases for available work space. Part of the second floor will house additional compactor storage, while the remainder of the second and entirety of the fourth will be for both open shelves and tray storage. Throughout all floors of the museum we are installing a new security system and smoke detectors, and are substantially upgrading our present fire prevention system.

Needless to say we have not been able to fulfill all of our needs or even our expectations. We had hoped, for instance, to install a greater number of compactors, place more of the Museum under temperature control system, i.e., exhibit areas, and renovate more space for student and staff research. Unfortunately, our budget does not permit us to resolve with a single effort all of our problems. It has however, allowed us to transform the Museum in a most significant and beneficial manner. Indeed, it is the largest and most important undertaking for the care and maintenance of the collections since the construction of the Peabody Museum 117 year ago. In our planning no decisions were made that will preclude the possibility for further improvement of the Museum's temperature, security, and fire control systems, or its storage or research space in the areas of the Museum untouched by this project.

With the completion of the renovation
Letters on this plan of the fourth and sixth floors refer to drawings on pages 6 and 7.

Storage facilities will be installed on the fourth floor, seen here above the third floor gallery area. This gallery will no longer be two stories high (see contraction of flooring in photo page 12).

we are assured of a more accessible, secure, and preserved anthropological collection. Exhibition, however, is an important element within any museum, and one not adequately addressed in this renovation project. I felt that it was far more important to first secure the preservation of the collections before addressing the need for adequate exhibition. Perhaps, it will be through the next Director's initiative that justice will be done to the collections through their proper exhibition. I am pleased to write, however, that exhibition has not been entirely outside of our own concerns.

The largest gallery in the museum is the Hall of the American Indian. This hall has been dismantled, and the collections have been placed in storage while pillars are being driven up from the basement to add structural support for the second floor. When this has been completed, a new exhibition in this gallery will feature the North American Indian and pre-Columbian cultures. This major undertaking has been made possible by a munificent gift from Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Heafitz. In time, permanent installations should feature the other strengths in the Peabody collections: Africa, Oceania, Stone-Age archaeology, Peruvian textiles, European archaeology, and the
Northwest Coast ethnographic collections, to name but a few of our more significant collections.

The Peabody Museum renovation program has been three years in the planning and will take the next year and a half to complete. It has been at times trying, frustrating, and even disheartening to both our own staff and the visiting public. It has not been easy to explain to a visitor who has traveled hundreds (or thousands) of miles to see a collection that it is inaccessible, packed out of reach for the next two years. It is disturbing to have to tell scholars who request access to study particular collections or objects that they cannot be accommodated, or to inform colleagues from other museums that we are unable to service their requests for loans. The project has on occasion adversely affected the day-to-day operations of the Museum and Anthropology department. The Peabody Museum is an old building and lacks blueprints and records of its initial construction. As a result, construction workers have inadvertently cut telephone and electrical wires, upsetting daily procedure. Lecturers in the museum have competed for attention with the crashing sounds of falling walls and jack-hammers. Throughout all of this I have been exceedingly grateful for the understanding and patience shown by all members of the Department of Anthropology and staff of the Museum. Mr. George Oommen and Mr. George Homsy have provided splendid advice and guidance in implementing the architectural plans. Larry Bauer of Crissman and Solomon, Inc., the principal architect, has carried out this complex project with sensitivity and understanding. His involvement, and that of his staff, assures a high degree of success in this difficult task — the renovation of the oldest anthropological museum in this hemisphere.

The Assistant Director at the Peabody, Dr. Garth Bawden, has been indefatigable throughout this project. Much of the day-to-day administration has been in his hands. Always informed, fully committed to the Museum, he has been an invaluable associate.

Last, it is highly unlikely that this project would have reached this point had it not been for the personal commitment and involvement of the President of Harvard University, Mr. Derek Bok, and the members of the Peabody Museum Visiting Committee, under the leadership of its Chairman, Mr. Vasco McCoy, and Vice Chairman, Dr. Douglas Schwartz. During the past five years the Visiting Committee has provided not only strong support but a leadership role in informing the University of the real needs of the Peabody Museum. President Bok, convinced early on of the needs of the Peabody Museum, told me shortly after I assumed the Directorship that I should not rest easy until I could take him on a walking tour through a renovated museum and with conviction inform him that the collections were accessible, secure, and within an environment that assures their preservation. The time for that walking tour is not far off! To all who have participated and who have helped make this possible I am most sincerely grateful. In the end we are all the benefactors of this project for its results assures us and those who will follow, of our concern for the proper maintenance and preservation of one of the foremost collections of anthropological and archaeological material in the world.

C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Director of the Peabody Museum (right) being assured, once again, by Project Manager Mr. George Oommen, that the Museum will be put back into functioning order.

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