Vikings led by Thorfinn Karlsefni started an American colony (the first European born in America was not the English girl Virginia Dare, born in 1588, but the Norse boy Snorri Thorfinnson, born in 1099), but because of trouble with the natives, primitive Indians and/or Eskimos, they soon abandoned that colony. During the next few hundred years there was little recorded traffic with Vinland. The great Viking push to the west...
BOOK REVIEW

Naked Ape’s Titillating Title Inaccurate

The Naked Ape: Desmond Morris McGraw-Hill 1967. 252 pp. $5.95

by John Napier

What’s in a title? A great deal if it happens to be “The Naked Ape”—a splendid, provocative title that could only be improved upon according to the traditional tenets of journalism by substitution of the word “made” for “naked”. Salaciously redolent of jungle life, it is suggestive of the beast in man and late-night horror movies, “The Naked Ape” must be the all-time Title of the Year. Unfortunately, however, as a title, it is wholly inadequate in every particular, standing with “The”.

Desmond Morris draws all his human comparisons from the “typical behavior of the typical naked ape” (my italics) by which he means “ordinary (sic), successful (sic) members of major cultures”. He excludes primitive tribal groups from consideration on the grounds that they are not primitive but live in cultural backwaters, his belief being that primitive tribes are based largely on civilized Western myth and apocrypha. All interested staff members for Smithsonian programs aimed at instructors will be delighted to receive prompt information from staff members about these programs. A program is now under way in cooperation with the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan area to develop and make available courses in anthropology and archaeology. bestimmation of advanced study and research available to American and foreign scholars. The fellowship consists of advanced study and research for one full academic year, with full pay, tuition, and traveling expenses for the recipient and family. No more than two such awards will be made each year.

Bioarchaeologist

Karl Panoske Schmidt was one of America’s most influential naturalists. In special field of herpetology, he made many fascinating discoveries about the habits of snakes and their environment. A. Gilbert Wright, assistant chief of the Smithsonian Office of Exhibits, has written a biography of Dr. Schmidt, just released by M. Evans and Company, Inc. Titled In the Steps of the Great American Herpetologist, this 123-page handbook follows Dr. Schmidt’s early life from his boyhood in Lake Forest, Illinois, through his college days, and his participation in geological expeditions, his first job as a herpetologist at the American Museum of Natural History, and his later expeditions which took him all over the world. He wrote: “Michael M. George, biologi­ list, Gil Wright was a friend of Dr. Schmidt for more than 20 years.

Frere Chinese Bronzes

The first of a three-volume catalogue, which has been described as a “monu­ mental work,” Chinese Bronzes will be published sometime next month by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The volumes are being written by John A. Pope, director of the Frer Gallery of Art; Ruther­ ford J. Gettens, head curator of the Frer; Noel Barnard, National University of Australia; and James Cahill, formerly with the Frer, now at the University of California. Chinese bronzes, along with Chinese paintings and ceramics, form especially strong parts of the Frer collection. In all, the gallery possesses more than 350 bronzes.

March Lunchbox Speakers Listed


Howland Lecture

Dr. Richard H. Howland, newly named Special Assistant to the Secretary and forum Chairman for the America’s Bicentennial Commission’s “United States and Civil History, will speak to participants in the joint Bicentennial program on March 7 at noon. At the National Museum of Natural History, and his participation in geological expeditions, his first job as a herpetologist at the American Museum of Natural History, and his later expeditions which took him all over the world. He wrote: “Michael M. George, biologi­ list, Gil Wright was a friend of Dr. Schmidt for more than 20 years.

Nomismatic Forum

Smithsonian numismatists Elvies and Vladimir Chand-Stefanelli will participate in the Centennial Numismatic Forum, which will be held on March 23. Speakers at the forum will be Albert and Ann, director of the Numismatic Forum to be held on March 23 at 10 a.m. in the Steel Hall of MHT. Designed for a broad range of numismatic interests, this event will feature a wide array of exhibits and guest speakers, including Mendel Peterson, chairman of MHT’s Department of Armed Forces History. SI employees are invited to attend the sessions.

Dunke Deports

David H. Dunke, since 1945 the assis­ tant chief of MHT’s Division of Vertebrae Paleontology, has accepted an appointment as curator of the Department of Paleontology at the Natural Science Museum in Cleveland, Ohio. He will be responsible for developing and the Museum’s re­newed collection of more than 15,000 specimens of fossil fish.

Snakes Alive!

Arthur M. Greenhull, research asso­ ciate in the Division of Mammals, is never sure what the mail will bring. Son Don Greenhull is a medical student at the University of Oregon who sent his father three corn snakes for research. But the corn snakes were taken back at the latest gift from Viet­ nam—a five-foot python. Warty postal workers also sent Don Greenhull a eis Greenhull's Stairtartarium, but Greenhull has told me of someone at the Zoo who will be very happy to get a call from me”, he said.

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Blitzer, Ritterbush Named

(continued from page 1.)

The Commonwealth of England, and Age of Kings.

PHILIP C. RITTERBUSH

Mr. Ritterbush, 31, appointed special assistant to the Director, has recently served as legislative assistant to U.S. Senator Thomas J. McIntyre (D-N.H.) as Assistant Director of Academic Programs, Mr. Ritterbush will assume responsibility for Smithsonian programs aimed at instructing the Institution’s collections and facilities for study and research available to students and other qualified investigators from universities and other educational institutions.

Under these programs the Smithsonian maintains scientific agreements with universities throughout the United States and abroad, and offers visiting research fellowships for study and research available to American and foreign scholars. The fellowship consists of advanced study and research for one full academic year, with full pay, tuition, and traveling expenses for the recipient and family. No more than two such awards will be made each year.

Local Academic Affairs Office Set

The Institution has established a spe­ cial office for local academic affairs, to cooperate with the Consortium of Uni­ versities of the Washington Metropolitan Area and help its member institutions cooperate with the American School of Classical Studies and a number of other universities and the city’s many research organizations.

Michael M. George, recently named Coordinator of Academic Affairs, will direct the new office, which hopes to make people aware of the vast resources of the Smithsonian and how they can be exploited for scholarly purposes.

As its initial project, the office is prepar­ ing to publish an academic bulletin and calendar of events, which will appear every two weeks. It will contain informa­

Ronald E. Orten, museum technician in MHN’s Division of Physical Anthropo­ logy, has been selected by Secretary Ripley as recipient of a Smithsonian In­ stitution Advanced Research Fellowship. He will use it to complete studies for a Ph.D. in physical anthropology at the University of Kansas. The fellowship consists of advanced study and research for one full academic year, with full pay, tuition, and traveling expenses for the recipient and family. No more than three such awards will be made each year.

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The Delean Gallery of the NPG features vaulted ceiling and sandstone columns. At the end of the corridor is the office of NPG director Charles Nagel.

Greatest Building in World’ Awaits Crowds

The Old Patent Office, called “the greatest building in the world” by architect Philip John­son, is one of Washington’s most historic structures.

It also is the home of the National Collection of Fine Arts and the National Portrait Gallery. The former will open its doors to the public the first week in May. NPG will follow in Sep­tember.

Actually, neither Smithsonian museum would be housed in the 128-year-old structure until 1958, when Congress passed a proposed bill in the 1950’s to tear down the building to make room for a parking lot!

That piece of proposed legislation caused such a stir that Congress transferred the building to the Smithsonian and appropriated $3-$465,000 for repairs and construction.

The imposing Greek Revival building was conceived at a time when the Nation’s Capital was little more than a swamp, when Pennsyl­vania Avenue was mud in winter, dust in sum­mer, and livestock ran through the streets.

The site selected for the building was a green common on the hill originally designated by Major Pierre L’Enfant for a great national cathedral.

Modeled after the Parthenon and designed primarily for use of the Patent Office and ex­hibit of patent models, the structure also was used for the government’s collection of science, history, and art.

It was, in effect, the first federal museum.

Photos by James Duggins

The Old Patent Office

After all these years and myriad occupants the Old Patent Office Building will, in form and function, again display evidence of Amer­ican creativity for the millions of persons who visit Washington and its historical and cultural attractions each year.

A spiral staircase leads to the old Model Hall.

The elegant third-floor foyer of the National Portrait Gallery, part of the 1880’s restoration area of the building.

Abraham Lin­coln’s second in­augural ball was held in this NCFA gallery, columned with shafts of solid marble discovered by restorers under layers of “gov­ernment green” paint.
Program Filling Brazil's 'Archaeology Gap'

Brazil occupies more than half the area of South America, until three centuries ago its prehistory was virtually unknown. Today, a beginning has been made toward filling that gap, through a cooperative effort of the Smithsonian and the government of Brazil.

The gap existed partly because there were no Brazilians with the necessary training in scientific archeology. A pilot program directed by MNH scientists Clifford Evans and Betty Mergers will, with the assistance of a nation with a nucleus of individuals trained and equipped to carry on their investigations independently.

The program began in 1964 with a one-month intensive seminar, under Fulbright, for a dozen Brazilians from all over Brazil. The program is designed to put archeology on a sound basis in Brazil, and to serve as a model for various kinds of research-training programs in other countries. The program is directed by MNH scientists and is being financed by the United States government.

(continued from page 1.)

Vinland Proposal

which flowed over Iceland, Greenland, part of France (Normandy—1011), and England (1066), petered out, and when Columbus "discovered" the New World, the once-stark colony in Greenland was dying or dead, and the "very attractive" land to the west was hardly a memory. So we count as real.

Nobody knows.

The sagas are so vivid that Vinland could have been almost anywhere on the north coast, and certainly in the vicinity of Greenland, literally everywhere between Canada and Greenland. On the other hand, the idea of probability seems to have narrowed—

a little. Consider these 612 conclusions.

1) The map was exhibited at the Smithsonian's Museum of History and Technology, and was the principal topic of a scholarly conference in 1966.

2) People involved in those happenings by 1400, have strong opinions, made it dead or alive, or in the Indian valley.

3) Bibliophiles found an old map, apparently derived from pre-Columbian sources, of Helluland, Markland and Vinland—a scholarly book about it, Vinland Map and Tartar Relation, published two days after Leif's Day and one day before Columbus' Day, 1965, stirred a most unscholarly uproar, and then the map was exhibited at the Smithsonian. It then was said to be "very attractive." Vinland was. But not one of them.

4) The map was exhibited at the Smithsonian's Museum of History and Technology, and was the principal topic of a scholarly conference in 1966.

5) People involved in those happenings by 1400, have strong opinions, made it dead or alive, or in the Indian valley.

6) The map was exhibited at the Smithsonian. It then was said to be "very attractive." Vinland was. But not one of them.

7) Poor old Vinland. Loster than The Lost Colony.

And the real hell of it is, it seems unlikely that anybody is going to find Vinland, to the satisfaction of everybody (anybody) else, for a long time. Maybe not. This great country seems doomed to rock along without a Viking site to match our Viking date, October 9, for 9 centuries. Or Odin only knows how many.

Ought we—can we—go on this way?

Therefore, we hereby make this Most Modest Proposal: the Smithsonian Institution will step into its responsibilities to the nation and the world, now step forward and find Vinland! A measure of the impact the program has been made possible by support from the Smithsonian Institution.

Throughout the program, Evans and Mergers' role has been an advisory one. The program's goals, says Dr. Mergers, are threefold—to get the necessary research begun, to strengthen archeology in Brazilian universities, and to provide some professional literature in Portuguese. The goal is to make the situation of archeology in Brazil a success story. The program is directed by MNH scientists and is being financed by the United States government.

Dr. Betty J. Mergers and Clifford Evans, MNH anthropologists, examine the pottery samples they have collected. The manual will be used in their training program for Brazilian archeologists.

Incoming Mail Has Always Brought Bizarre Requests

by Gayle Gordon

Throughout its history the Smithsonian Institution has received hundreds of requests for information, scientific papers, applications for employment and other materials concerning the day to day operation of the Institution. In each batch of incoming mail there have always been a few letters containing bizarre requests that test the ingenuity of the Registrar's Office, whose duty it is to direct the mail.

Today, they usually go either to the Office of Public Affairs, the Archives, or to the curatorial office directly concerned.

In the early years of the Institution, however, all mail went directly to the first Secretary, Joseph Henry, who painstakingly answered every question, however outrageous or ridiculous the letter. Later, as the Institution grew, the letters were directed to one man, designated by employees as "F.K." or the Fool Killer. Consults times he would reply to people who wrote, for instance:

"What would you pay for a Kalf, bored with no ire and not a 972? Now I have two biddies, 24 and 1" and I head its feet is real! I wish if you wish to buy it by what or what it was.

"I would make it an easy and pleasant duty, but there is no money in it."

The general answer to such offers was often times:

"We have, we have, to say, in reply, that the Institution has no appropriate objects for the purchase of monstrosities . . ."

Not all of the especially interesting letters from the early days are reprinted in this category of course. Employment applications, for instance, would not be deemed extravagant for me to say, though sometimes I may add, without egotism, that, for culture, refinement and urbanity of manners, I compare favorably with the best of men and society. My personal influence and friendship of the best class. The communications from my ministerial and church brethren and friends are too numerous to mention here. I will lay all my papers before you in a few days and have my friend see you in person . . . etc.

Unfortunately, the Institution's reply to this young man cannot be located. It is possible that the letters requesting or giving only information— but not the answer—survive.

"I am seeking data concerning the efficiency of man, regarding him as a heat engine. Note, in the first place, the heat involved by the combustion of fat, potatoes, flesh, milk, &c., 2. The total mechanical work, internal and external, performed in the usual manner, compare favorably with the best of men and society. My personal influence and friendship are too numerous to mention here. I will lay all my papers before you in a few days and have my friend see you in person . . . etc.

"What I put our great surplus information to the United States to the scientific test of the crucible and balance I cannot find it. Enclosed is a check for $50 on our great financial error. Too many millions of financial perpetual motion duties in the Treasury of the U.S. and elsewhere."

"When I put you to the test one hundred years later?"

Dr. Betty J. Mergers and Clifford Evans, MNH anthropologists, examine the pottery samples they have collected. The manual will be used in their training program for Brazilian archeologists.