

## Museums, Expositions, and Their Specimens

FRANZ BOAS WAS BORN in Minden in Prussian Westphalia in July 1858, the son of parents who were Jewish and liberal. At an early age he showed interest in science and geography, and, at the universities of Heidelberg, Bonn, and Kiel, continued an interest

in geography while specializing in science. His Kiel thesis was in physics and he published a number of promising papers in the related psychophysics field, but his focus had already turned to geography.

In October 1882 he moved to Berlin in order to prepare himself for fieldwork on Baffin Island, where he would investigate the influence of environment and its perception upon peoples and their movements. This period in

Berlin — from October 1882 to June 1883 — was a time of intense and exhilarating preparation.<sup>1</sup> He made arrangements with Georg Neumayer of the German Polar Commission for travel and with Rudolf Mosse of the *Berliner Tageblatt* for pay in exchange for fifteen newspaper articles. His self-training was extensive — cartography, linguistics, and the techniques of magnetic, meteorological, and somatological measurements.



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He now had no time for and almost as little interest in his psychophysics work, and when he left for Baffin Island on the *Germania* in June 1883, he had become a geographer with a special interest in the study of people and their environment. He had developed a competence in physical anthropology and in linguistics, knew something of folklore and ethnology. It might have been premature to call him an anthropologist or an ethnologist; those fields were still inchoate as separate disciplines — indeed, geography had only emerged in the 1870s as a definable academic area. Moreover, Boas was himself undecided. “I am still considering,” he had written in January, “whether I should let myself be taken up by the anthropologists or not. It will do no harm in any case and it puts me more frequently in touch with different people.”<sup>2</sup> He was still a geographer and would be for several years.

His twelve-month Baffin Island expedition, made with his servant Wilhelm Weike, brought Boas into intensive ethnological fieldwork and into specimen collecting. At the end of the long and lonely sojourn, Boas returned to Germany by way of New York. He had several reasons for stopping in America. His uncle, Dr. Abraham Jacobi, a distinguished physician, lived there. Jacobi was a close intellectual patron, exchanging with him detailed letters and engaging, whenever they met, in conversation that allowed the young scholar to share his earnest plans with the older savant. More important was Marie Krackowizer, the daughter of an emigré Austrian doctor, whom Boas had met when the Jacobis, Krackowizers, and Boases had holidayed in the Harz Mountains in 1882. Boas and Miss Krackowizer had become engaged just before Boas's departure for the Arctic. The engagement helped prompt him to survey career opportunities in the United States. He was already dubious about his future in Germany where the universities were surfeit with young doctorates and lecturers (*privatdozenten*) struggling for paid positions and where he felt his Jewish birth and liberal politics would be a handicap. In America the field was open. Geography was only in the making there while at home it seemed almost finished.

He spent some weeks in January in the Smithsonian, looking over the Hall, *Polaris*, and other Eskimo collections and arranging for the publication of his work on the Central Eskimo by the Bureau of Ethnology, before he returned to Germany. Assured by his friend and mentor Theobald Fischer that anti-Semitism

would not affect his university career and surprised that he was already known and respected among German geographers, but unable to find a non-academic post, he decided to qualify himself for a teaching position by registering for his *habilitation* at the University of Berlin under the geographer Heinrich Kiepert (whom he quickly came to detest). Bastian provided him with a temporary assistantship at the museum.<sup>3</sup>

The museum was a difficult place. Bastian was much better at accumulating than at organizing, and work patterns were chaotic. Boas nevertheless threw himself into the work and into that for Kiepert, enjoying the preparation of the American material for the new museum building as much as he hated the *habilitation* ordeal. It was now that his attention was captured by the art and imagination of Jacobsen's British Columbia material and, coincidentally, by the visit of the Bella Coola to Berlin. He worked very hard with the Indians during their two short visits to the city. Initially, his interviewing was by way of Filipp Jacobsen's Chinook, but with his facility with languages, he was soon able to engage in some direct conversation. The language was very difficult, a "terrible headache," but he was "*wie in Himmel*," at being able to work on something besides his eternal Eskimos. There was, he privately noted, a non-scientific purpose to this work: he wished to demonstrate to American scholars his competence in Indian as well as Eskimo studies. "I will do everything to force the people over there to recognize me." A paper for the New York journal *Science* would soon be ready. He was desperate now to return to America, to his American fiancée, and to America's career possibilities.<sup>4</sup>

By a particular blend of opportunities and enticements, Boas was being introduced and drawn to the Northwest Coast. Jacobsen's collections, the work with the visiting Bella Coola, and fascinating conversations with Aurel and Arthur Krause provided an invitation into a new ethnological field, exciting in itself and also offering an opportunity to expand his breadth as an Americanist and thus make him more marketable in the new world. His Eskimo work had made him attentive to their southern neighbors. "My fancy was first struck by the flight of imagination exhibited in the works of art of the British Columbians as compared to the severe sobriety of the eastern Eskimo." From Jacobsen's fragmentary notes he "divined what a wealth of thought lay

hidden behind the grotesque masks and the elaborately decorated utensils of these tribes." When Adrian and Filipp exhibited their Bella Coolas in Berlin, "an opportunity was thus given to cast a brief glance behind the veil that covered the life of those people, and some of the general problems of the region began to loom up."<sup>5</sup>

Even before Boas met the Bella Coolas, he had formulated an ambitious plan for a four-season expedition that would take him through arctic and sub-arctic areas to Vancouver Island, there to supplement for the museum Jacobsen's too-cursory artifact descriptions. Bastian refused (quite rudely in Boas's opinion) to recommend the plan to his finance committee. Now with his *habilitation* successful and his introductory lectures (he suggested that one be on the Northwest Coast Indians) concluded, with the work at the museum too frustrating and uncertain to keep him, Boas left for a summer's visit to New York. There was a possible position with the Geological Survey in Ottawa; in any case, he felt the broad American opportunities were preferable to the eventuality of a German professorship.

Once in New York he decided to make a research trip to the Northwest Coast, the area he already knew so well through Krause, Jacobsen, and most of all the nine Bella Coolas. Through his uncle's friends he secured a rail pass to Tacoma and Uncle Jacobi lent him five hundred dollars. The loan, he calculated, could be repaid by collecting cheaply in British Columbia and selling dearly in the United States or Germany. Armed with travel hints and letters of introduction from G. M. Dawson, Boas arrived in Victoria in September 1886.

The overriding object of his first field trip to the coast was to further his reputation as an Americanist. He intended to learn enough about languages, ethnic distribution, and mythology to qualify as an expert in the field of Northwest Coast anthropology, which, when added to his already recognized expertise in arctic geography and ethnology, would give him undeniable credentials. He wanted primarily to use language and myth as instruments to investigate the complicated ethnological relationships of the coastal region, and he worked extremely hard to accomplish as much along these lines as was possible in his short September to December stay.

As a supplementary purpose, he carried with him photographs and drawings he had made in New York from the Bishop-Powell collection and others of the Jacobsen masks in Berlin for which he hoped to secure mythological explanations — the “stories” to which the pieces belonged. His success in this was indifferent. Only in rare cases did the Indians recognize the masks and, while he learned about some of them, this was not nearly as much as he had hoped and expected. The task, he discovered, presented extraordinary difficulties because Powell and Jacobsen had recorded neither the family nor the lineage from which they had come and such information was vital to securing explanations. Moreover, the meanings of articles belonging to secret society dances were known only to the initiated. The circle of possible informants was thus severely circumscribed and different for each ritual piece.<sup>6</sup>

While Boas attempted to increase the ethnological value of the Berlin and New York collections, he was also intent upon securing a collection of his own, one that he could resell for a sum large enough to offset the credit extended by his uncle. The task occupied his mind from his arrival in Victoria until he had expended all the money he could spare for the purpose. His first day's observation convinced him that he could easily recover his travel costs: there were things to collect and they were valuable. He avoided buying anything in Victoria, quite correctly anticipating lower prices and better goods farther north. His first purchases were at Nuwiti, by which time he knew “exactly what I want to buy and assemble into a very compact collection.”<sup>7</sup>

Boas brought to his Nuwiti collecting the sensitivities of a seasoned fieldworker and the discriminating taste of an experienced ethnographer and museum man. This latter was a new element to coastal collecting. Swan had had sensitivity and Jacobsen a hardy ingenuity, but neither had the respect for artifacts as scientific specimens and ethnological examples which Boas, as one of Bastian's bright young men, possessed. This affected both what and how he bought.

He began cautiously. He probably knew that five years earlier Jacobsen had found these Indians so tied to their aboriginal ways that they were unwilling to sell; indeed, their traditionalism is likely one reason why he selected the Nuwiti for initial research. He spent a full eleven days at this remote Kwakiutl village, but

did not broach the subject of buying until the seventh day, spending the first week in intensive ethnological work — recording stories, sketching poles, observing shaman healings, watching dances and potlatches. On the fourth evening he gave his own potlatch to pay for a dance he had asked to be performed for him. His respectful patience secured the confidence of the villagers as probably no previous collector had. The Nuwiti chief praised him for his kindness and for the potlatch; he was “not like the other whites who have come to us.” Should Boas want anything, “we shall do our best to do what he asks.”<sup>8</sup>

Boas was thus well established to begin to buy. He had seen almost all the ethnological objects in the village, especially dance paraphernalia, knew their uses, and had recorded the stories associated with them. He knew what he wanted, had acquired the trust of the Nuwiti and a self-confidence of his own. Ned Hargon, the local trader, was enlisted to bargain for him “because I am supposed to be too aristocratic to do any trading.” This meant, Boas wrote, that “in other words I would be cheated right and left,” or, more accurately, that his assumed and accepted status would hinder him in the hard bargaining required to come to a proper price. All the circumstances were right and Boas was remarkably successful. He bought all the best masks, except two he was not allowed even to see, and many other good pieces, and he also put two women to work weaving mats and blankets for him. It was “a quite splendid collection.”

In the next few days he gathered more, acting like “a real businessman” — “as though I had stood behind a counter all my life.” He was delighted to have obtained the complete paraphernalia — masks, cedar rings, and whistles — of the winter ceremony, proud that this was the only collection from Nuwiti that was reasonably well labeled. Boas's patient ingratiation of his prospective vendors was not only a new and quite successful trick-of-the-trade in artifact collecting; it was also a means of retaining for those articles their ceremonial, religious, and mythological meaning, with the whole context of the object. Boas brought away with him virtually an entire dance complex, so far as it was material and portable.

In this first purchasing exercise can be seen two distinguishing marks of his general approach to ethnology: his concern for the particular phenomenon and his absorption in the mental processes

of people. He collected these pieces, quite obviously, for speculative reasons, yet they reflected his ethnological concerns, first, for the importance of the specific (in this case the precise winter ceremonial as observed among the Nuwiti Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island), and, second, for the psychological (in this case the mythology and meaning of the ceremonialism). The objects were not curios; they were objects whose significance, as he later wrote, came from "the thoughts that cluster around them."<sup>9</sup> He was concerned that his masks have stories and he continued to search for "meanings" in Jacobsen's Berlin masks for decades after they had been collected.

Although highly satisfied with his Nuwiti collection, it was a small one, not exceeding 65 pieces. He added to it, more indiscriminately, in Alert Bay so that he judged its worth to be at least \$250, though he had laid out only \$70. He had bought cheaply and felt a mixture of surprise, delight, and embarrassment at his actions. Though he felt "just like a merchant," he knew it was a good collection for which he might make "a tidy profit." Early in November he lost his purse; the \$35 it contained left him short of money and he bought little else. The loss did not prevent him from scouring an old graveyard in Quamichan where he picked up two well-preserved deformed skulls and more from middens at Comox. The entire collection, now some 140 pieces (not counting the skulls), went off ahead of him to New York. He intended offering first refusal to the American Museum where he also hoped to secure a curatorial position.<sup>10</sup>

The collection now took on a further purpose. Primarily a speculative venture to pay his costs, he also hoped it would be a useful instrument in his pursuit of the New York job. He had heard of a possible opening before he left and, even while in British Columbia, he had exploited all avenues in his pursuit of it, especially his connection with Jacobi and Jacobi's close friend, the influential Carl Schurz. Boas hoped, too, that Heber Bishop, now a museum trustee, would be attracted not only to his collection but to having a curator of anthropology who was an expert in the Northwest Coast. He would offer the New Yorkers his collection, but "if I do not get a position, it will probably go to Berlin."<sup>11</sup>

On his return to New York Boas exhibited the collection to Bickmore and others at a gathering to which he lectured for two

hours (Schurz complimented him on his English). He had asked \$600 for it, but Schurz and others urged him to put the price higher, to \$1,000, which he did. Bickmore regarded the collection as "very interesting," felt Boas would happily take \$500 for it, and called it to Bishop's attention. But Boas was disappointed. Bishop did not come forward with the purchase money, nor did the museum decide to hire a new curator. His consolation was a contract with Bishop to label and arrange the Powell collection, for which he would receive \$300. The largest part of his own collection went on to Berlin. "The interest of the Berlin Museum really lie in my heart," he wrote Bastian, but it was New York's indifference, especially to hiring him, and Bastian's promise of \$500 which sealed the bargain. Bastian claimed he could afford no more, soon regretted even this commitment, and tried to delay payment until 1888. For the \$500 Boas sent ninety-four pieces, holding back another twenty to exchange with the U. S. National Museum on Berlin's behalf. For these Bastian was obliged, it seems, for another \$100.<sup>12</sup> The whole business went on to weary-some length, leading to unpleasant letters between him and Bastian and difficulties with Oris T. Mason in Washington over the exchange. It appeared harder to dispose of a collection than to acquire one. But there were profits in the end.

Boas had paid \$120 for the collection; he realized \$600 from it (and still retained some valuable pieces). While hardly a bad profit margin, the trip had cost him \$900, making the gain from the collection only slightly more than half of his expenses. Fortunately, he found congenial employment as an editor with *Science*, the New York weekly published by N. D. C. Hodges. The \$150 a month from that, the Bishop contract, 150 Marks from Bastian for an Eskimo collection, and the promised \$500 for the Northwest Coast material allowed him to repay his uncle and, more important to him, to marry Marie Krackowizer and to commit himself to a North American career.

In the meantime, Boas travelled to Washington to study the Northwest Coast collections in the precincts of the National Museum. To his consternation he found them not displayed together, as were the Eskimo collections he knew from his earlier visits, but scattered in various parts of the building, exhibited among articles from dozens of different groups. It was not a random scattering, but a deliberate display technique that

grouped articles by purpose and use rather than by tribal or cultural origin. There was, moreover, an attempt to display an evolutionary sequence of development within each type. To Boas this method of display was both strange and wrong: it tore the individual object from its only meaningful context and put it into artificial categories imposed upon it by the curator. His attack, published in the new forum which his *Science* position gave him, touched on more than museum display techniques, and the subsequent controversy revealed some fundamentally different conceptions of the nature of anthropology.

In the emerging ethnological museum of the nineteenth century, directors and curators had had to find their own ways as best they could. Natural history and other fields with longer antecedents gave ethnologists models or examples but no certain solution to the oldest and most controversial question of nineteenth-century museum practice. Divergent views of how ethnological objects should be arranged and classified emerged as early as the first proposals for ethnology museums and thus before even the museums themselves. E.-F. Jomard urged that a museum ought to present "a progressive tableau of the industry of man from those which meet his most basic needs to his most luxurious development," essentially a statement of what was to become the classification by type-and-evolution of the U. S. National Museum. Jomard's friend P. F. von Siebold argued for an arrangement based exclusively upon the ethnic origin of the specimens.<sup>13</sup>

In continental Europe the tendency was toward von Siebold's view, that is, the installation of exhibits by geographical area or ethnic association. The examples of classical archaeology, art, and decorative art museums may have been an influence; perhaps it was merely that such an arrangement "was basically so simple and natural" that it was adopted without reflection.

At Dresden, Gustav Klemm, librarian and director of the porcelain collection, as well as author of a multi-volume study of "the cultural history of humanity," assembled his own collection on the basis of type of specimen to show developmental sequence, and its 7,939 numbered items were so arranged when installed in Leipzig's new Museum für Völkerkunde in 1873. Within the decade, however, the Leipzig officials altered the arrangement to a standard geographical-ethnic one. On the Continent, after 1878,

only Dresden maintained any displays according to type or sequence. There A. B. Meyer, whose museum, like his own research, incorporated both anthropology and zoology, arranged the general collections according to geographical area, but had type collections for knives, fire implements, money, musical instruments, and several other categories.<sup>14</sup>

Type collections had their greatest favor in England. The British Museum used a tribal or regional scheme, as did most of the smaller provincial and municipal museums, but the collection of Col. A. Lane Fox, opened to the public at Bethnal Green in 1874 and subsequently donated by its owner to Oxford University, used a very thorough evolutionary scheme of classification by type. Lieutenant-General Pitt Rivers, to use Lane Fox's later rank and name, came to ethnological collecting in part through preparing a collection to illustrate the history and development of firearms. Noting how progress from the simpler to the more complex forms often came about as the result of a succession of very slight changes, it struck him that this kind of evolutionary progress might be applied more generally to all arts and industries. With the idea of evolution, progress, and development in mind, he made an extensive ethnological collection on this arrangement and then, by Deed of Gift, imposed the order upon his Oxford museum in perpetuity. Evolution was "the one great feature which it is desirable to emphasize in connection with the exhibition of archaeological and ethnological specimens," he told a British Association audience in 1888. While a geographical or tribal arrangement had its advantages in highlighting the *ethnological* features of each group, his system possessed "greater *sociological* value" because it made apparent "the development of specific ideas and their transmission from one people to another, or from one locality to another."<sup>15</sup>

In the Pitt Rivers collection the stress was upon ordinary and typical specimens arranged "so as to trace, as far as practicable, the succession of ideas by which the minds of men in a primitive condition of culture have progressed from the simple to the complex, and from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous." His favorite example of evolutionary development was the boomerang; in his cases he laid out Australian examples in series to show how the most bent shape was merely an elaboration of a straight stick, which, in other lines of descent, had also evolved

into the throwing stick, the lance, the club, and even from a parrying staff into the shield.<sup>16</sup>

Pitt Rivers's arrangement was not a personal crochet. Henry Balfour, curator after 1891, extended its range and sophisticated its arrangement. The inspiration was as much biological as sociological (Balfour was trained in zoology). The museum's exhibition "is like that employed in the arrangement of most natural-history museums," he wrote, with "the objects being grouped according to their morphological affinities and resemblances (as it were), all objects of like form and function being brought together into groups, which again are subdivided into smaller groups — into genera and species, as one might say." When the ethnological collections of tea merchant Frederick J. Horniman were given to the London County Council in 1901, along with a new £40,000 Forest Hill building done in an impressive variant of *Wienerzezeion* style, the advisory curator, A. C. Haddon (also a zoologist by origin), recommended that it become the one London museum "definitely set apart to illustrate the evolution of culture." The Horniman Free Museum installation was thus "designed to throw light upon the evolutionary process by which the changing present has been derived from the unstable past," and "to suggest the general line of advance in arts, crafts, and ideas from the time of early man."<sup>17</sup>

In the United States, arrangement by geographic area or by tribal groups was adopted at Harvard's Peabody Museum and elsewhere. The American Museum's few collections were exhibited by collector or donor, which usually meant a geographical result; after 1894, they were arranged systematically by ethnic group.

Arrangements at the National Museum in Washington were quite different. Here the installation had increasingly followed the lines advocated by Jomard and Klemm and used by General Pitt Rivers. Items were placed with like items: musical instruments were exhibited with similar kinds of musical instruments irrespective of their geographic and tribal provenance, while weapons went into a "series" with other weapons. Within each series, the specimens were ordered into a supposed evolutionary sequence so as to demonstrate the history of human progress from savagery to civilization. Such an installation system had been used at the museum in a limited way as early as 1873. In the same year Otis

T. Mason, an instructor at the city's Columbian College and anthropological assistant in the museum, published a description of the evolutionary organization of Klemm's collection, just acquired by Leipzig. What appealed to Mason in the Klemm system was its seemingly scientific character, so analogous to natural history's systematic classification. A typological classification arranged by developmental sequence offered "a systematic arrangement of the facts respecting the human race."<sup>18</sup> Installation of the museum's collections according to this system gathered impetus after G. Brown Goode's appointment as assistant director of the museum.

Goode, an ichthyologist, turned his scientific mind to museum administration with extraordinary thoroughness. He was, an acquaintance noted, "a deviser of methods and systems." The chief requisite to the success of a great museum, he felt, was a "perfect plan of organization and a philosophical system of classification." To these he gave much thought in his first years under Baird. After considering the methods of the large European museums while abroad for the Berlin Fisheries Exhibition, he announced in 1881 a comprehensive plan for making the entire National Museum into a museum of anthropology in "a broad sense." Man was to be the focus of the plan, the central pivot around which all was to revolve. Goode decided, doubtless in collaboration with Mason, "that the ordinary classification by races or tribes" was less satisfactory "than a classification based upon function." Exhibits would be organized to show the evolution of any given industry or class of objects by a series that began with the simplest types and ended "with the most perfect and elaborate objects of the same class which human effort had produced."<sup>19</sup>

It was an audacious scheme which justified its claim of placing together in continuous series objects "which had never before been placed side by side in any museum."<sup>20</sup> By embracing not merely the usual archaeological or ethnological material, it provided a continuum of prehistory and history, of primitive and civilized. At the end of a series on land transportation would stand a steam locomotive, representing the nineteenth-century culmination of a development that had begun with tump-lines and skids.

Implementation of the generic classification was cautious. Musical instruments and costumes were put into a type sequence,

but Goode still regarded the method as provisional and engaged in a good deal of experimentation.

Otis Mason, ever since he had edited the texts of Gustav Klemm, firmly believed in museum ethnology by biological analogy. He announced that his department would follow "all the lines of investigation pursued by naturalists," considering "the whole human race in space and time as a single group" and all the arts and industries of man as if they were genera and species. Exhibitions would be arranged "to show the natural history of the objects." Mason's research strategy followed the same principle as his exhibition series: he published monographs dealing with types of specimens — throwing sticks, basketry, cradles, harpoons, and bows and arrows — rather than ethnographies of single tribes. He nevertheless admitted that the museum's collections "should not be forcibly strained into subjection to any one scheme." The same object could be arranged by tribe, material, structure, function, evolution, or geographical distribution, and no perfect scheme could omit any one of these. Indeed, an ethnic basis of display would be followed in the National Museum whenever its collections justified it; but when these did not offer enough for a "total life history of a tribe or race," the best practice was to use the material "to show the elaboration of the various human arts" and ultimately "to exhibit the progress in culture of the whole race."<sup>21</sup>

The Eskimo collections were sufficient to install on an ethnic basis, though even within that scheme, function and evolution of each implement were the criteria for installation in the tiered boxes that traced them through fourteen arctic locations. Other installations would follow the series principle: arrow-makers' tools, weaving, pottery production, North American gambling, and narcotic indulgences.

It was at this point that Franz Boas, just back from his first trip to the Northwest Coast, entered the Smithsonian's precincts to study the National Museum's collection from the area. He found items scattered in a dozen different typological exhibits. His anger at this method of display, in which "the marked character of the North-west American tribes is almost lost," was released in a courteous but outspoken public attack upon the National Museum's ethnology display. In a sweeping condemnation of both the arrangement and the assumptions that lay behind it, he

charged that the evolutionary method of classification created a rupture between the artifact and its natural setting. In Boas's view, the meaning of an artifact could be understood only within the context of its surroundings, among the implements of the people to whom it belonged and with the other phenomenon of that people and their neighbors. The specimen, then, was best understood when seen within a collection representing the life of but one group. "We want," he wrote, "a collection arranged according to tribes, in order to teach the peculiar style of each group. The art and characteristics of a people can be understood only by studying its productions as a whole." Mason went greatly astray, Boas charged, when he regarded ethnological phenomena as biological specimens and when he classified them according to the abstractions of species, genus, and family, because he thereby missed the essential points that "in ethnology all is individuality" and that "classification is not explanation."<sup>22</sup>

Boas went beyond axioms and aphorisms to accuse Mason's arrangement of being unfit for scientific research: by basing itself upon deductive arguments from analogy, it did not allow for application of the inductive method. The outward appearances of two phenomena might be quite identical, yet their "immanent qualities" could be altogether different. All rattles were constructed to make noise, but they could be quite varied in psychological intent and in usage, one the outcome of religious conceptions and utilized for sacred events, another representing children's pleasure in all noises. The important principle overlooked by Mason was that "unlike causes produce like effects." The only fact which Mason's collections of implements taught was that different men make similar things, that drums were used by savages and by modern orchestras; it told nothing about the character of the music of each, the very thing that was, after all, "the only object worth studying." In all of this the National Museum was fooling both itself and its visitors. It was creating patterns that did not exist in the nature of the material, but were imposed by the curator. The museum created "classifications that are not founded on the phenomenon, but in the mind of the student."

Mason replied to the attack, coolly explaining that there were a variety of ways in which curators might classify and exhibit their specimens and his museum had chosen to give prominence to one

which it thought most important. Ideally, he would construct a museum in the form of a checker-board so that in one way the cases would show a single tribe, while at right angles they would exhibit a single feature across cultures. Though conceding diverse possibilities in exhibition, Mason was not swayed from the primacy of biological analogy. "I think it is a growing conviction," he wrote, "that inventions of both customs and things spring from prior inventions, just as life springs from life," and that "we must always apply the methods and instrumentalities of the biologist" if ethnology were to be properly constituted. Finally, Mason absolved both himself and his system from responsibility for the diffusion of Northwest Coast material within the museum: he had not touched that region's artifacts since his appointment.<sup>23</sup>

Support for Mason's general position came from Major J. W. Powell, who deemed a tribal arrangement quite impossible both by nature and in practice, while Boas's views were tepidly backed by W. H. Dall and more vigorously elsewhere by F. W. Putnam of Harvard. At the latter's Peabody Museum "a natural classification" was used in which objects belonging to each people were grouped together. "By this method is brought out the ethnological value of every object," Putnam wrote. "There is no forcing into line, no selection of material, in order to illustrate a theory. Every object falls into its place with its own associates, and tells its part of the story of the efforts of man and the results which he has reached at in different times and different places."<sup>24</sup>

Neither side won the 1887 version of the controversy. Probably Boas made the weaker case with his diffuse and often incoherent arguments, his insistence upon only a single way in which specimens ought to be exhibited, and his statement, questionable even today, that "the main object of ethnological collections should be the dissemination of the fact that civilization is not something absolute, but that it is relative, and that our ideas and conceptions are true so far as our civilization goes." Mason had no monopoly on tendentiousness, of exhibits to illustrate a theory. Mason's own reasoned flexibility, his contention that different students were interested in different things, was probably more persuasive than his biological assumptions. Certainly he was not deflected from his classificatory schema, pursuing his plan for "elaborating series of specimens on natural history principles" by arranging for new exhibitions of cradles, scrapers, and human packing apparatus.<sup>25</sup>

Yet Mason and his colleagues at Washington remained open-minded in their arrangements, adaptable to various methods and sensitive to outside trends. In 1887-88, alongside displays of land transportation and bows and arrows, Mason began other installations following his Eskimo precedent, that is, arranged according to "definite and well-characterized areas." Among these, perhaps partially in deference to Boas, perhaps merely because of the richness of the museum's holdings, was the Northwest Coast.<sup>26</sup>

Goode and Mason, without altering their intellectual allegiance to type classification, did not strongly pursue it in practice. As early as 1888 Thomas Wilson, their archaeological colleague, threw over developmental series for "the unity of neighborhoods." In 1893 Goode wrote of the idea in the past tense, as an "at one time" intention, not abandoned, but unrealized because of practical difficulties of installation and space. Mason retained a similar commitment to the method. When visiting European museums in 1889 he was extremely disappointed that Leipzig's museum, with its Klemm collection, was closed. (He seems not to have realized that the director, Hermann Obst, had rearranged it on ethnic principles more than a decade earlier.) Dresden, still partially committed to a topical system, he found to be the best administered museum in the world. The Berlin museum was remarkable for the immensity of its collections, but, by using a simple arrangement by regions, nationalities, or tribes, it made little attempt "to work out any of the finer problems of ethnology." The new Pitt Rivers Museum, on the other hand, was a "gem" where his own methods were perfectly implemented in one functional series after another. Oxford was the only museum where "every piece has a *raison d'être*." While seemingly satisfied, even confirmed, in his method, Mason soon moved toward a conception of ethnology in terms of geographic areas. To a large measure this was a consequence of his suggestion that the Smithsonian's anthropological exhibition at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago be a joint effort of the National Museum and the Bureau of Ethnology, using as its guiding feature Major Powell's "great linguistic map" of North America, just published and "the crowning result of ethnological labors on our continent during fifty years." This decision was consistent with his flexibility, but it did undermine his commitment to developmental typologies. The shift from tech-



nological types to linguistic stocks as an organizing principle propelled Mason toward a geographic determinism.<sup>27</sup>

Mason intended the display to investigate the relationship between climate and natural resources and the arts, industries, language, and races of the North American Indian. The Chicago exposition offered an opportunity to test those questions and he was very pleased with the results. The great diversity of stocks crowded into the homogeneous environment of the Pacific coast, for example, allowed fruitful ethnological studies which showed that while languages might be "radically different" and tribal organization "entirely unlike," in the satisfaction of their material necessities, the divergent tribes had "yielded to regional or geographical forces." Material culture, he concluded, was controlled by the environment while spiritual or metaphysical expressions "were overwhelmingly ethnic and linguistic."<sup>28</sup>

While Goode and Mason were moving toward a geographical exhibition method, their position still differed fundamentally from that of Boas. They were moving in the direction from which he had departed, although, as he might have said, unlike causes were producing similar effects in actual exhibition appearance. Mason's preoccupation was with "arts and industries," with the material culture which was the basis of museum collections and exhibitions. Boas was also a collector and interested himself in museum exhibitions, but he was more interested in the idea behind the material phenomenon, in the mental processes of the people, and more especially in what this might show of the history of the culture.

Boas had begun his career with an environmental hypothesis for the Baffin Island Eskimo and was unconvinced by the efficacy of that approach. Geographical and climatic explanations were too patent and obvious and did not touch on the origins of cultural traits or their distribution. Many traits were found beyond the geographical region and seemed to predate a group's migration to its present environment. "Anthropogeographical considerations" could not be a sufficient basis for the study of the origins of any culture, he wrote in 1888, "as their influence is only secondary in determining, to a certain extent, the direction in which the culture develops." Study of cultural origins must begin, he continued, with investigation of ethnology and physical character.<sup>29</sup>

The attack by Boas on the Washington establishment had been audacious, even presumptuous. He was in 1887 still a very young man scarcely established in the United States. He had, it is true, already made a mark for himself for his work on the Central Eskimo, but his reputation was slender and his position as yet far from established. It had been a bold step to use his *Science* column in so direct an attack upon the National Museum's exhibition pattern, one of its most cherished ideas.

Boas was able to fortify his standing in American science by further fieldwork in the West, this conducted under the auspices of and with funds from the North-western Tribes Committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The opportunity had come at the beginning of 1888 when Horatio Hale asked him to undertake field research in British Columbia for the Committee.

Hale and Boas had met at the 1886 Buffalo meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Now a man of advanced age, Hale had worked on the Oregon tribes as a young philologist with the Wilkes expedition in 1842. Long deflected from ethnological work, he had lately returned to it in his retirement. Resident in Ontario, he had taken charge of the ethnological survey of the northwest tribes of Canada funded by the British Association and the Canadian government and nominally under the chairmanship of Oxford's E. B. Tylor. Finding that he could arrange summer leave from *Science*, Boas accepted the offer with alacrity and departed on his second Northwest Coast visit in May 1888.

Boas's instructions were to make a general survey of British Columbia tribes, with emphasis on language and physical anthropology, and to prepare an ethnological map of the province. As he had already done linguistic research and prepared an ethnographic map for *Petermanns*, he devoted much of his energy on this trip to physical anthropology, to measuring Indians (usually those in jail), and more especially to collecting skulls and skeletons. This he pursued with his usual zeal and, as with his ethnology collection in 1886, with speculative intent.

Stealing bones from a grave was "repugnant work" and even prompted horrid dreams, but "someone has to do it" and, he emphasized, skeletons were "worth money." He dug in a burial ground near Victoria, on an island near Port Essington (while a

photographer distracted the Indians), in Saanich, and, on his way home, at Lytton. He could collect only a dozen or so skulls himself and about the same number of skeletons, but he heard of a Cowichan collection of about 75 skulls that James and William Sutton had gathered for the American phrenological market. The collection proved exciting. Boas spent an entire day measuring it, finding to his surprise considerable variation within a single linguistic group. When he received assurance from Washington that there was a market for such material, he bought the entire Sutton collection, bringing his British Columbia total to some 85 skulls and 14 complete skeletons. The Sutton brothers were willing to gather more and Boas, telling them of some sites he knew of, left an order for whatever they could find. Working both by land and sea, the Suttons gathered 48 skeletons complete with crania, one without, and 74 skulls — a total of 123 individuals in all. A recount reduced the number to 119, perhaps "a few more" than Boas had wanted, but the collection should be kept whole, the Suttons thought, "as it makes along with what you already have a complete collection from one end of the island to the other." At Boas's rate of \$20 for a complete skeleton and \$5 for a skull, the value of the collection was about \$1,300; certainly, wrote William Sutton, it was worth at least \$1,000 and he had laid out in cash about half that amount.<sup>30</sup>

The collection had cost "a great deal more trouble & expense" than Sutton anticipated. The bones were "in caves and such out of the way places" that he had had "to buy some of the Indians" at a dollar each to show him the sites. That had let the word out and "some half breeds at Fort Rupert started quite a disturbance and tried to incite the Indians to shoot them." Then S. A. Spencer at Alert Bay had laid a complaint before the provincial police, causing William "quite a lively time to prevent an investigation." The bones were a possible embarrassment and "I would like to get them off my hands as soon as possible." He was "afraid of the authorities confiscating them, there has been such a disturbance over them, they may be compelled to take action." The matter became even more urgent in January when the Cowichan Indians found that some of their graves had been molested and raised "quite a rumpus." Information was laid against James Sutton and a warrant obtained to search his Cowichan sawmill for the bones, but nothing was found.

Nevertheless, the Indians hired a lawyer to proceed with the case.<sup>31</sup>

While the Suttons worried in British Columbia, Boas delayed in New York. He dearly wanted the bones but did not have the money. He finally made an arrangement to pay in installments, and Sutton shipped the skeletons and crania to the American Museum, invoiced with a falsified origin and labelled as natural history specimens — "an incognito that answered well." There were about a dozen fewer pieces than Sutton had earlier mentioned "on account of not being able to go after some we had stowed away, owing to the rumpus with the Indians." Most came from Discovery Island, from the environs of Victoria, and from among the Cowichan in the Koksilah River area. Boas's total physical anthropology holdings thus amounted to about 200 crania, of which 100 belonged to complete skeletons. These, secured "by the help of some friends," had cost him \$1,600.<sup>32</sup> He quickly looked for purchasers, trying to interest, without success, the New York museum, Virchow in Berlin, and Dawson in Ottawa. In any case, he wanted to keep the collection together at least until he had finished work on it. In the meantime it was stored, first at the American Museum and then, with his appointment as docent at Clark University, at the university's laboratories. Over the next few years it grew by about another hundred, a few skulls gathered on the coast in 1889 and 1890, but most of them non-Northwest Coast purchases and gifts. He finally disposed of the collection, partly to Virchow's Berlin museum and the remainder, with some difficulty, to Chicago's Field Columbian Museum in 1894.

While osteological collecting occupied much of Boas's energy on his 1888 trip, he also made a small collection of about fifty-seven pieces — mostly dance material, but also a shaman's outfit — for the American Museum. This latter collecting irritated G. M. Dawson, a member of the BAAS committee which was financing the larger part of Boas's field work and the man in Ottawa most interested in the Geological Survey's museum and in the Northwest Coast. Dawson saw to it that on Boas's next field trip any collecting would be for the Ottawa museum. He secured authorization of up to \$300, from which Boas was able to buy such "very nice pieces" that he was sad to have to pass them on so quickly. A few, worth \$48.30, went to Oxford on order

from E. B. Tylor. Tylor particularly wanted a shaman's "soul catcher," a piece of great interest, he wrote, to the history of religion.<sup>33</sup>

Dawson secured another \$300 for Boas in 1890, but Boas literally missed the boat that summer and did not get north of Victoria, New Westminster, and Ladner. Before going to British Columbia, he did research, supported by Major Powell's Bureau of Ethnology, on Oregon and Washington state tribes, and there gathered a dozen items from the Quinault, Tillamook, and Chinook for the National Museum.

Early in 1891 Boas accepted an assignment to work on the anthropological exhibits planned for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, the exposition to be held in honor of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus. In charge of "Department M," somewhat mislabeled as the Department of Ethnology, was Frederic Ward Putnam, director of the Peabody Museum at Harvard.<sup>34</sup> Putnam, who, like Horatio Hale, had met Boas at the AAAS meetings in Buffalo, asked the young immigrant scientist to serve as assistant in charge of physical anthropology and to supervise a special display of Northwest Coast tribes. As part of his duties, Boas entered into correspondence with hundreds of schoolteachers, missionaries, and administrators to arrange the measurement of over 90,000 North American school children and 17,000 Indians. Simultaneously, he set in motion a scheme for a comprehensive Northwest Coast Indian exhibition that would focus on the Fort Rupert Kwakiutl.

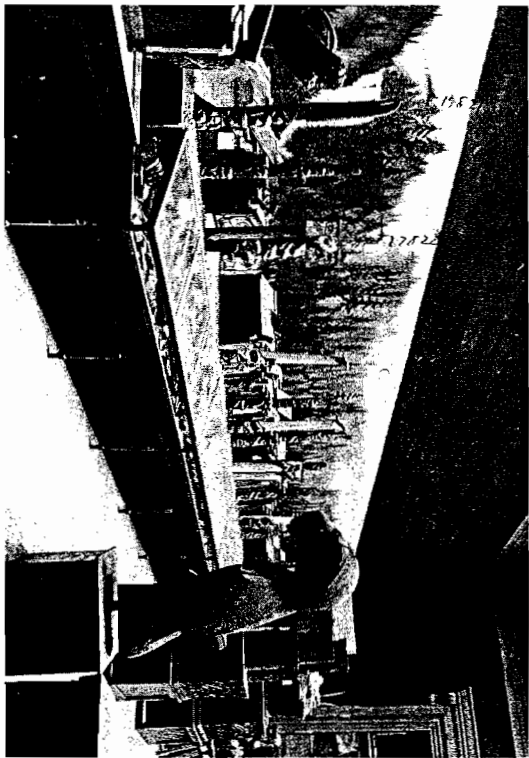
A trip west in the summer was largely consumed by ethnological work for the Bureau of Ethnology along the Columbia and Yakima rivers, but Boas also made arrangements for World's Fair collections with a number of coastal acquaintances and particularly with George Hunt. Upon his return east in September, the outlines of the fair display were firm.

The Fort Rupert Indians would be the "standard tribe," with additional collections from the Haida, Tsimshian, Nootka, and other neighboring tribes. The Kwakiutl were made the pivot of the display because, Boas wrote, they were central to the region's culture, which had its origin among these Fort Rupert tribes whose influence had been exerted over the other tribes on the coast. The evidence of this was in the borrowed Kwakiutl names

given to all those ceremonies which played so important a part in the customs of their neighbors. Boas had arranged with Hunt for a collection of the necessary specimens to illustrate Kwakiutl life and culture and, moreover, had arranged that Hunt bring to Chicago a group of Kwakiutl "to show whatever is asked of them in relation to their customs and mode of life particularly the ceremonies connected with their secret religious societies." Hunt would bring a large house, canoes, the outfits of daily life, and all that was necessary for the performance of ceremonies.<sup>35</sup>

For his collections Boas enlisted the assistance of experienced people he knew on the coast. James Deans, the old HBC man from Victoria who had assisted Pinart in his shell-heap collecting in 1876 and had toured the Queen Charlottes with Swan in 1883, and who was a frequent contributor of ethnological miscellanea to the *American Antiquarian* and other journals, he commissioned to make a Haida collection. Filipp Jacobsen, who had stayed on the coast after bringing home the Hagenbeck Bella Coolas, was to make a Bella Coola collection. Mrs. O. Morrison, native wife of Charles Morrison, the Fort Simpson trader so helpful to Swan, was to collect at Port Essington and on the Skeena. Swan himself, now seventy-three years old and already working for Washington State's exhibit, was to collect from Cape Flattery. Myron Eells, a Congregational minister also engaged in the state display, was charged with gathering a representative collection of the Puget Sound Salish, while others were asked to collect at Shoalwater Bay and in the British Columbia interior.

The Boas team began their work in earnest in the spring of 1892. Their collections began arriving in Chicago in the fall, stored in the acres of warehouses specially erected for the exhibition. From Deans came three boxcarloads of Haida material. "The wide world will stand in amazement" was his confident assessment of the beauty of Haida art as revealed by his collection. Ceremonial and shamanistic material was included, along with an entire Skidegate house and its forty-two foot pole. It was, he admitted, "a rather poor specimen of a Haida house but then, as so few of the old houses were left & I could do no better." At least as unusual was a set of models which accurately reconstructed Skidegate village at its 1864 prime: twenty-five houses and poles, ten memorial columns, six grave posts, and two burial houses.<sup>36</sup>



*The model Haida village collected by James Deans, with other exhibits from the Chicago Fair as initially installed in the Field Columbian Museum. Courtesy, Field Museum of Natural History.*

Jacobsen sent a Bella Coola collection costing \$554 and particularly strong in clan and secret society material and in stone implements. From Mrs. Morrison came almost \$500 worth of Nass and Skeena pieces, some of which, including two large poles, had been bought through merchant Robert Cunningham. Swan sent a small collection of sixty-five articles from Neah Bay, and Eells a good sampling of everyday articles from Puget Sound, as well as a collection of models illustrating every canoe type to be found between the Columbia River and Cape Flattery.

Last to arrive — delayed by storms — at Fort Rupert and Alert Bay — was Hunt's collection. It was easily the largest: in addition to a whole house, it had some 365 pieces heavily emphasizing the winter ceremonials. Hamatsa, Grizzly Bear, Nudlamada — virtually every Kwakiutl (and some Bella Coola) secret society — were represented.

Boas felt that his collaborators' efforts had resulted in the most systematic collection every presented. Putnam judged the collections as "the most complete and important ever brought together from this, ethnologically, most interesting region." The assess-

ments were exaggerated, but qualifiedly true. On the other hand, items were frequently poorly labeled since Boas had put aside his usual concern with stories and explanations.<sup>37</sup>

To this collection was added the loaned Tlingit collection of Edward E. Ayer, a Chicagoan who had made his fortune supplying railway ties, first to the Northwestern, then to the Union Pacific roads. "A natural born collector," his accumulation of ethnological artifacts became his chief recreation and delight. He had begun as a young man on a trip to California and continued while on army service in Arizona and New Mexico. Once in business, he collected as he travelled across the Plains, realizing that native life would soon be a thing of the past. With his wealth he bought everything he could lay his hands on, almost entirely from Indian traders in all parts of North America. His Northwest Coast collection came largely from an 1887 Alaska trip on the *Ancona*, which called at every cannery. At each stop he bought what he could, "and I had good luck, for I had two cabins full of Indian stuff." As usual it came indirectly: "I very rarely purchased relics through chiefs, though; mostly through dealers." Carl Spuhn, the Northwest Trading Company's agent at Killisnoo was on board the ship and, observing Ayer's purchases, told him that "up in our loft we have any quantity of these things, and you can have all you want." At Killisnoo he "got all that three or four men could carry." Spuhn would take nothing for it. Ayer later reflected that the loft collection "would be worth several thousand dollars now. He was a very fine chap."<sup>38</sup> Before taking it to the World's Fair, Ayer had displayed the collection at his Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, summer home — in a converted bowling alley. The poles were piled up against the barn.

The Northwest Coast exhibit, along with hundreds of others brought to Chicago by Putnam's assistants, by private collectors, by states and foreign governments, was intended for installation in the gigantic Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building. The clamor of numerous exhibitors for additional space, however, pushed Department M out of that centrally located building and into a special one, belatedly begun for Putnam's department and a Liberal Arts spillover. Inevitably, construction was delayed and the Anthropological Building was finished a full month after the opening of Chicago's Great White City. Despite efficient installation by department staff, the exhibits were open to the public

only on July 4, nine weeks late. Even then visitors had difficulty finding the building.

The Anthropological Building, shoved into the neglected and badly treated southeast corner of the grounds, inaccessible and distant from the central buildings, and hemmed in by the lake, the dairy barns, powerhouse, and train lines — “by what might be called the kitchen and back yard of the exhibition” — was “likely to be overlooked by nine out of every ten visitors.” A plain and unpretentious structure whose only asset was that it contained the necessary space, “the Anthropological Building is the furthest in the rear, the most forlorn in its exterior and interior, and pre-eminently the one with the most promise of being a failure.” The sorrowful fact was that Putnam had been squeezed out — “buffeted about by more worldly and self-assertive chiefs of departments” and disliked by Director Harlow N. Higinbotham.<sup>39</sup>

The department’s outdoor exhibits were not hampered by building problems and were ready for the opening. Putnam had arranged reproductions of Yucatan ruins in front of the building and the portal from Labna and the Serpent House of Uxmal shared pride of place with a Southwest cliff dwelling replicated to natural size. On the ethnographic grounds north of the building, along the shores of South Pond, were the habitations of the native groups, most particularly two Northwest Coast houses occupied by the Kwakiutl.

Reminiscent of the unfulfilled ambition of Swan and Baird for the 1876 Philadelphia exhibition, and following a direct precedent established at Paris in 1889, the Chicago exhibition would display native groups living in their own habitations and demonstrating their crafts, customs, and ceremonies. The thrust of the Columbian Exposition was to honor America’s pioneers and to celebrate the accomplishments of four hundred years of American progress. Putnam’s aim was even more retrospective: to show the inhabitants of pre-Columbian America. The government’s office of Indian Affairs would exhibit civilization’s work upon the American aborigines in model schools.<sup>40</sup>

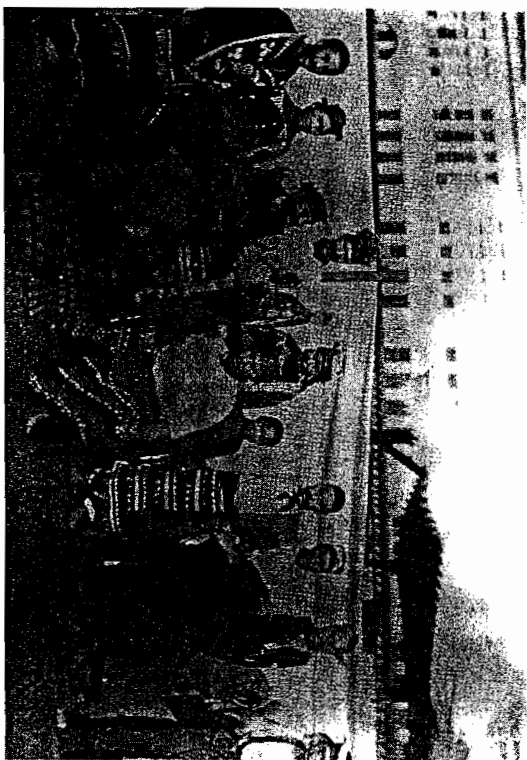
Boas arranged for Hunt to bring as many as fourteen adults (of which four should be married couples). The consent of the Canadian Indian Affairs department was secured and early in April 1893, fifteen adults and two children, led by George Hunt and escorted by James Deans, arrived in Chicago. William Hunt and

his Koskimo wife, the only longhead of the party, were with the group. They were all housed temporarily in three small rooms in the stock pavilion, with mattresses and bed-clothing, six chairs, and two stoves being requisitioned for their comfort until they moved into the traditional beam and plank houses on the ethnological grounds. The construction of these, threatened by delays in the confusion of the last days before the fair’s opening, was completed when Boas himself procured some missing timbers.

The Haida house, standing behind its immense pole, was small but impressive. The Kwakiutl house, formerly belonging to the Nakumgilisala of Nuwiti, was typically painted with a Thunderbird over the door and moon crests to each side. Arranged nearby were canoes, poles, and posts, most gathered by Boas’s collectors, but several loaned by Ayer. The beach in front of the houses was eventually graded for easy canoe access. The actual occupation of the houses in May became the occasion for “the first of a series of elaborate ceremonies.” A requisition went in on the next to the last day before the fair’s opening for 39 yards of blue and scarlet flannel, 232-dozen pearl buttons, and other material needed at once to complete the outfit of the Fort Rupert Indians.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the effort at systematic and authentic representation, the expeditions to Mexico and South America, and Boas’s indefatigable anthropometrics and Northwest Coast work, the fair’s anthropology exhibit was something of a failure. It was significant enough in its own right (though probably not matching the impressive Paris display of four years earlier), but when pushed to the remote edge of Jackson Park, literally at the end of the railway track, it became marginal to the exposition. Moreover, the sheer size and diversity of the fair overwhelmed the department.

Chicago’s was by far the largest world exposition yet undertaken, with more exhibits in an incomparably larger area than Paris and well over the Philadelphia Centennial’s area, number of exhibitions, and attendance. Even the Kwakiutl made very little impression. It was not merely that they shared the ethnological grounds with an Apache craftsman and a Navaho family in their hogan, with four families of Penobscots in their birch bark wigwams, with representatives of the Six Nations in a traditional Iroquois bark house, and with British Guianese Arawaks in a thatched hut; the exoticism of these official exhibitions simply



*The Kwakiutl troupe at the Chicago World's Fair, 1893. American Museum of Natural History.*

could not match the enormous color and panache of the ethnological exhibition "run riot" on the Midway Plaisance. This mile-long "open mart and caravansary of nations" was a free-wheeling entrepreneurial sideshow which almost overshadowed the exposition itself. Nominally the Midway was under the administration of Putnam's department of ethnology — appropriate enough, wrote the fair's official historian, for here the ethnologist could study the actual daily life and customs of "peoples of every clime and continent, typical representatives of all the varieties and races of mankind." Crowded under G. W. G. Farris's 250-foot-high wheel were 280 Egyptians and Sudanese in a Cairo street, 147 Indonesians in a Javanese village, 58 Eskimos from Labrador, a party of bare-breasted Dahomans in a West African setting, Malays, Samoans, Fijians, Japanese, Chinese, as well as an Irish village with both Donegal and Blarney castles, and a reconstructed old Vienna street. The official ethnological exhibition with its handful of Kwakiutl, Navaho, and Arawak was reduced to insignificance. Only the most unusual or bloodcurdling Kwakiutl demonstrations could match the erotic Egyptian dancers and other *succès de scandale* of the Midway.<sup>42</sup>

On May 24 the Queen's birthday was officially celebrated at the Canadian Building with an afternoon reception for all British subjects. At the same time a Kwakiutl canoe pushed off from the South Pond beach and, propelled by a dozen paddles, came round the canal and entered the Grand Basin through the classical peristyle. As it passed under the arch, the entire boardload stood up and "howled and danced to the jingle of the tamborine." The noise quickly drew several thousand spectators to the colonnaded waters, there to puzzle over "why the British flag should be floating over such a fierce, savage-looking lot."<sup>43</sup>

A far more horrible scene reportedly transpired one sweltering mid-August evening. In a gruesome enactment of what a journalist called the "Sun Dance," George Hunt cut two pairs of gashes through the skin of the backs of two Indians. While the two stood motionless, Hunt raised the flesh and passed heavy twine beneath the loose strips and tied the ends firmly together. The low monotone chant and the dull drum beats of the other Indians now became wilder and more violent as the two Indians, rivulets of blood trickling down from the cuts in their backs, raced round the platform driven like steeds by two more natives who seemed to take a wild pleasure in the act. "Around and around they ran, leaping, twisting, and diving till it seemed to the horror-stricken spectators that each instant would see the flesh torn from their bodies." The other Indians became frenzied and then, with eyes like wild animals and faces like famished wolves, the two tore the ropes from their fleshy fastenings, each "snapping and snarling like a mad dog" at the other Indians on the platform. Hunt walked over to one and extended a bare arm which was fastened upon with teeth that met in the flesh. When finally released, a piece the size of a silver dollar was missing from his arm, but he merely smiled, showing no signs of pain. In the hour or more that had elapsed a large part of their audience of five thousand had left, "sickened by the horrible sight."<sup>44</sup>

The Rev. Alfred J. Hall learned of the atrocious performance from the lurid *Sunday Times* account. He had only just arrived in London from Alert Bay and what he read of the pagan behavior of his Kwakiutl flock outraged him. He protested to Ottawa and demanded the cancellation of the Kwakiutl's engagement if that were at all possible. Before leaving Alert Bay he had, he said, done all he could to persuade the Indians not to go to Chicago and

he confessed to having had some influence so that those who went had been gathered almost wholly from other villages. (It will be recalled that Hall had been quite successful in keeping the Fort Rupert Indians from leaving with Adrian and Filipp Jacobsen for Germany in 1885.) At Chicago on his way to London, he had personally observed that the U. S. government was proudly exhibiting civilized bands from their industrial schools, while from Canada came "only this display of paganism, chosen by Dr. Boaz because the most degraded he could find in the Dominion."<sup>45</sup>

Lawrence Vankoughnet, the deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs and the recipient of Hall's outraged letter, responded immediately. He asked the Canadian commissioner at Chicago to have such exhibitions stopped at the earliest possible moment. A. W. Vowell, Powell's successor in Victoria, was told to ascertain from Kwakiutl agent R. H. Pidcock if he had known of Hunt's object in asking the Indians to appear at the fair and, if so, what measure he had taken to frustrate the endeavor. Pidcock replied that he knew Hunt had been commissioned by Boas to make a collection of curios and to persuade about a dozen Indians to go to Chicago to illustrate their mode of life, but he had had no idea that Hunt contemplated any such dance as reported. He had discouraged any Indians who had asked his advice. He had been led to believe, he wrote, "that the party were in [the] charge of Dr. Boaz or his agent and that Hunt was only employed as Interpreter, as I should not consider that he was at all a fit and proper person to have charge of a party of Indians." From Chicago J. S. Larke confirmed the event. Although "the barbarism I think was not as great as described," some of the cruel and revolting scenes as reported in the *Sunday Times* had occurred. So much repugnance had been created that exposition authorities promised to halt any repeat performance.<sup>46</sup>

Like the Bella Coola's performance of an "Eagle Dance," it is difficult to determine how much of this "Sun Dance" was real and how much hokum. Boas described a similar dance, the *hawinadal*, a few years later and, though he usually was careful to mention the special effects used to simulate bloody scenes, his account contains no mention of theatrical devices. Charles Nowell described a similar ceremony, which he called the "Warrior Dance," in which there was no fakery — it "hurted a little bit" when the flesh was pierced, but during the dance "I didn't

hardly feel any pain at all." Larke's letter, too, seems testimony that the newspaper reports, though exaggerated, had a basis in fact. Another incident involving apparently vicious and bloody beatings turned out to be pure folly: the clubs were made of kelp and filled with red paint.<sup>47</sup>

While the presence of fifteen Kwakiutl in Jackson Park for the better part of six months occasioned difficulties (there were, for example, some liquor problems), the group did not in other ways produce as much interest as Boas might have liked. Moreover, he found himself too busy with administrative work to advance greatly his own Kwakiutl studies. He was able, however, to teach Hunt to record linguistic texts in phonetic script, preliminary to the thousands of pages of myths, descriptions, and other texts that Hunt would send to New York in the following years.

In one respect the fair was a reunion. Capt. J. Adrian Jacobsen was at Hagenbeck's Arena on the Midway where he exhibited the unsold portion of the British Columbia collection which he and Filipp had made in 1885-86. George Hunt, Jacobsen's very useful assistant back in 1881-82, and his brother William and his wife were, of course, in Chicago. All three had intended to go with the Jacobsens to Germany eleven years before. Boas discovered that almost all the Kwakiutl material in Berlin had been bought from members of the Chicago troupe and that he could get full descriptions of the specimens for Bastian. Jacobsen even claimed partial credit for the Kwakiutl's presence in Chicago: the favorable reports made by the returned Bella Coolas of their trip to Europe had helped Hunt in convincing his Kwakiutl friends to make the Chicago visit.

Jacobsen's collection, inappropriately displayed among Hagenbeck's trained animals, was only one of a number of Northwest Coast collections which supplemented the Boas-supervised material in Department M. In the Anthropology Building itself, not far from Boas's display, was a large collection gathered and exhibited by Captain Newton H. Chittenden, "the picturesque explorer and investigator" who held official appointment as a British Columbia special commissioner to the exposition. Next to Chittenden's artifacts were "collections of ethnological material from British Columbia and Baffin Land" exhibited by Mrs. Franz Boas, material collected by Boas, perhaps largely in 1886, and not sold to Berlin or elsewhere. Not far away was Ayer's large North

American collection, including a considerable selection of Tlingit basketry, and the Alaska collection of E. O. Stafford that had been gathered by A. P. Swineford while governor of the territory. In the physical anthropology section, located on the building's north gallery, were Boas's Vancouver Island skulls, systematically displayed in glass cases among other cranial examples.<sup>48</sup>

Northwest Coast displays could be found elsewhere on the grounds. The British Columbia room of the Canadian Building, itself guarded at its main entrance by two Haida bear sculptures, contained "a handsome collection of curios" gathered by Indian agents under the supervision of A. W. Vowell. Superintendent Vowell had made the collection reluctantly, feeling that the \$4,000 he understood Boas to be spending was enough to "carry out the object desired." The \$500 advanced him by the Department of Indian Affairs could fetch "but little of interest" since "all the best things that were available are pretty well exhausted by the drains constantly made upon them by tourists and by the said agents of the World's Fair." Ottawa would hear of no such thing and, learning that the fair's collection would not be "exhaustive," insisted that every effort had to be made to see that the Indians and their manufactures were fairly represented. Vowell shipped material costing \$495.40, mostly minor items like mats and spoons, but certainly enough to prove to British Columbia's own commissioner in Chicago that his province's aborigines were "of higher artistic development than any of the Indians to the east of the Rockies."<sup>49</sup>

Washington State's pavilion contained an Eells-Swan collection. In the U. S. Government Building, about a thousand yards from the Anthropology Building and much more central, Lt. G. T. Emmons displayed his huge collection of Alaskan Indian material, some 2,474 items supplemented by another 500 collected by Sheldon Jackson from Point Barrow Eskimos. Gathered since his 1888 sale of 1,350 pieces to the American Museum, the size, quality, and careful cataloguing of this collection established Emmons in first place as a Northwest Coast collector.<sup>50</sup> More comprehensive was the Smithsonian exhibition, jointly organized by the National Museum and the Bureau of Ethnology and based on Powell's linguistic map.

Among the language stocks selected to explore the relationship of language, ethnicity, and environment were the Koloschan (Tlingit), the Salishan (Bella Coola and Salish), the Skiritigenan

(Haida), and the Wakashan (Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Makah), each represented by costumed figures and wall cases of artifacts. Unlike Putnam's exhibit, the Smithsonian's was ready for the opening of the fair. It was, wrote a visiting French anthropologist, "extrêmement belle dans toutes ses parties."<sup>51</sup>

The Columbian World's Fair closed in October and the process of winding down this largest of expositions began. The Kwakiutl troupe went back by Canadian Pacific rail. Putnam carried on a long argument with the railway company that they "be returned free like other exhibits, as they were exhibits in every sense of the term." Boas was glad to see them go. Nothing had ever caused him more worry and trouble; he swore "never again to play circus impressario." Deans, left behind at a dinner stop on the Prairies, wired ahead that the Indians be put off at the next stop, there to await him on the next day's train. Thereafter, according to Hunt, Deans "acted Bad to us. I did not like his way at all." The old Scotsman apparently lorded over his charges, not letting Hunt know what he was doing and telling everyone that Hunt was "one of his Indians." Indeed, Hunt felt that Deans "was worse than Indian." Putnam had arranged for \$2,100 to be placed on deposit at the Bank of British North America in Victoria in Hunt's name. Hunt paid off "the boys," \$150 to each, then returned to Fort Rupert to suffer from a serious measles epidemic that laid him low and, to his great sorrow, brought the death of his youngest son.<sup>52</sup>

The collection in Chicago went various ways. Captain Chittenden packed up his "Collection of Relics and Antiquities" for shipment to the California Mid-Winter Exposition. The explorer and guide had given it to the Province of British Columbia in 1891, but took it on the exhibition circuit (he had already been to London for the Colonial and Imperial Exposition and to Antwerp) before depositing it in Victoria in 1894 after the close of the California fair. The Washington State collection returned to become part of a state museum in Seattle. The Canadian Department of Indian Affairs intended to sell its collection, but, finding that Indian curios were a glut on the market, decided to send it back to Ottawa where it might form the nucleus of a museum at the department offices.<sup>53</sup> Eventually it ended up at the Geological Survey's museum.



Department M's collections were kept in Chicago. Partly as a result of Putnam's prodding, the leaders of the fair and the city decided to make exhibits from the exposition the basis of a permanent museum on the grounds. The collection of Hunt, Morrison, F. Jacobsen, et al. were moved to the Palace of Fine Arts, the building chosen to house the new Columbian Museum. To those collections were added, by gift, the Ayer collection, and, by purchase, Hagenbeck's Jacobsen collection, the Stafford-Swineford collection, and, at least provisionally, Boas's skull and skeleton collection.

Boas intended to stay with the collections. He expected to be placed in charge of the anthropological department of the new museum. That was certainly Putnam's recommendation. As he wrote to Ayer, the moving force behind the new museum, "Dr. Boas is the only person besides myself who is qualified to take charge of the anthropological material" and the only one left in Chicago who could bring order from the chaos of stacked boxes at the former Fine Arts Building. Putnam wanted very much that Boas be kept so that the "vast amount of exceptionally important and valuable material I have brought together should be placed in the proper charge of one who not only knows all about it, but who is the best man the museum can get to take charge of it."<sup>54</sup>

It did not happen so. Putnam, never popular with the dominant forces of the exposition's administration and no more so with their successors in the Columbian Museum, found his influence thin and his advice ignored. Boas was kept on temporarily, but when the trustees found they could secure W. H. Holmes of the Bureau of Ethnology as curator, they hired him. Boas properly felt himself the victim of an "unsurpassed insult" and departed Chicago on April 15, as soon as his installations were in place.<sup>55</sup>

He had long left his position at Clark University, part of a general revolt of the faculty against President G. Stanley Hall. Virtually all the others had been snapped up by Chicago University's W. R. Harper, but Boas had been passed over. The increasing demands of Putnam's department at the fair had turned his assistantship into full-time work and seemed to promise permanency at the successor museum. Now that had suddenly disappeared. He was too proud to accept an inferior position and his professional standing demanded that he should not. He was again unemployed and dependent upon contract work.

In the meanwhile he would spend the summer in Germany, then travel again to British Columbia to work toward the completion of the British Association's Northwest Tribes Committee research that had been left in abeyance because of his duties for Chicago. He could combine this with special assignments from Putnam for the American Museum and from Mason for the U. S. National Museum. Both wanted to have Northwest Coast figure groups for their displays and no one was better qualified to supervise their construction than Boas.

The life- or lay-figure group had been an innovative feature, at least in American terms, of the Smithsonian's Chicago fair exhibition. Going far beyond mere costumed manikins, the display included a number of groups of figures arranged into a representative scene and surrounded by appropriate objects.<sup>56</sup> W. H. Holmes, an artist before he turned ethnologist, supervised an impressive group of Powhatan Indians quarrying stone implements, while Frank Cushing was responsible for displays of Navaho and Plains women in life-like scenes and for five Zuñi groups employed in various typical occupations.

The figure group developed directly out of the life-sized manikins in use for decades, initially merely as a frame upon which an aboriginal costume could be hung. The earliest ethnological manikins at the U. S. National Museum were "Eskimo Joe and his wife Hannah," crude figures made in 1873 in imitation of the heroes of the *Polaris* expedition. By that time Moscow's Dashkov Museum was using natural-sized papier-mâché figures to represent thirty of the peoples of the Russian Empire.

European museums were far advanced in the use and, even more, in the techniques that would produce the sculptured verisimilitude initially desired. French and Japanese virtuosity was much admired for its trompe-l'œil effects in plaster, wood, or papier-mâché and the National Museum imitated those effects as best it could. As well, it investigated the manufacture of figures at Cas-tan's Panopticum in Germany, the races of man display at London's Crystal Palace, and even Madam Tussaud's. The next step, again pioneered in Europe, was from single figures to groups of figures engaged in some representative endeavor or action. The lead came from folklore museums, notably Stockholm's Nordiska Museet where Artur Hazelius combined Swedish peasant folk-

groups with reconstructed period rooms. One was shown at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia where it provoked the admiration of all. Hazelius extended his range to ethnology at the 1878 Paris International Exposition and exhibited a Lapp tableau at the Palace Trocadéro that was a sensation.

The use of groups in realistic settings spread quickly in Europe. The full, mature use of groups was demonstrated with outstanding success by E. T. Hamy at the Paris Exposition in 1889. In the Liberal Arts Building Hamy, together with his artist-modeler Jules Hebert, reconstructed families representing different pre-historical cultures in what was "probably the most interesting and instructive" anthropological exhibit of the fair and certainly the one that attracted the most attention. Four family groups represented mammoth, cavern, Neolithic, and Bronze Age man, as well as their contemporary counterparts of Russian reindeer herdsman, Sudanese blacksmiths, and others. The effectiveness of this type of group was carried to an even higher level of mimesis by Emil Holub's Bushman, Marabele, and Zulu groups for the South African exhibition at the Prague Exposition of 1892.

The group concept had exciting advantages. It showed, like the zoologist's environmental group (which doubtless influenced it), the specimens in a realistic imitation of their original setting and in use. The viewer saw how artifacts were actually employed. What association they were placed among other implements. Groups changed the idea of figures: they "were no longer pieces of sculpture but pictures from life."<sup>57</sup>

The haste and confusion of preparing the Chicago display did not allow the National Museum to sculpt their figures as carefully as the models from Europe and Japan that inspired them, but the prepared groups were nonetheless effective in their novelty and interest. Confessedly imitative of achievements abroad and less ambitious and successful than Holub's Prague groups, the Chicago experiments did cause the National Museum to feel that "something has been done which was never before attempted for the American Indian" and with a result which seemed "to more than justify the effort." Carefully made figures, "absolutely expressive of the bodily features and general appearance of the people," and arranged in groups demonstrative of the progress of their industries, were to become parts of the permanent exhibition in Washington.<sup>58</sup>

Otis Mason wanted a Northwest Coast group for the museum, one that could first be shown at the up-coming Atlanta Exposition. Boas accepted the assignment eagerly. He would combine his British Columbia fieldwork for the BAAS with a collection for a Kwakiutl Hamatsa group and then supervise the group's construction in Washington. It turned out that the American Museum also wanted a Northwest Coast group. A shake-up there had resulted in Putnam being appointed curator of anthropology, a position he held concurrent with the directorship of the Harvard museum. Putnam had, like Mason and Holmes, been impressed in Paris with the creative possibilities of figure groups and, though at Chicago he had imitated the French exposition's use of live natives in their habitations rather than Hamy's sculptured figures, only the latter was conceivable for permanent museum installation. Boas could prepare two groups for the American Museum, which might also provide an entrée for him into permanent association with the New York institution.<sup>59</sup>

Boas left for British Columbia in September 1894. This was his fifth trip to the province, but the first one (excepting his initial hurried visit of 1886) to include a part of the winter, the season when the Indians were settled in their villages and engaged in their elaborate ceremonials. For the first time he saw the winter dances and secret society ceremonies as they were actually performed.

Wrapped in a blanket and wearing a cedar bark headdress, he watched the Hamatsas, the Nutlamatas, the Seals, and the Tsokenwa dance round the overfed fires at Fort Rupert. It was all quite different from the impression he had gathered from hearing of these rituals and even from what he had seen of the mock performances of the Bella Coolas in Berlin or the Kwakiutl at Jackson Park. Here was the real thing and he worked himself to near-exhaustion watching, listening, and recording. He made casts of faces and took photographs of poses and ceremonies (through the assistance of O. C. Hastings, a professional hired from Victoria).<sup>60</sup> He bought what masks and cedar bark rings he could obtain, purchased more from John J. Hart at the Indian Bazaar in Victoria, and left instructions with Hunt to obtain more masks and rings at the end of the season.

For Washington his Hamatsa scene would feature the new initiate emerging from the yawning mouth of the painted ceremonial



*Franz Boas posing for the modelling of his U. S. National Museum Hamatsa group. Smithsonian Institution photo # MNH 8302.*

screen. He could not too closely duplicate this in New York, yet intended to stick to the Hamatsa theme by showing the initiate outside, returning from his spirit quest. Another group would focus on industries, on men carving and painting and on a woman weaving a basket while ingeniously rocking a suspended cradle. It was invigorating but exhausting and he was still without any definite prospects of permanent employment. He was depressed and frustrated, hated being so long away from Marie and his children. He was able to return in time for the year-end holidays. It had been a very useful trip, even if Putnam was reprimanded for the size of his accounts and the interior exposures taken by Hastings did not develop.

He now went to Washington in January 1895 to oversee the preparations for the National Museum figures. The most accurate way for preparator Theodore A. Mills to work was for Boas himself to pose before a photographer. He did several poses in coat and tie, but in most of the photographs he appears clad only in exercise pants, barefoot, and stripped to the waist. He emerges from a hoop, used to represent the round mouth of the ceremonial screen, with an animated facial expression and a silent howl emerging from his lips. Elsewhere he is the drummer beating on a non-existent box drum, and yet again he solemnly holds the neck ring of the emerging initiate.<sup>61</sup>

The seven-figure group was almost complete at the end of March, but details — especially the late arriving cedar bark rings from Hunt — were added when the figures returned from their Atlanta debut the next year. A Tlingit chief in ceremonial regalia was a less complicated construction and needed only a sculpture and the abundant Alaska materials already in the museum's collection.

Boas, still unemployed, but with possibilities mooted both at the Bureau of American Ethnology and from Putnam in New York, spent another summer in Europe, primarily to study continental museums' use of life-groups. On his return to New York, he began work on the American Museum groups for which he was under contract. The work went slowly, probably because of other commitments, especially his massive Kwakiutl report for the Smithsonian. At the year's end President Jesup complained that, though Boas had been paid \$600, no group was complete or even "any approach to that result" in spite of every assistance which had been offered to him.<sup>62</sup>

Boas's dilatoriness and Jesup's perturbation did not hamper Putnam's efforts to bring Boas on the museum's staff. That had been part of Putnam's plans for the museum from the time he had accepted the curatorship. There was no immediate opening, but Putnam assured Boas that "it will come by and by, and of course I shall do all I can for you." The Northwest Coast groups would serve as "a wedge for you." Putnam kept up pressure on both sides; he had on the one hand to create a position and on the other to keep Boas from taking something else before he could make that arrangement. He negotiated with President Seth Low of Columbia for part of Boas's salary to be paid by the college, and secured an offer from Abraham Jacobi, Boas's uncle, to contribute secretly a portion of Boas's museum salary. This, Putnam hoped, would make the museum's actual outlay so insignificant that Jesup would agree.<sup>63</sup>

To convince Boas to delay accepting an offer from the Bureau in Washington, he wrote of his ambitious plans for anthropology at the museum — of great ethnological displays with groups and lodges and a physical anthropology division complete with laboratories. Assisted by Marshall Saville, George Pepper, and Harlan I. Smith, Putnam and Boas would make an unbeatable team. "I have a deep affection for Dr Boas," he wrote his daughter, "and there is no man for whom I have a greater respect and whose learning I most greatly admire. I only hope he will decide to cast his lot with me in New York." Boas was not so certain. He did not think highly of William Ripley and Livingston Farrand at Columbia and he sought a position at Stanford, closer to his Pacific Coast interests, but he held off the Bureau until a definite offer could come from Putnam.<sup>64</sup>

In December Putnam had arranged things in New York. The Columbia side was almost certain, Jacobi's check was on deposit at the museum, and Jesup's opposition (on financial grounds and "because he is so young") had been overcome by Putnam's assertion that his appointment would give the museum first place among American museums.<sup>65</sup> Boas made a last quibble about title and status, then agreed to take the position. On January 1, 1896, he began as special assistant curator.

## The American Museum and Dr. Boas



ANTHROPOLOGY HAD NOT BEEN the American Museum's strongest department. Albert Bickmore had had the department as one of his several responsibilities. A non-professional in any case, he had spent the greater part of his time on public lectures and general administration. In 1891 the department was given over to Frederick Starr who soon left for the University of Chicago. James Terry, whose archeological collection the trustees had just bought for a princely sum, succeeded him. Terry's special charge was to catalogue and label his collection; he was dismissed two years later for stealing from his old collection.

This unhappy sequence determined President Jesup to secure for the much-abused department the best man in the country. His adviser suggested either W. H. Holmes of the Bureau of American Ethnology (soon to oust Boas from Chicago) or Frederic W. Putnam of Harvard's Peabody Museum. Jesup was told that Putnam, as a museum archaeologist, might be more suitable than Holmes, whose background lay in geology and art and whose curatorship at Washington was merely honorary. Putnam agreed to take the proffered head of department on condition he retain his directorship of the Peabody and reside in Cambridge. While thus spending only one week each month in New York, he at last brought strong direction — as well as prestige and distinction — to the museum's anthropology program.<sup>1</sup>

The accumulation of anthropological collections before 1894 was as erratic as the department's leadership. The Pacific Island