

# THE SMITHSONIAN TORCH



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Secretary Ripley presented a certificate of fellowship making Dr. Hans Syz of Westport, Conn., an honorary fellow of the Smithsonian, in recognition of superior service to the Smithsonian for his contribution as a student and collector in the field of 18th-century European and Oriental porcelains. Dr. Syz's collection of rare 18th-century European porcelain is being presented to the Smithsonian and will be on display in the Ceramic Gallery scheduled to open this fall in MHT. Mrs. Syz is standing at the left.

## CATLIN'S INDIAN PAINTINGS EMERGE FROM STORAGE

"Catlin's Indian Gallery," consisting of more than 400 paintings, the largest collection of George Catlin's works in the world, is now displayed in the Art Hall, located on the first floor of the Smithsonian's Natural History Building.

Dr. David W. Scott, director of NCFA, which is sponsoring the exhibit, points out that a revival of interest in Catlin and the American Indian has brought these works out of storage, where the paintings have been freshly cleaned and renovated, to the Art Hall.

The original Catlin paintings were acquired by the Smithsonian in 1879 and first exhibited in 1883. Soon after the turn of the century, however, the majority of them were placed in the Smithsonian's Anthropological Collections from which the paintings are now on loan.

John C. Ewers, the Smithsonian's well-known ethnologist, has said: "George Catlin holds a unique position in American art. Convinced that the traditional cultures of the North American Indian would be destroyed by expanding white settlements, he dedicated the best years of his life to 'rescuing the Indian from oblivion.' No other artist of the early 19th century traveled so widely among so many Indian tribes, or painted so many Indian portraits or scenes of Indian life."

## BLACKSMITHS FOR SI TO BE MALE ONLY

Herbert R. Collins, assistant curator in the Division of Political History, MHT, has contributed the following article, which he found in the *Blacksmith and Wheelwright*, vol. 71-72, October 1915.

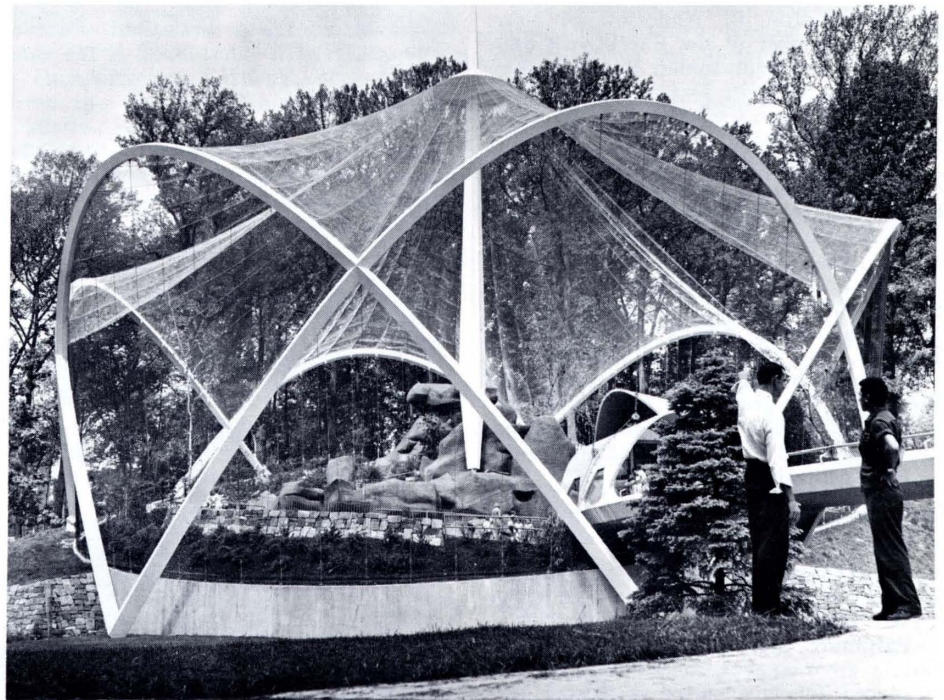
### NO LADY BLACKSMITHS WANTED.

The National Museum, at Washington, wants a blacksmith, and specifies that this blacksmith must be a male blacksmith. No woman blacksmiths, no matter how brawny, need apply. The National Museum wants that male blacksmith, and has announced it to the world through the medium of the United States Civil Service Commission, which will have to pass on the points of the candidates.

For fear that a whole slew of women blacksmiths will descend on the National Museum, the civil service announcement is headed in large, aggressive letters, "Blacksmith (Male)," and then goes on to say:

"The United States Civil Service Commission announces an open competitive examination for blacksmiths, for men only." Therefore, the dainty young blacksmithess who knows how to grab the off hind foot of a recalcitrant mule, slap it into place on a hoof that would sink a dreadnaught, need not apply for the museum job. Not that she wouldn't be entitled to a place in the museum—for she would—but they just don't want her over there.

It's a rank discrimination against the fairest and most tender of our budding young girl blacksmiths, but the hardened old scientists at the Government's big aggregation of George Washington's uniforms and pterodactylic bones don't want any female blacksmiths roughing up the iron to make it look red hot. Not a bit of it. They want a man.—Exchange.



The Great Flight Cage adjoins the renovated Bird House at the Zoo. Richard A. Dimon, Jr., project architect of the Zoo's newest structure, was awarded a citation of excellence for engineering at a dinner at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. He lives at 7919 Holmhurst Road, Bethesda. The cage was one of 580 entries in the American Iron and Steel Institute's 1964-65 Design to Steel Award Program. Dimon designed the unique structure, with its parabolic steel arches and 80-foot tall center mast supporting mesh-covered cables, to hold flying, ground, and shore birds.



# THE SMITHSONIAN TORCH



AN EMPLOYEES' NEWSPAPER, PUBLISHED MONTHLY

EDITORIAL BOARD: JAMES BRADLEY, PAUL H. OEHSER, WILLIAM WARNER  
EDITOR: ELIZABETH BEVERLEY PHOTOS: ALBERT J. ROBINSON

## SI EMPLOYEES IN THE NEWS

Paul V. Gardner, curator in charge, Division of Ceramics and Glass, was elected to the Board of Trustees of Alfred University during the annual spring meeting held on campus last June in conjunction with the 108th commencement. The ballots for Mr. Gardner as an alumni representative were cast by mail earlier this spring. Mr. Gardner was appointed as curator of the Division of Ceramics and Glass of the U. S. National Museum when the division was established in 1957. He is a native of Castile, N. Y., and a graduate of Alfred University, where he earned the bachelor of science degree in ceramics. Mr. Gardner is a graduate of the former Canisteo Academy and still maintains a home in Canisteo, N. Y.

\* \* \*

Gustav Arthur Cooper, chairman of the Department of Paleobiology in MNH, has been awarded the Paleontological Society Medal. Writing in the *Journal of Paleontology*, vol. 39, no. 3, p. 520, Dr. Frank C. Whitmore, Jr., writes of Dr. Cooper: "The recipient of a scientific award of this importance is, it goes without saying, a research worker of great competence. His mastery of this field is such that he has used in his work both time-tested and novel methods and has become involved in many different facets of his specialty." Dr. Cooper received his B. S. and M. S. from Colgate University and his Ph.D. from Yale. He came to the U. S. National Museum in 1930 as assistant curator of invertebrate Fossils.

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Dr. Richard S. Cowan, assistant director of MNH, has been appointed to the position of deputy director of MNH. He will continue to occupy the position of assistant director for systematics.

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John T. Schlebecker has been appointed as curator of the Smithsonian Institution's Division of Agriculture and Forest Products, MHT. Dr. Schlebecker comes to the Smithsonian from Iowa State University at Ames, where he was associate professor of agricultural history for nine years. He holds degrees from Hiram College, Harvard University, and the University of Wisconsin, where he received his doctorate.

\* \* \*

Dr. Harald A. Rehder, formerly curator-in-charge of the Division of Mollusks, is now research curator in that division.

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Daniel J. Reed has been appointed to the position of historian in the National Portrait Gallery. Dr. Reed comes to the Smithsonian from the Library of Congress, where he worked for the last six years in the Manuscript Division.

## OWNER OF LOST 30-YEAR EMBLEM SOUGHT

Anyone who has lost a tie chain with a 30-year SI service award emblem on it should call Ed. C. Carney, U. S. Office of Education, Caption Films for the Deaf, WO 3-3065.

## SMITHSONIAN REGENT



Senator Clinton P. Anderson

Senator Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico, member of the Executive Committee of the Smithsonian Board of Regents. Born in South Dakota, he attended Dakota Wesleyan University and the University of Michigan.

He was elected and served in the House of Representatives, 1940-1945. He served as Secretary of Agriculture from 1945 to 1948. He was elected to the Senate in 1948 and is chairman of the Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences and is a member of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Committee on Finance, and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. He served as chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Construction of a Building for a Museum of History and Technology for the Smithsonian Institution.

## SI EMPLOYEE IN CALLIGRAPHY EXHIBIT

Crimilda Pontes, (E & P) had two original designs for bookplates in an exhibition "Two Thousand Years of Calligraphy," in Baltimore, Md., during June. The exhibition, an attempt to cover the calligraphy produced during a period of almost 2000 years in countries using the Latin alphabet, was divided into three parts. Part III, which includes Miss Pontes' exhibit, is devoted almost entirely to the twentieth century and is displayed at the Peabody Institute Library. Miss Pontes was assistant typographer with the Yale University Press before coming to SI.

## CURATOR FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES RECEIVES AWARD

Sami K. Hamarneh, curator in charge, Division of Medical Sciences, has been awarded the Order of al-Kawkab (Star of Jordan) by the King and Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in recognition of his scholarly research in the history of medieval Islamic medicine and pharmacy.

In presenting the Royal Citation at the Jordanian Embassy in Washington in June, the Charge d'Affaires ad interim, Anton A. Naber, spokesman for King Hussein, stated: "As a student of the history of medicine and pharmacology, you were aware of the great contributions which our forebears made in those fields. Through your eloquence and pen and long labors, you have spread this awareness among scholars of medicine throughout the world and your writings are now to be found in medical libraries at the world's greatest universities."

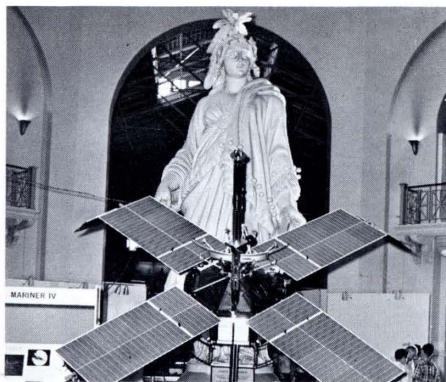
Dr. Hamarneh is the author of numerous articles. His latest book is the *Bibliography on Medicine and Pharmacy in Medieval Islam*.

The Order of al-Kawkab is awarded to those individuals, regardless of nationality, who have contributed outstanding services to Jordan.



Sami K. Hamarneh





Mariner IV, full-sized model, seen in NAM exhibit in A & I Bldg., is communicating to Earth from a longer distance than any other man-made object—more than 100,000,000 miles. Pictures of Mars' surface radioed back by the Mariner IV, launched Nov. 28, 1964, contain 30 to 50 times more detail than has ever been seen through the best telescopes from Earth.

#### METEORITE CURATORS TRAVEL

Dr. Brian Mason, research curator, Division of Meteorites, after attending a conference in Moscow in July on meteorites, joined Dr. Edward P. Henderson, curator working the unpopulated central section of Australia, where they will collect tektites and meteorites for the museum.

Roy Clarke, chemist in the same division, who also attended the Moscow conference, is now in Czechoslovakia and will return to the museum in September.

Dr. Kurt Frederickson, head curator for the Division of Meteorites, left the middle of August on a two months' trip which will combine pleasure and business. He went first to Stockholm for a visit, then to Paris, where he planned to address the "IV Congres International sur L'Optique des Rayons X et la Microanalyse," Faculte des Sciences, Orsay, France. He then planned to go to Frankfurt, Vienna, Paris, and London to visit and study museums and on to Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where he hoped to go into the country to do research and study meteorites. From there he will fly to Bombay, Calcutta, and Japan, continuing to visit the museums and study meteorites.



Victor B. Elstad, plant physiologist, Radiation Biology Laboratory, holds the bloom from the plant monstera, belonging to the philodendron family. This particular plant grows normally in the tropics, but for people growing it in this part of the world as a household plant it generally does not flower. This plant has been grown in nutriculture, not soil.

#### DIVISION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING OFF TO FINE START

The Division of Education and Training will be a year old in October. Dr. Charles Blitzer has been appointed director of the Division and Jerold Roschwalb serves as his assistant. Its job is to coordinate educational activity in the Institution by using the Institution's resources—both its collections and its staff of distinguished scientists and scholars—and make these resources available to the scientific and scholarly community at large.

Because of Secretary Ripley's interest in museums as educational forces as well as research centers, the objectives of the new division are being pursued through a variety of programs: postdoctoral, predoctoral, and undergraduate. Predoctoral interns usually use their year at the Smithsonian for writing their doctoral dissertations and their time spent here is accredited by their universities. There are also summer programs, and at this time a large program is underway to inform universities and individual scholars throughout the country what is being offered by the Smithsonian. The Division of Education and Training represents the Secretary in all liaison with cooperating universities.



Charles Blitzer



Jerold Roschwalb

Dr. Blitzer came to the Smithsonian from the American Council of Learned Societies, where he served as executive associate for four years. He studied at Williams College and Harvard University and taught for 10 years at Yale University in the department of political science. He is the author of a number of books including *An Immortal Commonwealth*, *The Age of Power*, and *The Commonwealth of England*.

#### AMERICAN FOLK ART COLLECTION DISPLAYED

Part of the 350 items of American folk sculpture and pictorial material, comprising the famous collection of Eleanor and Mabel Van Alstyne, is now on exhibition in the first-floor gallery of MHT. Called "The Art and Spirit of a People," this exhibit represents a sampling of one of the outstanding folk art collections in the United States. It encompasses a remarkable variety of shop figures, ships' figureheads, weathervanes, circus carousel and float carvings, paintings of steamboats, folk pottery, scrimshaw work, and other decorative ornaments and devices.

The material was assembled over a period of 40 years by the Van Alstyne sisters. It has now become a part of the Smithsonian's extensive cultural history holdings; a major portion of the collection will be kept on public exhibition.



Leonard Loudes

Leonard Loudes, Office of Exhibits, has an interesting job, maintaining plants in the museum for a much longer life expectancy than formerly. Owing to unique museum set-ups—the cold, and the light, or lack of it—there has been little means previously of maintaining these plants, now used not merely as background decor for various public halls but also as permanent parts of long-term museum exhibits. In the picture above, Mr. Loudes is standing beside a tree in the Hall of Anthropology in MNH. He came to the museum from Arizona about two years ago.

#### EMPLOYEE COMMITTEE ELECTED

New members of the Welfare and Recreation Association Executive Committee were elected in employee balloting on June 25.

Organizational members and alternates elected are as follows: BMD, Matthew Jackson, member, Margaret T. Baldwin, alternate; MNH, Claudia Jackson, member, Esther M. Norris, alternate; SIE, Cloyd Taylor, member, Vincent Maturi, alternate; MHT, Deborah J. Mills, member, Charles E. Dennison, alternate; OE, Patricia DuVall, member, James A. Piper, alternate; Service Divisions and other miscellaneous organizations, Thomas R. Cook, Photographic Services, member, James W. Proctor, Supply Division, member, Elsie J. Miguelino, alternate, Virginia Dalrymple, alternate; NZP, Sybil E. Hamlet, Leo M. Slaughter, members; NAM, Frances C. Jenks, member; Guard Force, Rudolph C. Dale, member; and BMD-Mechanical Services Division, Joseph J. Miller, member.

The new committee members are interested in your wishes and desires for the coming year.

#### SI RIFLE AND PISTOL CLUB MEETING

The Smithsonian Rifle and Pistol Club will have a meeting at the National Rifle Association Range on September 9 at 7 P.M. Everyone is invited.

*THE TORCH* will issue a Special Bicentennial number on September 15.



## FOCUS: Freer Gallery's Peacock Room

One of the more unusual SI treasures is the Freer's Peacock Room, or to be more precise: *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* by James Abbott McNeill Whistler. Probably the only surviving and certainly the most famous example of Whistler's forays into interior decoration,\* the room has probably as fascinating a history as any single possession of the Smithsonian.

In the early 1870's a rich English merchant, Frederick R. Leyland, purchased a mansion in London and commenced to remodel and redecorate it on a lavish scale. He entrusted the decoration of the dining room to a young architect familiar with Japanese methods of interior decoration, Henry Jeckyll. His instructions were to design the room in a splendidly Oriental manner as a setting for Whistler's painting "Princess from the Land of Porcelain" and for Leyland's collection of blue-and-white porcelain. Jeckyll built a complete wooden shell for the room, attached a paneled ceiling with eight pendant lamp fixtures, added full-length shutters over the three windows, and a turquoise-blue fireplace, over the mantel of which the "Princess" was hung. The walls were covered with fine old Spanish leather, elaborately embossed and gilded, originally brought to England by Katherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife. Walnut shelves carved and gilded in the Japanese manner were added around the walls for the display of the porcelain. Other furnishings, including a rug with a red border, were installed and the room was considered finished. So far so good. Then Whistler saw it.

Through a series of adroitly and, for Whistler, unusually subtle maneuvers, Leyland was persuaded to let the artist tone down the decoration so that it did not interfere with the delicate color arrangement of the "Princess." There are dozens of accounts of what followed, no two in complete agreement. At any rate, by early 1877, after six months' work, Whistler had finished. Of Jeckyll's original room only the architectural features and the "Princess" remained unchanged. Whistler had literally "painted a room to harmonize with my picture."

What inspired the peacock motif is unknown, but peacocks and peacock feathers dominate the decor throughout. The leather, wood, and canvas of the walls and ceiling are covered in various subtle designs—all developed from the breast and tail feathers of the peacock—in gold on blue, blue on gold, with dashes of blue-green and green here and there. Aside from the "Princess," the dominant features of the decoration are the huge peacocks on the shutters, painted in blue on a gold ground and a large panel at one end of the room that features two peacocks in gold on a blue ground. The total effect is unmistakably Oriental in inspiration but with an infusion of Western genius.

\*He once used so much yellow in the decoration of a room that the poet Swinburne said that entering it was like walking into the center of an egg.



The Peacock Room, showing the "Princess" over the mantel and two of the three shutters.

Whistler apparently received a constant stream of visitors, including members of the press while he was working. Veiled and garbled accounts of his activities appeared in newspapers and circulated throughout the London art world. The stories of the work, its progress, and its effect upon the people involved are many, various, and often as not untrue. It is said that most of the work was done at night by gaslight, that Whistler worked suspended from the ceiling in a hammock, and that he used a brush attached to a fishing rod to reach spots inaccessible from a ladder. Whistler's genius as an artist was by no means generally accepted in 1877, but that he was good copy was never in doubt.

The most colorful explanation—of questionable truth—of the two peacocks that decorate the end panel of the room is that Leyland, understandably annoyed with Whistler for wrecking his dining room—though he was said later to have recognized its beauty and shown it off proudly—offered to pay him only £1000 for his work. As professional men in England were traditionally paid in guineas, Whistler considered this an insult to his work. A touchier artist has probably never lived, and he was determined that art was not lightly to be treated as merchandise. Thus we have Leyland as a rich peacock clutching a pile of coins in his claws, and the artist as a poor peacock, proudly defiant and untempted by wealth. It is more likely, though less amusing, that Whistler was

simply representing his conception of the perennial relationship of artist and patron.

One of the more preposterous stories associated with the Peacock Room is that Jeckyll, after seeing what Whistler had done to his work, went mad and shortly afterward was found babbling of fruit, flowers, and peacocks while feverishly gilding the floor of his bedroom. Jeckyll did, in fact, lose his reason but not on Whistler's account.

After Leyland's death in 1892 the house was sold and the furnishings dispersed. Eventually Charles L. Freer, a friend as well as a collector of Whistler's works, acquired the "Princess." Later, after a protracted series of negotiations, the Peacock Room itself was re-erected in 1905 in Mr. Freer's Detroit home, where it remained until 1919 when it was shipped to Washington and installed in its present location in the Freer Gallery. (It was partially dismantled in the late 1940's in order to apply necessary preservation treatments. Its shoddy original construction and its many moves had placed it in a perilous condition.)

Today the Peacock Room remains a mute testimony to the genius, taste, and flair of one of the most original artists the United States has produced. Designed at a time when interior decoration had ceased to be art and become accumulation, its quiet elegance is all the more remarkable. And certainly no painting has ever had such a splendid frame.