

Interior



Shelves

New Objects at Kalaupapa National Historical Park

Contributed by T. Scott Williams, National Park Service

"His cassock was worn and faded, his hair tumbled like a school-boy's, his hands stained and hardened by toil; but the glow of health was in his face, the buoyancy of youth in his manner; while his ringing laugh, his ready sympathy, and his inspiring magnetism told of one who in any sphere might do a noble work, and who in that which he has chosen is doing the noblest of all works. This was Father Damien."

~Charles Warren Stoddard, visitor to Kalawao in 1884

Joseph De Veuster (1840-1889), better known as Father Damien, was a central figure in the lives of victims of Hansen's disease (also known as Leprosy) who were confined on the Hawaiian island of Molokai in the late nineteenth century. Father Damien was part of a community of Congregational ministers, Catholic priests, Mormon elders, and families and friends of patients who helped transform Kalawao from a place to die into a place to live. Helping to build houses, constructing a water system, organizing schools, bands, and choirs, and providing medical care for the living and burial services for the deceased, Father Damien brought worldwide attention to the disease and the plight of its victims.

Grandma Jean O'Keefe of Kualapu'u, Molokai, recently donated several objects associated with Father Damien to Kalaupapa National Historical Park (KNHP). The gift included a fragment from Father Damien's original redwood coffin, exhumed for identification in 1936. O'Keefe also gifted a piece of cloth which was touched to the head of Father Damien's physical remains; it is likely the cloth was collected during an inspection of his remains as part of the Sainthood process in the 1950's. The final component of O'Keefe's donation is a collection of nails used by Father Damien in the construction of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Catholic Church in Mapeluhu, Molokai. The church was burned down in 1965 and has since been rebuilt, but these original nails were collected from the ruins for preservation. O'Keefe received the nails from Patrick Boland of Honolulu.

The objects associated with Father Damien came full circle and were transported back to Kalaupapa by Tomiko Nishihira, postmaster at Kalaupapa since November 2012. Nishihira herself has ties to the artifacts. Her great-great-grandfather Andrew Poaha knew Father Damien and helped build Our Lady of Seven Sorrows in 1874. Poaha's wife, Elizabeth Keaka, washed Damien's clothes during the construction of the church. Tomiko's heritage line also links to the kama'aina who lived at Makanalua before the first patients were sent to Kalawao in 1866 - before Kamehameha I unified Hawaii. "I feel honored" was Nishihira's response when asked to transport the artifacts to KNHP's museum collections facility.

KNHP's Museum Curator, T. Scott Williams, and Cultural Anthropologist, Ka'ohulani McGuire, met with Grandma Jean to accept the donation. The collection was given to the park in honor of Father Damien and in memory of Grandma Jean's husband, Michael P. O'Keefe.

Grandma Jean wanted to ensure the preservation of the artifacts and to educate the public about the history of Kalaupapa and Father Damien of Molokai. The NPS has specific procedures and requirements when accessioning objects such as verifying authenticity and provenance and assessing the condition of possible collection items. KNHP's museum collections facility, known as "Hale Mälama" (house of care), was built to preserve the cultural and natural histories of the Kalaupapa Settlement and entire peninsula, and objects are maintained in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment that is open to visitors. Digital images of objects in the collections taken by KNHP staff make it feasible to share the story of Kalaupapa and Kalawao both regionally and abroad via the internet. For more information about the mission of and Museum collections at KNHP, visit <http://www.nps.gov/kala/index.htm>. ☞



Objects associated with Saint Damien include a fragment of wood from Father Damien's redwood coffin, cloth, and nails from the Church of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows in Mapeluhu.

Individuality and Dignity

Contributed by Annie Pardo, Indian Affairs

Omaha, Nebraska, was bustling from June until November 1898 as the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition arrived in town with the goal of showcasing the achievements of the rapidly developing West.

Congress had appropriated \$40,000 to bring together Native Americans "to make an extensive exhibit illustrative of the mode of life, native industries, and ethnic traits of as many of the aboriginal American tribes as possible," resulting in a three-month Indian Congress with more than 500 Indians from 35 tribes. The Apache, Arapaho, Assiniboine, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Chippewa, Crow, Flathead, Iowa, Kiowa, Kootenai, Omaha, Ponca, Pueblo, Sauk, Sioux, Tonkawa, Winnebago, Wichita, and other tribes were represented.

The Indian Congress selected Frank Rinehart as the official photographer for the Exposition. He ran a small downtown photography studio and became the only photographer allowed on the Indian Congress grounds. Rinehart seized this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, set up a studio on exposition grounds, and hired Adolph Muhr as his assistant. Muhr later managed a studio for Edward Curtis, well-known for his published portfolio of photographs, *The North American Indian*.

Using an 8" x 10" glass-negative camera, Rinehart photographed more than 500 Native Americans at the Congress and later in his studio, including the great Chiefs Geronimo, Red Cloud, and White Swan. He captured a stunning visual document of Native American life and culture at the dawn of the 20th century. The portraits have a candid intimacy, giving the subjects individuality and dignity, a quality not generally found in most 19th-century ethnographic photography.



Frank Rinehart, Left Behind, Omaha. Photograph taken in Omaha, 1900.



Frank Rinehart, Two Young Warriors, Assiniboines. Photograph taken in Omaha, 1900.

Today, the Haskell Cultural Center and Museum, on the campus of the Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, houses one of the largest collections of Rinehart's work. Among these collections are 809 glass plate negatives as well as platinum and archival silver prints. The glass negatives were originally purchased by Haskell alumni in the early 1970s and have since been preserved, scanned, and cataloged. Information about the collection can be found on the Center's website at <http://www.haskell.edu/cultural/pages/rinehart.html>.

The Rinehart negatives and prints are now part of the Indian Affairs Museum Program collections, putting a dignified human face on the Indian tribes of the era. ☞

Sunken Treasure

Contributed by Kelsey Lutz, National Park Service

Kelsey Lutz, Curator of Archaeology Collections at the NPS Pacific West Regional Office, recently finished organizing, rehousing, cataloging, and preparing for transfer a collection from Sunken Village Archeological Site National Historic Landmark in Portland, Oregon.

Sunken Village is the archaeological remains of a Chinook acorn-leaching site on the banks of the Columbia River that was active between 1250 and 1750 AD. The site was hydraulically excavated in 2006 and 2007 by a local university in partnership with an area contract archaeology firm. Due to NPS's involvement in the determination of this site as a National Historic Landmark (and their expertise in collections management), NPS was asked to help prepare the collection for storage.

As is common in wet-site situations, the archaeological team treated the organic material with a Polyethylene Glycol (PEG) solution for long-term preservation. While this treatment can keep basketry, acorns, and other organic artifacts from deteriorating as they dry, it also creates some major challenges during rehousing. Lutz collaborated with a wood conservator who specializes in PEG from the Western Archaeological and Conservation Center (WACC) to determine the best way to stabilize these delicate objects and to design appropriate mounts for their long-term storage.

In addition to basketry and nuts, the collection also includes some projectile points and other stone tools. As it turned out, the type of PEG used is a liquid at room temperature and became unstable during transport. The objects reabsorbed much of the PEG after sitting in stable conditions for about a month, but Lutz tried to sop up as much of the excess moisture as possible during rehousing. It was a messy process!

Projects like Sunken Village present unique problems for NPS's cultural heritage professionals and encourage curators, preservationists, and conservators to work together toward responsible, long-term solutions. Once stabilization work is completed, the collection will be stored at the University of Oregon, Eugene's Museum of Natural and Cultural History, where they will be available for research in the future. ☞

Interior Museum Program

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