Chapter 2
Collecting in America’s Progressive and Gilded Eras (1880–1919)

Mark Twain only wrote one work of collaborative fiction, *The Gilded Age*, a title that has come to characterize American excess between roughly the 1870s and the 1900s.¹ His lesser-known co-author was the editor and publisher Charles Dudley Warner (1829–1900), a man who later became a Vice President of the American Branch of the Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF). Through such prominent connections, Britain’s EEF was zealously promoted and its subscriber base swelled. By the beginning of the twentieth century it could even count among its numbers the President of the United States himself.² This intense interest coincided with the beginning of an expansion in the American museum sector,³ and out of all the countries that participated in Britain’s finds distribution network, it was the USA that became the most earnest competitor for a share of the finest discoveries. The result was that an estimated 60 institutions across 23 US states received Egyptian antiquities through British organizations between 1880 and the early 1920s.

This chapter traces these transfers and the transatlantic dialogues that accompanied them. At first, the US was largely reliant upon British fieldwork to provide it with excavated material to feed the American museum movement. By the early twentieth century, however, these institutions began to work independently in Egypt without intermediaries. British colonial structures, together with French and Egyptian ones, made this possible, but it was the Americans who capitalized upon it, industrializing archaeology on a massive scale. With the onset of the First World War, the balance of archaeological opportunity between the nations shifted further, and the USA took the leading role.

Throughout these structural realignments, local interests and idiosyncratic personalities continually re-shaped the receptions of, and practices around, antiquities, both in the field and in the museum. Many of the underlying motivations for the acquisition of Egyptian things in the United States ran parallel to the ambitions of British institutions, with a similar ‘bourgeois acquisitiveness’, ⁴ a strong interest from well-organized
women’s movements and a marked influence of female curatorial staff who engaged with archaeological finds in innovative ways. Nevertheless, there remained fundamental differences between the two countries. Perhaps the most important of these was the alternative geographies of urban aspiration that drove many wealthy US city patrons to invest in their local museums. Unlike museum growth in Britain, which was facilitated by government initiatives as well as by the occasional wealthy donor, America’s institutions depended almost exclusively on the capitalist venture of private philanthropy. Moreover, such competition existed not only between cities, but also within them, with multiple institutions vying for the most striking artefacts. Another distinctive trend in the United States was its development of fine art museums, whose evolving ethos came to shape particular attitudes to Egyptian material. In the longer term it is arguably this development that continues to define a distinctly American approach to Egypt.

‘I look on chisell’d histories’: The American Branch of the EEF

In 1888, a large granite statue of one of Egypt’s most infamous New Kingdom pharaohs, Ramesses II, was installed in Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts (MFA, Fig. 2.1). Most visitors were unlikely to have been able to read the hieroglyphic rendering of the king’s names, but they would not have missed the prominent label on the plinth below. It declared that the monument was a ‘Gift of the Egypt Exploration Fund through W. C. Winslow. AM. Vice Pres’.

The man mentioned alongside the ancient ruler, the Reverend William Copley Winslow (1840–1917), was a local Episcopal priest and the self-appointed founder of the EEF’s American Branch. He had been immediately attracted to the EEF’s biblical mandate, and in 1883 commenced an effusive correspondence with Amelia Edwards. Winslow’s endeavours became ever more solipsistic over the years. He earnestly hankered after honorary degrees and tediously bemoaned his lack of recognition, insisting that all large objects the EEF sent to Boston should bear his name.5 His relationship with the EEF became strained, and after a protracted period of accusations and insinuations, Winslow was dismissed from the Fund in 1902. Little insight into the machinations of Egyptology, archaeology or museums is revealed by the mass of archival correspondence relating to this unfortunate episode.6

As the Director of Carnegie Museum commented in 1901, ‘We would be very glad to be spared the trouble of reading letters constituting chapters
in the history of the same. They make us tired.’ Working through these letters more than a century later, this statement remains true.

There is no denying, however, that Winslow’s vigorous campaigning was of enormous benefit to the Fund. Within a year Edwards was able to report to the EEF Committee the ‘discovery of a silver mine in the United States of America from which the ore is conveniently extracted in a ready minted condition, and every blow of the pick produces a yield of shining American dollars’. By the end of the century there were 67 areas of the US with multiple local honorary secretaries, and by 1890, 57 per cent of all EEF subscribers were American. Winslow himself managed to raise an estimated $130,000 from American subscriptions, a sum equivalent to more that $3 million today. Such amounts surpassed those mustered in Britain, so much so that it became a source of considerable consternation when it came to deciding the division of finds between Britain and its partners across the Atlantic. It also resulted in lengthy tussles as various parties attempted to establish equivalences between sponsorship money, ancient finds and museum values.
There had been few major Egyptology collections in the US previously. The oldest collection of Egyptian material in America had come to the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, in the early 1800s. It had been inherited from the East India Marine Society, whose members presented Egyptian curios picked up during their travels. There was also the private collection of Henry Abbott (1812–59), a British physician who had resided in Cairo for twenty years, and who shipped several hundred antiquities across the Atlantic in the early 1850s after the British Museum refused to buy them. The Abbott collection ended up in the care of New York’s Historical Society. In Boston, the Museum of Fine Art’s Egyptian collection was founded in 1872, and contained around a thousand antiquities acquired from a Scottish artist, Robert Hay (1799–1863), and presented to Boston after its exhibition at London’s Crystal Palace. Tourist souvenirs from Egypt (especially mummy parts) were also scattered across the United States, but large, permanent arenas for their display did not exist until the latter part of the century. Their founding was coincident with the rich harvest of finds reaped by the EEF, which in many cases supplied major new American institutions with their first Egyptian antiquities, providing the impetus and means for American museums to undertake more systematic collecting in ancient Egypt.

This is not to say that Egypt had not been an integral part of American cultural life for much of the nineteenth century. Despite the absence of large collections or professional positions in Egyptology or archaeology there was an awareness of European-led expeditions. American travelogues about Egypt were in fact as numerous, if not more so, than their British counterparts at this time, and were fuelled by a burgeoning periodical press that gave regular attention to the land of the pharaohs. George Gliddon toured a moving ‘Panorama of the Nile’ – a large-scale painting moved between two vertical rollers – from 1849, accompanied by popular lectures, exhibitions and mummy unwrappings. The celebrated American poet Walt Whitman read widely in Egyptology in the 1840s and 1850s, and frequented Dr Abbott’s collection in New York, leading to Egyptological references in popular works such as *Salut au Monde!*: ‘I look on chisell’d histories, records of conquering kings, dynasties, cut in slabs of sand-stone, or on granite-blocks’. Egyptian revival architecture of the early to mid-nineteenth century was visible across the United States, in monumental gateways of rural cemeteries and in commemorative obelisks erected for great men. The debates surrounding the merits of such appropriations, including the controversial building of the Washington Monument,
ensured that Egypt remained in the public eye right through to the 1880s and 1890s. Such works, as in Europe, familiarized readers with the distant land of Egypt, and may have contributed to a sense of entitlement and ownership over the sites, monuments and artefacts encountered.

Expectations surrounding Egypt’s representation at Philadelphia’s 1876 Centennial Exhibition, America’s first major international exhibition, were primed by this interest. In execution, however, the Egyptian section’s eclectic mix of plaster casts, illustrations and photographs, arranged by the German Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch (1827–94), was considered somewhat feeble. In contrast, Chicago’s 1893 Columbian World Exposition presented Egypt as a grandiose spectacle with a bustling ‘Cairo Street’ and a monumental replica of the Luxor Temple, complete with two soaring obelisks, one of which was inscribed in hieroglyphs with the name of President Grover Cleveland. Inside the temple were wax models of royal mummies, while sacred music and reenactments of ritual processions added to the Orientalized drama showcased for popular consumption and entertainment. It all rather overshadowed the collection of original antiquities displayed by the University of Pennsylvania (Fig. 2.2). These were more soberly arranged in an exhibit entitled Objects from the Flinders Petrie Excavations and the Egypt Exploration Fund. It included more than 160 individual finds from Petrie’s expeditions at Kahun, Gurob and Hawara in the late 1880s, as well as his fieldwork at Amarna, and 100 items from the EEF’s

![Figure 2.2](image.png)
excavations in the Delta, such as Naukratis, Bubastis and Defennah. The Petrie and EEF displays received an award from the Exposition’s international panel of judges, who noted that,

The scientific importance of the collection can not be overrated, and the clearness and method with which it is labelled and displayed adds much to its value. The University of Pennsylvania, and especially its Department of Archaeology, deserves great credit for the fine exhibit.

Despite the intellectual emphasis here, the Exposition as a whole provided a strong aesthetic and emotional context for the reception of Egyptian archaeology. These two powerful object habits – the aesthetic and emotional on the one hand, and the scientific promise of edification on the other – remained an unsettled impulse for early twentieth-century American museum acquisition.

As a young nation, the United States had faced criticism from abroad that it was devoid of a meaningful cultural heritage (indigenous communities being excluded). The ‘great civilizations’ of antiquity offered one means of constructing a riposte, and many in the USA articulated the country’s position as the vanguard of a new cultural progression from the Old to the New World. In this vein the transfer of antiquities from North Africa to America, via Britain, formed a tangible link to an imagined past and a performance of those sentiments in the present. Egyptian monuments ‘served to bind us to antiquity’, or so New York City Mayor William Russell Grace declared in 1881, at the event marking the erection of Cleopatra’s Needle in Central Park. Other speeches that day conveyed a notably different attitude to Egypt from those articulated in Europe. Mutual friendship, rather than imperial domination, characterized the USA’s perceived relationship with Egypt, and the acquisition of the obelisk was presented as a source of national pride rather than imperial might.

There was also a strong religious dimension to this interest, even more so than was the case in Britain. This is perhaps unsurprising, as ‘full-blooded Protestant Christianity dominated educated life in nineteenth-century America’. A considerable portion of the American financial backing for the EEF initially came from men of the cloth who, like Winslow, were intent on proving the reality of the Bible. The EEF’s second annual report lists 294 Reverends among its American subscribers, constituting 39 per cent of the total number of American donors, far more than are evident in British ledgers. Jewish donors were equally important, as
the growth of Zionism offered a means to reflect on the ancient Jewish presence in eastern lands, rather than their marginalized lives in many parts of Europe. Winslow's success in reaching such individuals came from his persistent petitioning of the press for editorial endorsements, or through short, flamboyant articles on the EEF's work. A snapshot of the journalistic world through which Winslow preached the new gospel of scientific exploration is found among the myriad letters he sent Edwards, in which he breathlessly enumerated his labours:

> ...the Literary World, N.Y. Tribune, N.Y. Evening Post, Springfield Republican, N.Y. Observer (Presbyterian), Independent (Congregationalist), Evangelist (N.U. Presby’), Church Eclectic Magazine, The Presbyterian (Phila), + there are to be articles in the N.Y Times, the Christian Advocate (Cincinnati), + others I hope. The underscored ones I prepared. I sent also to the Examiner N.Y. (Baptist); the Intelligencer (Reformed Dutch) N.Y; to be in I hope (?) this week, + also to these Chicago papers: the Inter-Ocean, daily, the Advance, Congregational, the Interior, Presbyn. The N.Y. Times editor wrote me thanks: so it will be in. What the Whitehouse performance will effect on the Chicago papers, where the Living Church is issued, I cannot say. I sent a short article to the Dominion Churchman of Toronto, for this week. These articles are all temperately + I hope, skilfully drawn.... the editor of the Jewish Messenger (N.Y.) writes me earnestly to have him present the subject to his readers, many of whom are rich. I sent him a circular. 22

In keeping with this biblical remit, the only other American beneficiaries of finds from EEF work in the 1880s, apart from Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, were two religious institutions: Rochester Theological Seminary, which according to EES distribution lists received ‘a selection of minor antiquities’ in 1886, and New York’s Chautauqua Assembly, a teaching camp for Sunday School teachers founded in 1874, which acquired an estimated 456 items in 1887. Chautauqua’s share comprised lamps, bronze figurines of gods and goddesses, coins, scarabs, statuettes, mosaics and bronze latticework. These had been secured for the Assembly’s ‘Oriental House’ by the Reverend Kittredge, regional secretary for the EEF and head of the Chautauqua Archaeological Society. His own vision for the Assembly was that it should illustrate or corroborate the geography of the Middle East, and help to interpret the text of the Bible. The mass of relics was reported dismissively by Rudyard Kipling, who described
‘a place called a museum which had evidently been brought together by feminine hands, so jumbled were the exhibits’.\textsuperscript{23}

By comparison, Boston’s acquisitions were impressive, and between 1885 and 1911 the Museum of Fine Arts obtained some 3000 objects from the Fund. As one of the most active centres of American culture, with a well-defined urban upper class known as the Boston Brahmins, the museum was well provisioned, albeit shaped more by patron interests than by principled research agendas. By the 1890s, however, Boston was facing stiff competition from other US cities for British finds, a situation that draws into relief one of the primary differences between European and American museums. As Stephen Conn has argued, early museum growth in the US was linked more to the decentralized expansion of its urban centres, notably in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, than it was to the imperial zeal that characterized much European collecting.\textsuperscript{24} As was the case in Boston, museums in these other major US centres were established by a wealthy local elite, with little government funding. Since citizens identified more with their local area than they did with their nation – you would be a Bostonian first and an American second – urban aspiration and individual philanthropy goaded the development of institutions as each attempted to secure cultural authority over one another. It is unsurprising, therefore, that branches of the EEF were quickly established in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia in the 1890s, all aiming ‘to aid this English Archaeological Society in its very important excavations now being carried on in Egypt, and to receive for the museums in this country our share of the antiquities discovered by the explorers’.\textsuperscript{25} The Art Institute (est. 1879) and the Haskell Oriental Museum (est. 1896) in Chicago, the University of Pennsylvania Museum (est. 1887), the Detroit Museum of Art (est. 1885), New York City’s Metropolitan Museum of Art (‘the Met’, est. 1870), and Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Museum (est. 1895) all competed for the EEF’s best finds. In response, Winslow’s campaigns for Boston grew more determined:

...fine sculptures, including the noble palm-leaf shaft from Ahnas (2500 BC), have come to our Museum, which has beyond all question, the best collection, historically and chronologically, of monuments and sculptures from Egypt to be found on this Continent... Candor compels me to say that the work of our Society, so emphatically endorsed by our best minds in every department of learning, is having less practical support in ‘the modern Athens’ than in some other cities, notably New York and Chicago.\textsuperscript{26}
By invoking Athens, Winslow assumed and promoted the idea that the US was heir to the cultural traditions of Western Europe, including its orientalist sleight of hand that identified itself with world history as a ‘euphemism for European history’. Winslow, however, could not compete with more influential individuals. These included Charles Dudley Warner, who had the ear of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Director, General Luigi Cesnola, and was thus able to secure a direct line between the EEF and New York’s principal museum.

Coincident with this new topography of US museums was a period of particularly liberal partage agreements in Egypt, during which the EEF had been able to remove a series of spectacular monuments. An estimated 125 tonnes of material was extracted from Bubastis over the course of three seasons, for instance, around two-thirds of which were shipped abroad by the EEF. Unlike distributions to municipal museums in Britain – which were frequently characterized by small concessions of packets of beads, diminutive bronzes or sets of amulets – the American distributions of the late 1880s and early 1890s were, on the whole, more substantial. Boston, for instance, acquired a gold statuette of a ram-headed god, a colossal statue of Ramesses II and an enormous 20-tonne granite column. Chicago’s share was diverse, and included large temple reliefs, architectural elements and other fine stone inscriptions (Fig. 2.3). Detroit received part of an altar, sections of stone lintels and several relief slabs of Ptolemaic date from the 1897–8 Dendereh mission. The list for
the University of Pennsylvania includes several limestone blocks with the names and images of kings from Tell Basta, a large statue of Ramesses II in red limestone, and a series of well-preserved coffins.32

The penchant for large, striking antiquities also characterized the distributions from Flinders Petrie's BSAE to American patrons. In particular, Petrie played to the popularity of excavating biblical remains and, emulating the EEF's initial strategy, sought funding for work in the Delta with a view to tracing evidence of the Israelites. ‘There were many Americans,’ Petrie felt, ‘who would contribute to a biblical excavation, but not to that of a heathen temple’.33 He canvassed the same set of institutions that financed EEF investigations, as they had far more purchasing power than most European agencies. This included the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, which underwrote the full expense of transporting a 12-tonne sphinx of Ramesses II more than 6000 miles across the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean from the 1913 BSAE excavations in Memphis. This was the single largest Egyptian antiquity to make the journey since Cleopatra’s Needle was installed in Central Park, an astonishing feat involving hundreds of labourers throughout the route.34 This acquisition ultimately altered the trajectory of the museum’s collecting activities, providing the impetus for the director’s ambition to construct a grand Egyptian wing designed to hold monumental sculptures, which was realized less than ten years later.

Given these tendencies, the characterization by influential German art historian Wilhelm Worringer that America and ancient Egypt shared ‘a craving for the colossal’ seems apt.35 This American imperative to collect arresting treasures was enabled by philanthropy and civic ambitions, but it can also be attributed to a shift in its museum strategies between the Gilded and Progressive eras. In the former, the South Kensington Museum and its educational mission to train industrial designers was the template for American institutions, but as their own museums came of age, the model of Kulturgeschichte in German-speaking countries became more attractive.36 Organizations such as the Schweizerisches Landesmuseum in Zurich and the Bayerisches National Museum in Munich represented a new framework in which chronologically ordered material was set in atmospheric settings of period rooms. In the years running up to the First World War, the Boston MFA and then the Met, followed by Midwestern museums, adopted similar concepts and installed dynamic period rooms embellished with architectural fragments to convey the spirit of an era. Although this approach to display was developed primarily for the representation of
American history and decorative arts, in so doing aesthetic concerns were more broadly combined with the historical in museum strategies generally, far more than had been the case in Britain. In comparison, institutions in Britain tended to maintain their dense typologically focused displays into the 1920s, these being better able to accommodate the more mundane archaeological finds that Flinders Petrie’s teams and the EEF mostly returned in the early twentieth century.

‘When Women Reigned’: Amelia Edwards’s US Tour

Biblical links and intercity competition gave momentum to the EEF’s American cause, but other political undercurrents concomitantly influenced late nineteenth-century American acquisitions. In 1887, Henry White (1850–1927), First Secretary to the American Legation, gave thanks for the gift of antiquities to Boston in person, at the EEF’s fifth annual general meeting in London. He applauded the EEF not only for its research into ancient history, but also because ‘it formed an invaluable link between the two great English-speaking nations of the modern world’. Anglo-American relations had been steadily improving throughout the latter part of the Victorian era, and by the late nineteenth century a ‘Great Rapprochement’ grew between the two nations as diplomatic, political, economic and military interests converged. The transfer of antiquities was just one of a number of soft-power gestures that cemented these relationships. White went on to note a second key reason for the EEF’s appeal in the United States:

This rapprochement, moreover, had been largely fostered by the interest which the American nation took in the Society’s Honorary Secretary on account of the popularity of her works, and they were naturally attracted to a Society in which that lady occupied so prominent a position.

He was referring, of course, to Amelia Edwards, and to the widespread support the EEF was garnering from the US women’s movement. This was clearly evident in 1889–90 when Edwards undertook an arduous five-month lecture tour of the US East Coast and Midwest (Fig. 2.4). During that time she delivered an impressive 120 lectures to an estimated 100,000 people, proselytizing British fieldwork in Egypt as she went. Luncheons were held in her honour, receptions thrown to welcome her and interviews conducted by the regional and national press. Following
Fig. 2.4  Photograph of one of the press cuttings in Amelia Edwards's scrapbook taken from the *Daily Graphic*, 11 January 1890, showing Edwards lecturing in New York. Courtesy of the Principal and Fellows of Somerville College, Oxford.
Edwards’s tour the number of women subscribing to the EEF multiplied: in 1887–8 the EEF annual general report lists at least 99 female US subscribers; by 1891–2, that number had risen to 171, while almost half of the local US honorary EEF secretaries were women. Appearing in these lists are the names of several prominent American suffragists: Caroline Healey Dall (1822–1912) a leading nineteenth-century American reformer, feminist and essayist; Mary A. Livermore (1820–1905), a journalist, the first president of the Association for Advancement of Women, and president of the American Woman Suffrage Association; and Julia Ward Howe (1819–1910), co-founder of the New England Woman Suffrage Association, and founder of the suffragist magazine *Woman’s Journal*.

The University of Oxford’s Somerville College library holds a scrapbook of press clippings that record Edwards’s American journey and provide vignettes to these busy months: ‘She scores a distinct triumph at the Odeon’, cried the *Cincinnati Gazette* on 7 February 1890, ‘Honors to a Talented Lady’, announced the *Boston Herald* on 30 November 1889, and ‘An Intellectual Treat’, proclaimed the *Newhaven Morning News* on 12 November 1889. Other captions underscored Edwards’s position at the forefront of women’s reform: ‘A Lecture by a Woman’, exclaimed the *Baltimore America* on 4 December 1889, and ‘When Women Reigned’, stated the 25 February 1890 *Detroit Evening News* report. Most telling of all is the very last small press cutting pasted into this 76-page scrapbook. It is undated and unattributed:

> Those persons who are so much exercised because women are denied their rights should go and hear Amelia B. Edwards on the lecture platform. Here is a woman who has asserted her rights by sheer intellectual force and has secured them too. There was never a time when a woman with brains in her head and a talent for action, instead of mere agitation, could do so much as now.

It is a glowing portfolio, testament to her popularity. Letters in the EEF archive, however, reveal a more fraught picture, in which there was considerable resistance to Edwards as a female scholar, and to the EEF as a scholarly organization. Nevertheless, adulation for Edwards continued to be professed through gifts and honours. She received a bracelet from the women of Boston, as well as honorary degrees from Colombia College, NY Smith College in Northampton and the College of the Sisters of Bethany in Kansas. At Harvard’s Peabody Museum she was noted as being the first woman admitted to deliver a lecture.
Edwards spoke additionally at several women’s colleges, including Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Bryn Mawr and Mount Holyoake, all of which by the end of the century were contributing sponsorship money to the EEF and a few years thereafter began to receive small objects in the distributions. The New England Women’s Press Association threw a breakfast in Edwards’s honour, as did the influential New York Women’s Club, the ‘Sorosis’. The latter group had been founded in 1868, after the wife of the managing editor of the New York World, the noted journalist Jane Cunningham Croly (1829–1900), applied unsuccessfully for a ticket to attend a function hosted to honour Charles Dickens. The ensuing controversy ultimately led to the formation of an independent women’s-only body whose object was to ‘promote agreeable and useful relations among women of literary and artistic tastes’. Given Edwards’s own prominent journalistic background, as well as her contributions of ghost stories to Dickens’s periodicals, she was a revered guest.

There was clearly much these women had in common, but attitudes to political and social issues diverged. The Sorosis did not advance the cause of women’s suffrage for instance, but it held strong views on temperance. Edwards circumvented the latter by asking her travelling companion, Kate Bradbury, to discreetly arrange for her Chianti to be served in a china teacup at luncheons. On the issue of suffrage, Edwards took other opportunities to make her own political opinions clear. She was quoted in the 21 February 1890 edition of the Chicago Herald as saying ‘I am one of those suffragists who believe the present condition of affairs is outrageous’. Similarly, in the Detroit Tribune, which led with an article on 25 February 1890 entitled ‘The Women of Egypt – more than man’s equal in pre-historic times’, Edwards again made her views known. Her opinion of modern day Egyptians, however, was also laid bare. The comments in the Detroit Tribune betrayed her disdain for ‘the Arabs’, who she claimed were responsible for the destruction and disposal of Egyptian monuments for monetary gain. Her assertions were blind to the fact that foreign interests fuelled the art market, and that tourists were responsible for much of the damage to Egypt’s heritage. She was equally ignorant of the concerted attempts by Egyptians themselves to study and to educate the Egyptian public about their past and the world around them. For Edwards, the British protectorate was a necessary civilizing mechanism over what she saw as an untrustworthy population that was totally disconnected from the ancient remains it lived among. Her remarks serve to reinforce Elliot Colla’s point that scientific authority over Egyptian antiquities went hand in hand with colonial control of Egypt. In other words, Western intervention was
considered a moral necessity in order to protect ancient artefacts from unscientific treatment by local Egyptian populations, and its institutions were felt to be fully entitled to Egypt’s heritage. Celebratory accounts of the lives of individuals like Amelia Edwards tend to overlook comments of this kind, which sit uncomfortably with the heroic and progressive tone that infuses traditional disciplinary histories. The archives remind us, though, of the complexity of worldviews, which are informed by an array of intersecting experiences and identities. Edwards’s own outlook was ultimately shaped, and indeed enabled, as much by her elite social class, financial independence, English nationality and unmarried status, as it was by her gender.

Edwards presented antiquities during several of her visits to US institutions. In some cases these constituted the very first Egyptian artefacts acquired by organizations, ushering in new foci for collecting initiatives. For instance, she gifted to fledgling American museums such as the Art Institute in Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York a number of fine 2300-year-old shabtis made for the tomb of a priest named Horudja. Flinders Petrie had fished out around 399 of these figurines from a perilously submerged burial chamber in the Fayum at Hawara the previous year. Egyptologists sometimes refer to shabtis as ‘answerers’, servant figures ready to undertake manual labour on behalf of the deceased. Undoubtedly Edwards hoped that these attractive little relics would now serve the EEF’s cause.

Amelia Edwards was an exceptional individual, but in the late nineteenth-century world of museums and Egyptology she was not an exception. Other prominent women and women’s groups were likewise driving forward the study of Egypt, including Sara Yorke Stevenson (1847–1921) in Philadelphia, her collaborator and then rival Phoebe Hearst (1842–1919) in California, and the USA’s first professionally-trained Egyptologist, Caroline Ransom Williams (1872–1952), who catalogued Egyptology collections in New York, Detroit, Minneapolis, Cleveland and Toledo. Even the EEF’s American branch came to be administered and publicized almost single-handedly by Marie Buckman, a wilful, energetic woman with a flair for the dramatic, from the late 1890s through to her retirement in 1935.

In Chicago, the newly appointed Egyptologist at the University of Chicago, James Henry Breasted (1865–1935),48 encouraged the Chicago’s Woman’s Club (CWC) and its Philosophy and Science Department to divert its energies towards securing subscriptions for Flinders Petrie’s Egyptian Research Account (ERA). The committee they convened became ‘the working force of the Chicago Society of Egyptian
As a result, Breasted boasted that the University of Chicago ‘will receive the subscriptions of any who are interested in unearthing and bringing to America the rapidly disappearing remains of this ancient people, among whom the Hebrews dwelt’. The CWC was founded in 1876 with a stated mission to deal with civic problems, philanthropy and reform issues. The group’s efforts included practical social activism, and its ethos was relatively liberal on issues such as race and suffrage. It raised $404 between 1896 and 1897 for the ERA, and on 20 October 1898 the *Chicago Tribune* ran a story celebrating the recent acquisitions by the Field Museum and the University of Chicago. The article ended with the announcement that CWC member and suffrage campaigner Mary Wilmarth would ‘lecture on the work of the Chicago Society of Egyptian Research’. The CWC maintained its support for several years, raising a further $1578, thereby securing for the Haskell Museum Predynastic and Early Dynastic finds from the EEF excavations at Hu and Abydos, as well as continuing to attract media attention for women’s work.

Caroline Louise Ransom arrived in Chicago around the same time that the CWC was active, in the autumn of 1898. She had studied previously at Mount Holyoke, where her aunt, Louise Fitz Randolph, established the University’s museum and procured artefacts from the EEF in order to teach archaeology and art history. Ransom enrolled in Breasted’s newly formed Egyptology degree program at the University of Chicago, the first course of its kind in North America, as its first female student. She graduated with an MA in 1900. After an interlude studying with Adolf Erman in Berlin, she returned to Chicago where she successfully completed her doctorate in 1905 on – what might have been considered an appropriately feminine domestic topic – ancient furniture. Despite an offer of marriage, Ransom remained single in order to build her career, beginning with a teaching post at Bryn Mawr.

In 1910 Ransom took up the position of assistant curator in the Department of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. With most of the (male) members of the department engaged in active fieldwork abroad, it fell to Ransom to take responsibility for almost everything else, such as cataloguing the collection and managing the annual arrival of material from fieldwork. Her efforts were not merely administrative. Ransom’s documentation of the collection demonstrated her ‘great knowledge and impeccable scholarship’, while her interventions in the gallery were innovative. In 1912, for instance, she reported to the American Association of Museums on her experiment in mounting an extensive series of photographic illustrations in the main Egyptian galleries, showing the museum’s own excavations in progress and the
original context for the archaeological discovery of many displayed items. In this way archaeological processes and modern Egypt were made publicly visible almost a century before such strategies would become a more commonplace feature in museums internationally. The initiative also underscored the different directions that American archaeological displays were beginning to take, away from the dense, object-focused arrangement of most British establishments. There is perhaps also a sense here of Ransom’s agency in responding to her exclusion from ‘masculine’ fieldwork, with photographs offering a mediation between different worlds; between the ancient and the modern, the male and female, the field and the museum. Her position gave Ransom the opportunity and the authority to transform knowledge obtained through excavation into new forms of archaeological narrative. Kathleen Sheppard has observed that this work might not have been perceived as glamorous in the way fieldwork was, but it was ‘foundational, discipline-building scholarship’. This new means of materially performing knowledge was also perhaps a sign of the increasingly nationalist turn that American archaeology was taking, especially as promoted by Breasted, Ransom’s mentor. The display of the scale of US efforts in Egypt within the Metropolitan Museum’s galleries signalled its authority over the artefacts shown, in contrast to the British-procured objects it had relied upon previously.

Sara Yorke Stevenson, a shrewd and vigorous lady remembered for her sense of humour and good-tempered realism, established herself in 1870 within Philadelphia’s close-knit intellectual elite, the Mitchell-Furness coterie. This group comprised writers, scientists, physicians and scholars who shaped the social and civic life of Philadelphia. In this milieu Stevenson was perfectly comfortable. As an accomplished intellectual she quickly became known as the America’s ‘only lady Egyptologist’, who lectured to great acclaim at the University of Pennsylvania where she received an honorary doctorate in 1894. Throughout the 1890s she served as president of the women’s reform organization the Philadelphia Civic Club, and was a founding member of the Archaeological Association of the University of Pennsylvania, the organization that evolved into the current University Museum, where she held the first (honorary) position of curator of Egyptian and Mediterranean collections. Through another organization founded on her initiative, the American Exploration Society, she arranged for a shipment of 42 boxes of material excavated at Dendereh to be sent directly from Petrie to the Penn Museum. She approached Petrie again in 1895 with the offer of financial support in return for objects. Her letter reveals the encyclopaedic vision for the museum that she and her close colleague William Pepper, the provost of
the University, passionately shared:

... it has occurred to me that we might through you do, in Egypt, what we are doing elsewhere – In Babylon we are conducting as you no doubt know an exploration at ancient Nippur – in South America, I have just arranged with Dr Uhle... to explore for us in the vicinity of Cuzo (Peru) and Tiahuanale (Bolivia) – In Yucatan we have an expedition exploring caves – with the hope of settling certain questions as to the antiquity of the American Civilizations – We are cooperating with Harvard in Honduras – and it has recently occurred to me ... that it might be agreeable to you that we should cooperate with you.59

The correspondence between Petrie and Stevenson reveals a ‘bond of personal friendship’60 and mutual respect. He appreciated her for ‘her whole-hearted and unselfish dedication to the subject’, and she was ‘glad to be your [Petrie’s] mouthpiece over here’.61 Her donations led Petrie to joke that she seemed ‘to take a naughty pleasure in putting me into difficulties to adequately compensate your generosity’.62 She could afford to be munificent. The 1893 budget of the University Museum had allotted $80,000 to the Old World Archaeology section. In contrast, the American and Prehistoric department received a paltry $331.20.63 Stephen Conn has explained this disparity as a result of the desires of wealthy Philadelphians who funded the institution, and who took a greater interest in the Old World than the societies in their own backyard. As he goes on to explain, however, it was also a consequence of intellectual tensions. On the one hand, explorations in the Near East pursued biblical and Classical frameworks, founded upon specific histories and chronologies. On the other, New World fieldwork was situated more within the disciplinary development of anthropology, which emphasized cultural evolutionary frameworks that placed indigenous American groups on a ‘natural’ timescale. Correspondingly, British finds from Egypt were placed on the first floor of the museum, while archaeological finds from the Americas were situated on the ground floor with natural history specimens.64

Almost all of the aforementioned activity was focused in the urban centres of north-eastern America, where the ‘new women’ of the Progressive Era were clustered. One museum pioneer, however, took the challenge of furthering a professional career southwards, to poverty-stricken South Carolina. Here the feminist movement had not been as strong, and expectations of demure ‘Southern ladies’ had remained
largely unchanged since the Civil War. Laura Bragg (1881–1978), a ‘self-
proclaimed social missionary and reformer’, arrived in Charleston in September 1909 to find a town largely untouched by modernization, with dilapidated mansions spread along mostly dirt-track roads. She was to take up a position in the Department of Public Instruction at the US’s oldest museum, the Charleston Museum, founded in 1773. By the twentieth century much of the collection was languishing in store, and it was Bragg’s responsibility to install the old museum into a new location in Thompson’s Auditorium. She eventually became its Director in 1921, the first woman to be named director of a major museum in the US. Bragg threw herself into these roles, developing the Charleston Museum as a democratic and educational establishment for the whole community (inclusive of African Americans, Chinese and indigenous peoples). If these communities did not come to the museum, then she took it to them in the form of educational ‘Bragg Boxes’, miniature dioramas with curriculum books, photographs, cultural artefacts and scientific specimens to touch and pass around. A total of 63 were constructed by 1914, to which a further 84 were added over the next twelve years.

It was Bragg who devised the plan for the ‘History of Man’ exhibit within which ‘Egypt is a tale by itself, to be emphasised here... because of the part it played in the building up of other civilizations’. It was at this time that objects from the BSAE concessions at Harageh and Lahun were acquired, most likely via Bragg’s personal connections in the Egyptian Departments of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Boston MFA, where she had spent brief periods working, or through her friend Caroline Sinker, who had links with Philadelphia museums. Although the rhetoric of these displays was couched in the then familiar terms of ‘primitive peoples’ and ‘civilization’, Bragg held ‘no brief for the Nordic race theory’, and felt rather that museums can ‘change our supercilious attitude toward the rest of the world’. In 1920 she wrote to Flinders Petrie directly, outlining the history of the museum, its status as ‘the only large, active museum in the South’, and her ambitions for exhibiting ‘typical forms of civilization and endeavouring to show the origins and migrations of various cultural elements’. In this scheme, she went on to explain, ‘you can readily understand that Egypt is the corner stone’. In 1922 the arrival of a second batch of finds from Flinders Petrie, together with material from Eckley B. Coxe, Jr’s US expeditions, ‘led to the reinstallation of the Egyptian exhibit’. For Bragg, Egyptian antiquities represented her ‘deepest interest of making the history of the past live for people of the present’, and she was thrilled by the sorts of things that Petrie’s excavations could supply: the pottery vessels, stone tools, faience amulets
and metal tools. These were not just things for display. Bragg insisted on the value of tactile engagement with objects, and in this context Egyptian ‘minor antiquities’ became ‘a real asset in teaching’ in South Carolina.\textsuperscript{72} It is even possible that some of the smaller pieces found their way into one of her travelling ‘Bragg Boxes’. Whether Egyptian objects were always so revered in the South should, however, be questioned. Slavery was a narrative that was assumed for much of ancient Egyptian history, and this would not have been lost on those of African descent in what had been the largest slave port in the US. Such contemporary voices, however, are absent from currently accessible archives.

These activities are not necessarily evidence that arts at this time were being feminized, because ultimately such cultural institutions were still served by a male policy-making elite.\textsuperscript{73} For these reasons it is commonly assumed that museums were shaped by white, male interests.\textsuperscript{74} Kathleen McCarthy has nevertheless argued that fundraising and philanthropic efforts enabled politically disadvantaged groups, like diverse women’s assemblies, to influence American society in other ways.\textsuperscript{75} Their activities offered to its mostly wealthy proponents a parallel cultural world in which social relationships could be negotiated and through which they could make their presence known. Lobbying for Egyptian antiquities fitted this profile, as was the case in Britain. For others, the fluidity of the quickly changing field of higher education and the developing museum world allowed for new professional identities to be forged. And within the latter, partage models empowered women to proximally engage in the sorts of scientific collecting that was usually the preserve of men. It allowed them to directly shape knowledge constructed within institutions, and it involved them establishing terminology and canons of expertise around material objects that future generations would require to advance their careers.

**Museum Cartographies**

As American museum collections grew, questions began to emerge as to where they should be located. These quandaries formed part of broader negotiations over intellectual boundaries, as the contours of academic practices were realigned between museums and universities at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the US the consequences of collecting policies on Egyptian antiquities and related material were particularly marked in Philadelphia. Here material was exchanged between the Commercial Museum (est. 1893), the University of
Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (est. 1887) and the Philadelphia Museum of Art (est. 1877), as has been thoroughly explored by Stephen Conn. Through these transfers Egyptian artefacts troubled the lines between art, industrial art and archaeology. In Chicago there are three venues in which objects acquired from British excavations are housed: the Oriental Institute (formerly the Haskell Museum) of the University of Chicago (est. 1894), the Field Museum (est. 1893) and the Art Institute of Chicago (est. 1879). The histories of these institutions are also closely interrelated, particularly through the intermediation of James Henry Breasted, with Petrie at the periphery.

Collections in Philadelphia and Chicago provoked the support, and occasionally the ire, of the city’s university scholars. Other institutions, such as the Brooklyn Museum, faced different sorts of conflicts with its ‘twin city’, New York, on Manhattan Island. The Brooklyn Institute had hosted Edwards’s first and final lectures on her tour, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music Hall on Montague St, with the dual aim of promoting the EEF and generating funds to purchase works of art. When Amelia Edwards first visited in 1889, Brooklyn was still an independent city whose local press lamented its lack of a museum. Newspapers such as the Brooklyn Standard used her tour as a platform to continue to call for a cultural institution in which local citizens could take pride. The Brooklyn Museum was eventually opened in 1897, but the following year the city was merged, along with five other boroughs, to form New York City, much to the disappointment of many Brooklynites, who feared losing their civic sense of self. The museum’s identity was, as a result, contested. On each side of the newly constructed Brooklyn Bridge opinions clashed as to what should fill the grand Roman Neoclassical building that had been erected. Those in Brooklyn initially had lofty aspirations, identifying themselves with London’s South Kensington Museum and its reputation as a prominent centre of learning in the technical and industrial arts. Many New Yorkers, on the other hand, believed that there should be ‘only one great museum of art in Central Park’, relegating Brooklyn’s Museum to the position of a ‘great organization for popular study’. By 1905 a letter from the museum to Flinders Petrie, who was then leading excavations in the Sinai, gives away the direction taken by Brooklyn Museum, at least with regard to Egyptian antiquities. The museum authorities requested ‘larger showier specimens suitable for display’, and they earnestly hoped ‘that a good mummy case may turn up the time you next visit Cairo. A mummy case is always an attractive object and regarded with much interest by the public.’ As they went on to explain:
Mr Petrie’s judgement will be considered as superior to our own in all these matters, provided he understands that there are no Egyptologists in Brooklyn, and that inscriptions or papri [sic] will not be valued from the standpoint of the scholar or hieroglyphic [sic] expert… we do not hope to obtain rare historic pieces. We want to make a popular exhibit.  

Brooklyn’s appeal came at a time when America’s universities and museums were beginning to strike out on their own. Millionaire philanthropists provided investment capital for independent American expeditions to Egypt, filling a niche opened by fractures in the EEF’s American branch after Winslow’s 1902 dismissal and the discontinuation of the affiliate EEF branches in Philadelphia and Chicago in 1904. The first of these plutocratic patrons was Phoebe Hearst, who sponsored the University of California expedition to Koptos, north of Luxor, in 1899, where George Reisner (1867–1942) was granted a large concession to work. He continued to explore a number of sites on behalf of the Phoebe Hearst Museum over five years, including at Ballas, Naga ed-Deir and Giza, before the funding was rescinded. By that time, Albert Lythgoe (1868–1934) had been appointed as the Boston Museum of Fine Art’s first curator in the new Department of Egyptian Art. The museum joined forces with Harvard University to sponsor a continuation of work on the Giza plateau, shifting the spoils to America’s north-east coast.

As Boston’s Egyptian collection grew, the Metropolitan Museum of Art became worried that New York was losing out. J. P. Morgan, the museum’s wealthy president of the Board of Trustees, launched the challenge that the Met’s new Department of Egyptian Art (founded 1906) should ‘rank permanently as the best in America’, and he swiftly lured Lythgoe to New York to head its own 1906–07 expedition to el-Lisht, capital of Middle Kingdom Egypt. From 1910 onwards the Metropolitan Museum of Art based its operations in Luxor, and its collections expanded to occupy ten newly built galleries in the north wing, primarily administered by Caroline Ransom while Lythgoe was away in the field. The Metropolitan Museum also profited from other ‘robber barons’, such as Theodore Davis (1838–1915), a man who made his millions as a lawyer and sponsored work in the Valley of the Kings before giving up the concession to Lord Carnarvon in 1914. On his death Davis bequeathed his rich collection to the New York institution. Brooklyn Museum commissioned Henri de Morgan (1854–1909) for two winters of excavation in 1906–07 and 1907–08, fieldwork that considerably enlarged its Predynastic collection in the process, while the University
of Pennsylvania’s expeditions began in 1907 through the support of Eckley B. Coxe, Jr. (1872–1916), a wealthy heir to a fortune made mining coal fields. By 1915 the Coxe endowment allowed for budgets as high as $15,000 per season in Egypt, far in excess of any British project. In Chicago, Breasted’s initiatives at the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute were eventually financed by one of America’s wealthiest individuals of all time, the oil magnate John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937).

On account of such financing America was able to organize archaeological practice in Egypt on a much more massive scale than had previously been seen, with considerable sums being spent on equipment, dig-houses and libraries. This allowed the US to aggressively advance its influence over Egyptian archaeology in competition with the longer-established claims of Europeans. The material results of these missions were closely linked to the institutional affiliations of the excavators and their philanthropists. As such, they were accountable to a far narrower set of museums than British campaigns.

Given this lavish expenditure and the scale of work it financed, it is understandable why book titles such as *The American Discovery of Ancient Egypt* give the impression of a nationally bounded narrative of heroic exploration. In practice, however, US work moved into the Egyptian archaeological labour market that had been partially restructured by British interests and which enabled increasingly sophisticated excavations. Generating knowledge about ancient Egypt implicated a fluid set of transnational relationships. Some of those involved, like Breasted, received their first archaeological excavation experience directly under Petrie, while for others it was more indirect, with “Petrie’s pups” forming the initial logistical foundation for US-led missions.

Theodore Davis’s privately financed work, for instance, was undertaken by several British excavators, including John Garstang, James Quibell, Edward Ayrton and Percy Newberry. Meanwhile, individuals such as Frederick Green, James Quibell, Kate Quibell and Arthur Mace, as well as several unnamed Egyptian workmen, who had all gained their first experiences of running archaeological excavations under Petrie, were employed on Phoebe Hearst’s expedition specifically because Reisner was ‘absolutely inexperienced’ during his first seasons between 1899 and 1901. Yet Reisner quickly established his own exacting methods, critiquing ‘the search for museum specimens’ that had driven British enterprises as ‘an offence against historical and archaeological research which is utterly unworthy of any institution which pretends to be dedicated to the advancement of knowledge’. Every tomb was to be recorded, photographed and published, in contrast to Petrie’s selective accounts.
This greater emphasis on empirical findings by US-led expeditions was, given the sponsorship, as much a product of political economy as it was of intellectual reform. Nevertheless, the museum was still in the mind’s eye of the excavator, and Reisner envisaged that his records would be for public benefit, as well as of research value. In letters to his sponsor, Phoebe Hearst, he outlined his specific plans for an Egyptian museum in California which would utilize photographs in situ alongside displayed objects to illustrate archaeological context. Like Ransom’s work in the Metropolitan Museum a decade later, these trends in US collecting reveal distinct sets of museum values which were ‘worked out at the interface of photograph and object’ with photographic collections operating to authenticate and authorize narratives of scientific work.

A second key element in Reisner’s management of sites was the introduction of simple index cards, known in archaeological circles as ‘tomb cards’, to organize observations. This systematization of field documentation instituted on the Hearst campaigns in turn impacted British field-logging methods, which adopted more formal note-taking from at least 1908. On Ayrton and Loat’s EEF excavation at Abydos, for instance, pre-printed, bespoke tomb cards were used to record cemetery F. Notably, the large central portion of these cardboard records was reserved for a ‘catalogue of objects’, rather than as a space to document the broader context of the finds (Fig. 2.5). Object-led knowledge of the past remained the focus of excavation. By 1910 these individual ‘context sheets’ had been restructured for use by Petrie’s BSAE teams.

Fig. 2.5a & b Front and back of a ‘tomb card’ from EES Abydos excavations, 1908–09. Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society (AB. TC.E.0011).
with discrete sections for listing different categories of grave goods, as well as for recording the specifics of tomb dimensions and the sex of the occupant. Despite the latter two sections being dedicated to contextual detail for the finds, practitioners rarely used them, and they continued to list object types for the next decade. By this time, the BSAE excavation reports published lists of artefacts sent to museums by reference to tomb number, meaning that such field recording mechanisms could be a means of facilitating the distribution, as much as the archaeological interpretation, of finds.

The circulation of finds between Britain and the US continued during the Progressive Era, albeit in alternative ways. Smaller sets of material from the EEF and BSAE from 1905 onwards continued to trickle into institutions in Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia, but on nothing of the scale of the returns seen in the previous century, nor of the sort that could rival what American institutions were now able to procure independently. It is true that such institutions often still maintained a watchful eye on the spoils that came into Boston’s harbour, but they were usually quick to dismiss the type of objects that were arriving. In 1911, for example, the Docent of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Louis Earle Rowe (1882–1937), inspected the cargo of antiquities sent by the EEF to the Boston office and noted that ‘so many museums were already supplied with much of the material’, which was in any case ‘of second rate character, yet decidedly of use for students, especially the several varieties of pottery’. He suggested that Rhode Island School of Design might acquire a few pieces for their art museum. They took the opportunity.

Through such mechanisms, ad hoc donations and opportunistic acquisitions began to find their way to a few new American destinations between 1906 and 1915. These included Johns Hopkins University Museum in Baltimore, and Williams College Museum of Art in Williamstown, but in these cases it was the simple happenstance of personal connections, rather than intercity competition, which was the primary motivating factor for acquisition. In Baltimore’s case that involved the participation of local attorney James Teackle Dennis (1865–1918) in the EEF Deir el-Bahri excavations. A different sort of personal association led to nearly one hundred archaeological relics ending up in the Iowa Masonic Lodge in Cedar Rapids. This was reportedly on account of the husband of EEF American Branch Secretary, Marie Buckman, who was a Knight Templar and a Scottish Rite Mason. As a result of this initial donation the Grand Secretary of Cedar Rapids Lodge was eventually appointed as EEF Honorary
Secretary for Iowa. The Lodge took particular interest in two ibis mummies and material from Abydos, the centre of the Osiris Cult in Middle Kingdom times. Osiris was a god who ‘all Scottish Rite Masons will be interested in’, because of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century belief that freemasonry had its origins in ancient Egypt. These beliefs formed a strong current in American interest in Egypt. They lay behind, for instance, the acquisition of ‘Cleopatra’s Needle’ in New York, through the agency of Henry H. Gorringe (1841–1885), the installation of which was an event attended by several thousand Masons.95

By 1910, smaller institutions beyond the metropolises of the East Coast were building up their own Egyptian collections, and in the absence of millionaire philanthropists, appealed to the EEF for concessions to American museums. The timing could not have been worse, however: much of the Old World was set to be engulfed by the First World War.

‘Business As Usual’: Excavation and Distribution During the War

The initiative for a group of American museums to acquire material through the EEF was led by an elusive and very private professor, Thomas Whittemore (1871–1950).96 He was well connected with wealthy American patrons, and had long-standing friendships with European and Europe-based artists like Henri Matisse and Gertrude Stein. As a student Whittemore had become fascinated with the ancient world, and in 1911 he abandoned his post at Boston’s Tuffs College to excavate for the EEF with Naville at Abydos. From there Whittemore sent 400 undecorated, small brown pottery libation cups back to America, which when distributed to individual subscribers ‘proved at that time a wonderful attraction and gained us [the EEF] subscribers’.97 Encouraged by this response, Whittemore sought to direct his own excavations, funded solely by American donations. He enlisted the support of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the University of Pennsylvania, Brooklyn Museum, Cincinnati Museum, Wellesley College, Toledo Museum of Art, the University of Illinois, Yale University, Brattleboro Public Library in Vermont, and Louisville Museum in Kentucky, all of which were to be reimbursed with ancient finds. Sawama and Balabish cemeteries near Abydos were identified for excavating, but no pretence was made to scientific investigation. Ostensibly, this was exclusively an exercise in museum enrichment:
Both [cemeteries] had been previously excavated by the Department of Antiquities, as well as frequently plundered by natives, but it was thought that they might still yield types of pottery much sought by the museums, and, perhaps, other objects of interest. It seems that where the objects were from was considered less important than where they were going. The asymmetrical colonial power relations underpinning this treasure hunt are represented in a photograph of what is apparently payday at Balabish (Fig. 2.6). Whittemore can be seen seated at a table in tweed trousers, shirt, tie and cloth hat, surrounded by Egyptian workmen standing barefoot on the rocky desert surface, together with dust-covered basket boys seated on the ground. Is this simply another illustration of business as usual, mobilizing and administering the oriental other for Western gain? Perhaps, but not quite. Photographs can disguise more complicated histories of colonial encounter than is readily apparent. As anthropologists have increasingly come to realize, such snapshots are not only images, but also material performances through which complex relationships were negotiated. In this case, the frozen moment captured on a glass plate negative was clearly staged. Whittemore’s profile at the left hand edge of the picture is assured as he holds still for the exposure, while the animation of the group jostled around him is apparent from the

Fig. 2.6 Photograph of payday at Balabish, March 1915. Courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society (BAL.NEG.10).
ghostly expressions that streak across the image. Early twentieth-century photography was a cumbersome business. Unlike the well-financed US expeditions, British fieldwork was less able to invest in the bulky and fragile equipment that such practices relied upon. As a result, which aspects of fieldwork were to be recorded had to be more selective than was the case for American excavations. In this case, the rationale for setting up such a portrait of fieldwork life was a composite of circumstances and conflicting interests, of which archaeology or museum acquisition were the least important considerations.

The photograph was taken around March 1915, a time when trench warfare was tearing Europe apart. Whittemore had witnessed the casualties of the conflict first hand, as a volunteer with the British Red Cross in 1914, serving in France where he attended to ‘acres of wounded’ amid ‘unimaginable suffering’. He had flown to Egypt that season from Germany, where he had been attempting to visit his friend, Matthew S. Prichard, who was being held at a prisoner of war camp near Berlin. Most of his war after leaving Balabish in April 1915 was spent engaged in humanitarian efforts in France, Russia and Bulgaria, using the fundraising skills honed for the EEF to campaign for supplies for refugees and fugitives. It would simplistic to attribute his interlude in Egypt between the horrors of the Western Front and the bleak Balkan war-torn landscape as merely a privileged hiatus. Whittemore was in fact responding to a personal plea from an Egyptian foreman (rais), Aly Osman, one of the Egyptian workmen he knew from his previous seasons at Abydos and whose own livelihood was now under threat from Europe’s war. He had written personally to Whittemore in broken English at the end of 1914. Of the thousands of archival documents relating to the distribution of finds from Egypt, this is the only one known to represent the voice of an Egyptian worker:

Dear Sir,

I hope that you are quite well please if there is any work tell us because the workers waiting any work this year and if you dont [sic] come and not work tell us to search for work we are much oblige [sic] from your work.101

Whittemore forwarded the letter to Marie Buckman at the EEF American branch head office noting that ‘you will see by the enclosed what a pity it is not to go on with the work’. The American Committee immediately cabled Whittemore to make arrangements to travel to Egypt and to commence
excavations, while Buckman informed the London office that ‘Aly Osman’s letter is our appeal to you for special support of this expedition’. Any altruism apparently expressed here could be dismissed as a ploy to encourage a reticent British organization to endorse an excavation for American benefit. Notwithstanding this possibility, Osman’s intervention remains significant. Egyptian foremen, as Wendy Doyon’s work has shown, occupied pivotal positions between indigenous workmen and Western archaeologists, as they played a central role in mediating the economic relations of archaeological fieldwork in Egypt. This is no more evident than here.

The London office consented to the American branch’s request, but it did so on its own terms. All official contemporary EEF accounts of the Balabish expedition efface the Egyptian workers’ agency and their stake in the archaeological process. Instead the initiative was reframed jingoistically as one of heroic British defiance. The editorial of the April 1915 edition of the Journal of Egyptian Archaeology boasts that:

The action of the American Committee in carrying on our work under the joint Anglo-American leadership of Professor Whittemore and Mr Wainwright, is much appreciated as a ready help in time of difficulty, and as proof that the American public has no belief whatever in the ridiculous German lies about disturbances in Egypt. The fact that Professor Reisner is carrying on ‘business as usual’ at Gizeh, of course, tells Boston that all is well on the banks of the Nile in spite of the absurd inventions of the egregious Herr Encke and the credulity of ‘Tante Voss’. And so Boston keeps the Fund’s flag flying in Egypt.

Similarly, Whittemore’s colleague, Gerald A. Wainwright’s journey to the field site was commended as an act of heroism, his having ‘escaped the attentions of German pirates’ in order to reach Egypt from England. Against this background, perhaps the purpose of the photograph was, in visual anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards’s terms, a ‘mode of reassurance’, an attempt to present a picture of stability, of ‘business as usual’, when all else in the world was in a state of flux and uncertainty. Today this image of the individuals around Whittemore also acts as a reminder that the money raised by the EEF did not just enable the dispersal of antiquities, but also went directly towards the creation of a new wage labour economy. In turn this created ‘a particular division of labour for the extraction of ancient artefacts whereby the labour of Egyptian peasants was “invested” in Egypt’s archaeological development’.
The antiquities wrested from Balabish were the EEF’s last consignment of material to make it out of Egypt and Europe before the war depleted finances, diverted manpower and disrupted transport. In November 1915, the steamship SS Arabic was sunk by a German torpedo, with the loss of 44 lives together with its cargo of Egyptian antiquities originally destined for the Metropolitan Museum Art. Petrie and his colleagues were horrified, and they did not dare to ship anything else, despite the Journal of Egyptian Archaeology’s repetition of British war propaganda that ‘the Navy has crushed the German submarines in our waters’.107

While many archaeologists enlisted for war duty, Petrie was forced begrudgingly by age to remain in London, ‘managing the collection there all the winter, and wondering when a bomb might scatter it all’.108 In the interim he also tried to negotiate a home for one of the most spectacular finds made by his teams over the winter of 1913–14: an exquisite set of 3800-year old jewellery belonging to the Middle Kingdom Princess Sithathoryunet, found concealed in a niche of her underground tomb alongside King Senwosret II’s pyramid. The set included a pectoral inlaid with 372 skilfully cut pieces of semi-precious stones (Fig. 2.7), hundreds of gold and amethyst beads (some shaped into lion claws), obsidian and gold cosmetic vessels, travertine canopic jars to hold the deceased’s internal organs, and delicate, ivory ornamented wooden caskets. It was

![Fig. 2.7](image.png) Pectoral and necklace of Queen Sithathoryunet with the name of Senwosret II (c. 1887 BC) (museum number 16.1.3a, b) excavated by the British School of Archaeology in Egypt team at Lahun in 1914. Creative Commons Zero (CC0) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
heralded in *The Times* on 20 May 1914 as ‘The Treasure of Lahun’, and the article closed with a reminder that the jewellery that had not been retained by the Cairo Museum was now in London and would shortly be exhibited at University College London that June. The display was still open when war was announced in August, and Petrie rushed back from a lecture tour to dismantle it. The precious assemblage survived the Zeppelin raids and was eventually dispatched to New York after the war. Petrie later alleged in his memoir *Seventy Years in Archaeology* that he accepted an offer from the Metropolitan Museum ‘reluctantly’, as it was the only institution then capable of providing the appropriate financial recompense for such a sensational find. Britain’s war effort, he claimed, had restricted available funds, and South Kensington and the British Museum were apathetic towards accommodating the find. Letters in the archive reveal this to be somewhat disingenuous assertion. Rather, as Petrie confessed to the Head of the Metropolitan Museum’s Egyptian Department, ‘I should be glad to think of it being in a safe place out of reach of the barbarians.’ Missives in the Metropolitan Museum archive further detail the extent of the bargaining that went on, and Petrie’s active role in promoting competition to inflate the price further. A bid of £7500 had been made by Berlin Museum by June of 1914, which New York countered with an offer ‘to advance as much as nine thousand pounds in case you can purchase the whole material’. Petrie, as Breasted remarked shortly after, had ‘become a mere digger after museum pieces and stuff to satisfy his subscribers’.

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The passing of royal treasures from British to American hands was in another sense symbolic of Britain’s post-war displacement from the forefront of Egyptian archaeology. As Breasted boasted, ‘far and away the best work done in Egypt is being done by three American expeditions here, Reisner, Lythgoe and Fisher, that is Boston (Harvard), New York and Philadelphia’. Such a statement was typical of the American exceptionalism that pervades much of Breasted’s rhetoric, such as that in the widely disseminated high school textbook *Ancient Times* (1916), which emphasizes a ‘cultural kinship’ between modern America and ancient Egypt, predicated on a shared imperialist quest to conquer the wilderness. He had a point, however. By the early 1920s seven out of eight foreign missions in Egypt were sponsored by American organizations.

The shift was keenly felt back in London. In late 1918 the EEF rallied the support of Lord F. M. Grenfell (1841–1925), President of the
Fund and former Sirdar of the British Army, to push for a British Imperial Institute of Archaeology for Egypt,\textsuperscript{116} while Sir John Evans penned an appeal in the 3 March 1919 edition of The Times. The issue was also one of the first agenda items of the newly formed Joint Archaeological Committee, assembled by the British Academy and representing all the principal English societies concerned with Archaeology, ‘with the object of urging on the Government the proper organization of the control of antiquities of all periods in the lands opened up by the war’.\textsuperscript{117} The group laid down a memorandum addressed to the Treasury in January 1919. All to no avail. At the fourth meeting of the Joint Archaeological Committee on 6 March 1919, the Chair of the Committee, British Museum director, Frederic Kenyon, read the Treasury’s terse response: ‘in the present financial conditions it was not possible to increase any liabilities by endorsing a British Institute in Egypt’.\textsuperscript{118} It was a prudent decision, as the following decades would demonstrate.
Notes

2 President Theodore Roosevelt became a member of the American Branch of the EEF around 1902/1903 after donating $25. Letter from Charles W. Darling to Theodore Roosevelt, 4 February 1903, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division.
5 Letter from Winslow to Edwards, 8 March 1888, EES.COR.2.d.180; see also Winslow to Edwards, 18 June 1889, EES.COR.2.d.247.
7 Letter from W. J. Holland to Emily Paterson, 31 December 1901, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Department of Egyptian Art Archives.
10 Many local museums sprang up across America in the Antebellum Era. They were often focused on natural history and curios, but these tended to be operated as forms of popular entertainment rather than education, and few were long-term enterprises. See Wallach, A. 1998. Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum in the United States. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, p. 24.
19 Original certificate in the University of Pennsylvania Museum archives (number 249505). With thanks to Alessandro Pezzati for sharing a copy with me.
22 Letter from Winslow to Edwards, 19 May 1884, EES.COR.2.d.5.
28 Letter from Charles Dudley Warner to General Loring, 19 September 1897, Boston Museum of Fine Art, Department of Egyptian Art archives.
31 PMA/WFP1/D/6/1.2.
32 EES.DIST.06.03b.
39 19 out of 40 listed names, as based on salutations Miss or Mrs in the subscription lists. Where ‘Dr’ or only initials are given it is impossible to make a judgement on an individual’s gender.
40 Dall’s papers can be consulted in the Massachusetts Historical Society and include several pieces of correspondence with the EEF: http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/view/fa0270/i-c03_497terms=civil%20war [accessed 27 October 2017].
41 For example, a donation of $5 is recorded in EEF 1892. *Report of the Sixth Ordinary General Meeting 1891–92*. London: Egypt Exploration Fund, p. 49.
45 Griffith Institute Archives, Diary of Mrs Kate Griffith (née Bradbury), made during the journey to America with Amelia Edwards in 1890 (2 volumes).
48 Breasted held a doctorate in Egyptology from the University of Berlin, and went on to become Instructor in Egyptology at the University of Chicago. He simultaneously held the post of Assistant Director and curator of the University’s Haskell Oriental Museum, which had opened in 1896. See Abt, J. 2012. *American Egyptologist: The Life of James Henry Breasted and the Creation of the Oriental Institute*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
50 Breasted and Petrie, Egypt Research Account. Italics in the original.
The address was originally made at the session of the American Association of Museums, 10 June 1912 and published as Ransom, C. L. 1912. The value of photographs and transparencies as adjuncts to museum exhibits. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 7(7): 132–4.

Sheppard, My Dear Miss Ransom.


Letter from Sara Yorke Stevenson to Flinders Petrie, 15 February 1895, University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum archives, call number 0057. With thanks to John Baines for copies of these letters.

Letter from Yorke to Petrie, 15 February 1895.


O’Connor, The earliest pharaohs, 30.


Not everything sent to Stevenson was accommodated in the Penn Museum. As president of the American Exploration Fund, she also mediated the transfer of hundreds of smaller artefacts to places such as Bryn Mawr and the Peabody Museum at Harvard University.


Letter from Laura Bragg to Flinders Petrie, 16 October 1920, Charleston Museum Archive.

Brinton-Coxe was also an Honorary Secretary of the EES in America.


McCarthy, *Women’s Culture*.


Muñoz, Amelia Edwards in America.


Letter from Brooklyn Museum to Petrie, 7 January 1905, PMA.WMP1.115.10.1.13.4.


Doyon, History of archaeology through the eyes of Egyptians.

As explained by Olga Tufnell, this was a term applied by the hierarchy in the early part of this [the twentieth] century to those people selected by Flinders Petrie to act as his assistants in the field. See Tufnell, O. 1982. Reminiscences of a ‘Petrie Pup’. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 114(2): 81.


Letters from L. Earle Rowe to Mrs Gustave Radeke, July 1911. L. Earle Rowe Correspondence, Rhode Island School of Design Archive, collection number 213.1.2.

EES.DIST.34.24 and EES.DIST.34.26d.


Letter from Buckman to Jonas, 18 August 1925, EES.USA.COR.


Letter from Aly Osman to Thomas Whittemore, 27 November 1914, EES.USA.COR.

Document titled ‘Aly Osman’s Letter’, included in letter from Buckman to Paterson, January 1915, EES.USA.COR.

Doyon, The history of archaeology through the eyes of Egyptians.


Doyon, History of archaeology through the eyes of Egyptians; Doyon, Egyptology in the shadow of class, p. 266.


Letter from Petrie to Lythgoe 8 May 1915, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Egyptian Art archives.


Letter from Petrie to Lythgoe, 8 May 1915, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Egyptian Art archives.

Letter from Paris to Lythgoe, 21 June 1914, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Egyptian Art archives.


Memorandum dated January 1919, British Academy Archives, BAA/SEC/2/4/1(a).

AJC Minute Book, 1918–1945, British Academy archives, BAA/SEC/2/4/1.