



MUSEUM FRIDAY FEATURE

John Pickard and Flinders Petrie

by Benton Kidd, Curator of Ancient Art

Devoted patrons of the Museum of Art and Archaeology are aware of its founding by Saul and Gladys Weinberg, who established the Museum in 1957. But foundations for today's Museum were laid more than 125 years ago with the arrival of John Pickard, who joined the archaeology and classics faculty at Mizzou in 1893. Almost immediately, Pickard began to express his interest in establishing an art museum. In a letter to President Richard Jesse, dated January 1, 1895, Pickard requested \$10,000 for the purchase of plaster casts, photographs, and furniture. Pickard's request was apparently granted, and a museum space seems to have been established that same year, as a Mizzou catalog (dated 1894–1895) documents in a description of the newly-opened Academic Hall (now Jesse Hall). Pickard was soon off to Europe to begin his first shopping trip for plaster casts; another would follow in 1902.

Prior to his arrival in Missouri, 34-year old John Pickard was completing his doctorate at the University of Munich. His dissertation, on theaters of the Classical period, had taken him to Greece for research; he had also excavated at Eretria in 1891. With his PhD behind him, Pickard again traveled to Greece. On this trip, he must have been delighted to learn that Egyptologist Flinders Petrie was staying at the same Athenian pension. The pair struck up a friendship, toured Greece, and continued on to Italy.

Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie is one of the luminaries of early archaeology. It would be beyond the scope of this feature to detail all his accomplishments, but his meticulous approach—cataloguing every potsherd, every bead, every bit of metal, every scrap of anything, to establish chronology—would revolutionize archaeological methodology. No one prior matched his precision. His mapping and measuring of the Giza plateau



Possibly by John Sites Ankeney (American, 1870–1946)
Portrait of John Pickard, ca. 1900–1925
Oil on canvas
Transfer from old collection (X171)



“Museum of Classical Archaeology and the History of Art” as displayed in Academic (Jesse) Hall, 1896.

(Continued on page two)

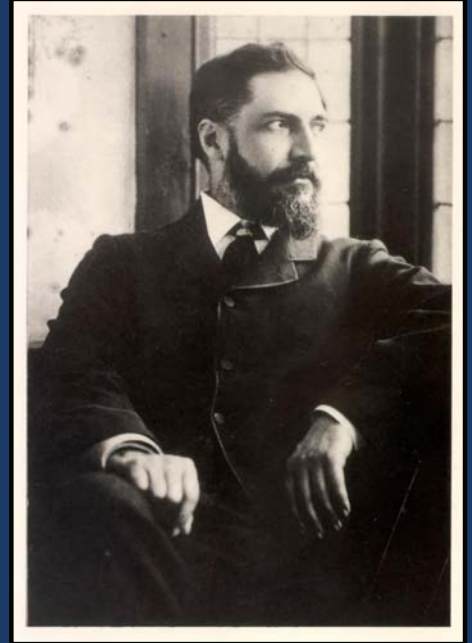


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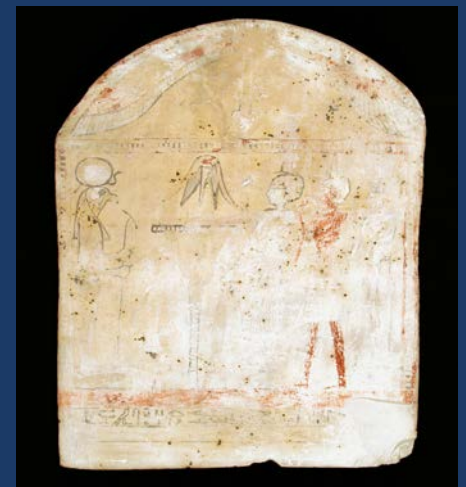
was unprecedented, and that exhaustive study resulted in a pivotal publication on the pyramids and associated structures. Colorful and eccentric, Petrie lived in a tomb on the site for two years while he carried out his research. He allegedly worked naked in the sweltering pyramid interiors and, when tourists arrived, he wore pink to keep them at bay, “as the creature [probably] seemed too queer for inspection.” After Giza, he went on to work at Amarna, Fayum, and Luxor, among other sites. His initial work in Palestine began in 1890, but he was there permanently by the 1920s, living in Jerusalem until his death in 1942. Upon his death, it was his wish that his head be preserved for study in the Royal College of Surgeons of England. The head remains there today (not displayed!).

Over the course of his lifetime, Petrie amassed an extensive personal collection of antiquities, most of which are housed today in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, part of the University College of London. Reputedly generous with friends and colleagues, he also gifted antiquities to many, including John Pickard, who received four Egyptian artefacts, which remain in the Museum’s collection. Collecting antiquities from excavations would hardly be ethical behavior for an archaeologist today, but much has changed in 125 years. Another facet of Petrie’s life that is rarely mentioned is his support of eugenics. As early as 1883, Petrie was acquainted with eugenicists Francis Galton and Karl Pearson. During more than fifty excavation seasons in Egypt, Petrie sent thousands of skulls, bones, and even full skeletons to Galton and Pearson for racial studies at the University College London Anthropometric Laboratory. These studies led Petrie to conclude that a “Caucasoid race,” perhaps from Mesopotamia, had invaded Egypt, conquered the locals, and introduced the dynastic system.* Kathleen Sheppard (Missouri S&T), who has studied Petrie, points out that three of his publications, seldom noted, had eugenic purposes: *Racial Photographs of the Egyptian Monuments* (1887), *Janus in Modern Life* (1907), and *Revolutions of Civilisation* (1911). Sheppard notes that Petrie believed he could promote eugenics in modern society by justifying it with his historical evidence. In *Janus*, he even espoused forced sterilization of the “worst stocks” of women. We cannot deny Petrie’s contribution to archaeology but we might also conclude that Petrie’s biographers are far too apologetic regarding his involvement in eugenics, and that he was much more than a marginal figure in the movement.

(Continued on page three)



Flinders Petrie, ca. 1895.
Public domain photograph

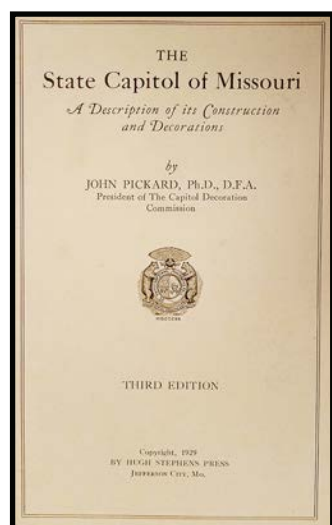


Stele with Isis and a Man and Woman before Horus
Egyptian, Ptolemaic, ca. 332–150 BCE
Painted limestone
Gift of Sir Flinders Petrie (X1)



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John Pickard went on to have a 36-year career at Mizzou. His students, including John Ankeney (who may be the artist of his portrait), remembered him as tall and stately, with a large, handlebar moustache, and a resonant voice, strongly accented by New England roots. In addition to teaching, Pickard was instrumental in the formation of the College Arts Association, for which he served a term as president. Two additional noteworthy projects involving Pickard are the construction of the Missouri State Capitol Building in Jefferson City and the Memorial Tower on the Mizzou Campus.

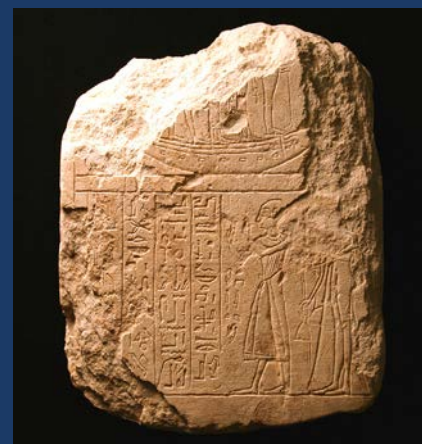


Title page of Pickard's Capitol guidebook.

On a mild evening in February 1911, a thunderstorm rolled through Jefferson City and delivered a lightning strike to the dome of the existing Capitol, destroying it by fire. Plans for a new building were immediately undertaken, and Pickard would become the president of the Capitol Decoration Commission, which operated for eleven years. The opulent campaign of decoration, which included painting, sculpture, and decorative metalwork, was one of the most ambitious undertaken for any such building. The final bill, of ca. \$250,000, was a staggering sum for the early twentieth century. After the building's opening in 1917, Pickard wrote

an exhaustive 125-page "illustrative and descriptive guidebook," detailing all aspects of the decoration. It was during these years that Pickard was given the moniker "Missouri's Apostle of the Beautiful." In his later years at Mizzou, Pickard introduced the idea for a monument to Mizzou students who had died in WWI. The Gothic Revival "Memorial Tower" (today Memorial Union) would be dedicated in 1926. Three years later, John Pickard retired at age 70. An elegant retirement dinner was held in his honor, and one student recalled that it was "a very elaborate affair" with a menu entirely in French. Pickard died in 1937 at age 79. He had no known ties to eugenics, though an American eugenics movement is known to have existed at least by 1904. Pickard Hall on Francis Quadrangle, the Museum's former home, is still slated for demolition. ■

*What came to be called "dynastic race theory" gradually lost currency but a fringe movement has attempted to revive it more recently.



Stele with a Sacred Bark, a Worshiper, and His Wife

Egyptian, 19th–20th Dynasty,
ca. 1295–1069 BCE
Painted limestone
Gift of Sir Flinders Petrie (X2)



Stele with Winged Sun Disk, Dedicatory Inscription, and Two Worshipers before Ra-Harakhty

Egyptian, 20th–25th Dynasty, ca. 1186–664/650 BCE
Possibly from Memphis
Limestone
Gift of Sir Flinders Petrie (X3)



Head of an Official from a Block Figure

Egyptian, 18th Dynasty, ca. 1300 BCE
Limestone
Gift of Sir Flinders Petrie (X4)