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The Oberlin Near East Study Collection in Context

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The Oberlin Near East Study Collection in Context



*See page 4 for citation.

Julian Hirsch

Acknowledgements

In some ways the groundwork for my thesis and work on the ONESC Initiative began more than five years ago in a kitchen in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania. I was meeting Dr. Elizabeth Bloch Smith for the first time and could scarcely have imagined that our meeting would lead to my participation in an archaeological excavation in Israel that summer. After my first excavation, I was hooked. The spring before I came to Oberlin was filled with weekly meetings, readings, and discussions with Liz. I learned so much in that time and appreciate her continued guidance and support.

If Liz was responsible for exposing me to just how fascinating the archaeology of the southern Levant was, Dr. Jeffrey Blakely was the person who helped me find the path where I could follow my passion at Oberlin. I still have my notes from the first day of the January 2017 Winter Term. I was amazed by everything Jeff knew about the history of biblical archaeology at the college and the history of the collection. If anything inspired me throughout my work, it was hearing vivid stories from Jeff about sitting in Harry Thomas Frank's classroom learning about archaeology. Jeff has truly been my partner at every step of the way. I've consulted him for advice numerous times. Jeff kindly provided invaluable suggestions that only a true veteran of the field could offer. To give credit to Jeff in two more areas, Jeff certainly inspired my interest in the history of biblical archaeology and during the Winter Term in 2017 assigned me to work on the Bab edh-Dhra' collection of Early Bronze Age tomb pots. It's almost embarrassing how attached I've become to these objects. Jeff's fault no doubt.

None of this would have been possible without Professor Cindy Chapman. From the spring of 2017 onwards, she has allowed me to continuously reap educational and personal rewards from the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. Heck, she even let me rename the thing! I remember being somewhat concerned as a Sophomore that my plan to inventory and photograph the entire collection would only receive halfhearted support. I could not have been more wrong. Professor Chapman has continuously allowed me the freedom to explore and learn with this collection. Since I started research and writing, Professor Chapman has provided me with continuously invaluable comments and support. Her idea that I join the capstone writing group was a stroke of genius and I learned so much from her and others in that class. It's almost unbelievable how much influence Professor Chapman has had over my Oberlin experience for a professor I took so few courses with.

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Throughout this process, there have been times when I needed to ask scholars and faculty at other institutions about their collections and for their insights. Perhaps I was lucky, but in my conversations with Rachael Sparks of UCL, Aaron Brody of the Pacific School of Religion, Douglas A. Knight of the Vanderbilt Divinity School, Morag Kersel of DePaul University, and Dana Herman of Hebrew Union College, I could not have found a more forthcoming group excited to help out a young scholar with tracking down the answers to a mystery or two. It is worth singling out Katherine Blanchard of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. When I contacted her about the legal status of Oberlin's collection from Beth Shemesh, she got right on the problem, got in touch with the Penn Museum's registrar and archivist, and was able to provide answers to some tough questions.

I must acknowledge the invaluable information and contribution provided by my oral history subjects. Hearing about Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank from those who personally knew them is constantly a rejuvenating force that strangely imbues me with the impossible desire to make both men proud. Grover Zinn in particular added several critical dimensions to this thesis that would otherwise have been entirely absent. Annie Storr, Ed Vermue, Cindy Chapman, Jeffrey Blakely, and John Elder were all kind enough to give me their time and knowledge and I look forward to adding their recollections to Oberlin's archives and the history of this invaluable collection.

I would not have been able to write many sections of this paper if not for Eric Cline and Norma Franklin. Both Eric and Norma have such a passion for Megiddo history. It was shocking to meet Norma two years ago and to hear her list fact after fact about May's time at the site. That an Israeli was so familiar with Herbert May and knew about his collection was exciting and helped kick start my search in May's archive. Eric Cline just finished writing the book about the history of the Megiddo excavations and was kind enough to send me the text of his chapter relating to May's arrest well in advance of the book's release. My discussions with Dr. Cline were illuminating and I hope that my insights may also have provided him with some new information about Megiddo.

I am extremely grateful to my parents and siblings who have been constant sources of support and who have listened to me go on about every new detail I discovered. It's not a given that one's family takes interest in what they do and helps them achieve it. In this I've been extremely lucky.

I lastly want to thank the volunteers of the ONESC Initiative. The 10 students who invested their time in the collection made this thesis possible. Without them, there is no way I could have cataloged and photographed everything by the end of my senior year. Thank you: Justin, Tara, Will, Geena, Addalyn, Alaina, Sophie, Emily, Theo, and Bryton.

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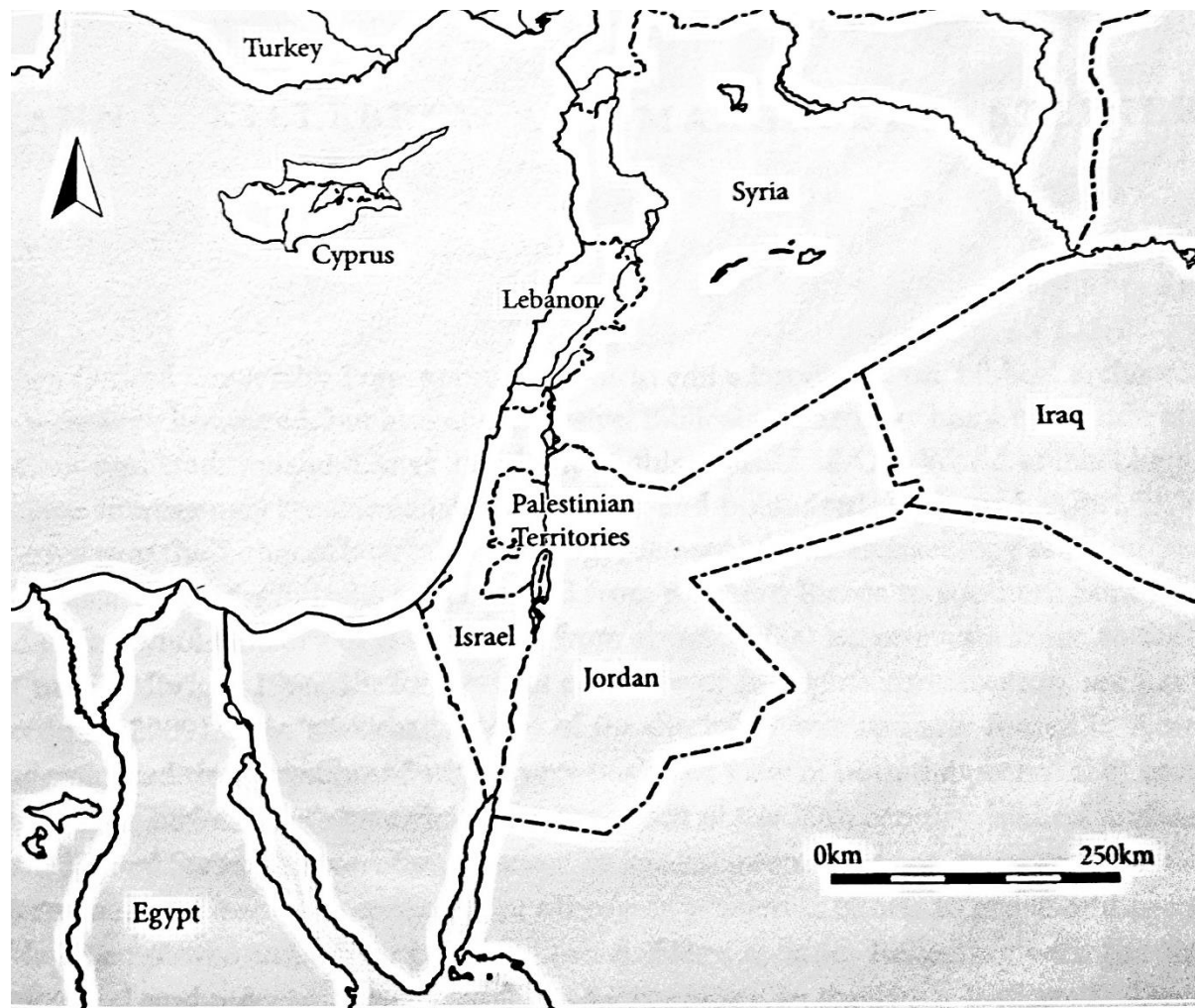
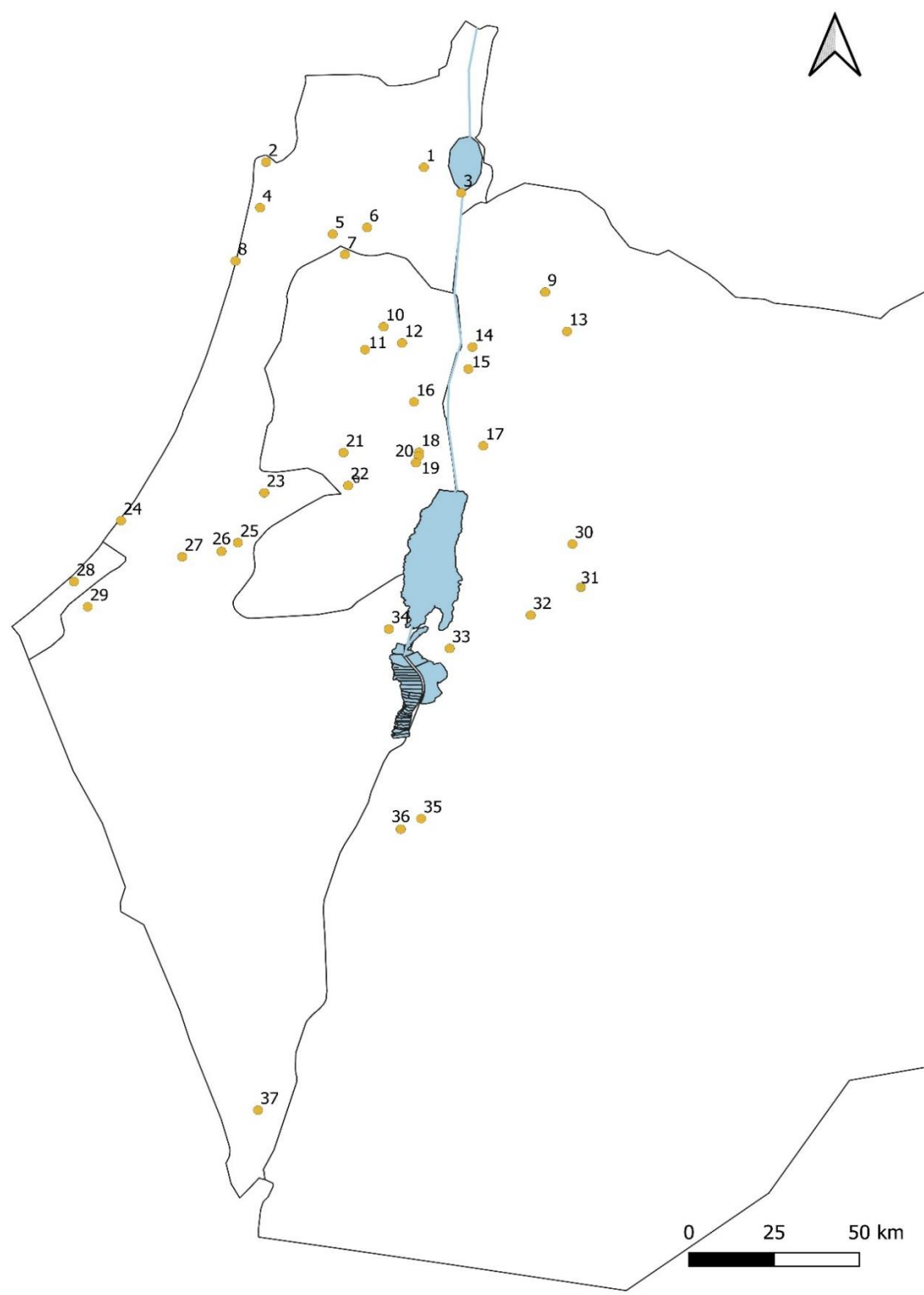


Image reproduced from *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Levant*, edited by Margreet L. Steiner and Ann E. Killebrew, Oxford University Press, Oxford. (2014): xxii.

Sites Represented in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection



Map created by author.

Site Number	Site Name Used in Text	Modern Site Name	Alternative Toponym
1	The Horns of Hattin		Kurûn Hattîn
2	Haifa		
3	Tel Beth Yerah		Khirbet Kerak
4	Mugharet el-Wad	el-Wad	Wadi el-Mughara
5	Megiddo		Tell el-Mutesellim
6	Afula		
7	Taanach		Ti'inik
8	Caesarea		Caesarea Maritima
9	Herakla	Khirbet Harqala	
10	Tell el-Farah North (N)		Tirzah
11	Shechem		Tell Balata
12	Tell Misqa	Tell Miski	
13	Jerash		Gerasa
14	Tell el-Mazar		
15	Tell Umm Hamad		
16	Tell Sheikh edh-Diyab	Tell es-Sheikh Diab	
17	Tell Mustah	Jabal el Mustah	Tell el-Mistaha
18	Ain Duq	Naaran	
19	Jericho		Tell es-Sultan
20	Tulul Abu al-'Alayiq		
21	Tell en-Nasbeh		Mizpah
22	Jerusalem		
23	Beth Shemesh		Ain Shems
24	Ashkelon		Ascalon
25	Maresha		Tell Sandahannah
26	Lachish		Tell ed-Duweir
27	Tell el-Hesi		
28	Tell el-Ajjul		
29	Tell Jemmeh	Tel Gamma	Gerar
30	Medeinneh	Medeineh (On Wadi eth-Themed)	
31	Saliyeh	Saliyah	
32	Balua	Khirbat al-Balu'a	
33	Bab edh-Dhra'		
34	Masada		
35	Jariyeh/Gheweibeh	Khirbet al-Jariya	
36	Hamr Ifdan	Khirbat Hamra Ifdan	
37	Meneiyeh	Timna	

Periodization

Archaeological Period	Historical Period	Dates
Epipaleolithic		c. 22,500-10,300 BP
Neolithic		c. 9750-4500 BCE
Chalcolithic		c. 4500-3700 BCE
Early Bronze Age IA		c. 3700-3400 BCE
Early Bronze Age IB		c. 3400-3100 BCE
Early Bronze Age II		c. 3100-2900 BCE
Early Bronze Age III		c. 2900-2500 BCE
Early Bronze Age IV/Intermediate Bronze Age		c. 2500-1950 BCE
Middle Bronze Age I		c. 1950-1750 BCE
Middle Bronze Age II-III		c. 1750-1550 BCE
Late Bronze Age I		1550-1375 BCE
Late Bronze Age II		1375-1190 BCE
Iron Age I		1190-1000 BCE
Iron Age IIA		1000-925 BCE
Iron Age IIB		925-722 BCE
Iron Age IIC		722-586 BCE
Persian Period		585-332 BCE
Hellenistic Period		332-63 BCE
	Early Roman Period	63 BCE - 135 CE
	Late Roman Period	63-324 CE
	Late Roman Period	324-640 CE
Early Islamic Period		c. 640-950 CE
Middle Islamic Period	Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk Periods	950-1516 CE
	Ottoman Period	1516-1917 CE

Chapter 1: Introduction the Oberlin Near East Study Collection and its Collectors

1.1 The Oberlin Near East Study Collection (ONESC)

The Oberlin Near East Study Collection (ONESC) is a 646-object archaeological collection housed in the Oberlin College Department of Religion. Of these objects, most come from the Southern Levant, a region encompassing the modern-day states of Israel, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories. A more limited number of artifacts come from a broader Near Eastern context. The contents of the collection are diverse in both scope and age. While roughly half of the objects in the collection are pottery fragments, the collection also includes numerous complete pottery vessels, flint tools, groundstone objects, small metal objects, cuneiform tablets, and ancient glass. These artifacts date from the Epipaleolithic c. 20,000 BP to the Early Islamic Periods (Umayyad Period) (c. 640-950 CE) with a small number of additional artifacts dating to Middle Islamic Period (c. 950-1500 CE).

Prior to Spring 2018, the collection was colloquially referred to as the Herbert May Collection, after Herbert Gordon May, a Professor of Old Testament Languages and Literature at Oberlin's Graduate School of Theology (GST) from 1934 to 1965 and later in the Department of Religion (1965-1970, 1973). In the oral accounts passed down by Religion Department faculty, the collection was assembled by May over the course of several trips to the Middle East where he participated in archaeological work and collected objects for use in his Bible classes. The collection was renamed in 2018 due to the uncertainty at that time over the extent of material May collected. While my research has confirmed that May is in fact responsible for bringing the vast majority of objects in the collection to Oberlin, the new name, the Oberlin Near East Study

Collection (ONESC) reflects the more minor role played by other collectors, a more descriptive title for personnel outside of Oberlin that would otherwise be unfamiliar with Herbert May, and a hope that the collection will become a more widely utilized campus resource.

It is important to note that while the Oberlin Near East Study Collection is delineated as a collection of archaeological artifacts, its primary collectors, Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank made equal efforts to create a library of photographic slides, which they used to show their classes archaeological objects, sites, plans, and more. These slides included the personal photographs of Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank complemented by illustrative material from archaeological publications. For May and Frank, both media were constituent parts of a larger whole. The present division between the archaeological objects and slides exists in large part due to the slides joining the library collection, while the artifacts remained in the Religion Department. Herbert May's photographs are digitized and today form an online collection known as the H.G. May Archaeology of Palestine Collection.¹ The study of these photographs and photographic slides is beyond the purview of this thesis, though when such a study is done, it will likely add a great deal to our understanding of Oberlin's collectors and their views about the importance to archaeology and archaeological objects to the study of biblical religions.

Over the past 20 years, a small number of objects in the collection have been used by Professor Cynthia Chapman of Oberlin's Religion department. In her classes, Professor Chapman has used the artifacts to demonstrate aspects of the daily routine of the ancient Israelite Household. She is the present curator of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection, providing space for its storage and facilitating its use.

¹ <https://isis2.cc.oberlin.edu/library/special/may.html>

Beyond the simple facts of the collection's diversity, regional provenance, and suggested source, until recently little was known about how the collection was assembled, why it was assembled, and what exact material it encompassed. This thesis and my work with what I have termed the 'ONESC Initiative' from the Spring of 2018 to the Fall of 2020 represent an effort to expand what is known about the collection while attempting to facilitate the collection's broader use at Oberlin in the future.

1.2 The ONESC Initiative

As a freshman, during the 2017 Winter Term, I participated in an effort to catalog the collection. This effort was led by Dr. Jeffrey Blakely, a veteran archaeologist who was exposed to the collection as a student at Oberlin in the early 1970s. For four weeks, I worked with Dr. Blakely and 8 other students to build a collection catalog complemented by photographs of every object. In the aftermath of that Winter Term project, I wanted to continue the process of cataloging and photographing.

This desire led to my founding the ONESC Initiative. Over the course of two-years, I worked with a group of student volunteers to recatalog the entirety of the collection while taking at least two high resolution photographs of every object. I also had the chance to conduct oral histories with several former students as well as former and current faculty who had used the collection during their time at Oberlin. We created and filled a spreadsheet of data about every object in the collection. We recorded markings, measurements, previous accession numbers, and when possible, the date of their ancient creation and use, alongside several other categories. Combined with nearly 1500 photographs that all fit on an external hard drive, the collection is now manageable and possible to study in a way that was previously unimaginable. The Initiative also saw to it that every object was individually placed in secure plastic bags and initiated the purchase

of additional archival storage boxes to ensure the collection's long-term physical integrity and organization.

As we worked, it became apparent how little anybody knew about ONESC beyond the barest skeleton of knowledge. This was especially the case as we came across objects with the names of obscure and unknown sites written on them and a large number of objects with historical accession numbers which, for us, had no obvious meaning or origin. Though difficult, the work of figuring out what these numbers correspond to and where exactly those obscure sites are has been well worth it, leading to the recovery of provenance for nearly half the artifacts in the collection.

1.3 The Critical Study of Collections

In her study *Museums Objects and Collections*, Susan Pearce marks an important distinction between histories of collections and critical studies of collections that examine the reasons for a collection's formation, and the biases of its collectors (Pearce 1993: 7). The first genre, the collection history, is a descriptive one. If I was writing a collection history, I would chronologically describe the acquisitions of Herbert May and his successor Harry Thomas Frank noting how many artifacts they brought, what those objects were, where they acquired them, and at times, who they acquired them from. The second genre, the critical collection analysis, builds on the first by using broad histories of collections in tandem with prevailing intellectual paradigms and motivating political and cultural factors to investigate how objects were acquired, why a collector selected specific items for collection, and why the collector was devoted to building a collection (Kohler 2007: 429; Pearce 1993: 7).

My intention for this thesis is to create a descriptive collection history augmented by critical elements which together allow for a more holistic understanding of ONESC's formation and use. In addition to illuminating the collection's makeup and provenance, I will use that

information to examine broader questions concerning the boundaries and methodologies involved in the socially sanctioned collection of Holy Land antiquities by American academics from the 1930s until the 1970s, including from Oberlin College. Though these dates are arbitrary to the careers of Oberlin's professors, they reflect tumultuous changes in the political control of the Holy Land seeing Palestine and Transjordan emerge from British Colonial rule into independent and ideologically driven states with archaeological agendas of their own (Trigger 2006: 272-275; Corbett 2014). The chronological boundaries set for this study also provide a window representing the rise, height, and demise of the biblical archaeology and later theology movements, both of which placed tremendous emphasis on the importance of archaeological research for vivifying and empowering the Bible (Dever 1985). By studying Oberlin's relatively small collection and the figures who created it, it will be possible to see how the 646 objects in ONESC relate to those larger themes.

Archaeological collections, as deliberate assemblages, necessarily reflect the specific biases held by their collectors, and the communities to which collectors belong (Pearce 1993: 66; Belk 1995: 76). Studying these biases then allows for a better understanding of both (Pearce 1995: 330). While archaeological objects were created to fulfill functional roles in the past, when selected for a collection in the present, they are typically utilized for alternate purposes (Marshall and Gosden 1999: 177). Perhaps the clearest example of this is the pottery fragments that make up nearly half of the collection. In their original setting, ONESC's potsherds were useful as part of a larger functional vessel. As broken fragments, though, in order to have been considered worthy of collection, Oberlin's collectors must have imbued them with a greater meaning that justified the time and effort spent collecting them and returning them to the United States (Kersel 2015b: 375; Clifford 1988: 220). Through the ideological black box of Oberlin's collectors and the broader

biblical archaeology community to which they belonged, an otherwise meaningless pottery sherd could be used to evoke a complete object, alongside an entire archaeological site, time period, or in some cases an ancient form of religious belief.

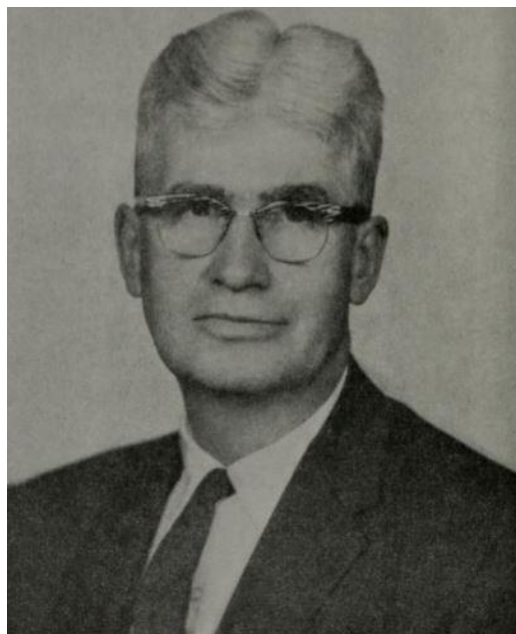
As receptacles given meaning by their handlers, observers, curators, and collectors, objects removed from their original context are continuously reinterpreted (Silberman 1995: 9). Over time, such continuously reinterpreted objects and especially archaeological objects can be conceptualized as having “social lives” (Appadurai 1986: 17, 34). The study of the entire social life of an artifact is known as a life history. In a life history approach to analysis, a singular object is followed from its creation to its status in the present, exploring along the way, how the object was created, used in an ancient context, and deposited in an archaeological context. If the object was recovered by archaeologists, the object assumes a host of separate meanings, and is taken away to a museum or another repository distant from the place from which it was recovered, and further reinterpreted by communities ranging from scholars to public audiences. A life history approach is useful for drawing out details of an object’s trajectory that might otherwise be obscure and allows for a more holistic understanding of an object by contemporary observers who are exposed to the object’s protean past (Kopytoff 1986: 67).

In comparison with a life history, an object biography represents a selection of discreet portions of an object’s life history (Kopytoff 1986: 68). In this thesis, I do not explore the varied ancient contexts of objects in the ONESC. Instead, my aim is to provide a biography for their acquisition and use by the Oberlin Professors Herbert Gordon May and Harry Thomas Frank while investigating the questions of who, what, where, when, why, and how objects were collected and used between 1931 and 1980, the window of time in which Professor May and Frank collected artifacts and taught at Oberlin. The story of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection has of course

continued since 1980. To encompass this time period, I also provide an appendix that outlines a descriptive history of the life of the collection from 1980 to the present.

1.4 The Primary Collectors of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection

1.4.1 Herbert Gordon May (b. 1904- d. 1977)



Herbert Gordon May c. 1970. Reproduced from Oberlin College Department of Religion 1970.

Herbert Gordon May was a Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature at Oberlin from 1934 to 1965 and continued to teach in the college's Religion department from 1965 to 1970 and in 1973. Though this paper largely intersects with May's archaeological experiences, writings, and collecting, May was equally characterized as a theologian, cartographer, and a translator of scriptures (Frank and Reed 1970; 9). With contributions in these many areas, May was a biblical archaeologist in the classic sense wherein he, "[studied] discoveries and excavations in order to glean from them every fact that throws a direct, indirect, or even diffused light upon the Bible (Wright 1957: 17)."

Herbert May was born in 1904. In his 20s, he earned a series of degrees in theology including an A.B from Wesleyan in 1927, an A.M from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1929, a B.D from Chicago Theological Seminary in 1930, and a PhD from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1931. During his student years, May distinguished himself as a linguist becoming proficient in French, German, Greek Latin, Hebrew, Syriac, Aramaic, and to a lesser degree, in Cuneiform languages (Graham to Graham 1933). After finishing his PhD in 1931 with a thesis entitled “Hosea and Isaiah’s Cult”, May spent the next three years living in Palestine as part of the Megiddo excavation sponsored by the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute.

While in Palestine, May collected numerous artifacts and took hundreds of photographs, many of which are now in the Oberlin College Library’s H.G. May Archaeology of Palestine Collection. During his three years at Megiddo May was introduced to the leaders of the biblical archaeology movement including William Foxwell Albright and Nelson Glueck, both of whom became lifelong friends, with the latter playing a significant role in the formation of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

May returned to the United States in 1934 to join the faculty at the Oberlin’s Graduate School of Theology. As Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature at Oberlin, May published books and papers spanning a wide variety of topics including the development of Hebrew religion in tandem with archaeology, biblical exegesis with a focus on the prophetic books, biblical translation, religious education, and historical geography/biblical cartography. May edited several widely used volumes including the *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (1962), the *Oxford Bible Atlas* (1962), and the *Oxford Annotated Bible* (1962).

May played a significant role in the creation of the Revised Standard Bible, joining the project committee in 1945, serving as the Chairman of its Old Testament Section from 1960 until

his death, and as the Chairman of the entire project from 1966 to 1974. He also participated in numerous other academic associations, serving as President of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1962, a Trustee of the American Schools of Oriental Research, and the President of its Midwest branch in 1947 (Frank and Reed 1970: 12). He passed away in 1977 at the age of 73.

1.4.2 Harry Thomas Frank (b. 1933- d. 1980).



Harry Thomas Frank c. 1975. Image reproduced from "H. Thomas Frank Dies at 47." 1980.

Harry Thomas "Tom" Frank taught in Oberlin's Religion Department from 1964 until his death in 1980. During his time at the College, Frank used the Oberlin Near East Study Collection in his teaching and made a small number of contributions. As a product of the changing field of biblical archaeology in the late 1960s, Frank's approach to the use of artifacts was different from May's and represented a new chapter in the biography of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

Tom Frank was born in 1933. He received his BA from Wake Forest College, a BD from Yale University, and his PhD from Duke University with a thesis entitled "the Place, Thought, and Significance of Maurice Goguel in New Testament Studies." Frank was hired at Oberlin in 1964 to help build the College's Religion department, a newly founded department devoted to the humanistic study of religion. In 1966 Frank received a grant that allowed him to visit

archaeological sites in Italy, Greece, Egypt, and Jordan (which at that time occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem).

While in Jerusalem, Frank met Paul Lapp, one of the most active Levantine archaeologists of the 1960s who invited him to work on his excavation at Taanach, a site in the northern West Bank. Upon his return from that excavation, Frank developed a considerable interest in archaeology, especially as related to the New Testament, and in the early 1970s, published a series of popular handbooks about biblical archaeology. Frank's involvement in ASOR and interest in Near Eastern archaeology led to Oberlin's involvement in the ASOR-sponsored excavations at Tel el-Hesi, an archaeological site at the southern end of Israel's coastal plain in 1970 (King 1983: 205-207).

In the 1970s, Frank acted as the director of Hesi's volunteer program through which he brought numerous Oberlin students to Israel to participate in the excavation (Coogan 1981: 178). Frank's passion for making archaeology accessible carried over into his teaching. His classes were always full and the enthusiasm he inspired in his students led to several pursuing careers in archaeology (Coogan 1981: 178).² In line with his passion for making archaeology accessible, Frank was the associate editor of ASOR's popular journal, the *Biblical Archaeologist* (now *Near Eastern Archaeology*) and later served on the editorial board of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, a popular magazine (Frank 1978b).

Frank's primary training was in New Testament, but his research interests spanned both Old and New Testament. In the late 1970s, Frank was conducting research into the phenomenology

² It is difficult to convey just how beloved Harry Thomas Frank was. In every conversation I have had with his former students and colleagues, including a cousin who went to the college in the 1970s, it is so apparent how beloved a teacher he was. For his students, Frank inspired enthusiasm, encouraged critical thinking, and facilitated active participation in archaeology. Hearing the stories and reading about Frank's passionate teaching, Frank comes across as so vividly alive and present that one cannot help but feel pain from Frank's early passing some forty years later.

of Biblical religion as a method of studying and teaching religion among the humanities as well as into the life and times of the 1st century B.C.E Judean King, Herod. Frank passed away in 1980 at the age of 47 (“H. Thomas Frank Dies at 47.” 1980).

1.5 A Note on Geographic Terminology and Toponyms

Names contain political, linguistic, and cultural meanings. By providing a place or area with a name, choices are inherently made that bias the viewpoint of specific groups. This thesis, by in large, discusses area within the borders of the modern-day states of Israel, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories. The terminology used for naming sites in this region is perhaps more loaded and contested than in any other part of the world. These countries can be placed into several larger geographic units. The first, the Eastern Mediterranean is a descriptive term that in this context refers to the interconnectedness of that region in antiquity. Artifacts from Greece, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, and Cyprus are regularly found within Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories.

Equally, these nations belong to a region called the Near East. This Eurocentric term was historically used to refer to the part of the Middle East stretching from Israel in the east to Iraq in the west and from Turkey in the north, to northern Arabia in the south. More broadly, the term might be used to also include Egypt, eastern Iran, the whole of Arabia, and the southern Caucasus. This term is still in common usage for the study of the Middle East in antiquity. Prehistorians refer to this part of the world as Southwest Asia.

Archaeologists are increasingly referring to the region containing Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Cyprus, northern Sinai and the Palestinian Territories as the Levant. It has widely replaced the geographic term Syro-Palestine, which is limited to Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Territories. Though wider usage of the term Syro-Palestine was widely touted by

leading archaeologists in the 1980s, its usage has waned in part due to the political contestation of the term Palestine (Dever 2003: xi; Killebrew and Steiner 2014: 1-2). The archaeological artifacts and sites described in this thesis belong to the Southern Levant. This area encompasses Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Territories, southern Lebanon, southern Syria and northern Sinai. Of those however, this thesis only truly discusses the areas encompassed by Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and the eastern half of Jordan. This is the rough geographic area within which most of the Bible's events take place and in which most biblical characters are described as living. For Oberlin's collectors, this region was commonly referred to as the Holy Land. For that reason, I regularly employ the term Holy Land throughout this thesis.

The Southern Levant can be subdivided by the Jordan river. The area to the west of the Jordan river containing Israel and the Palestinian Territories is referred to by the geographic terms Palestine or Cisjordan, while the area to the east containing Jordan is referred to as Transjordan.³ During its British administration from 1920-1948, Palestine was a united political unit that I will refer to as Mandatory Palestine. After the 1948 Arab Israeli War, the West Bank came under the administration of Jordan while Egypt administered Gaza. The term Palestinian Territories refers to these two areas after they were captured by Israel during the Six Day War.

With the ever-changing political circumstances in this part of the world, combined with a history of exploration dating back 200 years, the names by which sites are referred to both colloquially and in the archaeological literature have changed drastically (Moorey 1991: 14-22). Even today, the name one calls a site varies based upon the archaeological community one belongs to. While the broader world archaeology community has retained a number of Arabic site names that were in use at the time of their initial exploration and excavation, Israeli archaeologists and

³ Israeli archaeologists refer to the archaeology of Palestine/Cisjordan as the archaeology of Eretz Yisrael (the archaeology of the land of Israel). As this term is not used outside of Israel, I do not make use of it.

scholars of the biblical period often refer to an archaeological site by its biblical or Hebraicized toponym. In some cases, these biblical place names have become the primary names of archaeological sites. Megiddo is one such example. Today, the site is far more commonly referred to as Megiddo or Tel Megiddo with its Arabic toponym Tell el-Mutesellim typically used as a secondary name more often written than spoken. The spelling of Tell/Tel is in itself significant. The spelling Tell is used to refer to sites in Arabic speaking regions, while Tel is the Hebraicized version used for sites in Israel.

Several of the sites in Jordan and the West Bank that artifacts in ONESC come from have assumed altered names or spellings since their initial discovery and publication between the 1930s and early 1950s. I have mostly maintained the names and spellings of sites as they are written on the objects I am describing, and in the archaeological literature historically connected to those objects. My map of archaeological sites represented by the ONESC contains these names alongside their modern names.

1.6 Overview

In chapter 2, I provide a brief overview of the deep history of collecting objects from the Holy Land before turning towards a discussion of the origins of stratigraphic archaeology in Palestine. From there, I introduce the British Mandate of Palestine and Transjordan and demonstrate how the excavation and antiquities exportation laws passed by the British colonial government led to the formation of numerous large collections outside of the Southern Levant. I describe three separate approaches to collection formation, content, and use by American seminaries, Universities, and Museums in the 1920s and 30s. I lastly introduce the Megiddo expedition, setting the stage for May's arrival and the beginnings of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

Chapter 3 discusses Herbert May's collecting from 1931-1965, covering May's arrival at Megiddo until the closure of the Graduate School of Theology. Through an analysis of artifacts complemented by Herbert May's extensive archive, I reconstruct which objects came to Oberlin as a result of May's collecting during this period. After examining May's collecting in Palestine, I turn to his arrest for antiquities smuggling in 1934. In my discussion of May's arrest, I examine the just published account of the events of June 1934 (Cline 2020). May's arrest, taken with the objects he collected, demonstrates that while the British government had an official definition of an antiquity, that definition was not shared by the archaeological community who helped facilitate May's collecting.

Turning to May's first years in Oberlin, I discuss his early attempts to incorporate archaeological objects into his classes before his collecting bonanza between 1939 and 1941. Over those three years, May acquired more than 200 archaeological objects. May continued to collect into the late 1940s and 1950s. Using these examples, I suggest that members of the small academic biblical archaeology community were mutually devoted to collection building and facilitated collection building by other members of their community. That most items in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection were given as gifts demonstrates how archaeologists with possession of artifacts would have used the artifacts under their purview to create strong ties within the small academic biblical archaeology community. I lastly discuss the display of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection in the Graduate School of Theology.

Chapter 4 focuses on the period from 1965-1980 when the Graduate School of Theology closed, Herbert May's influence over the collection decreased, and Harry Thomas Frank emerged as the collection's primary curator and user. After examining the effects of the closure of the GST on the collection I turn to the antiquities purchased by Herbert May while on sabbatical in 1966

and 1967. I argue that while May might have been responsible for choosing and purchasing artifacts, Harry Thomas Frank should be viewed as the key figure responsible for the purchase. To explain the mechanics of antiquities purchases in Jordanian occupied Jerusalem, I introduce the laws and regulations governing the purchase and sale of antiquities from the time of the British Mandate up until May made his purchases.

The 1967 inventory of antiquities made by Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank provides the basis for a discussion of the collection's ownership and composition in 1967. With the closure of the Graduate School of Theology, much of the material that was previously understood as loaned to the college became fully incorporated into the collection and came to be considered the property of May, Frank, or the Department of Religion. The division of the inventory between artifacts owned by May, Frank, and the department of Religion offers a glimpse at how the now unified ONESC was once thought of as constituent collections.

I lastly discuss Harry Thomas Frank's collecting and in particular the mechanics of the acquisition of a group of tomb objects from a site in Jordan called Bab edh-Dhra.' A close examination of this acquisition reveals how even in the late 1970s, personal relationships within the field of biblical archaeology continued to play a huge role in the distribution of antiquities. I lastly discuss how artifacts were displayed by the Religion Department in the Peters building.

Chapter 5 builds on the previous two chapters to provide a fuller understanding of why May and Frank were devoted to collecting archaeological objects. I begin the chapter with a discussion of how May's experience at Megiddo actualized the reality of the Holy Land and gave him a lifelong appreciation for the religious value of archaeology. Building on the discussion of May's collecting in Palestine in Chapter 3, I suggest that the objects he collected from 1931-1934 were mementos and souvenirs rather than a cohesive and purposefully collected study collection.

Only later when May added these objects to those he gathered between 1939 and 1941 did the collection assume an important educational role. Using May's published scholarship, I discuss several groups of artifacts in the collection and explain what their function would have been in May's classroom. I lastly examine the intersections between May's archaeology and theology plotting his changing views between his interactions with the Chicago liberal school of the 1920s and 30s up through his embracing biblical theology, the theological arm of the biblical archaeology movement.

Turning to Harry Thomas Frank, I contextualize his collecting and use of artifacts against the changing landscape of the biblical archaeology and theology movements in the 1960s and 70s. In my analysis of Frank, I suggest that the antiquities purchases made by May in the 1960s represented an attempt to "complete" the collection so that it would fit the needs of his younger successor. I lastly discuss Frank's own views regarding the role of theology in archaeology.

Chapter 2: The Development of Archaeology and Collecting in the Southern Levant from the late 19th to the early 20th Century

2.1 Collecting Palestine before Archaeology

Foreigners and travelers have been removing artifacts from the Holy Land for as long as it has held that designation (Silberman 1982: 6). Soon after Constantine's adoption of Christianity in the 4th century, religiously motivated pilgrims began pouring into Palestine and Transjordan hoping to visit the places mentioned in the Bible. These pilgrims would often collect objects as mementos of their journeys which, upon returning home, they would connect to religious figures. In this context, a lock of hair or a piece of wood would be ascribed to a biblical figure or purported to have come into direct physical contact with that figure. This transformation of an artifact from ordinary to sacred and fetishized through a declared association with the Bible has been termed 'Magical Materialism' (Silberman 2017: 111). Across Europe during the Medieval period, relics were regarded as witnesses to the divine and as such, for communities of believers, objects could represent the tangibility, timelessness, and truth of the Bible (Geary 1986: 169).

The increased European presence in the Middle East starting in the late 19th century ushered in a renewed period of widespread collecting. In the earlier half of the century, European Imperial powers collected numerous artifacts from the Holy Land and the broader Middle East with the intention of increasing their own national prestige (Silberman 1982). In the latter half of the 19th century, collecting was dominated by several scientific societies and private museums who took advantage of the Holy Land's newfound accessibility, its increased number of antiquity and souvenir shops, and the willingness of locals to sell objects to wealthy foreigners (Cohen-Hattab and Shoval 2015: 19-21; Greene 2017: 58).

The British Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) was founded in 1865 with the mission of exploring and collecting natural history and archaeological specimens from the Holy Land (Cobbing 2017: 76). The PEF created accurate maps of Palestine and collected photographs, ethnographic objects, natural history specimens, and archaeological artifacts (Cobbing 2017: 77). By contrast with previous collectors who were mainly theologians, pilgrims, and diplomats, the PEF's collectors were primarily secular British army officers. This expansion of Holy Land collecting beyond prestige items and religiously venerated objects was part of the changing outlook on what constituted proper collecting in mid to late 19th century Europe. This new outlook demanded a far more taxonomical, organized, and didactic role for a collection (Clifford 1988: 227). The Palestine Exploration Fund shared their findings with the general public in their "Palestine Museum," located in London, where they displayed ancient pottery and other artifacts their collectors gathered from Palestine.

In the United States, religion played a more active role as an impetus for collection formation. In 1889 David Gordon Lyon, a Harvard based theologian, made his first trip to the Near East to collect specimens for what would in time become the Harvard Semitic Museum. Lyon was influenced by the work of the American biblical scholar Samuel Ives Curtiss who believed that the modern Arab population of the Holy Land mirrored the cultures and peoples of the Bible and that therefore, one could only come to a better understanding of the biblical context by studying Palestine's modern population (Vogel 1993: 229-230). Incorporating these ideas into his collecting practice, Lyon collected ethnographic items, replicas, photographs, and assorted artifacts so that a visitor to his museum would be able to "absorb" the essence of the Holy Land as if they themselves were visiting it (Greene 2017: 58, 68). Archaeological objects played a limited role in the museum, as methodologies for the dating of ancient ceramics had not yet been utilized in Palestine. In the

museum's vision, by interacting with collected objects, visitors could actualize the Holy Land as a real, physical and, historical place. In the 19th century, few Americans had the opportunity to visit Palestine making it difficult to conceptualize outside of the pages of the Bible (Vogel: 190, 219). By bringing back pieces of and from the physical land then, scholars thought that Palestine could be made more real and brought closer to believers who would thereafter better understand and appreciate the Bible (Vogel 1993: 59, 219).

2.2 Petrie, Ceramic Chronology, early archaeology in Palestine, and new meanings for Artifacts

In 1890, the Palestine exploration fund invited the prominent Egyptologist, Flinders Petrie, to excavate at a site called Tell el-Hesi. At that time, scholars believed that Tel el-Hesi was the location of the ancient Judahite city of Lachish, a city featured prominently in the Hebrew Bible (Silberman 1982: 148).⁴ Petrie's excavation at Tell el-Hesi was the first stratigraphic excavation undertaken in the Levant. Petrie utilized the excavation techniques pioneered by Heinrich Schliemann at Troy in the 1870s to uncover the remains of eleven superimposed cities (Trigger 2006: 291). Due to its location on Palestine's southern coastal plain, Petrie found a plethora of Egyptian objects which he used to date differentiated levels. Petrie correlated these datable Egyptian objects with the mundane pottery found at Tell el-Hesi and in doing so, established the methodology which, though much refined, still dominates Middle Eastern Archaeology to this day (Dever 1980a: 42; Moorey 1991: 29; Trigger 2006: 294-295). Herbert May believed that Petrie's excavations, "ushered in the second phase of scientific exploration in Palestine (Graham and May 1936: 326)."

⁴ Since the 1930s Lachish has instead been correlated with Tell ed-Duweir.

Petrie understood that different architectural phases at Tell el-Hesi contained different styles of pottery. By associating these pottery forms with historically datable finds such as Egyptian scarabs or imported Greek pottery, Petrie was able to assign a date range to the excavated strata and the finds within them (Moorey 1991: 29). Petrie's correlation between the ubiquitous broken ceramics found at sites in the Holy Land with datable items from the broader Near Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean worlds contextualized Palestine's historical past against the background of the surrounding ancient cultures who at that time had already been the subject of half a century of archaeological research (Silberman 1982: 149).

Building on a rough biblical and historical chronology, Petrie associated the various phases he found with specific cultural groups naming individual strata: Israelite, Jewish, and Seleucid (Moorey 1991: 31). In assigning these cultural markers to strata, Petrie used the succession of cultures already known from the biblical and historical record and assigned the material culture assemblages he found to discreet ethnicities. Through Petrie's methodology, pottery was associated with historical time periods and with the groups of people believed to have inhabited the Holy Land in antiquity.⁵

Biblical scholars soon began incorporating Petrie's ceramic typology and chronology into their own search for biblical sites. Some, such as the American biblical scholar Fredrick Bliss, argued that the locations of biblical cities could be accurately determined by survey alone. Bliss held that by comparing a site's ceramic chronology with its periods of occupation as indicated by the Bible, one could correlate archaeological and biblical sites (Moorey 1991: 31). In his view, if a site did not possess an exact correlation, it could not possibly be equated with a biblical location

⁵ By the 1920s the practice of naming strata after cultural groups had been replaced by the three-age system (Stone, Bronze, and Iron). According to Moorey, this change was made to keep the archaeology of Palestine up to date with mainstream trends in world archaeology (Moorey 1991: 75).

(Bliss 1906: 293-296). Though Bliss's method led to a small number of site identifications that persist, in many other cases, incongruities between the text and artifacts either confounded archaeologists or led them to purposefully skew the dates of their ceramic finds so they matched the biblical account (Moorey 1991: 59).

Through Bliss' paradigm, archaeological remains and objects were used to underscore the reliability of the Bible as a historical narrative. Artifacts and their associated phases could be matched up as the actual historical settings and objects of biblical stories and figures (Davis 2004: 30). Archaeology then could be used to speak to the reality of the Bible and could fend off attacks from those who challenged its historicity and authority (Davis 2004: VIII). The use of ceramics for dating architectural phases that were then correlated to biblical episodes became the bedrock on which much of the biblical archaeology of the early 20th century was built (Davis 2004). In his assessment of archaeology's revolutionary new role in biblical studies anchored upon ceramic chronology, Silberman (1982: 201) concludes that, "Ancient pottery, inscriptions, and buried cities [became]...new objects of veneration. Scientific archaeology had become the new system of belief."

2.3 A New Paradigm: Archaeology and Antiquities Laws in the British Mandate

The introduction of Stratigraphic Archaeology fundamentally changed the practice of collecting Holy Land antiquities. Whereas ethnographic materials and photographs had dominated the earlier acquisitions by institutions such as Harvard's Semitic Museum, after Petrie's excavations, museums refocused their efforts towards acquiring artifacts associated with specific times, places, and cultures (Silberman 1982: 172). If systematic archaeology changed collecting practices, the establishment of British political control over Palestine and Transjordan would have as great an effect. In 1917, British forces led by General Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem. Three

years later in 1920, British rule was codified into a Mandate, a governmental framework in which an administering Western power was meant to help a territory become an independent nation.

The British established a department of antiquities to oversee the excavation and protection of ancient sites and antiquities. This new department granted members of the League of Nations equal excavation rights and established a partage law whereby excavating institutions would divide their finds with the antiquities department and could then legally export their half (AO 1929: 550; Davies 2004: 50). Western archaeologists viewed, these laws as a dramatic improvement over the “restrictive” antiquities policies of the Ottomans. With the new laws, some felt that Palestine’s role as a part of global heritage could finally be shared (Davies 2004: 54; Silberman 1982: 199).

Throughout the 1920s, the British administration passed several antiquities laws culminating in the 1929 Antiquities Ordinance (AO 1929). This law was provided a legal definition of an antiquity, outlined the legal conditions under which an antiquity could be exported from Palestine, and established a legal framework for the sale of antiquities. This ordinance deeply affected Herbert May who was collecting in the 1930s and who was arrested for violating the law in 1934. According to AO 1929, **any** object produced by people before 1700 constituted an antiquity (AO 1929: 548). At the end of an excavation season, dig directors were required to provide the department with a list of all the antiquities they had found so that the head of the department could make an informed and equitable division of artifacts (AO 1929: 550). While the law was explicit in its definition of an antiquity, excavators seem to have operated under a different definition. One archaeologist in a 1943 popular account of archaeological discoveries in Palestine wrote, “all objects which are **whole** or by slight additions can be restored for exhibition in a museum must be registered (McCown 1943: 16).” This difference in opinion between archaeologists and the letter of the law was crucial in Herbert May’s collecting during his 1931-

1934 stint living in Palestine during which he obtained several objects that legally should have been reported.

The 1929 Antiquities Ordinance specified that an antiquity could be exported if a collector or excavator obtained an export permit from the director of the department of antiquities (AO 1929: 551). Obtaining such a permit required a declaration of what material the collector intended to take out of the country and could possibly also involve an evaluation of that material by a representative from the department of antiquities (AO 1929: 551). Objects would only be repossessed by the government if an individual obtained no permit, or if those objects were deemed important or unique enough for the Palestine Museum.

2.3 Models of Institutional Collecting in the Mandatory Middle East

Taking advantage of Palestine's liberal export laws, numerous Western institutions established excavations in Palestine (Davis 2014: 35). American Universities, Seminaries, and Colleges were especially prolific, leading to the formation of several large collections of Holy Land antiquities throughout the United States. Simultaneously, American art museums and private collectors began purchasing art objects for exhibition (Emberling and Teeter 2010: 44). According to Emberling (2010: 10) the prestige accompanying the ownership of an artifact, especially one from the Holy Land, was never far from the minds of American collectors and large museums.

Davis (2004: 58, 75) singles out the University of Pennsylvania's excavation at Tell el Husn, the biblical site of Beth Shean as one such example of a prestige minded excavation (King 1983: 77). While the excavation had an interest in uncovering the history of the site, considerable pressure was put on the excavators to dig quickly and haphazardly to improve the chance of recovering display quality artifacts. This was especially important as the Beth Shean expedition was the first American excavation in Palestine since the First World War and thus promised huge

rewards in both prestige and paying visitors to the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Several contemporary archaeologists scrutinized such haphazard excavations charging that general archaeological material had been neglected leading to unreliable results and publications (Badè 1934: 46; McCown 1943: 1).

2.3.2 William F. Badè and Seminary Museums of Biblical Archaeology

Amongst the many factors that make the history of archaeology in Palestine unique is the number of excavations undertaken by small American seminaries. These excavations led to the formation of numerous archaeological collections as the partage system ensured that the material rewards for setting up an excavation were considerable. In 1926, William F. Badè of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California began excavating at the site of Tell en-Nasbeh located near Ramallah. Though the site was originally selected to determine if it could be correlated to the biblical site of Mizpah, Badè took an active interest in the lives of the community's ancient inhabitants and therefore excavated more systematically than many of his peers (King 1983: 79). While Badè maintained the classic attitude of the biblical archaeologist that archaeology could correct, revise, or confirm tradition, he also believed that the role of the everyday object had largely been ignored and deserved far more attention in archaeological reports and in biblical studies (Zorn 1988a: 30). In his view a museum specimen could only hold significance if it could be placed against its archaeological and human context (Zorn 1988a: 28).

Badè used the finds from Tell en-Nasbeh to teach courses about archaeological method and pottery typology to his seminary students. He founded the Pacific School of Religion's museum of biblical archaeology to display finds from the site (Zorn 1988a: 31). Though the museum was accessible to the general public, it was primarily intended as a teaching and learning resource for seminary students (Zorn 1988b: 37). As opposed to larger museums which displayed monuments

and other unique objects, the Badè museum's display mostly consisted of pottery and was organized chronologically to denote the passage of time in Palestine and the range of ancient cultures that inhabited the land (Zorn 1988b: 38).

Several other seminary museums of biblical archaeology were also created by taking advantage of the Mandatory period's liberal export laws. These museums collected and displayed mundane artifacts and highlighted the origin of those artifacts at the biblical sites their institution had excavated. In effect, it allowed an institution to claim a unique association and familiarity with a biblical site, its history, and its contents. One of Herbert May's primary goals in his attempt to establish an Oberlin-led excavation project in 1936 and 1937 was the procurement of such a collection, which would have been used to establish this type of museum (May to Bohn 1937). As we will see, the Haverford College Museum, played an instrumental role in the creation of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection (Eliot and Kirby-Stevens 1939: 23).

2.2.3 Breasted, the Oriental Institute, Informed Collecting, and Humanistic Archaeology

Though Herbert May was first and foremost a theologian, his view of artifacts and their importance was greatly influenced by his experiences with the humanistic camp of the University of Chicago's Theological Seminary, its school and museum of Near Eastern Studies, the Oriental Institute, and its excavation at Tel Megiddo. The Oriental Institute was founded by the United States' first PhD in Egyptology, James Henry Breasted. In marked contrast to many other institutions whose archaeological agendas were guided by personal religious interest, the Oriental Institute was founded as a scientific, secular, and humanistic institution focused on studying the social evolution of humankind throughout the entire ancient Middle East (Breasted 1933: IX, 2, 93; Emberling 2010: 10; Moorey 1991: 51).

As Breasted put it, the purpose of the institute was more broadly to answer, “How did man become what he is?” and to serve as a, “research laboratory for the investigation of the early human career [that] endeavors to trace the course of human development from the merely physical man disclosed by the paleontologist to the rise and early advance of civilized societies, the product of a social and material evolution culminating in social idealism.” Breasted focused his institute on the Middle East as he believed that it was, “the scene of this evolution (Breasted 1933: 2-3).”

Breasted designed the Oriental Institute as an archaeological laboratory, and thus, in the first years of its existence, he assembled a study collection for instructive use by the public at large and for the archaeologists and language specialists training at the Institute (Emberling and Teeter: 31-32, 37). Breasted made his first collection building trip to the Middle East from 1919-1920. During that trip, he focused on purchasing representative and historically significant artifacts which could be used for studying the Near East as a broad unit (Emberling and Teeter: 34). He carefully selected artifacts for purchase based upon their potential educational value and even bought certain items specifically so that they could be used as foci for doctoral dissertations (Emberling and Teeter: 37, 46). Breasted noted during his journey that it was far more difficult to find representative collections of Levantine artifacts than Egyptian ones and by that period already understood that the Oriental Institute would need to conduct an excavation in the region if it was to develop a large and contextualized collection (Breasted: 1933: 63). Only a few years later, in 1925, the Oriental Institute began its excavations at the mound of Megiddo.

Breasted’s exhibitions focused on showing the gradual evolution of humanity in the Middle East. As such, the Oriental Institute’s exhibitions were organized chronologically and geographically rather than thematically (Breasted 1933: 103, 104, 108). Breasted believed that “whole periods of man’s activity can be so presented through original objects, models, and pictures

as to make them very much more vivid, real, and understandable...to see them chronologically arranged is like looking down a vista of milestones marking the long road over which we have passed and indicating the process by which we have become what we are (Breasted 1933: 103-4).” Breasted believed that collections were universally valuable writing, “collections are an invaluable aid to instruction whatever the age of the students (Breasted 1933: 103).”

For Breasted then, the function of the collected and exhibited artifact was to provide believable and transmittable evidence of his view that the Middle East had been the primary locus for the development of human civilization. The arrangement of the collection chronologically would serve as a presentation of this thesis to museum visitors who would encounter specific developments in a parade of galleries. The placement of artifacts into their studied geographical, cultural, and chronological backgrounds allowed them to forcefully suggest the veracity of Breasted’s view and to speak to their own authenticity and importance as parts of the new “science” of Near Eastern studies (Abt 1996: 194). As demonstrably authentic and contextualized ancient objects, the artifacts in the Oriental Institute, would serve to render developments, places, and times far removed from the modern visitor as vivid, real, and understandable (Breasted 1933: 104).

Breasted’s ideas heavily influenced Herbert G. May who was acquainted with Breasted through his ties to the University of Chicago (Oberlin College Department of Religion 1970). Though May’s theological background guided his archaeological interests to the Holy Land and biblically associated time periods, Breasted’s evolutionary view of history in the Near East and his approach to the educational and evidentiary role of the artifact certainly affected May’s collecting.

2.4 The University of Chicago's Megiddo Expedition

Located in Northern Palestine, Megiddo is perhaps the most extensively excavated site in the entire Levant. Of the four expeditions to the site, the nearly 15-year project undertaken by the University of Chicago and funded by John D. Rockefeller Jr. was the most extensive with only the Second World War precluding its continuation (Cline 2020: XIX). In James Henry Breasted's original vision, the excavation would dig the entirety of the 36-meter-tall and 5-hectare large site down to bedrock (Breasted 1933: 234). With its extensive funding, the Megiddo expedition employed over 300 local workers as well as a cadre of Egyptian foremen who had worked on other University of Chicago excavations in Egypt (Cline 2020: 21, 85). During May's three year stint at the site from 1931-1934, excavation took place 9 months a year with the staff and workers only regularly receiving time off on Fridays (May to Smith 1932). The excavation made innumerable discoveries including what was then labeled the horse stables of King Solomon, a monumental water shaft cut into the site's bedrock, a group of carved ivories from a Late Bronze Age palace, and several stelae and other fragments of writing that connected the site's pottery and strata to broader Near Eastern history (Moorey 1991: 57-58). After 15 years, the University of Chicago uncovered the remains of 20 strata and excavated several strata completely (King 1983: 79).

Over the course of 15 years, the Megiddo expedition had three different directors who worked with an ever-changing group of field staff responsible for overseeing the day to day excavations, registering finds, and working on publications. By the time May arrived in 1931, the excavation was directed by, P.L.O Guy, a veteran British archaeologist who by that point had already worked on several large scale Middle Eastern excavations (Moorey 1991:57). After a rocky start, Guy and May established a stable working relationship. In time though, the tumult

involved in May's departure from Palestine in 1934 would be the final domino leading to Guy's dismissal and replacement by Gordon Loud (Cline 2020: 182; Harrison 2004: 3).

The Megiddo expedition features prominently in James Henry Breasted's 1935 documentary film, *the Human Adventure* (Cline 2020: 146-147). The film was shot in 1932 and in addition to a variety of shots showing the process of excavation, also has a segment devoted to how the expedition recorded artifacts. May is shown registering recently discovered artifacts in the expedition's pottery storage room (<https://youtu.be/yysHJk0v5XA?t=2053>).



Megiddo pottery Storage Room by Herbert May (Photograph Courtesy of the Oberlin College Archives:<http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm/ref/collection/palestine/id/4087>)

2.5 Conclusion

Foreigners have collected artifacts from Palestine and Transjordan for as long as it has been designated the “Holy Land.” Beginning in the 19th century, the scientific principle of taxonomy changed the character of Holy Land collecting towards a more educational purpose. In the United States, collections of objects from the Holy Land took on a religious connotation as contemporary theologians believed that objects from the present-day Holy Land could be used to actualize the Bible for their congregants who would themselves likely never visit the land. In 1890, Flinders Petrie ushered in a new era of collecting with his application of stratigraphic archaeology to a Palestinian archaeological mound. Petrie’s discoveries were used by biblical scholars to confirm their preconceived notions of biblical historicity.

After the First World War, the British Empire administered Palestine and created an antiquities department and laws amenable to widespread excavation and the easy export of large assemblages of archaeological artifacts. American institutions recognized the favorable conditions for archaeology and soon after, museums, seminaries, and universities established their own excavations. Though some projects were guided by the hope of discovering prestige and “museum display quality” artifacts, projects undertaken by seminaries were often a vehicle to tie a seminary to a biblical site. The humanistic camp led by James Henry Breasted collected objects with a view of demonstrating the gradual evolution of human society in the Middle East. Towards that end, Breasted established an excavation at Megiddo, a site in Northern Palestine. Megiddo was the largest excavation of its day and Herbert May’s experiences at the site would provide a crucial catalyst for the formation of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

Chapter 3 Acquiring and Displaying ONESC I (1931-1965)

3.1 Defining the Period

The purpose of this chapter is to identify Herbert May's specific contributions to the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. Though additions were made to the Oberlin Near East Study Collection after 1965, between 1931 and 1965, Herbert May was the primary figure responsible for bringing 'biblical artifacts' to Oberlin and for displaying them in the Graduate School of Theology's museum. May's collection of archaeological artifacts began in the 1930s with his arrival at the University of Chicago's Megiddo expedition. The chapter ends in 1965, the date when the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology closed, and May began dividing his time between Vanderbilt University and Oberlin College. While May purchased artifacts for the collection after 1965, these later purchases were made within the guidelines and needs of his successor, Harry Thomas Frank, who, after 1965, should be considered the primary curator of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.⁶

The chapter is organized chronologically, following specific instances of May's collecting from 1931-1965. By focusing on the mechanics of how artifacts were collected and traded, this chapter illuminates the multiplicity of ways that one could collect artifacts in Mandatory Palestine and during the earliest days of the modern states of Israel and Jordan. Understanding the mechanics of Herbert May's collecting demonstrates the relative nonchalance with which members of the biblical archaeology community of the 1930s collected and transported artifacts. biblical archaeologists justified their collection and often undocumented movement of archaeological artifacts by placing them in study collections used for the benefit of their student's educational

⁶ For the period from 1965-1980 see chapter 4, 'Acquiring and Displaying ONESC II.'

experiences and for promoting their field. By facilitating the movement of antiquities within their community, biblical archaeologists reinforced their social ties, making their academic community stronger and better connected.

3.2 Previous Accounts of Herbert May's Role in acquiring ONESC

While biblical archaeology courses based mostly in historical geography preceded Herbert May's time at Oberlin, there is no clear indication that a collection of Holy Land antiquities existed at the college before his arrival in 1934 (Blakely, Jeffrey. Oral History. 2018). Before then, the library held a small number of cuneiform tablets and cylinder seal impressions, though it is unclear if these were used in the Graduate School of Theology's courses (Thornton to May 1964). Previous accounts of the collection's history, passed down orally by professors in the Religion Department, indicated that when Herbert May arrived at Oberlin, he brought his personal collection of antiquities and photographic slides, which he incorporated into his teaching. These accounts relayed that as a staff member at the Megiddo expedition in the early 1930s, May had access to discarded archaeological material from a wide variety of contemporary excavations which he was able to gather and export without incident. Other artifacts were either believed to be items which May picked up during visits to biblical sites, or to have come from the legal antiquities market in Mandatory Palestine (Blakely, Jeffrey. Oral History. 2018). In line with the belief that May collected and owned the total contents of the collection, with the exception of a very small number of artifacts, until Spring 2018, ONESC was referred to as the Herbert May Collection. With the exception of artifacts accompanied by tags recording their purchase in 1967, little was known and nothing was recorded regarding the provenance of the collection's artifacts. Even for the artifacts which had site names written on them, it was uncertain when those groups of objects specifically made their way to the college or how.

3.3 Collecting in Mandatory Palestine 1931-1934

While living in Palestine as the Megiddo expedition's epigrapher, recorder, and assistant photographer, Herbert G. May began assembling a personal artifact collection. May collected objects from Megiddo, during trips to biblical and tourist sites around Palestine, and during his visits to contemporary excavations. May most commonly collected ceramic sherds, many of which were discarded and left unpublished according to the archaeological standards for excavation and publication at that time. The practice of discarding non-publication quality artifacts is documented in the archaeology of the Holy Land as early as Flinders Petrie's excavations at Tell el-Hesi in the 1890s and was commonplace in the 1930s (Davis 2004: 29; Bade 1934: 32). The discard of non-diagnostic artifacts is referred to as 'catch and release archaeology' and persists to this day (Kersel 2015a: 47). While May had ready access to artifacts from dump piles and surface sherds, as a member of Palestine's small archaeology community, May also received several artifacts from dig directors as gifts.

3.3.1 Artifacts from Megiddo

The Oberlin Near East Study Collection contains 11 artifacts from Megiddo. Of these, 8 are ceramic sherds, which were possibly collected from Megiddo's dump pile. Of the remaining artifacts, 2 are small ceramic juglets and the last is a small grinding stone. Since May lived at Megiddo for three years, it is surprising that so few artifacts were collected from the site.

Most of the sherds from Megiddo were likely either collected from the site's dump pile, or from surface collection wherein May might have found sherds of personal interest on the mound's surface and collected them (Cline 2020: 180). The exception to this is ONESC 396, a red slipped rim sherd labeled with a field number indicating its origin in Tomb 903 (Lower), an Early Bronze Age tomb on Megiddo's eastern slope (Guy and Engberg 1938: 9-12) (Figure 1). Though ONESC

396 is labeled with an individual field number (P 5292), both it, and its corresponding unique number are absent from the final publication of Tomb 903 (Lower) (Guy and Engberg 1938: Plate 3).

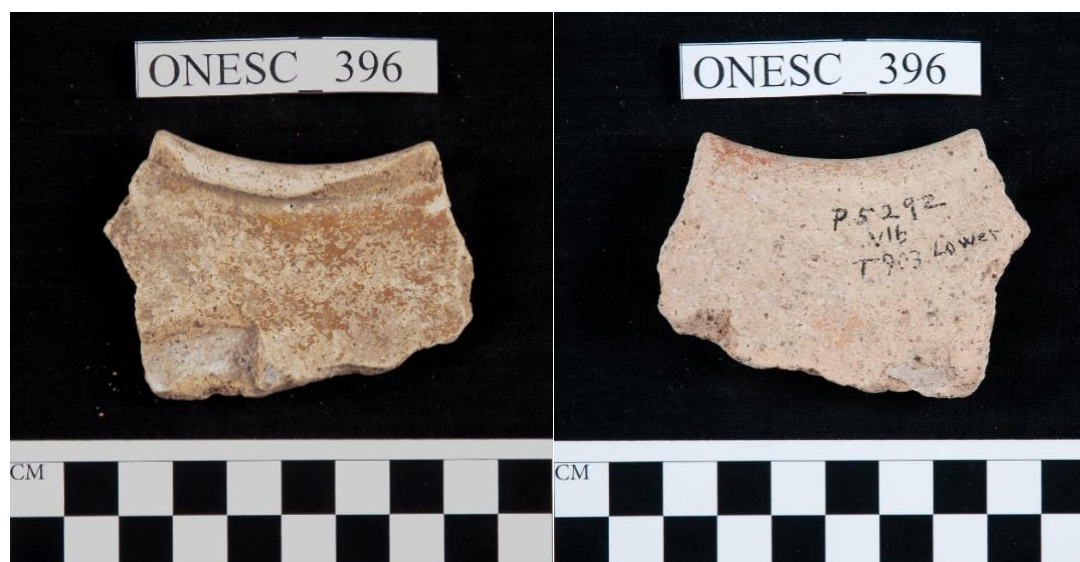


Figure 1: ONESC 396 exterior and interior.

Of the two juglets, ONESC 07 dates to the Iron IIC period (722-586 BCE) (Amiran 1969: 263-265) and the second, ONESC 06 to the Middle Bronze Age II-III (1750-1550 BCE) (Amiran 1969: 111-112). Whereas ONESC 07 can be connected to May's three years at Megiddo, ONESC 06 was purchased by Herbert May in 1967 and will therefore be discussed in Chapter 4. ONESC 07 (*figure 2*) is marked with a field number indicating its origin in stratum III, square Q13, an Iron IIC context excavated during May's time at the site (Lamon and Shipton 1939: 63). Though ONESC 07 has a unique field number, it does not appear in the publication of stratum III square Q13. The final publication of the three loci in stratum III square Q13 indicates that only fragmentary artifacts were found (Lamon and Shipton 1939: 122). The diagnostic published from these contexts do however correspond to the same vessel type as the object at Oberlin,

demonstrating that Oberlin's object could easily have come from those contexts (Lamon and Shipton 1939: Plate 1).



Figure 2: ONESC 007 Iron IIC Juglet from Megiddo.

Though difficult to speculate without additional information, as a member of Megiddo's staff, May might have been allowed to personally claim a limited number of excavated objects. Since May was involved in Megiddo's artifact registration, the possibility exists that he either did not record ONESC 07 or falsified the registration record to show that only sherds were found in square Q13 as opposed to the complete juglet we possess at Oberlin. The same could be true of ONESC 396 as May is specifically recorded as being the figure responsible for registering artifacts from a number of Megiddo's tombs (Guy and Engberg 1938: X). As diagnostic rim sherds can stand in for complete objects in archaeological publications, the misrepresentation of ONESC 07 as a fragmentary artifact has not affected the ability of archaeologists to understand its context and therefore, this possible falsification might have been considered harmless or potentially acceptable by those higher up in the Megiddo Expedition's hierarchy. The explanation for ONESC 396's absence from the Megiddo publications is perhaps more parsimonious. While archaeological

excavations in the 1930s claimed to produce total records of every object found, in reality, they did not publish every sherd and did little to no quantification of the amount of material found (Jeffrey Blakeley, Personal Communication, February 11, 2020). As such, if ONESC 396 was never going to make it into the final publication, it would likely have been considered acceptable for May to claim it for himself.

3.3.2 Finders Keepers (or how Dr. May stopped worrying and started collecting surface finds)

While living in Palestine, Herbert May actively collected artifacts from both the local landscape and from nearby archaeological sites. In a 1932 letter to John Merlin Powis Smith, a University of Chicago based biblical scholar, May wrote, “I am employing my sabbatical Fridays to explore some of the countryside. Last Friday I walked to Taanach. In the deserted excavation trenches I picked up a couple of flints, a stamped jar handle, drill socket, polishing stone, and some Late Bronze painted pottery. I have also wandered in Wady ‘Arah (May to Smith 1932).”

While removing archaeological artifacts from previously excavated contexts is presently considered taboo, Herbert May had no such qualms about removing objects from the trenches from German biblical scholar Ernst Sellin’s 1902-1904 expedition to Taanach (Avi-Yonah and Stern 1975: 1139). May used a black marker to indicate the provenance of a small number of these artifacts. The fact that May felt comfortable sharing the means by which he had collected these artifacts with a senior colleague demonstrates that for archaeologists at that time, mundane artifacts could be collected using ‘finders keepers’ principles. With the exception of the flints and Late Bronze Age painted pottery, the rest of the items mentioned in May’s 1932 letter can be identified within the collection due to May’s markings in black permanent marker. Throughout the rest of his time in Palestine, May continued to collect artifacts from the environs of Megiddo including a

Late Bronze Age fertility figurine collected on December 24, 1932 during a walk in the Wady 'Arah, the primary wadi near Megiddo (ONESC 221: Figurine Head) (figure 3).

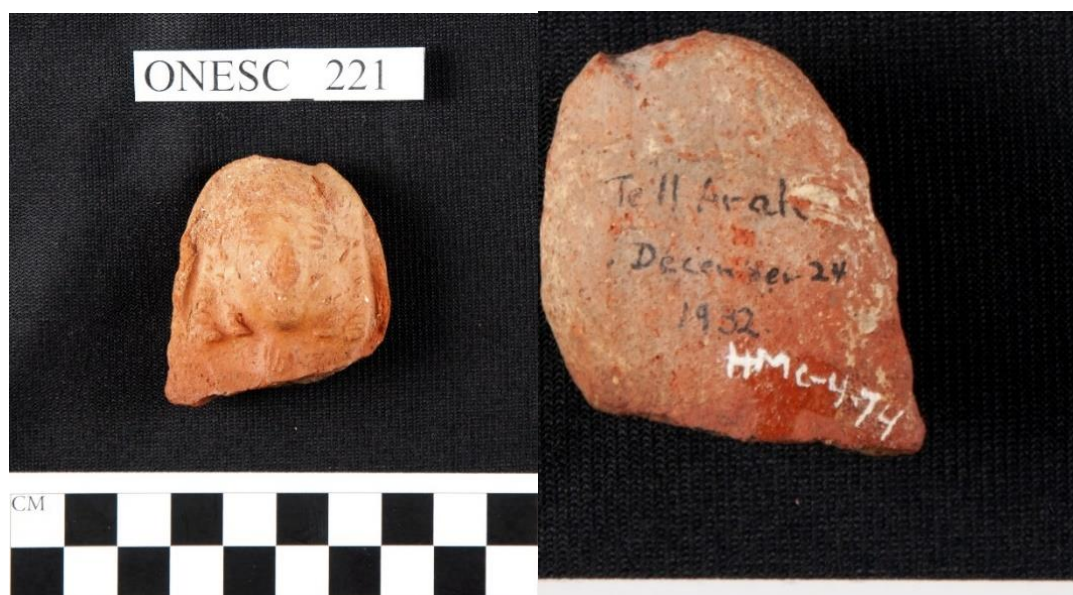


Figure 3: ONESC 221, a Late Bronze Age Fertility Figurine from Wadi Arah'

2.3.3 Collecting during Travels

Herbert May also collected artifacts from the various tourist sites he visited. Many of these sites were visited in conjunction with his travels to nearby contemporary excavations.

While visiting the excavations at Jericho in 1931, it is likely that May also visited the nearby 6th century mosaic-laden synagogue at Ain Duq (Vincent 1919: 532).⁷ May marked his visit to the site by collecting 4 ceramic sherds which he likely found on the ground surrounding the synagogue, or in the dump piles left by the site's French excavators.⁸

During a trip to Flinders Petrie's excavations at Tell el-Ajjul in 1932, May visited the coastal site of Ashkelon (May 1936b). This trip was likely motivated by the brief excavations that

⁷ Today Ain Duq is referred to by the Hebraicized name, Na'aran.

⁸ The site is specifically mentioned in May's lecture notes though he does not explicitly state that he visited the site (May 1936b)

had been carried out by the PEF from 1920-1921 and as a result of the site's notoriety as one of the cities of the Philistine pentapolis which appears prominently in the Bible (Avi-Yonah and Stern 1975: 121). While there, he collected two ceramic sherds which were likely surface finds.⁹

In either 1933 or 1934 May visited Tel Beth Shemesh.¹⁰ According to his account, his visit came after the Beth Shemesh excavation ended (May 1936 b).¹¹ May collected 11 sherds from the site which likely came from its surface. Uncharacteristically for ONESC, a collection ostensibly assembled to vivify the Bible, two of these sherds (ONESC 153, 154) date to the Mamluk period. It is possible that May would not have been able to date these objects and instead picked up the sherds because they were painted and eye-catching (Jeffrey Blakely, Personal Communication, December 14th, 2018) (figure 4).

In the Spring of 1934, Herbert May visited the extensively excavated Roman ruins at Jerash where he collected 2 sherds (May 1936 b: 80). Though excavations at the site were ongoing at the time of his visit, it is uncertain whether these two sherds came from those excavations or from the site's surface (King 1983: 87).

May also likely visited the site of Salah ad-Din's 1187 victory over the Crusaders, the Horns of Hattin. While the two flint blades from the site are atypical for the Oberlin Near East

⁹ In the 1936 lecture where he describes his visit to the site, May expresses his disappointment over the lack of Philistine contexts reached by John Garstang and W.J Pythian-Adam's excavations. Despite those excavations successfully uncovering an entire Roman counsel house, May goes so far as to label the excavator's efforts as, "not a success" on account of their failure to reach levels of Biblical significance (May 1936b). Such a statement highlights that May's archaeological interest was deeply connected to his faith and belief in the importance of the Old Testament.

¹⁰ The uncertainty over the date of May's visit is due to him not offering a specific year in the 1936 lecture in which he described his visit to the site. Nonetheless, based on his mentioning that at the time of his visit, "the excavations had been completed, and the holes filled in. (May 1936b), a determination between these two years can be made. Haverford College's expedition to Beth Shemesh concluded in May of 1933 (Grant 1934: 2). The only helpful detail which Herbert May happened to record about his visit was that it was on an, "extremely hot day (May 1936b)." The reference to heat indicates that he visited either in late summer 1933 right after excavations had been concluded, or the following summer before June 17, the date when he left Palestine.

¹¹ These objects are specifically marked as coming from Ain Shems, the Arabic name for the Biblical city of Beth Shemesh (Grant 1931: V). This provides an easy way of differentiating which objects May collected in 1933 or 1934 from the objects Haverford College loaned in 1940.

Study Collection, the close proximity of the site to Megiddo and May's documented visit to the similarly distanced Taanach make it probable that May visited the site during one of his days off and collected these two blades.

As illustrated by his visit to Taanach, May's visits to tourist sites and other prominent historical locations were usually accompanied by the collection of ceramic sherds and other objects he found either on the site's surface or in archaeological dump piles left by past excavations. In May's mind, the provenience and even date of such artifacts may not have been particularly important as long as he could collect a piece from the sites he visited. By writing the location of the artifact's origin on an object, May indicated that his primary intention was in many cases to connect an object with a location rather than with a particular time period or its use as part of a functional object in the distant past.



Figure 4: ONESC 153, a sherd from the Mamluk period collected by Herbert May at Ain Shems

3.3.4 Collecting from Contemporary Excavations

While living in Palestine, May regularly visited and collected artifacts from contemporary excavations including those taking place at Jericho, Tell el-Ajjul, Lachish, Tell en-Nasbeh, and the Mt. Carmel prehistoric caves.

During his Christmas holiday in 1931, May visited John Garstang's excavations at Jericho carried out on behalf of the British School of Archaeology (May to Smith 1932). During this visit, he collected 12 ceramic artifacts. May's access to material at Jericho was likely limited to the site's dump pile as indicated by his mostly collecting ledge handles (figure 5). While these objects were sometimes given unique identification numbers, including at Megiddo, the examples May collected from Jericho were not labeled. This can be easily explained, as ledge handles are only partially useful for dating purposes due to their long-term presence as a feature of Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Early Bronze Age pottery. With Jericho being occupied throughout those periods, it is understandable why Garstang may have elected to discard ledge handles rather than keep them and label them individually (Mazar 1990: 39, 61, 153). May also collected several body sherds. The provenance of these sherds is indicated in black marker.



Figure 5: ONESC 147, a Ledge Handle from Jericho

Herbert May visited the famous Egyptologist Flinders Petrie's excavations at Tell el-Ajjul on the Gaza coast during his Thanksgiving break in 1932 (May to Graham 1932). While there, he collected at least three sherds, including a body sherd with red and blue bichrome decoration (ONESC 298) (Amiran 1969: 156) (*figure 6*). Two of these sherds have applied field numbers that correspond to areas and height levels that Petrie excavated during the 1932-33 field season (ONESC 298: Area LH2 level 1007; ONESC 517: area KE level 1038), but no corresponding objects have been found in Petrie's publication of those contexts (Petrie 1933: Plate XLVII). Further, no record of these artifacts appears on the end of season object list given to the Department of Antiquities by Petrie (Rachael Sparks, Personal Communication, October 23, 2019). The field numbering on these objects indicate that May did not take them from the site's dump pile as he likely did with the artifacts from Jericho. Instead, May must have been given the artifacts by Ajjul's staff during his visit.

Like other excavations of the 1930s, Tell el-Ajjul only published a small sample of the pottery found during excavation (Sparks 2013: 156). Petrie's publications showed representations of the variety of pottery types discovered over the course of excavation rather than actual assemblages of pottery objects related to one another in archaeological context (Sparks 2013: 157). With this methodology that valued object type over the individual object, it is easy to see how even a bichrome painted artifact with a specifically recorded excavation area and stratigraphic height might not be reported to the department of antiquities and instead given to Herbert May during his site visit. Petrie's impressionistic approach to publication was incongruous with the British antiquities law that focused on the individual object. That he did not report stratified artifacts such as the sherds at Oberlin demonstrates a comfortable flouting of the law. As a result, it is impossible

to know how many visitors, who like May were part of Palestine's archaeological community, were able to visit Ajjul, and leave with painted and stratified objects.



Figure 6: ONESC 298 Bichrome sherd from Tell el-Ajjul with field markings.

Herbert May's archive does not record him visiting James Starkey's excavations at Lachish.¹² Nonetheless, based on the 20 artifacts from Lachish in ONESC, he must have visited the site at some point between 1932 and 1934. These artifacts fit within the broader pattern of May collecting discarded pottery and include unnumbered loop handles, bases, and body sherds.

The Oberlin Near East Study Collection contains one object, a Judean Pillar Figurine fragment (ONESC 47) (*figure 6*), from Tel en-Nasbeh.¹³ Excavated in five seasons from 1926-1934 by William Frederic Badè of the Pacific School of Religion, the small site was almost completely cleared during that time (Moorey 1991: 58). In a later letter, May mentions the site and

¹² This of course does not mean that he did not do so. Oberlin's archive contains relatively little of May's correspondence before he was hired in 1934. The determination that these objects come from Starkey's excavation rather than the Israeli excavations that resumed in the 1960s is made since these artifacts are marked identically to the sherds from Ajjul, Jericho, and the other sites May is known to have visited in the 1930s.

¹³ At an uncertain point, May crafted a base and head for this fragment out of playdough in order to render it more complete.

demonstrates his awareness of the excavations there, but does not specify when he visited (May to Reynolds 1967b). ONESC 47 is marked twice with the numerals XX, though this does not correspond to the strata or system of field numbers used at the site. The object is marked with a unique tag, dissimilar to the type in common use at the Tell en-Nasbeh excavations (Aaron Brody, Personal Communication, October 22, 2019). It remains possible then that the artifact was a surface find which May found and kept as he did with the artifacts from Taanach. Alternatively, due to the object's fragmentary state, it was unlikely to be included in the publication and was therefore possibly more tenable to give away, especially to a scholar whose work at that time primarily dealt with the material remains of Israelite religion (May and Engberg 1935). The meaning of "XX" and the origin of the object's tag remain unclear.¹⁴



Figure 1: ONESC 047 Judean Pillar Figurine from Tell en-Nasbeh

¹⁴ Several other artifacts in the Oberlin Near East Study collection are marked with the same variety of tag, have the same handwriting, and use the same numbering system, indicating some unknown connection between them. ONESC 343 is marked as XV, 031 as XVIII, 348 as XXI, 322 and 527 as XXII, 342 as XXIII, 364 as XXIV, and 337 as XXVII. The objects range in date from the Early Iron Age all the way to 20th century. Most of these objects have no provenance further confusing how they may all be related to one another. If Herbert May created these tags and this numbering system, the question remains why it was only applied to these 8 objects. If Herbert May did not collect these objects, it is completely uncertain who did. Because the Tell en-Nasbeh dig began in 1926, it is possible that Herbert May's predecessor Kemper Fullerton is responsible for bringing this group of artifacts to the college. Fullerton's possible contributions should be investigated in the future.

3.3.5 Collecting Prehistoric Artifacts from the Carmel Caves

Concurrent with Biblical archaeology's flourishing in Palestine in the 1930s, the study of the area's prehistory was also beginning to take shape. Among the earliest prehistoric projects in Palestine was Cambridge archaeologist Dorothy Garrod's excavations at Mount Carmel. Between 1929 and 1934, Garrod excavated the Epipaleolithic el-Wad cave, which at that time was referred to as Mugharet el-Wad (Weinstein-Evron 2009: 37). The Oberlin Near East Study Collection contains 13 artifacts from Mugharet el-Wad. The artifacts are all lithic artifacts except for a single bone which appears to be unmodified (ONESC 422).

In the spring of 1933, May and the rest of the Megiddo excavation staff visited Garrod's excavation. May recorded this event in a 1936 lecture saying that the visit was made, "to make for them the photographic records of some astonishing finds...the entire Megiddo staff took a vacation that day, and we all went over." (May 1936b). May retold this story to his class in 1973, adding that he returned to Mugharet el-Wad several times after that first occasion and that he had been given a limited number of artifacts in gratitude for his photography (Blakely, Jeffrey. Oral History. 2018). May returned to the site in the spring of 1934 and may have collected additional artifacts (May 1936b).¹⁵

As a part of Mandatory Palestine's archaeological community, May was granted exclusive access to collect material from contemporary excavations. While he would have been free to collect artifacts from dump piles, the example of Tel el-Ajjul demonstrates that in some cases other archaeologists would allow him to take artifacts regardless of whether or not those objects had been given field numbers and might have otherwise been published. It is possible that the artifacts in the collection from Megiddo are also an example of this practice. Without the benefit of

¹⁵ A fuller account of this visit can be found in Cline 2020: 148-150

documentation, it is difficult to prove how common it was for archaeologists in this period to give away objects to other academics in the field. May mostly collected ceramic fragments, on account of both their ubiquity and the common practice of ‘catch and release’ archaeology. But, as evinced by his collection of prehistoric artifacts from Mugharet el-Wad, May was also interested in a broader range of material.¹⁶ The field markings on the objects from Tell el-Ajjul and Megiddo indicate that the objects from those sites should have been published, demonstrating the nonchalance with which archaeologists in this period held the act of giving away artifacts to another member of the archaeological community. How the Judean pillar figurine fragment from Tell en-Nasbeh was collected also remains uncertain.

3.4 The Arrest of Herbert May (June 17th, 1934) and its Implications

Among the greatest uncertainties related to ONESC concerns Herbert May’s 1934 arrest for attempting to illegally export antiquities from Palestine. This little-known incident first appeared in the archaeological literature in Timothy Harrison’s report on stratum VI of University of Chicago’s excavations (Harrison 2004). In his brief account, Harrison underscores the significance of Herbert May’s arrest noting that it led to the firing of the Megiddo expedition’s director, P.L.O Guy. Concerning the arrest Harrison writes that Herbert May, “was stopped by the Haifa port authority...and accused of attempting to export antiquities illegally from the country. Apparently, the antiquities only consisted of a personal sherd study collection (Harrison 2004: 3).” At the time of his arrest, May was recorded as carrying, “93 Potsherd Fragments, 95 Flint Flakes,

¹⁶ May also made visits to contemporary archaeological excavations in Palestine where he did not collect anything. In the summer of 1933, Herbert May visited the excavations at Ai with William Foxwell Albright and several other guests at the American School of Oriental Research (today’s Albright Institute). During that visit he assisted Albright in picking up sherds which were used to date the site and revealed the site’s lack of Middle and Late Bronze Age occupation (in opposition to the Biblical narrative) (May to Toombs 1963). Despite him specifically mentioning that he picked up sherds, no artifacts in ONESC can be assigned as originating at Ai.

2 Pieces [of] Basalt Rings, 5 Lamps, 6 Stone Implements, 3 Jars, and 1 Decorated Stone (Cline 2020: 179).” May’s potsherds may have come from any of the aforementioned sites or from additional sites not mentioned in his archive. His flint flakes on the other hand likely came from Mugharet el-Wad as it is the only site represented by flint objects rather than ceramics in the current Oberlin Near East Study Collection. The provenance of the basalt rings, stone implements, jars, and stone are uncertain, and little can be said about them due to the brevity of their description. These items were subsequently confiscated by the Haifa Port Authority and later sent to the Antiquities Authority in Jerusalem where they likely remain.¹⁷

Recent research on the incident has drawn together archival material in Chicago and Jerusalem allowing for a clearer picture of what took place on June 17th, 1934.¹⁸ According to this expanded account, May, prior to boarding his ship to the United States, signed a declaration stating that he was not exporting antiquities or any other contraband. However, upon observing that May was travelling from the widely-known Megiddo excavations, the port authority decided to search his bags and found the aforementioned pot sherds, flint artifacts, jars, and Roman lamps (Cline 2020: 176-77).¹⁹ Since he had no export permit and had falsified his customs declaration, May was arrested.

¹⁷ May’s practice of writing on his artifacts using black sharpie makes it possible that these artifacts could be identified and corroborated against the list drawn up by the port authority.

¹⁸ It is by fortunate circumstance that my time working on this thesis coincides with Dr. Eric Cline’s work on and release of *Digging up Armageddon*, a book discussing the history of the University of Chicago’s Megiddo expedition from the point of view of its staff members. The 9 pages of the book devoted to the “May incident” vastly enhance the published narrative of what took place.

¹⁹ Since the lamps were legally purchased and exported, they should still be in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. It is however presently impossible to identify which Roman oil lamps these were as the collection contains 13 complete lamps which can be dated to either the Roman or Byzantine periods. According to memos recorded during the incident, the jars were also purchased in Jerusalem and should also still be within the collection (Cline 2020: 180). While logical that May purchased artifacts in this period, no documentation in Oberlin’s archive attests where he made his purchases and the extent of material he purchased.

Following his arrest, May called P.L.O Guy and asked him to clarify that the items he was transporting were unimportant sherds from Megiddo's dump pile rather than valuable items that he could sell. Instead, Guy told the authority that Herbert May had, prior to his departure, asked for a written statement saying that he was not transporting antiquities, but that he had refused. Considering Guy's reluctance to support him and since, as a member of Palestine's archaeology community, he should have known the laws regarding antiquities exportation, May was charged, the discovered antiquities were confiscated, and he had to pay a not insubstantial fine (Cline 2020: 179).

Though May claimed to be transporting nothing of value, a memo written by the then acting director of the Department of Antiquities clarifies that among the items May was transporting were an alabaster pot, bronze artifacts, and several other artifacts of value which are mentioned but unfortunately not described (Cline 2020: 179). Curiously, none of these items appear on the aforementioned list of antiquities. In fact, neither the alabaster pot nor bronzes are mentioned again in any of the later correspondence related to the incident, a puzzling conundrum that casts doubt upon the completeness of the record.

Besides the disappearance of these artifacts, other aspects related to the aftermath of the incident can only be described as strange. One month after the incident, P.L.O Guy sent James Henry Breasted a confidential letter describing his side of what had transpired. Upon reading the document, the director's son, Charles Breasted, declared that it was the, "most sordid document to ever reach this office (Cline 2020: 176)." Unfortunately, this letter has been removed from the Oriental Institute's archive and replaced with a sheet of paper specifying that the letter had been relocated to Charles Breasted's personal file which is also missing (Cline 2020: 176). This letter is far from the only missing documentation related to the incident. In fact, Herbert May's archive

at Oberlin contains no letters from the second half of 1934 suggesting that he purposely excised the documentation from that time period.

With the disappearing artifacts and documentation, I (somewhat reluctantly) suggest that parts of the May incident have been deliberately covered up to avoid embarrassment on the part of the Oriental Institute and the Megiddo expedition. In the narrative that has survived, May did not declare his items as antiquities because he did not consider discarded sherds and flint flakes to fit into the same category as complete artifacts worthy of that status and therefore declaration (Cline 2020: 180). For a scholar who had spent the previous three years excavating and had as a result seen thousands of complete artifacts of great value this, to an extent, makes sense. In this framing of the story, May should have known better and simply made a mistake. But, based on his asking P.L.O Guy for a letter declaring that he was not carrying antiquities, it seems that Herbert May was aware of the possibility that his bags would be searched and was actively attempting to prevent such a search from taking place.

The narrative of simple error also seems incongruous with Charles Breasted's declaration related to the incident. While May's mistake had the potential to embarrass the Oriental Institute, a simple error in customs declarations hardly adds up to the "most sordid document to ever reach this office." The now proven presence of antiquities that May collected in Palestine in the ONESC also negates the idea that the totality of the artifacts May attempted to export from Palestine between 1931-1934 were confiscated at the time of his arrest. The presence of these artifacts in Oberlin's collection suggests that May had either transported artifacts during one of his previous journeys back to the United States, or that the port authority had somehow been unable to find a portion of the artifacts May was attempting to export in 1934 (May to Clinchy 1932). Based on ONESC's two sherds from Jerash which were collected in 1934, the latter must be true, while the

former also seems likely. Without additional documentation however, the full details of what happened on June 17th, 1934 cannot presently be known.

The fact that May asked P.L.O Guy for a note declaring that he was not carrying antiquities suggests that May anticipated no difficulty in receiving such a letter from a fellow member of Palestine's archaeological community and recognized a difference of opinion between archaeologists and the Mandatory authority regarding the definition of an "antiquity." According to Mandatory law, one could legally export artifacts as long as they were either sold by licensed dealers or were part of a division of artifacts (*partage*) between the academic institutions that sponsored excavations and the Palestine Department of Antiquities who administered permits (Kersel 2008: 26; Kersel 2010: 88). Of the ways he collected artifacts from 1931-1934, only May's artifact purchases were legal. It is clear however that many archaeologists of May's day were comfortably complicit in flouting these laws.

Dorothy Garrod gave Herbert May several artifacts from Mugharet el-Wad in appreciation for his work at the site, while the artifacts in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection from Tell el-Ajjul were likely given to Herbert May by Flinders Petrie who never published or reported them to the Department of Antiquities. Though the exact mechanics of how he came into possession of his artifacts from Megiddo are unclear, May's long-term friendships with fellow expedition members in the aftermath of 1934 demonstrates that his ownership of these artifacts was by and large accepted, while his arrest was an unfortunate fact, rather than a cause for larger concern or ostracism from the academic community. May even published a Megiddo volume, *Material Remains of the Megiddo Cult*, less than a year after the incident (May and Engberg 1935). It is hard to believe that members of Palestine's archaeological community were unaware of the Mandatory antiquities laws. Nonetheless, it seems that archaeologists felt that as the "producers"

of material culture and custodians of the past, they were entitled to unique control over the use and movement of archaeological artifacts. For members of this community this control was legitimized by their stated intentions to use their collected antiquities in educational study collections.

The June 1934 arrest deeply embarrassed Herbert May. The absence of documents from the latter half of 1934 in the Oberlin archive suggests that for one reason or another, he actively excised the documentation related to the incident and its aftermath from his personal files. That documents are missing from other archives makes it possible that the removal of these documents was compulsory. May rarely (if ever) mentioned the incident, with some of his professional colleagues being unaware that it ever took place (Zinn, Grover. Oral History. 2019). He also seems to have forgone the use of the artifacts he collected between 1931-1934 during his first years at Oberlin. These artifacts do not reappear until 1940 when May began using them in his classes (May to Fiske 1940a). The fact that he did not use the artifacts in these first few years also suggest that the objects were not collected to be used in classes but were instead personal mementos.

3.5 1934-1939 Herbert May at Oberlin, the excavation that was not to be, and the first Oberlin Biblical Archaeology “Museum”

3.5.1 Herbert May’s first years at Oberlin

In 1934, Oberlin hired Herbert May to teach Old Testament Languages and History at the Graduate School of Theology. May made use of his archaeological background almost immediately by delivering one of the 1934 Haskell lectures on the history and significance of the Megiddo excavation (May 1934). In his first semesters at Oberlin, Herbert May added a course on ‘the Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible’ which was intended to, “make more real to the student the life of the Hebrews and the revelations of the Old Testament literature (The Department of Old

Testament Language and Literature 1934).” There is no indication that Herbert May incorporated his personal collection of artifacts into his courses during his first few years at the college.

3.5.2 Attempts to Establish an Excavation Project

Beginning in 1936, Herbert May and his former professor at the University of Chicago, W.C. Graham, began formulating plans for a jointly-led American School of Oriental Research, Oriental Institute, and Oberlin College excavation project at the Bronze and Iron Age tells of Khirbet Iskander and Khirbet Mlehleb in Transjordan (Glueck to May 1937). In a 1936 lecture, May explained to his students that, “It is my ambition that someday Oberlin shall enter the ranks of those institutions who have made the Old Testament vital and real through furnishing the wherewithal and the staff for an archaeological expedition in Palestine (May 1936b).” May’s proposal to the Oberlin administration outlined several additional reasons why he believed it would be advantageous for the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology to participate in an excavation. Besides the educational and scholarly value of the project, May highlighted that Oberlin’s participation would, “make it possible for us to have...a representative collection of the antiquities recovered from excavations, and [that] these would...assist in making realistic the presentation of Old Testament history (May to Bohn 1937).”

May’s archive at Oberlin contains no further references to this proposed excavation in Transjordan. Nonetheless, it is clear that the project never took place. His continued desire to bring a representative group of archaeological artifacts to Oberlin demonstrates his belief in their importance to pedagogy while also suggesting that at this point, he continued to forego the use of objects from his personal collection.

3.5.3 A Museum without Artifacts? The first Oberlin Biblical Archaeology Museum

Due to his failure to start an excavation project that would secure artifacts for Oberlin, Herbert May turned to photographs as a means of incorporating archaeological objects into his classes. In his 1939 report to Oberlin College, May describes the start of what he called a Biblical and Archaeological Museum. Concerning the museum, he reported, “a large case has been purchased and placed in room 4 of Bosworth Hall...in it have been placed biblical manuscripts and archaeological exhibits. I have framed and labeled some twenty-two pictures of archaeological objects and have hung them around the walls of this room...all these things may be taken as evidence of increasing use of visual education techniques (May 1939a).” May’s reference to “archaeological exhibits” leaves great uncertainty with regards to whether he is referring to actual artifacts, replicas, or informational posters. This ambiguity makes it unclear if May’s first museum contained ancient artifacts.

By the end of 1939, May added 3 additional photographs to this museum. In a letter to his former Megiddo colleague Robert Engberg, he wrote, “I have framed some 25 pictures of archaeological objects and have hung them around my classroom as a project in visual education. It has somewhat the value of a museum for an institution where actual museum objects are not available (May to Engberg 1939).” May echoed this view in a later letter writing, “I have found that good pictures give good service in filling out what would otherwise be a very meager museum collection (May to Nakarai 1941a).” Unfortunately, neither quote solves the issue of whether this first museum contained artifacts. While the “institution” which May is referring to could be Oberlin, it could equally be meant in a general sense within the context of the letter.²⁰ Though

²⁰ May’s comment is found in a paragraph where he advocates for the Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research’s plates to be printed on cheaper paper so that the images could be more widely circulated and thereafter used for religious education. His reference to Oberlin’s photographic exhibition is only made to underscore the educational benefits provided by photographic exhibitions.

Herbert May considered photographs of archaeological objects to possess educational value, he believed that actual artifacts had far more potential as pedagogical tools.

3.6 Assembling Artifacts for the Oberlin College Museum of Biblical Archaeology (1939-1941)

After his unsuccessful attempt to begin an excavation project, Herbert May began exploring alternate avenues through which he could accumulate a collection of archaeological objects. May wrote to his contacts across the world of Biblical Archaeology to ask for groups of artifacts that could fill the recently purchased cabinets in his classroom/Museum of Biblical Archaeology. Between 1939 and 1941, Herbert May brought almost 150 artifacts to Oberlin. These artifacts continue to be among the most significant in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. The ease with which May gathered these artifacts demonstrates that as a member of the Biblical Archaeology community, regardless of whether he was actually excavating in Palestine, May retained his privileged position to collect archaeological objects for the benefit of his student's educational experiences.

2.6.1 Sherds from Nelson Glueck's Surveys in Transjordan and the Negev Desert

In 1939, May wrote to several colleagues to ask for archaeological objects. In the same aforementioned letter to Robert Engberg, May ends by asking, "are there available representative collections of pottery sherds which we might have...? ... if such collections might be sent...it would...make more realistic...the work of the American Schools [of Oriental Research] (May to Engberg 1939)." In connection with his comment about making the work of the American Schools of Oriental Research more realistic, the "representative collections of pottery sherds" likely refer to the sort of banal pottery fragments that are found when excavating or surveying an archaeological site. May's desire to add ceramic sherds to his collection indicates his interest in

teaching students about the methods and processes involved in archaeology, in addition to the subject's significance for Biblical Studies. In his reply, Engberg wrote that he had no such objects to freely give away but says that, "Nelson [Glueck] assures me that he has some Transjordan sherds in Cincinnati which you may have (Engberg to May 1939)."

By contrast with most archaeologists of his day, who were primarily notable for their excavations, Nelson Glueck is most renowned for his extensive explorations and field surveys throughout Transjordan and the Negev Desert of southern Palestine (King 1983: 96).²¹ Glueck's mastery of pottery typology allowed him to pioneer the systematic study of ancient settlement patterns in the Holy Land, leading to the identification, analysis, and initial publication of more than 1500 sites (Moorey 1991: 76).

By the summer of 1940, Glueck formally agreed to send an assemblage of archaeological artifacts to Oberlin consisting of "Moabite and Edomite pottery (May to Fiske 1940a)." The artifacts arrived in September and were afterwards placed in May's museum (May to Fiske 1940b). In the memorandum noting the arrival of the artifacts, May noted that they were, "received... from the American Schools of Oriental Research [and consisted of] objects from the explorations of Nelson Glueck in Edom and Moab, specimens of copper ore and slag from the mines and furnaces of Solomon at Khirbet Gwhewibeh and Jariyeh, and a study collection of more than a hundred sherds from the sites of Hamr Ifdan, Balua, Medeineh, Meneiyyeh, and Saliyeh. (May 1940)."²²

Glueck published each of these sites in his four-part *Explorations in Eastern Palestine* series.²³ Hamr Ifdan first appears in part II which records Glueck's 1934 travels in southern Jordan,

²¹ Glueck published two popular accounts of his explorations. The first, *the Other Side of the Jordan* (1940) discusses his travels in Transjordan while *Rivers of the Desert's* (1959) discusses his explorations of the Negev desert.

²² This is one of the rare instances where the number of artifacts May brought to Oberlin is quantified. In the current Oberlin Near East Study Collection, only 77 of the "more than a hundred" sherds can be identified. Where the remaining pottery sherds from Glueck's gift are is presently uncertain.

²³ As most of these sites are not commonly known, I have decided to give each a brief description and have indicated where one can find Glueck's description of each site.

a region he describes using the name of the ancient nation that occupied that area in biblical times, Edom (Glueck 1934: 20-22). He describes the site of ‘Khirbet Hamr Ifdan’ as an, “Early Iron Age acropolis...guarding the approaches to a number of Early Iron Age copper mining and smelting sites east and south of it (Glueck 1934: 20-21).” Glueck collected several hundred sherds from the site, three of which are now at Oberlin (figure 8).

Balua is rendered as Balu’ah in part I of *Explorations in Eastern Palestine*. This volume records Glueck’s explorations in Moab, which like Edom refers to the ancient nation that occupied the area in biblical times (Glueck 1933:53-56). Glueck notes that, “Khirbet Balu’ah occupies a strategic position guarding the approaches to the Wadi el-Mujib...[it] is an extensive site, with a number of small ruins made of...basalt blocks (Glueck 1933: 55).” The Oberlin Near East Study Collection has two sherds from the site which Glueck dated to the Early Iron Age (ONESC 148, 471).²⁴ May made a 3x5 descriptive tag to go with these objects that describes the site’s occupational history (figure 9).



Figure 8: ONESC 246, an Iron Age I (1200-1000) 'Collared Rim' Pithos rim sherd from Hamr Ifdan. This object is atypical of the artifacts given by Glueck in 1940 as it is highly diagnostic and fairly large. The EI marking on the artifact refers to the Early Iron Age

²⁴ The sherds from Glueck’s explorations in ONESC are often marked with Glueck’s original dating. The vast majority are marked EI or EI I-II referring to the “Early Iron Age” an antiquated term which equates to the Iron Age I (1200-1000) in use today.

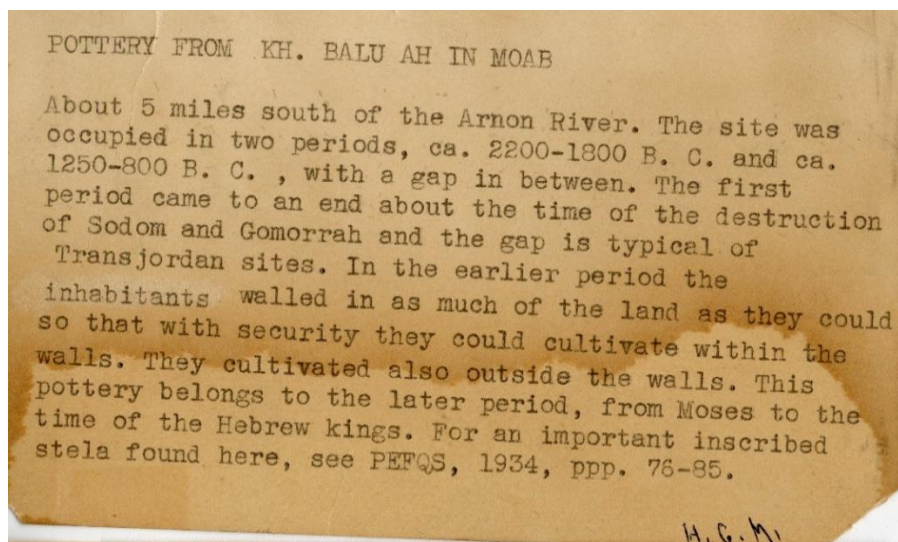


Figure 9: 3x5 Descriptive tag for Balu'ah created by May in 1940. This tag accompanied the artifacts from Balu'ah in the Graduate School of Theology's Museum of Old Testament Antiquities. Similar tags were created to describe the other Glueck sites represented in ONESC.

Medeinneh is recorded as Khirbet el-Medeiyineh (Glueck 1933: 13-14.) ONESC has 27 sherds from the site. In the 3x5 tag he created for the group of sherds, May describes the site as an, "Iron Age acropolis, on the left bank of the Wadi eth-Themed." The tag also describes the primary characteristics of Moabite pottery as noted in Glueck's publication.



Figure 10: ONESC 273, Rim Sherd from Meneiyeh. The front of the object is marked with a number 26. Many artifacts given by Glueck at this time are marked with an as of yet undeciphered numbering system. The back side of the artifact is marked with the site's provenance and period.

Meneiyeh appears as Mene'iyeh in volume II (Glueck 1934: 42-45). Whereas the rest of these sites are in present day Jordan, Meneiyeh is in Israel, and therefore, its name was

Hebraicized shortly after the foundation of the state in 1948 (Azaryahu and Golan 2001).²⁵ Thus, the site is today referred to by its Biblical name, Timna. In the 3x5 tag where he describes the famous copper mining site, May writes that Meneiyyeh was, “a great acropolis guarding the southern approach to the mining sites in the Arabah...on the acropolis were ruins of furnaces, buildings, and slag heaps.” The Oberlin Near East Study collection has 13 ceramic sherds from the site (figure 10).

The Iron Age site of Saliyeh overlooks the northern portion of the Wadi Saliyeh. The Oberlin Near East Study Collection has 30 sherds from the site along with two slag fragments. Glueck ascribed the type of pottery found at this site as a reliable indicator of Moabite ethnicity in the archaeological record (Glueck 1933:34-36).

The collection contains three copper ore fragments from Khirbet Gwhewibeh and Jariyeh, two sites in the Wadi Arabah which Glueck described as copper mining and smelting camps dating to the Early Iron Age (Glueck 1940: 60-61). On account of the pottery he found at both sites and informed by biblical descriptions of King Solomon’s greatness and control over Edom, Glueck dated both sites (and most others in the area) to the reign of Solomon (Glueck 1940: 61). In conjunction with his later findings at the coastal site of Ezion Geber, Glueck created a narrative whereby the copper first smelted at these Arabah sites by corvees of Canaanite and Edomite slaves was taken to Solomon’s port on the Red Sea to be formed into finished products and ingots and

²⁵ As much of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection was collected before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, this is a tremendously relevant issue. In line with modern conventions, I have mostly been using Hebrew place names or spelling in reference to locations in the present-day state of Israel. However, many of the objects discussed in this chapter have the Arabic site names in use during the 1930s written on them. Thus, the objects May picked up from Beth Shemesh in 1933 or 1934 have Ain Shems written on them. The objects in the collection from Ashkelon are marked as coming from Ascalon

thereafter either traded or brought to Jerusalem (Glueck 1959: 36-37; Glueck 1940: 64; Glueck 1934: 28).²⁶

The 3x5 catalog card May made to accompany the material given by Glueck, indicates that he used the sherds from the Moabite sites of Medeinneh, Saliyeh, and Balua to illustrate typical Moabite material culture and reflect the settlement pattern shifts described in Glueck's work concerning Moab (Glueck 1933). By contrast, the Edomite and Arabah sites of Hamr Ifdan, Meneiyeh, and Khirbet Gwhewibeh and Jariyeh were directly connected with the hypothesized mining activities of King Solomon. The catalog cards that go along with these sites tell Glueck's story of forced Canaanite and Edomite labor extracting copper ore and forming it into ingots for King Solomon. As sherds collected through survey rather than excavation, they would have demonstrated an important but less represented element of the American School's work, the function for which May requested the objects in the first place. The multiple archaeologists May went through in order to find such a collection demonstrates that these figures were devoted to the project of disseminating archaeological objects to their colleagues so that they could benefit from teaching with a study collection.

3.6.2 A Loan Collection from Haverford College

Concurrent with his attempt to acquire a collection of sherds from Nelson Glueck, Herbert May also utilized his connections within the world of Biblical Archaeology to obtain a loan collection of complete and published objects from Haverford College's 1928-1933 excavations at

²⁶ Glueck's ascription of these sites to the time of Solomon based mostly on Biblical text has been under attack since the 1980s. In particular his dating of Ezion-Geber to the time of Solomon has been criticized as a prime example of the pitfalls of biblical archaeology being overly reliant upon text (Moorey 1991: 77; Pratico 1985). While Glueck ascribed most of the sites described in this section to the Israelites, it has recently been argued that the sites should be associated with the Edomites and that copper production may have been responsible for the emergence of Edom as a state in its own right (Levy et. al 2005; Ben-Yosef 2019).

Beth Shemesh. Though May already possessed artifacts from the site, which he collected in either the summer of 1933 or 1934, those artifacts were limited to fragmentary surface finds.

In early May 1940, Herbert May wrote to the Haverford College Archaeological Museum's curator, John W. Flight to request a loan collection from their institution.²⁷ This museum was established in 1929 as a repository for material from their excavations at Beth Shemesh and for a collection of cuneiform tablets (Eliot and Kirby-Stevens 1939: 23). Flight replied writing, "I shall be glad to send along to you one of our loan collections." and offered May the opportunity to procure several replica casts of important objects found at Beth Shemesh (Flight to May 1940a).²⁸ By June 4th, Flight sent 50 objects accompanied by descriptions of each artifact.²⁹ He also offered Herbert May additional artifacts writing, "should you wish any other artifacts which may be of use to you – or fragments of various types...we may be able to supply you from our...materials here. (Flight to May 1940b)." May responded enthusiastically writing, "as projects and problems arise...wherein we might use them, I will take advantage of your kind offer (May to Flight 1940)."

²⁷ Unfortunately, the Oberlin archives do not contain this initial request. My assumption is based on Flight's response which is dated to May 27th, 1940.

²⁸ The concept of "one of our loan collections" is a fascinating one and would be worthy of an entirely separate research project. It suggests that Oberlin may not be the only institution which possesses a group of artifacts from Beth Shemesh. Quick searches suggest the possibility that similar loan collections might still be found at Bryn Mawr College and Smith College. Haverford College also apparently retains some artifacts from the site. The legal ownership of these artifacts is as fascinating one as the University of Pennsylvania purchased Haverford's collection of Beth Shemesh objects in 1962. (Robinson 1941: 98; "Elihu Grant Beth-Shemesh Excavation Records." University of Pennsylvania Finding Aids Search Finding Aids. University of Pennsylvania). Accessed February 9, 2020. http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/d/ead/upenn_museum_PUMu1032.). In connection with my desire to ensure that Oberlin's collection remains in good legal and ethical standing, I reached out to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology to inquire as to the nature of their contract with Haverford College. After examining that contract, I was assured by figures at the Museum that their purchase only included the artifacts at Haverford in 1962 rather than the totality of artifacts from Beth Shemesh in the United States (Katherine Blanchard, Personal Communication, December 17, 2019). It is possible that Haverford College might have a claim over the long-term placement of the artifacts, though that is an issue for the future.

²⁹ If this list were found it would be immensely helpful to the identification of artifacts whose VI numbers have rubbed off, as well as the metal objects from the site which are unmarked.

According to the original agreement between Haverford and Oberlin, the objects were on loan for a five-year period, with privilege of renewal (May 1940).³⁰

May viewed these complete and published artifacts as tremendously significant for his teaching and commented that they would, “form the nucleus of [the] museum (May to Fiske 1940a).” After their arrival in late June, 1940, he described the group of artifacts as, “compris[ed] [of] some fifty objects including pottery...jugs, bowls, jars, lamps, and representative sherds, and also flint-sickle blades, bronze arrow and spear heads, beads, [an] Egyptian amulet, oxidized grapes, whetstones etc...and excellent replicas of a Canaanite game-board, [the] wedding scarab of Amenhotep III, and an important cuneiform tablet (May 1940).” The ceramic artifacts belonging to this group are marked with a VI followed by a dash and an individual catalog number assigned at Haverford (Flight to May 1940b).³¹ The VI likely refers to Oberlin’s being loan collection #6 while the sequential order of following numbers suggests that each is an accession number related to the specific loan group (figure 11). 33 artifacts in the Oberlin Near East Study collection are marked with VI numbers.³² Additional artifacts from the loan collection include a Middle Bronze

³⁰ No evidence of any such renewals taking place have been found within Herbert May’s file in the Oberlin archives. While this loan may have been renewed several times, I could not find any references to the loan after 1965. I discuss this further in the next chapter in connection with the 1967 object inventory. All memory of the loan ever taking place had been forgotten by the time I started this project.

³¹ The discovery of what the VI- numbers meant came about in an unusual and roundabout way. Since the ceramic artifacts in the loan collection are also marked with field numbers, I had long suspected that I would be able to find the artifacts in the publication of a site excavated in 1930s Palestine. For much of my investigation into the meaning of the VI- numbers, I had incorrectly assumed that they referred to Megiddo stratum VI, which did not entirely make sense due to the artifacts coming from a vast swath of time periods rather than from the Iron I period that corresponds to Megiddo VI (1200-1000). In January 2018, I participated in a Winter Term project at the Penn Museum where I worked with the Beth Shemesh artifacts purchased from Haverford in 1962. Based on my memory of the field markings on the Oberlin artifacts (this was before I had started taking photographs of the collection which began that spring), in the fall of 2019 I thought it might be worthwhile to compare the handwriting on Oberlin’s artifacts to that of Beth Shemesh artifacts with photographs on the Penn Museum’s online database (several of which I took and edited during that Winter Term). This led to a realization that the field markings and handwriting on both sets were identical. Soon after, I looked in the Beth Shemesh publication and found photographs of ONESC artifacts there, confirming that they came from the site. About a month after figuring out that VI- number objects could be assigned to Beth Shemesh, I found the various letters I am citing here as evidence of how the objects came to Oberlin.

³² In addition to its field markings and VI number, ONESC 236, a Middle Bronze Age bowl (Amiran 1969: 94, 97), is marked L-20-25. From my conversations with figures at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, I learned that objects marked with L-20 were loaned to the University of Pennsylvania by

Age bronze dagger (ONESC 08) which can be assigned to the site due to its associated 3x5 tag, as well as two of the three aforementioned casts (ONESC 23: Gameboard; ONESC 249: Cuneiform Tablet)(figure 12). Lastly, the “Egyptian amulet” from Beth Shemesh corresponds to ONESC 245: Bes Pendant (Grant and Wright 1938: Plate LIII, 25).³³ Despite his report that the collection from Beth Shemesh comprised of fifty artifacts, the possibility exists that fewer were ever actually at the college on account of May’s report that the initial shipment from Haverford was missing two items (May to Flight 1940).³⁴ The rapidity with which May was able to acquire the loan collection from Haverford demonstrates that such loans were commonplace and easy to secure if one was a member of the Biblical Archaeology community. The fact that Oberlin’s loan group from Beth Shemesh is marked VI suggests that at least 5 other collections were lent out by Haverford College at the time.³⁵

Haverford College in the early 1930s (Katherine Blanchard, Personal Communication, December 17, 2019). This means that over the course of less than 20 years, ONESC 236 was discovered at Beth Shemesh, returned to the United States where it was part of the Haverford College Archaeological Museum’s collection, sent on loan to the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1930s, returned to Haverford College before 1940, was loaned to Oberlin College that year, and has remained at Oberlin ever since.

³³ The wedding scarab (Grant 1934: Plate XX) is not present in the collection while the bronze arrow and spear heads cannot be identified due to metal objects from the site lacking markings. These should still be considered as present in the collection, just not identifiable (at present). Based on comperanda found at Beth Shemesh I also believe that the collection’s Bovine figurine (ONESC 217) should also likely be attributed to the site (Grant 1934: Plate XXV). Though presently unconfirmed it seems possible that the Beads which May referred to were the collection’s scarab beads. Several of these scarabs were covered up with white ink during a previous organizational attempt, rendering the images on their underbellies difficult to see clearly and thus complicating their identification with the published scarabs from Beth Shemesh. With these artifacts included, it seems possible that the totality of artifacts sent by Haverford to Oberlin are currently present in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

³⁴ These items which would be marked VI-5 and VI-17 are not in the collection today demonstrating that they were never sent even after it was discovered that they were missing.

³⁵ A visit to the Haverford College archives in January 2020 yielded no additional information about the 1940 loan collection. At present, Haverford’s archive contains no records of John W. Flight, the Biblical Literature department, or their former museum of biblical archaeology.

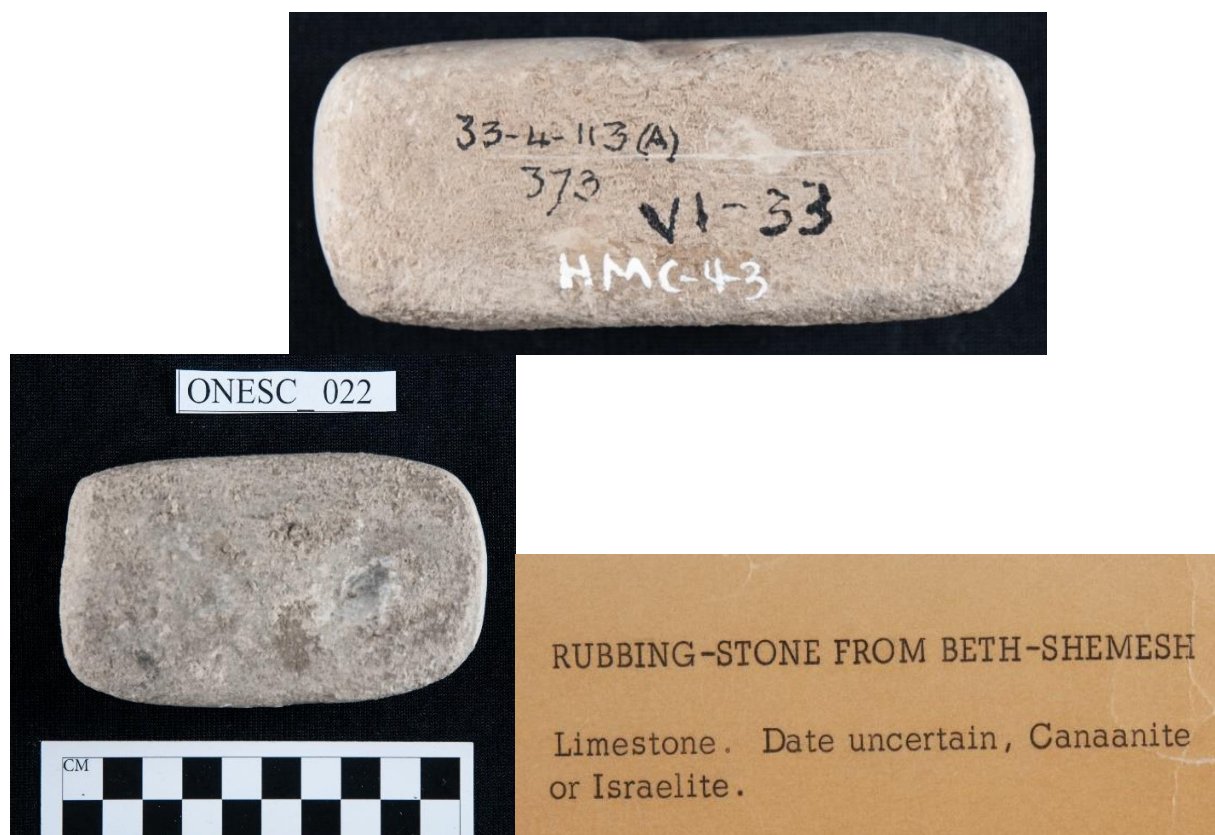


Figure 11: ONESC 022 Whetstone from Beth Shemesh. The object is marked with both a field number (33-4-113 (A)) room number (373) and individual loan number (VI-33). May made a 3x5 tag to accompany the object.



Figure 12: ONESC 023, Cast of Canaanite Gameboard from Beth Shemesh.

3.6.3 A Cuneiform Tablet from the Oriental Institute

May was also interested in collecting artifacts from Mesopotamia. In April 1941, Herbert May renewed his membership to the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute via a phone call. During his conversation with the Institute's director, John A. Wilson, he expressed his interest in building up Oberlin's collection for use in his classes. In Wilson's reply he wrote, "the Oriental Institute is sending you a cuneiform tablet [from Uruk] as a Membership gift. It is understood that this tablet is going to you so that you may make effective use of antiquities in your classes (Wilson to May 1941)."³⁶ While Wilson refers to the tablet as a membership gift, it might fairly be assumed that other members, lacking May's educational background at the Oriental Institute, would not have had access to tablets, or other antiquities for that matter, as "membership gifts." For Wilson the movement of a cuneiform tablet was justified by Herbert May's declared intention of using the object to teach. May's asking for the tablet directly evinces that such practice was standard. As the acquisitions of the Nelson Glueck sherds, the artifacts from Beth Shemesh, and the cuneiform tablet from the Oriental Institute demonstrate, in this period, a scholar such as May was easily able to acquire antiquities through his academic network. As long as those objects would be used for educational purposes, May's contemporaries felt comfortable with the transportation and relocation of the antiquities in their university collections to other institutions and academics.

3.7 Additional Artifacts after 1941

After Herbert May's acquisitions bonanza between 1939 and 1941, little evidence exists for the arrival of additional archaeological material at Oberlin before the large artifact purchase made in Jerusalem in 1967.³⁷ Based upon the collection's contents however, it is possible to

³⁶ The letter contains a translation of the tablet. Should the various tablets in Oberlin's collection ever be professionally examined, it will be possible to identify which of the collection's 22 tablets came from the Oriental Institute.

³⁷ Frustratingly, there is a paucity of archival material from the mid-1940s and the 1950s in May's archive. Whereas there is extensive documentation to aid in the reconstruction of exactly how and when artifacts came to Oberlin from

hypothesize that a large number of ceramic sherds were given to Herbert May in the 1950s. Given the extensive documentation regarding the acquisition of artifacts until 1941, it is certain that the objects discussed in this section did not make their way to Oberlin until after 1941. The fact that May did not return to Palestine until 1958 meanwhile rules out May personally collecting these artifacts as he had in the 1930s (May to Fisher 1959).

3.7.1 Plans for Museum Expansion and a Student Gift

After filling the cases of Bosworth 4 with artifacts from Transjordan and Beth Shemesh, May turned his attention to acquiring replica artifacts to fill out his museum. In his 1942-43 report to Oberlin College, May stated his, “hope...[that], after the war, it may be possible to secure a number of replicas of archaeological objects, such as the Moabite Stone, the Stele of Hammurabi, and the Black Obelisk (May 1943b).” May had wanted to bring replicas of these specific artifacts to Oberlin for several years (May to Nakarai 1941b). Each of them is significant to both biblical history and to the broader history of the Ancient Near East. The Moabite stone was known, at that time, as the longest and most significant Iron Age historical inscription ever found in the Levant (Albright 1945).³⁸ Both the Hammurabi Stele and the Black Obelisk also hold biblical significance with the former contextualizing biblical law within its historical context and the latter possessing an artistic depiction of King Jehu of Israel (Schneider 1996: May 1962: 105). The Oberlin Near East Study collection contains several replicas associated with the broader Ancient Near East and especially with Mesopotamia, but May was never able to secure the specific large-scale replicas he desired.

1939 until 1941, it is impossible to do so for the artifacts in this section. It is unclear why this period is underrepresented in what is otherwise a very thorough archival record.

³⁸ The Moabite Stone is also known as the “Mesha Stele.” It remains the longest Iron Age inscription yet found in the region though most would now consider the 9th century Tel Dan Stele with its “House of David” inscription to be the most significant (Biran and Naveh 1993).

May was able to add a small number of artifacts and other material to the collection. In his 1943-1944 report to Oberlin May reported, “Our museum of O.T. Antiquities has had two new contributions. A student of some years ago...sent to me a number of specimens of Luristan bronzes and some Persian seals. Two synagogue mosaic floor panels, reproduced as oil-color murals, have been presented to the museum (May 1944a).” At present neither the Persian seals nor Luristan bronzes are in the collection. The mural reproductions of the Beth Alpha synagogue’s mosaics hung at the front of Herbert May’s classroom in Bosworth 4 and later in the Religion Department’s classroom in Peters. Their current location is unknown.³⁹ That these murals were given to May in 1944 could be more than coincidental as he published an article about synagogues in Palestine that same year (May 1944b).

3.7.2 A Second Gift by Glueck?

The Oberlin Near East Study Collection contains material from six additional sites in Jordan and the Western Jordan Valley that can be associated with Nelson Glueck’s explorations. Whereas the artifacts given by Glueck in 1940 all came from sites published in volumes one and two of *Explorations of Eastern Palestine*, these sites are all found in volume four, which details his explorations in Northern Jordan and the Jordan Valley (Glueck 1951).

Glueck describes the site of Herakla as a high hilltop site with fallen stones 13 km north west of Jerash. He notes the multi-period occupation of the site in the Early Bronze Age, Middle Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Roman and Byzantine periods (Glueck 1951: 105-106). The collection contains 9 artifacts from the site. ONESC contains 10 sherds from Tell Mustah (Tell el-Mustah), an Early Bronze Age I site at the confluence of the Wadis Jariah and Shaib (Glueck 1951: 368-

³⁹ The murals were placed in the basement of King after the condemnation of the Peters building. What happened to them after the King basement was cleared out in the 2000s remains unknown (Jeffrey Blakeley, Personal Communication, February 11, 2020).

370). Though it was discussed in several publications before Glueck's survey of the Jordan Valley site, the twin mounds of Tell Umm Hamad esh-Sherqi (East) and Gharbi (West) are the most prominently featured sites in *Explorations in Eastern Palestine IV* (Glueck 1951: 318-329; Betts 1992: 8) (figure 13). ONESC contains 9 artifacts from the site. The collection contains one artifact from Tell Misqa (modern Tell Miski), a low mound situated above the Wadi el-Far'ah in the modern-day West-Bank (Glueck 1951: 422; Lapp 2003: 175). The collection contains 4 artifacts from Tell el-Mazar, a prominent mound in the central Jordan Valley mostly occupied during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (Glueck 1951: 302-303). Lastly, the collection contains two artifacts from Tell Sheikh edh-Diyab, a small site located below the entrance to Wadi Fasayil mostly occupied in the Early Bronze Age I-II and Iron Age I-II (Glueck 1951: 414-416).



Figure 13: ONESC 297 Nail-indented body sherd from Tell Umm Hamad esh-Sherqi. The other artifacts mentioned in this section also have their provenance indicated in black marker.

Though no archival material records how or when this material came to Oberlin, the common association between these six sites as places Glueck explored between 1945 and 1949 and published in 1951 suggests that this material was given to May by Glueck either during or immediately after that time. This hypothesis is further supported by the timeframe of Glueck's

1947 return to the United States, where he began his tenure as President of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, after his five-year directorship of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem (King 1983: 99). Following his surveys, Glueck returned to Cincinnati with his collected material so that he could work on his publications during the academic year. Like the earlier material given by Glueck, the provenance of these sherds is also indicated in black marker. They do however differ in their lacking the type of unique numbers found on the objects from Glueck's earlier gift. Further confounding matters, no memorandum exists that describes when the sherds arrived or if they were all brought to Oberlin as a group at one time. No letters in Oberlin's May archive discuss him asking Glueck for additional artifacts. The prevalence of sherds from the Early Bronze Age in this group is also odd. Though Early Bronze Age pottery typology and chronology is extensively discussed in Glueck's volume IV and ties together this group of objects, it is unclear why Herbert May would have wanted additional material from a period without clear biblical associations.

Material from several other Early Bronze Age sites discussed in Glueck's volume can also be found in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. Of the four sherds in ONESC marked as coming from Tel Beth Yerah (Khirbet Kerak), a prominent Early Bronze Age site at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, three are marked "7/10/46" (figure 14). Though not entirely certain, it is difficult to believe that these numbers could refer to something other than July 10th, 1946. At that time, Beth Yerah was under excavation by Moshe Stekelis and Michael Avi-Yonah of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society (Avi-Yonah and Stern 1975: 253). While Herbert May would not have had a connection to that excavation, Nelson Glueck mentions it in his volume IV and could easily have visited the site in 1946 during his tenure as director of the Jerusalem school (Glueck 1951: 106, 238-239). Though Glueck did not publish any original material from the site, it is

possible that he was given the objects by the excavators for the purpose of comparison with the pottery found at the sites he did survey. Glueck then would have brought them back to Cincinnati for study before the objects made their way to Oberlin.



Figure 2: ONESC 263 Body Sherd from Beth Yerah decorated with “Grain Wash.” The object is marked with the date 7-10-’46 possibly indicating when it was collected.

ONESC contains 17 artifacts from the predominantly Early Bronze Age site of Afula in the central Jezreel Valley. While the site was first excavated in 1931, the same time that Herbert May arrived in Palestine, the label made to go with the Early Bronze Age pottery in May’s first museum refers only to, “Early Bronze Age Pottery Fragments from Megiddo, Beth-Shemesh, [and] Jericho.” If May collected these sherds in 1931, Afula would have been mentioned on the label. Afula was later excavated in 1937 and again in 1950-51, a time frame that would allow for their collection by Glueck and which fits into the wider pattern (Avi-Yonah and Stern 1975: 32-33).

Eleven artifacts in the ONESC come from Tell el-Farah (North) located 11 km north of Nablus. The site was excavated in nine seasons on behalf of the Ecole Biblique between 1946 and 1960 under the direction of Roland de Vaux (Moorey 1991: 93). Though May could have visited the excavations during the summers of 1958-1960, it seems unlikely that Tell el-Farah would be

the only site he collected material from during those summer visits. The unlikelihood of May personally collecting this material is only increased by the fact that the sherds from Tell el-Farah (N) at Oberlin date to the Early Bronze Age rather than the later Biblical periods that the site is also known for (Avi-Yonah and Stern: 1975: 395-396).

In his discussion of Tell Umm Hamad's Early Bronze Age pottery, Glueck makes comparisons between the ceramic assemblages from various sites including Tell Misqa, Afula, and Tell el-Farah (North) (Glueck 1951: 320). This discussion of Afula and Tell el-Farah indicate Glueck's interest in both sites and creates the possibility that he was given material for comparison from those excavations, which he later brought back to the United States. If Glueck gave this entire group of artifacts to Oberlin at once, the fact that Afula was not excavated until 1950 provides a terminus post quem for when the objects may have been given.

Dating the arrival of these artifacts to the early 1950s makes sense against the background of Glueck's scholarship at that time. By the early 1950s Glueck would have finished working on the fourth volume of *Explorations in Eastern Palestine* and might have wanted to offload a portion of the artifacts he had accumulated in Cincinnati. Further, after Israel's War of Independence in 1948, the political situation and Glueck's prominent role in the American Jewish community, made it impossible for him to return to Jordan to continue his research there (Brown and Kutler 2006: 144-45). By 1952, Glueck had found a new research project in the exploration of Israel's Negev desert. As this project was geographically removed from his earlier work, Glueck may not have felt the need to retain his study collection of Early Bronze Age artifacts from Northern Jordan and the West Bank and might have wanted to 'clean out his attic.' It is possible that he offered May his artifacts at this point and though May's academic interest may not have been the Early Bronze Age, it is unlikely that he would have turned down the opportunity to accumulate more

archaeological material at Oberlin. While May had made labels to go along with his earlier acquisitions, for whatever reason, no 3x5 cards refer to the artifacts from any of these sites.⁴⁰

3.7.3 Artifact Purchases in the Early 1960s

Beginning in 1958, in connection with his work on the Oxford Bible Atlas, Herbert May spent a series of summers in the Jordanian annexed West Bank and Jordan proper. Unfortunately, these visits are poorly represented in Oberlin archive allowing for only a minimal reconstruction of what sites May visited and what objects might have been added to ONESC as a result of those visits. The sole document attesting May's acquisition of artifacts in this period is a letter from May to an East Jerusalem based antiquities dealer named Farid Salman who owned a store called the Queen of Sheba Bazaar. In that letter May requests, "a couple of Roman Period lamps in good condition" to augment his already existing collection of Byzantine lamps at Oberlin (May to Salman 1962).⁴¹ With numerous Roman lamps in the collection, it is uncertain which lamps were purchased in 1962. Though possible that May collected additional artifacts during his visits in the late 1950s and early 1960s, at present, it remains uncertain.⁴²

3.7.4 Incorporating Cuneiform Tablets

In June of 1964 an Oberlin librarian, Eileen Thornton, wrote Herbert May a letter informing him that the library possessed a small and unused collection of cuneiform tablets. According to the letter, the tablets had been at Oberlin prior to 1928 with no more precise date being offered.

⁴⁰ After a thorough search through Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati's Glueck files, Dana Herman, the director of Research & Collections, was unable to find any references to this exchange of artifacts (Dana Herman, Personal Communication, January 9th, 2020). This of course does not indicate that such an exchange did not take place as Glueck and May could have easily discussed the transfer over a telephone call. The lack of a written record discussing this possible artifact transfer supports my thesis that scholars in this period comfortably moved artifacts around as long as those items were to be used for educational purposes.

⁴¹ It is possible that the Byzantine lamps May refers to in this letter were the ones he was legally able to export from Palestine in 1934. At the end of the letter, May (who seems to have learned his lesson from 28 years before) specifically requested an export permit.

⁴² Mr. Salman and the Queen of Sheba Bazaar will appear again in *Acquiring and Displaying the Oberlin Near East Study Collection II* in connection with May's 1967 artifact purchase.

Thornton informed May that these tablets had never been incorporated into the library and offered him the opportunity to decide where the artifacts would be kept in the future. A note at the bottom of the letter indicates that May picked up the tablets and added them to the Graduate School of Theology's collection (Thornton to May 1964). The Oberlin Near Collection currently contains 15 cuneiform tablets, one of which came to Oberlin via the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. Without additional documentation all that can be said about the remaining 14 tablets is that they were incorporated into the collection by May in 1964.

3.8 Displaying the Oberlin Near East Study Collection (1939-1965)

It is by fortunate circumstance that the Oberlin archives contain several photos of Herbert May's classroom/Museum of Old Testament Antiquities in Bosworth room 4. The combination of these 1951 photographs complemented by the archival records allows for a reconstruction of how Herbert May's classroom was laid out and how his antiquities were displayed. These photographs also provide visual evidence that May collected with the express purpose of incorporating artifacts and archaeology into his courses.

Prior to the addition of artifacts from Beth Shemesh and Nelson Glueck's explorations, May surrounded his rectangular classroom with 25 photographs of archaeological artifacts (*figure 15*). These photographs were joined by a case placed at the front righthand side of May's classroom. May used this case to hold archaeological exhibits and manuscripts (May 1939a). Since May did not mention displaying artifacts in this period, archaeological exhibits likely refers to replica artifacts or student projects. The manuscripts included several early Christian papyri from Egypt, a Greek codex, a 14th century Torah scroll of North African origin, and a Samaritan Torah

Scroll (Zinn, Grover. Oral History. 2019; Barton 1903: 10-13; “14th Century Torah Scroll Discovered in College Library” 1985).⁴³



Figure 3: May teaches a class in Bosworth 4. The 25 photographs surrounding the classroom had pictures of archaeological sites and artifacts related to the biblical time period. Image courtesy of Oberlin Archives (Graduate School of Theology Subseries VI Box 1)

May viewed his 1939-41 acquisitions as essential to the formation of his museum of Old Testament antiquities. In May’s mind, the artifacts from Beth Shemesh would, “form the nucleus of our museum along with my Megiddo stuff.” He also felt that with the addition of Glueck’s sherds, “we [will] have the makings of a real exhibit... [which will] be useful in making a bit more

⁴³ The codex and papyri came as part of a gift known as the Pye Bequest, which also included several Cuneiform artifacts that are no longer at Oberlin (Zinn, Grover. Oral History. 2019). In recent years, the Pye bequest has become an interest of the head of Oberlin Special Collections, Ed Vermue, who has accumulated a group of documents describing its contents. The 14th century Torah and Samaritan Scroll were both collected by William E. Barton, a graduate of the Oberlin school of theology who visited Palestine in 1902. He describes the acquisition of the Samaritan Torah scroll in his 1903 book ‘*The Samaritan Pentateuch: the story of a survival among the sects.*’ Both objects were donated to the college in 1912 (“14th Century Torah Scroll Discovered in College Library” 1985: 5). The codices, papyri, and scrolls are now kept in Special Collections.

realistic the presentation of the O.T. materials (May to Fisk 1940a).” To augment these objects, May made a number of 3x5 informative labels which were placed next to their corresponding objects (May to Flight 1940). As several labels mention sites he collected material from in the 1930s, May’s reference to “Megiddo stuff” should be taken to refer to anything he collected during his time in Palestine.

These artifacts were primarily kept in the three-panel case at the front right-hand side of Bosworth 4 (*figure 16*). The top shelf of the case was taken up by the two Torah scrolls while the lower shelves held an assortment of objects from Beth Shemesh, a number of ceramic sherds, and a small number of replicas including a miniature copy of the Bust of Nefertiti. The labels were placed flat on the shelves rather than upright. Immediately behind this case and next to the front wall of the classroom was a desk with several drawers in which May kept his slide collection. Four replica premodern Homo Sapien skulls rested on top of the desk.⁴⁴

At the front of the classroom on the righthand side of the blackboard was a raised-relief map of Palestine in biblical times.⁴⁵ The Beth Alpha mosaic murals were placed above the right and left-hand sides of the blackboard. Above the center of the blackboard was a series of pulldown maps including a map of the Eastern Mediterranean.

On the left side of the classroom next to the blackboard was a two-panel case which contained additional antiquities (*figure 15*).⁴⁶ A flat-top desk behind this case served as a space to place additional antiquities including a replica of a four-horned altar.⁴⁷ As the objects placed on

⁴⁴ It is uncertain where these skulls are presently. While not in the collections of Religion or Anthropology, it is possible that they found their way into the Biology department. If this were the case, these objects could potentially be found on the 2nd floor of the science center.

⁴⁵ This map is currently in Professor Cynthia Chapman’s office.

⁴⁶ This case can only be seen in one photograph currently in the Oberlin archives. In that photograph it is in the background and slightly out of focus making it impossible to describe its exact contents.

⁴⁷ In the photo where this desk is visible, Herbert May’s body blocks visibility of at least half of this desk making it difficult to say exactly which objects were on it.

this desk were not enclosed in a glass box, it is possible that these were items which Herbert May wanted ready access so that he could pass them out during his classes.

May's exhibit was in place until the Graduate School of Theology closed down in 1965. At that time the objects were transferred to the Department of Religion's classroom in Peters 217 which became "Tom Frank's Museum (Zinn, Grover. Oral History. 2019)."⁴⁸



Figure 16: May shows a visitor ONESC 04 (Iron IIC Cooking Pot) alongside the case on the front-right side of his classroom. Pictured here are the skulls, various manuscripts, the Beth Alpha mosaic reconstruction, and the elevated-relief map of Palestine in the Bible. The objects in the case on the right mostly belong to the group loaned from Beth Shemesh. The photographs are presumably part of the 25 May framed prior to acquiring artifacts between 1939 and 1941. Image courtesy of Oberlin Archives (Graduate School of Theology Subseries VI Box 1)

⁴⁸ This display will be discussed in *Acquiring and Displaying the Oberlin Near East Study Collection II*.



Figure 17: A professor in the Graduate School of Theology teaches students. The Beth Alpha mosaic murals are both visible in the photograph. On the front-left side of the classroom is a case containing antiquities. Image courtesy of Oberlin Archives (Graduate School of Theology Subseries VI Box 1)

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how 269 of ONESC's artifacts joined the collection. Soon after arriving in British Mandate Palestine in 1931, Herbert May began collecting archaeological artifacts. These artifacts came from sites he visited as a tourist and from the excavations conducted by his contemporaries. When May visited archaeological sites, he usually marked his visit by picking up archaeological objects from discard piles or from the site's surface, a process May described in detail with reference to his collecting at Taanach.

As a member of Palestine's then small archaeological community, Herbert May was given archaeological materials that would otherwise have been off limits. May's artifacts from Mugharet el-Wad, Tell el-Ajjul, and demonstrate that archaeologists were more than happy to facilitate collecting by their peers.

While the limited number of artifacts May was given by other archaeologists would not have truly affected the interpretations of the archaeological layers they were found in, it does

demonstrate that archaeological publications of the 1930s were idealized representations rather than complete records of the results of excavation. That not every object was considered essential can be explained by the quick pace and large scale of excavation at that time and in particular at Megiddo, which was the largest excavation of its day. With near constant exposure to many complete objects, it is easy to see how archaeologists at such a site would over the course of several years become entirely desensitized to the importance of an individual object and in particular to ceramic sherds. This might explain why it was acceptable for ONESC 07 to be published as a group of sherds rather than a complete artifact and how May so easily came into the possession of ceramic sherds marked with field numbers.

The arrest of Herbert May for antiquities trafficking in 1934 demonstrates the fundamental incongruity between the ways in which archaeologists thought of and treated antiquities and the letter of the law in British Mandate Palestine. Though mechanisms existed for the legal removal of artifacts by sponsoring institutions in foreign countries through partage, archaeologists such as May did not consider the fragments and small number of complete objects they were transporting to be worthy of the status of an official archaeological antiquity. Though May might not have considered the material he was transporting to hold that status, his asking for a letter from Megiddo's director to clarify that he did not possess antiquities demonstrates that May was aware that such a difference of opinion existed and that what he was doing was technically illegal.

While previous accounts held that the totality of May's archaeological collection was confiscated at this time, the now proven presence of objects that May collected in Mandatory Palestine in ONESC suggests that he had either been able to transport objects back to the United States in previous years, or that he somehow managed to get some of his luggage past the Haifa port-authority without inspection. The inconsistencies in the documentation regarding the incident

as well as the missing documentation related to the incident at Oberlin College and the University of Chicago suggests that there is more to the story of May's arrest than is presently known.

When Herbert May began teaching at Oberlin in 1934, he did not use the artifacts he had collected in Palestine in his courses. Instead, he began searching for ways to create an archaeological collection for Oberlin including an attempt to start an excavation project. With his excavation never getting off the ground, May turned to his academic colleagues requesting that they send him artifacts that he could use in his teaching.

Soon after making his requests, May was sent over 100 ceramic sherds by his friend Nelson Glueck and a loan collection of published artifacts from Haverford College's museum of archaeology. May was also able to acquire a cuneiform tablet from the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute in the aftermath of a single phone call with its director. The rapidity with which May gathered a collection in this way demonstrates that May's contemporaries were mutually committed to the creation of study collections which would be used for educational purposes. It also suggests that scholars in this period felt that they held personal ownership of the artifacts they curated and could do with them as they wished as long as they justified their movement of artifacts as being for the 'greater educational good.' By giving one another artifacts as gifts, these scholars strengthened their academic community. While the artifacts from Beth Shemesh were originally loaned for five years with privilege of renewal, the lack of evidence that such renewals took place suggests that after an artifact was transferred, the loan would be in name only with the artifacts thereafter being thought of as the property of the loaned institution or in this case, the professor curating them.

May added these artifacts to glass cases in his classroom that was also referred to as a museum of 'Old Testament' antiquities. Though he did not continue to acquire artifacts with the

same fervor after his initial bonanza from 1939-1941, the presence of multiple artifacts from sites mentioned in Nelson Glueck's *Explorations in Eastern Palestine IV*, suggests that an otherwise unattested acquisition took place in the early 1950s. The large volume of non-biblical Early Bronze Age material from this hypothesized gift suggests that May might have acquired the artifacts more passively as part of a 'spring cleaning' by Glueck who was in the early 1950s starting a new research project about Israel's Negev desert.

May's return to the Holy Land in the late 1950s and early 1960s in association with his work on the Oxford Bible Atlas was accompanied by the procurement of several artifacts purchased at antiquities shops in Jerusalem. The exact extent of material May purchased is however unclear.

Throughout this chapter, the focus has been on answering the questions of what specific artifacts can be associated with May's collecting from 1931-1965, where those artifacts were collected from, and how May collected artifacts. Absent from the chapter, however, is the question of why May was so committed to collecting throughout his entire academic career. Why May collected artifacts, how he used them in classes, and how he constructed his ideas of the didactic and archaeological roles that could be played by different categories of artifact is the focus of chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Acquiring and Displaying ONESC II (1965-1980)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I trace the Oberlin Near East Study collection from the 1965 closure of the Oberlin College Graduate School of Theology to its curation and expansion by Harry Thomas Frank, a New Testament scholar hired by the Department of Religion in 1964. Following the closure of the Graduate School of Theology, Tom Frank used the artifacts from Herbert May's collection to create a museum/classroom of his own. Frank's museum benefited from a group of artifacts purchased by Herbert May while on sabbatical in 1966-1967. Though May was physically responsible for purchasing the artifacts, the objects he purchased were specifically tailored towards Frank's research interests in the archaeology of the New Testament period. After discussing the 1967 purchase and the artifact inventory that resulted from it, I describe Tom Frank's contributions to the Oberlin Near East Study Collection, culminating in his vital role in securing a long-term loan of tomb objects from the Jordanian site of Bab edh-Dhra' in 1978. In contrast with May whose archive at Oberlin allowed for an extensive reconstruction of his collecting activities, the paucity of archival material about Frank means that it is impossible to reconstruct his acquisitions in the same detail I could for May. The chapter ends in 1980 when Tom Frank unexpectedly passed away, an event from which the collection has never entirely recovered.

The methodology employed to collect antiquities at this time was typically far more formal than that May had employed in the 1930s and 40s. Whereas before, antiquities were brought to Oberlin through informal sanctioning by individual archaeologists, in this period, artifacts were more often obtained through legal mechanisms including long term loans and purchases. These mechanisms were connected to state-controlled distributions of antiquities by both Israel and Jordan. After achieving independence in the late 1940s, both states nationalized their

archaeological heritage, tying the archaeological objects and sites within their borders to the legitimacy and identity of the state itself (Fowler 1987; Trigger 1984: 358-359; Silberman 1989: 100-101; Kersel 2008: 27). Both states staked a far stronger claim to this heritage than the British colonial government had done. This affected the ways in which archaeologists working in Palestine and Transjordan interacted with antiquities. Whereas biblical archaeologists had previously seen themselves as the primary inheritors of Palestine and Transjordan's archaeological heritage, this claim was now contested by powerful states. As a result, after Glueck's second gift in the early 1950s, May and Frank were no longer able to simply write to their colleagues and expect to thereafter obtain artifacts.

Despite May and Frank's general concern regarding the legality of their acquisitions, in limited cases, Frank obtained artifacts using the same 'finders keepers' principles that May had previously employed. Personal relationships within the archaeological community also occasionally guided the state's legal distribution of antiquities. This is particularly visible in Oberlin's acquisition of tomb pots from the Early Bronze Age site of Bab edh-Dhra' in Jordan, a case where artifacts were acquired by legal means, but with a personal subtext hiding behind an artifice of officiality.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ One could argue that if one of the major breaks I am employing between this chapter and the prior one is the rise of the state as the primary arbiter of antiquities ownership, then several examples included in the prior chapter should be included in this chapter. I have elected to start in 1965 because it represents a time during which Tom Frank became the collection's primary curator. Except for Glueck's second gift, ONESC was relatively stable between the late 1940s and early 1960s. The size and scope of the 1967 purchase then represents the first opportunity to analyze the culminative effects of state mandated antiquities distribution, the closure of the Graduate School of Theology, and Tom Frank's growing influence over the collection.

4.2 The Closure of the Graduate School of Theology and the Formation of Tom Frank's Museum in Peters 213

In 1965, the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology closed and merged with the Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Between 1966 and 1970, Herbert May held a joint professorship in the Oberlin's Department of Religion and at Vanderbilt's Divinity School. Under the conditions of this joint professorship, May spent one semester per academic cycle at Oberlin and the other at Vanderbilt. With May away from Oberlin for half the year, Harry Thomas Frank and the Religion Department inherited responsibility for the collection.

Upon the closure of the Graduate School of Theology, its facilities, Bosworth and Shipherd halls, were repurposed into administrative offices and the college's new dormitory, Asia House (Blodgett 1985: 28-29). With Herbert May's former classroom converted into an administrative space, the artifacts that had formerly comprised the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology Museum of Old Testament had to be relocated.⁵⁰ As Bosworth was being repurposed, May kept his "museum" open and as late as September 1965, offered tours to Sunday School groups from the surrounding area (May to Phillips 1965).

By November 1966, Professor Harry Thomas Frank secured Peters 213 as the classroom for his intended museum of biblical antiquities and had begun moving May's antiquities and other teaching materials including the Beit Alpha Mosaic paintings and May's maps into his classroom (May to Reynolds 1966a; Reynolds to May 1966a; Reynolds to May 1966b). By December, Tom Frank had successfully moved the entirety of the Graduate School of Theology's collection and began teaching classes in Peters 213 (Reynolds to May 1966c). Frank surrounded his biblical

⁵⁰ While the archival record indicates that Frank's classroom was Peters 213, later memories by students and colleagues of Tom Frank and Herbert May recalled this room number as Peters 217. It is either possible that the room moved after this initial transfer of items from Bosworth or that rooms in Peters were renumbered in the 1970s (Storr, Annie. Oral History, 2020; Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019; Blakely, Jeffry. Oral History, 2018).

studies classroom with photographs, though it is unclear if these were the same photographs of that Herbert May hung in his classroom (Frank to May 1966a). May never took artifacts with him to Vanderbilt during his four-year tenure, and instead allowed Oberlin's Religion Department to retain the entirety of the collection he had assembled for the Graduate School of Theology (Douglas A. Knight, Personal Communication, January 26 2019; Christopher Benda, Personal Communication January 31 2019).

4.3.1 Herbert G. May's 1966-1967 Sabbatical Antiquities Purchases

Herbert May spent the 1966-1967 academic year on sabbatical leave from Oberlin. His expansive plans included a trip to Greece and other eastern Mediterranean countries, as well as an extended stay as an Honorary Associate at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, Jordan. This stay in Jerusalem was broken up into two legs, the first of which took place from July until September and the second between November and January. In his sabbatical application, May noted his intentions to, "do on the-scene-research looking forward to the revision of the Oxford Bible Atlas [and] to investigate the more recent archaeological activities in these areas (May to Theological Faculty Council, The General Faculty Council and the Board of Trustees 1965)." May's original plan did not include purchasing additional artifacts for the Religion Department.

While May was in Jerusalem, Tom Frank lobbied Oberlin's President, Robert Carr, to create a Near Eastern Studies major at Oberlin. By December, President Carr agreed to establish the major, and as an expression of his support sent \$500 dollars from his personal contingency fund to Herbert May in order to, "give a significant boost to our collection of Near Eastern Artifacts (Frank to May 1966b)."⁵¹ Tom Frank completely trusted Herbert May's judgement in selecting artifacts that would complement the already existing collection and augment its usability for

⁵¹ In 2020 currency, this would be \$3,720.

teaching about the archaeology of the New Testament period and Near Eastern Studies. Frank wrote that he was, “very glad that you are on the scene in Jerusalem to make the selection of items (Frank to May 1966b).” He further informed May that though he had secured money for artifact purchases, he did not believe that the money would successfully be sent to Jordan and then converted to dinars before early January 1967 (Frank to May 1966a).

Knowing that he would have limited time to decide which artifacts to purchase once the money arrived, May began searching for an appropriate group of objects on December 7th. Though May was physically responsible for making the purchases, he reported that he was only doing so, “thanks to the effective initiative of Tom Frank (May to Reynolds 1966b).” By January 1st, May reported that he had, “secured a collection of pottery and other objects that at the moment is being processed through the Antiquities Department.” Using his own money, May bought a group of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine coins that he gave to Tom Frank for use in his teaching (Frank to Carr 1967). Many of these coins were purchased from a Jerusalem based collector named L.H. Ohan who sold May 26 coins ranging in date from Alexander the Great until the 4th Century CE (May et. al 1967: 3). In a 1967 letter, Tom Frank highlighted Ohan’s role writing that, “without [his] generosity and interest many of the items could not have been secured (Frank to Carr 1967).” Herbert May also purchased coins during his travels to sites around the West Bank and Jordan including a bronze coin he, “bought from a young man of the village [Tabaqat Fahl] ...with the words Pel (Pella) and Col (Colonia) (May to Reynolds 1967a).”

In his regularly written reports to Oberlin, Herbert May highlighted the extensive measures he was taking to ensure the legality of the purchase writing, “Both because it is the right thing to do and because possible future relations of Oberlin with the Antiquities Department are at stake, I have insisted on proper legal procedures with export permit, etc. (May to Holbrook 1967).” May

purchased his antiquities from Farid Salman, the owner of the Queen of Sheba Bazaar, an antiquities store located across from the American School of Oriental Research on Salah ad-Din Street (May to Reynolds 1967c; Jeffrey Blakely, Personal Communication February 12, 2020). May had previously frequented Salman's shop and purchased Roman lamps there in 1962. Before export, the artifacts were each individually photographed to comply with the Jordanian antiquities laws (May to Reynolds 1967c).

Though the artifacts were photographed in January, they were not exported until April. By that time, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities confiscated a red Nabatean pot May purchased. Why they did so is however uncertain (Salman to May 1967). The objects were transported to the United States on a cargo ship where they were kept in wooden boxes. Upon their arrival in the United States, customs officers forcefully opened the boxes, damaging several artifacts in the process. In the opinion of Tom Frank and Herbert May the damage was extensive enough to, "diminish the value of [several objects] by half or more (May et al. 1967).

In his later recollections of the moment when Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank opened the crates in July 1967, Professor Emeritus of Religion, Grover Zinn said, "I remember a glass tear vial, a Roman glass tear vial that had been deliberately or inadvertently smashed...all of [the boxes] had been opened very carelessly and most of the objects had been moved around...being there when Tom and Herb opened some of them up, not a happy moment (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019) (figure 1)."

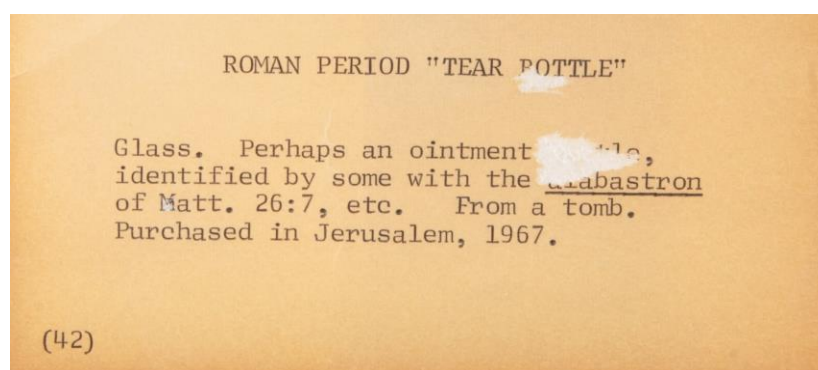


Figure 1: ONESC 43, the damaged Roman Glass tear vial mentioned by Grover Zinn

According to the 1967 inventory of antiquities in Oberlin's Religion department, a document compiled by May, Frank, and John Trever, a professor at the College of Wooster, May purchased 42 artifacts from Farid Salman in 1967 (May et al. 1967). In contrast with May's earlier collecting which centered around artifacts from the time period of the Old Testament, many of the artifacts purchased in 1967 dated to the post-Old Testament Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods. Tom Frank viewed these artifacts and the coin collection May purchased as, "bear[ing] directly upon New Testament Study (Frank to Carr 1967). Several other artifacts May purchased in 1967 were bought with the intention of filling in underrepresented archaeological periods. As such, May's purchases were not restricted to objects from "New Testament" periods, but also included artifacts from the prehistoric Intermediate Bronze Age. May also purchased several

artifacts from a broader Eastern Mediterranean context including a small number of Egyptian objects (May et. al 1967).

Evaluating the importance of the 1967 artifact purchase, Tom Frank wrote, “this collection [of artifacts purchased in 1967] ...increased Oberlin College’s collection not only significantly numerically but incalculably in terms of teaching value. Materials on hand cover the periods from late Chalcolithic...to Byzantine. Our display of lamps is a strong beginning towards a complete and important collection showing the development of pottery forms (Frank to Carr 1967).” Frank further praised May’s thrifty use of the \$500 dollars sent to him by the college writing, “the collection received by us in July is valued at almost twice the amount paid for it (Frank to Carr 1967).”

While Herbert May was responsible for the actual selection and purchase of artifacts in 1967, Tom Frank played a huge role in both. By approaching President Carr, Tom Frank secured the funding for May’s purchases. Further, the large number of artifacts May purchased which post-dated the periods of the Old Testament, demonstrates that May’s primary consideration when selecting artifacts was whether they would be useful to Tom Frank’s teaching. As a half-year senior faculty member, May might have felt that his career at Oberlin was nearing its end and that in the future, his younger colleague would be responsible for the collection’s upkeep and use. In short, if Herbert May was the actor of the 1967 purchase, Tom Frank was the impetus.

4.3.2 The Jerusalem Antiquities Market, and the Legal Landscape of the 1967 Artifact Purchase

After the 1948 Arab Israeli War, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan occupied east Jerusalem and the West Bank. While the transition from the British Mandate to the subsequent independent states of Israel and Jordan was both violent and difficult with lasting ramifications,

little changed with regards to the legal status of antiquities, with both states passing legislation that mimicked the antiquities laws of the British Mandate (Kersel and Kletter 2006: 320).

Palestine's Mandatory government passed a series of laws determining the definition of an antiquity and the legal measures for their excavation, study, sale, and export (Kersel 2008: 21). Legally, artifacts were considered the property of the British Mandatory Government. Artifacts could only leave the country if they were given to an excavating institution through partage, or, if the antiquities authority deemed that an artifact was a duplicate and not needed for the national repository. In that case, artifacts were turned over to state-sanctioned antiquities dealers and thereafter sold to tourists, collectors, and museums (Kersel and Kletter 2006: 319). After purchasing an antiquity, buyers were required to obtain an export permit and had to pay an export tax (Kersel 2008: 25; Kersel and Kletter 2006: 319). In theory, artifacts could only enter antiquities shops through state sanctioning. In reality however, artifacts were looted at sites across Palestine and Transjordan and smuggled to antiquities stores. The pipeline of illegally excavated artifacts to legal antiquities stores has been traced back to the Ottoman period and persists to this day (Kersel 2008: 35; Kersel 2018: 599). In the 1930s, Herbert May purchased a small number of artifacts at sanctioned antiquities shops.

By 1967, east Jerusalem had been administered by Jordan for nearly 20 years. Jordan's antiquities laws parroted British law. As a result, partage persisted and the antiquities shops of Jerusalem, Amman, and Hebron thrived under the purview of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and Tourism (Kersel and Kletter 2006: 320). In this period, Jordan primarily used antiquities to support the tourist trade and local economy. Even museums were directed towards international rather than local audiences (Badran 2018: 621, 624).

In 1962 and 1967, Herbert May purchased antiquities from Farid Salman, a licensed antiquities dealer. By purchasing antiquities from Salman, May acquired an export permit that legally allowed the antiquities to leave Jordan and become his property. Before their export, May's artifacts were individually photographed by Salman. Salman then turned the photographs over to the Department of Antiquities who were responsible for recording all of the objects leaving the country. Although research into the Jordanian antiquities database has suggested that it was ineffective, the department's confiscation of a Red Nabatean pot in 1967 suggests that export photographs were at times carefully examined (Kersel 2008: 33). Based on Salman's expectation of compensation for the confiscated object, it is less likely that the object was confiscated because it was looted, and far more likely that it was recognized as a non-duplicate artifact and thereafter repossessed by the state (Kersel 2018: 602). Herbert May therefore followed the total legal procedure for purchasing and exporting artifacts in 1967. It is unclear why U.S. customs decided to open the boxes of antiquities.

4.4.1 The 1967 inventory of Antiquities in possession of control of the Department of Religion

Since Oberlin funded the 1967 artifact purchases, the college insisted that Herbert May and Tom Frank create an official inventory for security and insurance purposes (May et. al 1967). This inventory provides a vital record of the collection's size and contents after the 1967 purchase and provides a glimpse of the effects of the collection's transition from the Graduate School of Theology to the Department of Religion. The inventory demonstrates that after the closure of the Graduate School, the college took on a greater interest in the collection. Whereas in the 1940s, Herbert May independently acquired archaeological artifacts with little oversight or communication with his peers, by the 1960s, the acquisition of artifacts had to be reported along with the total composition of the collection.

4.4.2 Making sense of the 1967 Inventory

The 1967 inventory is split up into five lists dividing the collection by artifact's ownership and date of acquisition. The first list is entitled, "Antiquities in possession of Oberlin College and entrusted to the Department of Religion prior to July 1967." This list includes many of the objects from the Haverford College loan, the 16 cuneiform tablets that were transferred from the library to the Graduate School of Theology in 1965, the W.E Barton Torah Scrolls, several replica artifacts, and 2,400 glass slides. Most objects on the list were brought to the Graduate School of Theology to aid in instruction. It is surprising that the more than 100 sherds from Nelson Glueck's explorations are not listed in this category. The list records provenance, general artifact type, and a date range.

The second list is an inventory of the 42 artifacts purchased by Herbert May in 1967. In addition to the descriptive features in the first list, this list also notes decorative or distinctive features on specific objects, making it easier to match artifacts in ONESC with the inventory. The ceramic objects purchased in 1967 were labeled in black marker with a number matching up to the objects position on the inventory from 1 to 42. Two item's descriptions (ONESC 245: Bes Amulet; ONESC 06: Juglet) include Herbert May's initials in parentheses, though the meaning of why only these artifacts are labeled with his initials is uncertain.

ONESC 06 is a common type of Middle Bronze Age Juglet from Megiddo (figure 2). How May purchased an artifact from Megiddo, a site in Israel, when he was in Jerusalem, Jordan might seem odd, but can be explained by Jordanian antiquities law. The British antiquity laws of the 1920s included a provision that any object deemed unnecessary for the national repository could be sold in private antiquities shops (Kersel 2008: 26). With its extremely fragmentary condition and extremely common morphology, ONESC 06 would not have been claimed by its excavators

and if kept by the national repository would have joined a large number of nearly identical objects in storage (Ilan and Marcus 2019: 18, 62-63). As Jordan retained this provision in their antiquities legislation, it is impossible to say if the object found its way to Farid Salman's store during or after the mandate. In either case, this provision explains how in 1967, May could purchase an object excavated some 30 years earlier at Megiddo. This law also explains how the 1967 purchase included two metal objects from Beth Shemesh, a site that was also in Israel.

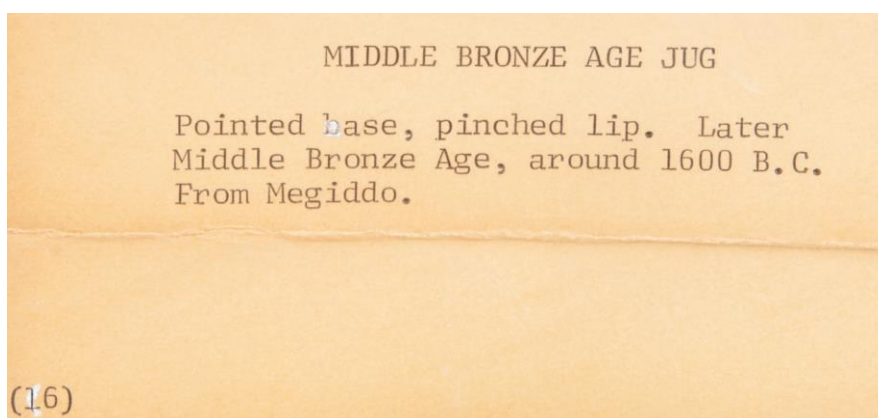


Figure 2: ONESC 06. As one of the 42 artifacts May purchased in 1967, this object received a unique inventory number (16) that was applied to the object and its 3x5 label.

I previously assigned ONESC 245 (Bes Amulet) to the Beth Shemesh artifact loan from Haverford College. The artifact fit with the description of an “Egyptian Amulet” in the

memorandum of artifacts received in 1940 and is identical to an object in the Beth Shemesh reports (Grant and Wright 1938: Plate LIII, 25). Although such artifacts were often created en masse, the Bes Amulet from the Beth Shemesh excavation reports is identical in size, shape, and morphology to the one at Oberlin, casting doubt on when the object arrived at the college. Taken together with the initials next to it on the 1967 inventory, it is clear that these objects were somehow differentiated from the rest, though why they used unique notation is uncertain.



Figure 3: ONESC 245 Bes Amulet

The third list describes antiquities owned by Harry Thomas Frank but entrusted to the Department of Religion. The 13 objects were mostly purchased on the antiquities market except for an item simply marked “assorted undated potsherds.” It is uncertain how many sherds this item refers to. As opposed to Herbert May who indicated the origin of many of the sherds he collected, Frank does not seem to have done so making it impossible to identify which sherds can be attributed to him and where he collected them.

The fourth list inventories the 26 coins purchased by Herbert May in 1967. According to the inventory, the coins were once accompanied by a separate and more extensive description. It

is uncertain if this more extensive list can be found in the Oberlin archive. The list also includes 9 Roman coins owned by Harry Thomas Frank.⁵²

The last list describes Herbert May's personal collection of antiquities. This list includes a collection of coins, a group of lamps dating from the Iron Age to the Byzantine period, including 5 dating specifically to the Byzantine period, a group of figurines from Ephesus, Taanach, and Megiddo, several groundstone objects, flint artifacts, pottery sherds, and several complete pottery vessels. While most objects in this list correspond with May's acquisitions from the 1930s, including artifacts from Mugharet el-Wad and Megiddo, others are from subsequent dispersions. Oddly, artifacts from the Beth Shemesh loan appear on this list separate from other objects from the loan that appear in list 1. Additionally, significant groups of pottery sherds including those from Jericho, Lachish, Tell el-Ajjul, and the entirety of objects from Nelson Glueck are entirely absent from the inventory.

The inventory strangely includes an Erie Indian pottery jar and skeletal material. The Erie Indian pottery likely corresponds to ONESC 05 which has always been an enigmatic piece within the collection. To my knowledge, nothing that could be considered Erie Indian skeletal material currently resides in the collection.⁵³ This material is mentioned nowhere else, and it is unclear why these artifacts were part of the collection. The Erie Indian Pottery jar could very well be subject to NAGPRA and must therefore be investigated in the future.

⁵² It is possible that these coins, or at least a portion of them, eventually found their way to the Classics Department's coin collection. The 1967 inventory includes a replica of the Phaistos Disk, a famous Minoan artifact. The Classics department also owns a replica of this object, though it is uncertain if the two are the same. It is unlikely we will ever know how and why the elements of the collection were dispersed throughout the college.

⁵³ Of the 9 artifacts classified as being made of bone in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection, 7 can easily be identified as tools. Of the remaining two artifacts, one is specifically marked as coming from Mugharet el-Wad and therefore cannot correspond to the Erie bones in question here. The last remaining object, ONESC 500 is a small and fragmentary piece of bone. While possible that this unidentified bone does come from a human being, for the present it remains uncertain.

4.4.3 Whose artifacts are whose again and where did all this stuff come from?

Up until 2018, the Oberlin Near East Study Collection was referred to as the Herbert May collection insinuating that he had collected and owned its total contents. Accounts by May and Frank's students in the 1970s however indicate that at that time, the collection was perceived as a diverse collection accumulated by many different figures at various times in the past (Storr, Annie. Oral History, 2020). Even May's colleagues were largely unaware of the origin and ownership of a great deal of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. Though possible that May entrusted this information to Harry Thomas Frank when he finally retired from the college in 1973, it is unclear if even Frank was aware (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019). The 1967 inventory demonstrates that while many objects were classified as Religion Department property, several others in active teaching use belonged to either May or Frank. It also suggests that with the closure of the Graduate School, certain artifacts that were entrusted to the GST were divided between Herbert May and the Religion Department.

Until the closure of the Graduate School of Theology in 1965, the Beth Shemesh collection was publicly advertised as a loan collection from Haverford College (Oberlin Graduate School of Theology 1965). From 1941 to 1965, the Graduate School of Theology's official bulletin listed both the loan collection and sherds from Nelson Glueck as facilities under their purview. Even after Haverford College sold their own Beth Shemesh collection to the University of Pennsylvania in 1962, the Graduate School of Theology continued their attribution.

By contrast, the 1967 inventory neither acknowledges Haverford College nor that certain artifacts were loans rather than the property of the Oberlin College, Frank, or May. The inventory divides the Beth Shemesh artifacts into the group of objects considered college property, and into the group of artifacts owned by May (May et. al 1967). There is no evidence that May ever renewed

the Beth Shemesh loan, let alone evidence that Haverford College ceded ownership of the artifacts to May or Oberlin College. By insuring the Beth Shemesh artifacts, Oberlin effectively claimed ownership over a group of artifacts that were originally intended to return to Haverford College after 5 years. While the Graduate School of Theology may have acknowledged the loan, it seems that after more than 20 years at the college, the artifacts were fully incorporated into Oberlin's collection and into the personal collection of Herbert May. The loan's absence from the inventory explains how after May left the college, and Frank passed away, the Haverford College loan was completely forgotten.

As easily as the Beth Shemesh artifacts were incorporated into the Religion Department's collection, so too were the artifacts previously considered the property of Professors May and Frank. While the inventory states that May's artifacts were kept in the Rice building, separate from Frank's artifacts and the Religion Department Museum in Peters 217, in time, without a photographic record of the collection and a more thorough inventory, it is easy to see how the specific origin of most objects was forgotten along with which figures were responsible for bringing specific groups of artifacts to the college. Though possible that Herbert May shared some of this information, there is no evidence of what exactly Frank would have known. Regardless, with Frank's death in 1980, whatever he had known was lost.

4.4.4 What we Had and What We Lost: the Oberlin Near East Study Collection then and Now

The 1967 catalog allows for comparison between the objects listed, and the current contents of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. With over 50 years between when the list was made and the present day, it is unsurprising that many of the inventoried artifacts are no longer in the collection. Without additional information about May's retirement and Frank's death, it is difficult to speculate where these artifacts may have gone. Unfortunately, the 1967 inventory is not

particularly detailed, and as a result, it is difficult to match up artifacts in the current collection with the inventory. I am therefore only highlighting artifacts from the inventory that are clearly no longer a part of the collection.

Several items from the 1967 purchase are absent from the ONESC, including several scarabs from the Karnak Temple and Cairo in Egypt dating to the time of the New Kingdom as well as a bronze ring from Beth Shemesh. The present Oberlin Near East Study Collection contains six scarabs, while more than 10 scarabs were inventoried in. It is completely uncertain where the additional scarabs might be.⁵⁴

Many of the 13 objects attributed to Harry Thomas Frank remain in the collection and can be identified. The others might also remain in the collection but are more difficult to identify due to the limited description provided by the inventory.

The most glaring difference of artifacts between the present Oberlin Near East Study Collection and the 1967 inventory is the absence of coins from the current collection. The location of these coins is uncertain though it is possible that some are in the Classics Department's coin collection.

Of the artifacts described as Herbert G. May's personal property, both the bronze and silver coins are missing. Other missing objects include Persian bronzes, Persian seals, several flint sickle blades, and a number of scarabs including the Amenhotep wedding scarab, one of the three replicas included in the Haverford loan.

⁵⁴ Since the scarabs are dated in the 1967 catalog, it would be possible for a student in the future to match up which scarabs are still at the college and which are absent.

4.5.1 Harry Thomas Frank's Collecting

Like Herbert May, Harry Thomas Frank took advantage of his time in Palestine and Transjordan to collect fragments of archaeological sites and to purchase artifacts. While he certainly picked up a number of ceramic sherds and other assorted items as suggested the “assorted undated potsherds” in the 1967 inventory (May et al. 1967), the majority of identifiable objects collected by Frank are fragments of buildings or structures from sites associated with the New Testament and its characters.⁵⁵ Tom Frank was a prolific buyer of antiquities, taking advantage of Jordan and Israel's antiquities stores to build his personal collection.

When Harry Thomas Frank first visited the Holy Land is unknown. His participation in archaeology however began in 1966, when he was invited to take part in the Taanach expedition led by American archaeologist, Paul Lapp (*Chronicle Telegram* 1975). In 1970, Frank returned to participate in the renewed Tell el-Hesi excavations, where he served as the director of educational and volunteer programming until 1980. In that position, Harry Thomas Frank facilitated the participation of numerous Oberlin students, in some years drawing as many as 40 to excavate in Israel (Blakely, Jeffery. Oral History, 2018: Frank and Horton 1989). He returned to the site between 1971 and 1980 with a year off in 1974 when Oberlin instead joined the American consortium digging at the Roman port city of Caesarea in Northern Israel (Goodrich 1973). While Oberlin's active participation in the Hesi expedition declined after 1975 due to budgetary constraints, Frank maintained his position until his passing in 1980.⁵⁶ Frank also led “Holy Land”

⁵⁵ By contrast with Herbert May who left an extensive paper archive to the college, Harry Thomas Frank is only represented by his faculty file, consisting of a single folder. As a result, my reconstruction and discussion of Frank's collecting is far more limited than that I made for May.

⁵⁶ Considering Oberlin's active role in the Tell el-Hesi project, it is surprising that the only artifact in the collection clearly marked as coming from Hesi is a replica figurine (ONESC 134). According to Jeffery Blakely, as Oberlin participated in the site's excavation extensively before the passage of Israel's 1978 antiquities law, which ended partage, when the Tell el-Hesi excavations are entirely published, Oberlin will be entitled to a study collection of

tours in 1978 and 1980 (Skillicorn 1981: 133). Due to his active presence in Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank, Harry Thomas Frank had ample opportunities to purchase and collect antiquities.

4.5.2 Frank's Finders Keepers

Harry Thomas Frank's primary academic interest was the New Testament with a particular interest in King Herod, the 1st century BCE Roman client king who is famous for his prolific building throughout Palestine and Transjordan (Frank 1975a). Frank visited various sites associated with Herod including his palaces at Masada and Tulul Abu-al- 'Alayiq as well as his port city, Caesarea Maritima. Herod's fame as a builder guided Frank's collecting several building fragments. To these, Frank added a few additional artifacts from sites near Tell el-Hesi as well as a small number of objects he picked up while excavating at Taanach project in 1966 and as part of the Shechem Regional Survey Project in 1972 and 1973 (Frank 1978b).

During one of his visits to the Holy Land, Tom Frank visited King Herod's desert fortress and palace, Masada. At the site, he found a Roman roof tile with a child's footprint on it (ONESC 100), removed it from the site, and subsequently brought it back to Oberlin in his suitcase (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019) (figure 4).⁵⁷

Frank did the same with fragments of a plaster from a column (ONESC 89) and a brick from the bathhouse (ONESC 101) at Herod's winter palace in Jericho, Tulul Abu-al-'Alayiq. In the tag he created for ONESC 89, Frank highlighted the site's importance particularly as the place where King Herod passed away. The site was connected to the New Testament by its excavators

unpublished but registered artifacts from the site (Kersel and Kletter 2006: 220; Jeffrey Blakely, Personal Communication, February 12, 2020).

⁵⁷ For whatever reason, this story has come to be a much-repeated tale of how part of the collection was acquired. This could in part be since Masada is such a well-known site and since this architectural fragment is anything but small.

who referred to it as “New Testament Jericho” throughout their publication (Kelso and Baramki 1949).



Figure 4: ONESC 100, Roof Tile from Masada.

Tom Frank visited the excavations at Herod’s port city of Caesarea in 1976 after his initial participation there in 1974. While there, he collected several marble and porphyry fragments from the walls and floors of a Byzantine bathhouse under excavation at the time of his visit (ONESC 191-194).

Frank collected other material from the Roman and Byzantine periods including a portion of a Roman mosaic he found while walking with his son, Malcom, in Jerusalem’s Kidron valley in August 1976 (ONESC 190).

While digging at Hesi, Frank likely visited the nearby sites of Tell Jemmeh and Maresha (Tell Sandakhanna) (Avi-Yonah and Stern 1978: 545, 790). Though no obvious connection exists between the sites other than their both being occupied in the Hellenistic period, Frank collected

nearly identical shell earrings from both and labeled their interiors to indicate their provenance (ONESC 418, 564).

Tom Frank's acquisitions were not limited to artifacts from the New Testament periods. He also collected artifacts connected to older sites including a sling stone from Taanach which he collected in 1966 (ONESC 032), a group of carbonized seeds from Shechem that he collected in either 1972 or 1973 (ONESC 550), and a mudbrick fragment from Lachish's 6th century gateway (ONESC 216).

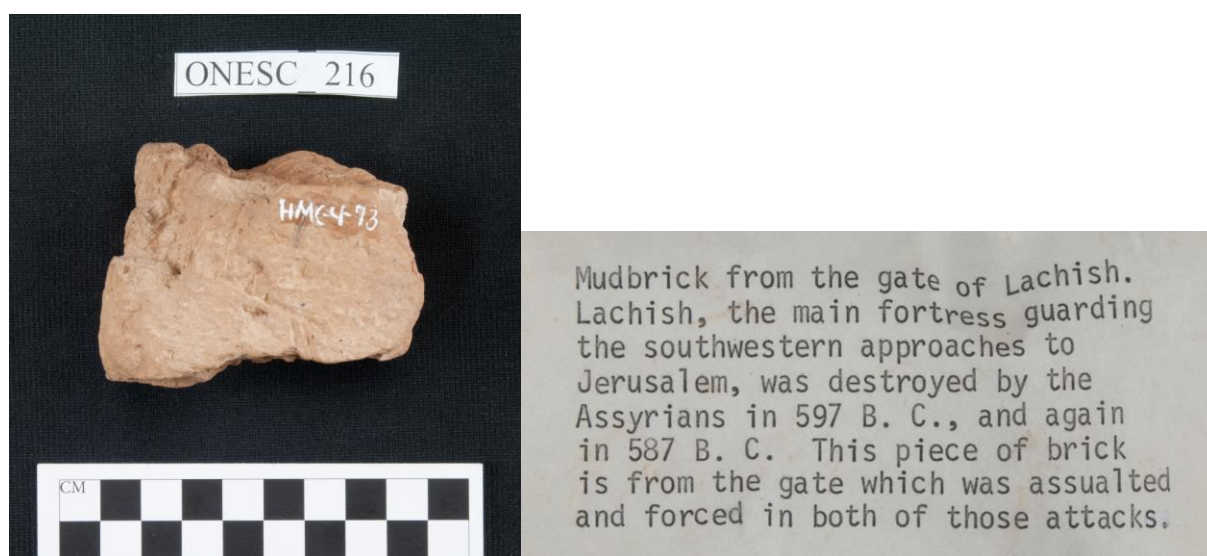


Figure 5: ONESC 216 Mudbrick Fragment from Lachish accompanied by its original tag typed by Professor Harry Thomas Frank

4.5.3 Purchases

Harry Thomas Frank also relied on Jordan and later Israel's antiquities stores in order to build his personal collection, some of which made its way into the current Oberlin Near East Study Collection. Though his focus was on later periods, Frank purchased material from the Early Bronze Age all the way to the Byzantine period (May et al. 1967). In addition to the artifacts he purchased for use at Oberlin, Frank also maintained a personal collection and museum in his home. Frank's

home museum centered around coins from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods, but also included pottery and other ancient materials (Cotleur 1979).⁵⁸

4.6 A Student Loan in the Early 1970s

For his former students and colleagues, Harry Thomas Frank is best remembered as an engaging educator whose lectures inspired a love for the archaeology of the Holy Land. For one student in the early 1970s, Annie Storr, this engagement was enough for her to make a personal contribution to the collection.⁵⁹ As Storr related during our interview in 2020, as a student in several of Tom Frank's courses, she realized that the collection contained few Egyptian artifacts. She was also aware that Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank were interested in expanding the collection, leading her to consider loaning her Professors the few Egyptian artifacts in her possession.

As a child, Storr received a group of faience beads, an Eye of Horus amulet, and several scarabs that her grandmother had purchased during a tour of Egypt in 1902. To string her beads, Storr (with some help from her parents) enlisted the help of her backyard neighbors in Chicago, Egyptologist John A. Wilson and his wife.⁶⁰ The Wilsons showed Storr various ways she could accurately string her beads before they collectively decided on a pattern. While stringing the beads, Storr decided to incorporate her Eye of Horus amulet into the necklace.

When Storr offered him her artifacts, Tom Frank enthusiastically accepted her loan offer and added Storr's necklace (ONESC 145) and scarabs to one of the display cases in his Peters

⁵⁸ At the time of my writing this thesis, Harry Thomas Frank's wife, Betty, still lived in Oberlin and has likely retained a large portion of his collection. To truly understand Harry Thomas Frank as a collector, one would need to study the fragment of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection that can be associated with him as well as his personal collection of artifacts in his home.

⁵⁹ During our meeting, Storr repeatedly specified that her contribution to the Oberlin Near East Study Collection was a loan rather than a permanent gift. Though at the time of our meeting she did not request the return of her artifacts, she specified that in the future it is possible that she will request their return.

⁶⁰ This is the same John A. Wilson who sent Herbert May a cuneiform tablet from the Oriental Institute as a membership gift in the previous chapter.

classroom.⁶¹ After her graduation, Storr allowed the objects to remain in the collection, but asked Tom Frank for a notice verifying her ownership (Storr, Annie. Oral History, 2020) (figure 6).⁶²



Figure 6: ONESC 145 Annie Storr's Egyptian Necklace.

4.7 The Bab edh-Dhra' Distribution: The Personal Behind the Legal

Oberlin's group of tomb vessels from Bab edh-Dhra', an Early Bronze Age site in Jordan close to the Dead Sea, came to the college as part of a far larger distribution of artifacts from the site (Kersel 2015a). This distribution scattered groups of tomb objects to universities and museums in multiple countries and continents. While the distribution was carried out with specific political and logistical goals in mind, in the case of Oberlin's group of pots, the personal relationship

⁶¹ Though Storr's necklace can easily be identified as it is a distinct object within the collection, the large number of scarabs make it difficult for even Storr to identify which ones were originally hers. If Storr ever wishes to reclaim her artifacts, it will be vital to find out which scarabs are recorded in the 1967 inventory, and which ones came from her collection.

⁶² While possible that the document written for Storr is in the Oberlin archive, it is equally likely that no such record exists. Through her conversations with Grover Zinn, Annie kept track of the fact that her objects remained in the collection. On my part however and from my conversations with Grover, I am not confident that he could accurately point out which objects belonged to Storr at this point in time.

between the figures responsible for the distribution and Harry Thomas Frank played a key role in how this published and important group of pots ended up at the college.

Bab edh-Dhra' is a large Early Bronze Age town and cemetery site located near the southern end of the Dead Sea. As early as its discovery by William Foxwell Albright in 1924, it was associated with the biblical site of Sodom (King 1983: 72; Schaub and Rast 1989: 15-18).⁶³ Even before then however, it had been a focal point for looters who took advantage of the large number of easily accessible complete vessels in its cemetery (Kersel 2018: 599). The first major excavations at the site took place in response to its looting. Beginning in the late 1950s, Paul Lapp, the then director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, Jordan, noticed a huge influx of Early Bronze Age pots into Jerusalem's antiquities shops (Kersel 2018: 602). After identifying their source at Bab edh-Dhra', Lapp began a rescue excavation at the site and cemetery which he led between 1965 and 1967. Herbert May visited Lapp's excavation in December 1966 and called Bab edh-Dhra', "one of the central archaeological sites of today (May to Reynolds 1966c)."

In the 1960s, material from the site was readily available in Jerusalem's antiquities shops. As a result, both Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank purchased artifacts from the site and its surroundings (ONESC 03, 09, 010; May et al. 1967). ONESC 010's tag specifies that the object does in fact come from Bab edh-Dhra', while the other two can be traced to the same area based on the unique morphology of Early Bronze Age pottery from the Dead Sea Plain (Philip 2008: 200). Though ONESC 03 and 09 were likely looted, ONESC 010, was excavated by Paul Lapp,

⁶³ May did not accept the identification of Bab edh-Dhra' as biblical Sodom and instead thought Sodom had been buried beneath the Dead Sea in, "late prehistoric times (Graham and May 1936: 50)."

deemed unnecessary for Jordan's national repository, placed in an antiquities store, and sold to Herbert May in 1967 (Kersel 2018: 604) (figure 7).⁶⁴

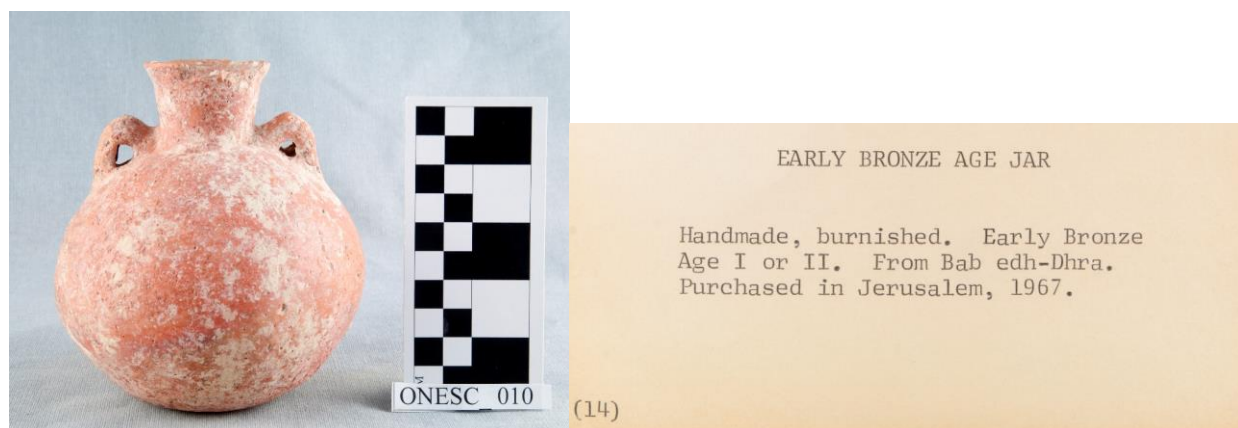


Figure 7: Amphoriskos from Bab edh-Dhra' purchased by Herbert May in 1967

Paul Lapp unexpectedly passed away in 1970 leaving the Bab edh-Dhra' excavations unpublished and its finds split between storage rooms in Jerusalem and Amman (Kersel 2015a: 50). As time went on, it became increasingly apparent that these artifacts were insecure with several archaeologists noting that pots were missing from storage and that the group was poorly inventoried (Kersel 2018: 603). To address their shared concerns, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) decided to enact a novel solution provided by Lapp's wife Nancy, herself an archaeologist.

In 1977, Lapp proposed that the tomb pots from the 1965 to 1967 excavations could be divided among various ASOR institutions and museums so that they could be displayed and used in classrooms (Kersel 2015a: 50). By late 1977, the plan was officially accepted by both ASOR and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities who hoped that the display of objects from their country would increase international interest in the archaeology of Jordan. To facilitate the dispersion of artifacts, Nancy Lapp formed a committee tasked with ensuring that the pots would

⁶⁴ The 1967 inventory also refers to an Early Bronze Age Jar from Bab edh-Dhra' owned by Tom Frank and entrusted to the Department of Religion. This object is no longer a part of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

go to institutions with a wide geographical spread, a great deal of public visibility, and a willingness to put the objects on permanent display (Kersel 2015a: 50-51).

While the Jordanian government expected monetary compensation for the distribution, by 1978 Jordanian law outlawed the antiquities trade, meaning another solution was needed. Both ASOR and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities were worried about the negative implications of a nation selling its cultural patrimony at a profit, and therefore decided to label the fee charged to acquiring institutions as a “shipping and handling fee (Kersel 2015a: 50).” After this fee was paid, the Jordanian government turned over ownership of the nearly 1200 distributed objects to schools and museums across the United States, Canada, and Australia (Kersel 2015a: 51).

As a prominent member of ASOR, Harry Thomas Frank was well aware of the Bab edh-Dhra’ tomb group distribution plan and by February of 1978, had already made the case to both Oberlin College and ASOR that Oberlin should rightfully receive a tomb group. In his initial pitch to Oberlin’s Vice-President for Development, David Clark, Frank highlighted the exclusivity of the distribution, the great deal of competition between institutions for a group of pots, Oberlin’s long record of participation in Middle Eastern archaeology, and the likelihood that Oberlin would receive a tomb group if the college acted promptly to secure funding (Frank to Clark 1978a). By February 10th, with go-ahead from Oberlin, Tom Frank reached out to Nancy Lapp to officially request a Bab edh-Dhra’ tomb group. In his letter, Frank requested specific tomb groups and argued that Oberlin should receive a group because of the campus’ widespread interest in Near Eastern archaeology as a direct result of the ASOR sponsored Tell el-Hesi excavation (Frank to Lapp 1978).

Frank’s own scholarly background and experiences with Early Bronze Age material may also have contributed to his interest in acquiring a tomb group from Bab edh-Dhra’. The Tell el-

Hesi expedition devoted a great deal of attention to the site's Early Bronze Age remains (Fargo and O'Connell 1978: 180). The 1970s was also a period of widespread scholarly interest in the Early Bronze Age, fueled by the 1974 discovery of a mid-third millennium archive at the site of Ebla in Syria, a topic about which Harry Thomas Frank wrote (King 1983: 207; Frank 1978a: 133). Those who knew Frank also commented on his interest in collecting material from the Early Bronze Age. In one of Frank's published obituaries, the author mentions his searching for Early Bronze Age tools in Jordan during a summer tour, and specifically mentions the excitement Frank elicited when, "finding a beautifully preserved...Early Bronze Age pot (Skillicorn 1981: 133)."

By March 5th, Oberlin had been selected by ASOR and the Jordanian department of antiquities to receive the 13 ceramic vessels from the Early Bronze Age IA (3700-3400 BCE) tomb, A7S for \$247 (Schaub and Rast 1989: 62-64; ASOR Bab edh-Dhra' Committee 1978) (figures 8, 9, 10). In his final report to the college regarding the acquisition, Frank remarked on Oberlin's serendipitous selection as the only non-urban institution receiving a tomb group. While the Jordanian Department of Antiquities' directed that all tomb groups would be placed in highly visible urban centers, Frank explained that Oberlin was the exception due to its reputation in archaeology and the college's active participation and high standing in ASOR (Frank to Powell 1978; Frank to Clark 1978b).⁶⁵ Fascinatingly, later research by Kersel (2015a) has demonstrated that far from being unique, Oberlin was only one of many small institutions in non-urban areas that received tomb groups from ASOR.

⁶⁵ Curiously, later research by Kersel (2015a) has demonstrated that far from being unique, Oberlin was only one of many small institutions and seminaries in non-urban areas that received tomb groups from ASOR. Why Tom Frank characterized Oberlin's situation as unique is unclear.

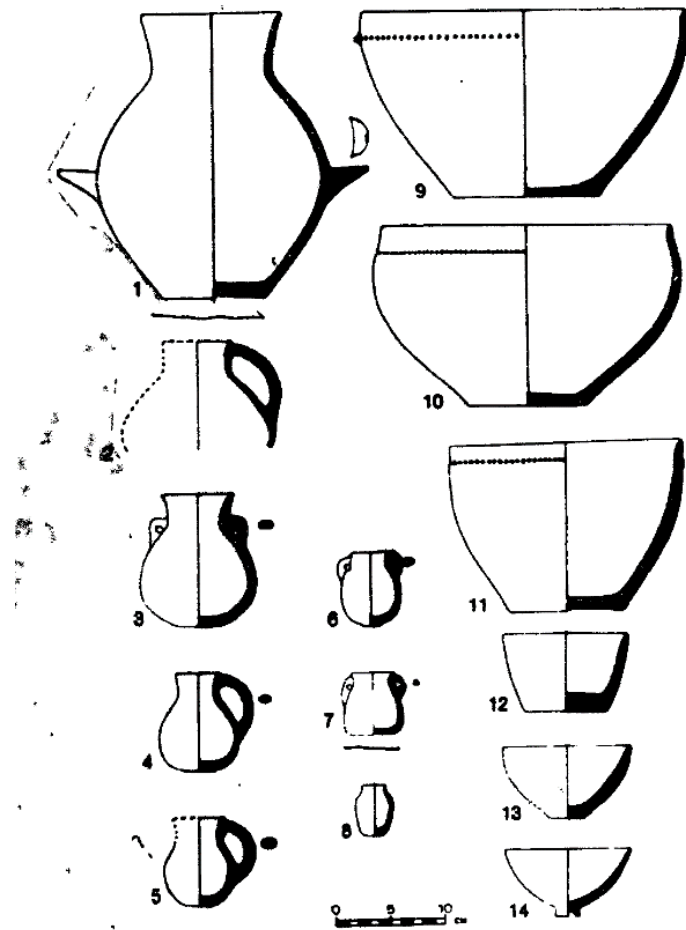


Figure 8: Pottery from tomb A7S. The Oberlin Near East Study Collection currently contains objects 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14. It is unknown where the remaining Bab edh-Dhra' artifacts from tomb A7S are on campus, if they are on campus at all. Reproduced from Schaub and Rast 1989.



Figure 9: ONESC 102 and 103. These artifacts correspond to vessels 1 and 9 from tomb A7S.

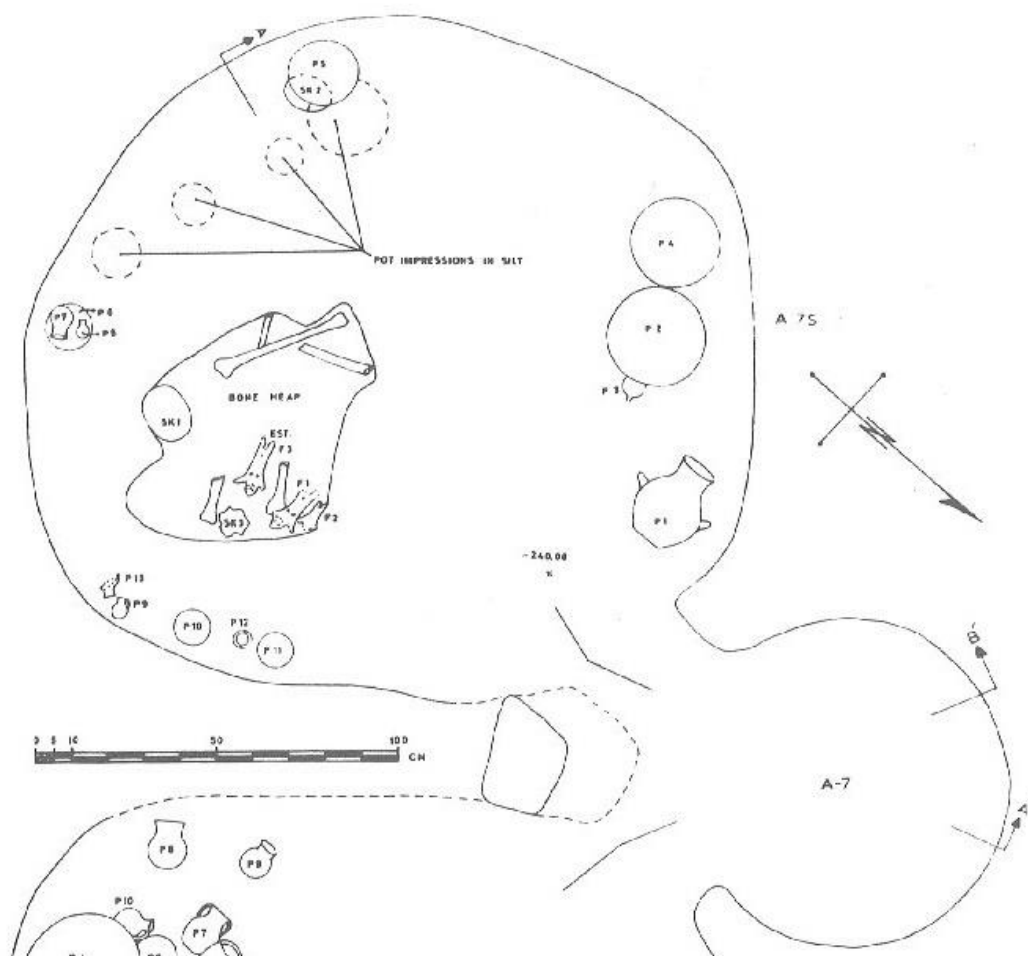


Figure 10: Tomb A7S. Reproduced from Schaub and Rast 1989.

Though Oberlin's reputation and participation in ASOR may have contributed to its receiving tomb pots, various interpersonal factors equally contributed to Oberlin's selection. In 1966 while spending his summer at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem Jordan, Tom Frank was approached by the school's director Paul Lapp who drafted him to join his expedition to Taanach in the northern West Bank.⁶⁶ Frank developed a high opinion of Lapp, once

⁶⁶ May joined this excavation as well during his 1966-67 sabbatical.

referring to him as, “the greatest archaeologist of our time (*Chronicle Telegram* 1975).”⁶⁷ Presumably in connection with the association he formed with Frank that summer, in the autumn of 1966, Lapp was invited to deliver the Oberlin College Department of Religion’s annual Haskell lectures (Lapp 1969: vii). In the preface to his 1969 publication of those lectures, Lapp refers to Harry Thomas Frank as his, “Family in Oberlin” and singles him out as responsible for his invitation to Oberlin and for handling the publication arrangements (Lapp 1969: viii).

Frank seems to have maintained a friendship with Nancy Lapp after the death of her husband. Understanding that Nancy held a great deal of control over which schools would receive tomb groups, in his original pitch to the College’s Vice-President for Development, David Clark, Frank devoted an entire paragraph pointing out that Nancy was in charge of the distribution while drawing attention to his relationship with Paul and the fact that the Lapp’s daughter was at that time a junior at the college (Frank to Clark 1978a). In his actual request to Nancy Lapp eight days later, Frank addressed her by her first name, and devoted an entire paragraph to his and Oberlin’s relationship with her and Paul, including a mention of Lapp’s 1966 Haskell lecture and its 1969 publication (Frank to Lapp 1978). While Frank did not admit to the interpersonal aspects involved in Oberlin’s allocation, at least some of Frank’s colleagues understood the importance of his relationship with the Lapp’s to Oberlin’s receiving a tomb group. Explaining his view of the acquisition in 2019, Grover Zinn explained that the, “material actually came as a gift. I was chair of the department when that came. Paul Lapp’s widow wrote us and informed us that she was giving and distributing the finds to various institutions and she wanted to give Oberlin the Bab

⁶⁷ During our oral history session, Jeffery Blakely put Frank’s opinion of Lapp into more fanciful terms saying, “if Tom Frank had put up a pantheon of archaeologists who deserved sainthood, Paul Lapp would have been #1 on that pantheon (Blakely, Jeffery. Oral History, 2018).

edh-Dhra' materials...in a sense, this is more or less a memorial to Paul Lapp who drowned off of Cyprus.”

Kersel's scholarship (2015b: 49) explains that the 1978 Bab edh-Dhra' tomb distribution represented a legal transference of ownership from the Jordanian government, to buying institutions around the world. As such, Oberlin is the legal owner of the ceramic contents of tomb A7S. While the material was intended as a sale, Frank did not refer to it as such, instead referring to it as a “permanent loan” or “permanent placement” (Frank to Clark 1978a; Frank to Lapp 1978). Zinn's characterization of the loan as a gift by Nancy Lapp as a tribute to her late husband demonstrates how in the long run, Frank's oxymoronic conception of the pots being permanently loaned rather than owned by Oberlin College has contributed to confusion over who actually owns the ceramic contents of tomb A7S.

Nothing more can be said about this segment of the collection without acknowledging the context in which it arrived. The Bab edh-Dhra' tomb group would be the last major addition to the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. By the time the artifacts were shipped to the college in late 1980, Harry Thomas Frank had passed away leaving the Oberlin Near East Study Collection in a state of partial limbo (Coogan 1981: 178). Along with Frank likely died a great deal of knowledge about the collection which Herbert May had passed on to him. As a result, large swaths of the collection's history is likely impossible to reconstruct.

4.8 Displaying the Oberlin Near East Study Collection in Peters 217

From 1965 until the mid-1990s a large portion of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection was stored and displayed in Tom Frank's classroom, Peters 217 (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019;

Oberlin College 2015).⁶⁸ Though the objects were kept in Peters for nearly 30 years, I have as of yet been unable to find photographs of the classroom. As a result, this reconstruction of what the classroom looked like is based on the memories of long-time Professor of Religion, Grover Zinn, as well as two of May and Frank's students.

Peters 217 was a rectangular classroom with several tight packed rows of chairs, a large desk at the front, which according to Grover Zinn was the same one that Herbert May had in his Graduate School of Theology classroom, a blackboard behind the desk, and large windows at the back facing towards Mudd library. As in Herbert May's former classroom, the Beth Alpha mosaic murals were hung above the blackboard so that they were visible throughout the room. At some point prior to the movement of objects from Bosworth to Peters and after 1951 when the photographs discussed in Chapter 2 were taken, the Religion Department or Graduate School of Theology purchased two or three sloped-top glass display cases which were about 6 feet long and 4 feet high.⁶⁹ These cases had 4 or 5 stepped rises on which artifacts were placed. The sloped-glass topped cases were joined by at least one large glass vertical cabinet which was at the back of the classroom (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019).

Frank used the sloped-glass display cases to display many of the collection's bowls, the majority of ONESC's lamps, several Egyptian objects including an eye of Horus amulet and some scarabs, a group of cuneiform tablets, several papyri, and a Greek codex (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019). Jeffrey Blakely's recollection largely matched Professor Zinn's except that he also

⁶⁸ Though earlier references to Tom Frank's classroom refer to it as Peters 213, later accounts of the classroom always described Frank's classroom as Peters 217. I have chosen to use Peters 217 here as those accounts are my primary sources of information as to how the collection was displayed at this time.

⁶⁹ My assumption is that these cases were purchased by the religion department when Tom Frank was setting up his museum classroom in 1966. This assumption is based upon the fact that the photographs discussed in chapter 3 only show vertical cases. Grover Zinn's memories however complicate this picture. Zinn, who arrived in 1966 as Frank was setting up the new classroom claims to remember such cases being in Herbert May's Bosworth classroom which was being dismantled at the time.

remembered the collection's cylinder seal impressions being on display (Blakely, Jeffery. Oral History, 2018). Large artifacts were not displayed due to the size constraints provided by the cases. The collection's large number of sherds were stored elsewhere. It is unknown whether the photographs May had in his old classroom were used in Frank's. Many May's artifacts were kept in Rice 5-7 (May et al. 1967). It is unclear if any of these objects were ever displayed in Frank's classroom.

The display cases were rarely opened during classes with both Blakely and Storr remembering Frank directing their classes to get up and look at artifacts corresponding to the time periods under discussion in class (Storr, Annie. Oral History, 2020). Describing student interest in the cases and his use of artifacts in class in 1967, Frank wrote, "the students are finding the artifacts interesting. They are around the cases almost every day and Grover and I have made use of the coins on a number of occasions (Frank to Department of Religion 1967)." Frank also made his museum available to local church groups who could arrange for a tour of the collection. (Frank to Department of Religion 1967).

Upon the arrival of the artifacts from the 1967 purchase, May, created 3x5 typed informational tags to go along with the displayed artifacts. Frank and May also created a smaller number of thinner and wider tags, though these may have been made at a later point in time by Frank during one of several rearrangements of the cases (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019).

4.9 Conclusion

Between 1965 and 1980, the Oberlin Near East Study Collection grew significantly. This first expansion in 1967 came against the background of the closing of the Graduate School of Theology. With Herbert May's decreased presence at Oberlin, Harry Thomas Frank became the

predominant figure in ensuring the use, storage, and display of the collection. Complementing Frank's interest in the New Testament period, much of the material purchased by May belonged to the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods. To collect artifacts, Frank and May primarily turned to the antiquities markets which were common across the West Bank and later in Israel. While a certain dubiety may be attached the origin of some of these objects, their acquisition was undoubtedly legal, a fact that Professor May emphasized. By going through state mandated channels Frank and May acknowledged and respected the state's ownership of antiquities far more than May had done in the 1930s when he had flouted colonial law. Nonetheless, in limited cases, the finders-keepers principles of the earlier period were still employed, most clearly in Tom Frank's acquisition of a large roof tile from Masada.

Though the state was the primary arbiter of the movement of antiquities in this period, the lack of a unified and ideologically motivated Jordanian school of archaeology, allowed foreign archaeologists to retain influence over the movement of Jordanian antiquities (Badran 2018: 621: Maffi 2009). Without the sub-text of Frank's relationship with Nancy Lapp and ASOR, it seems unlikely that Oberlin would have acquired a Bab edh-Dhra' tomb group.

Upon the arrival of the new artifacts to Oberlin, they were immediately placed in Harry Thomas Frank's classroom where he used them over the course of the next 13 years. Oberlin College maintained an institutional interest in the artifacts and in 1967 requested an inventory. Whereas May had been able to maintain a collection for some 30 years without the college taking an interest in his acquisitions or participation in the movement of antiquities, by the late 1960s, the institutional relationship to these artifacts became one of ownership, with the college becoming interested in what individual objects were in its possession, where those objects were stored, and what the monetary value of those objects was. The institutional ownership of the objects has

persisted and though the collection in time would come to be associated with Herbert May, nobody questions its ultimately being a resource of Oberlin College.

Chapter 5: Constructing the Biblical Object in ONESC

5.1 Introduction

In Chapters 3 and 4 of this study, I discussed who collected the Oberlin Near East Study Collection, how they were able to gather material for the collection, and what specific artifacts they gathered. Though answering these questions alone would drastically improve our understanding of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection, in order to truly have a sense of how the collection was formed and then used at Oberlin, we must ask the question of why (Kohler 2007: 429). Why did Herbert May and Tom Frank over the course of 50 years choose to create a collection of artifacts to use in their teaching? What did archaeology mean to them? What did they believe the power of the artifact was, which made it an essential part of their pedagogy relating to the Bible? These are just some of the questions this chapter will examine.

To get a sense of why someone collects objects, it is important to recognize that the specific objects forming a collection reflect the goals and desires of their individual collectors, but also say something about that collector's community (Pearce 1995: 330). Objects do not join collections randomly but are selected by individuals who are in themselves affected by the social conditions of their time. These conditions lend themselves to the formation of ideas regarding what constitutes proper forms of collecting, what material should join a collection, and how material within a collection should be used for edification or personal enjoyment (Pearce 1993: 38, 116). Groups who share these ideas in turn socially sanction collecting by members of their community (Belk 1995:76).

Collections then, as the products of collectors and groups, are inherently biased assemblages. As a group of objects removed from their original archaeological context, artifacts in collections often say more about collectors and the current collecting climate than they can about

the particular time period or original context from which they were removed (Kersel 2015b: 375). Without the benefit of their original context, artifacts can act as canvases on which the collectors who control them can paint their own interpretations (Kersel 2015b: 368). In doing so, the meaning of objects changes as they are socialized into artifacts which signify what we think of the past or are used by collectors and curators to form what others think of the past (Marshall and Godsen 1999: 170; Pearce 1993: 206).

With these ideas in mind, we can approach the questions outlined above to examine Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank's collecting as both a unique product of their own interests and ideas about the past, but also as a product of their association with the broader academic Biblical Archaeology movement. This movement grew significantly between the 1930s and 1960s under the premise that the historical and divine aspects of the biblical text could be demonstrated by harnessing the archaeological record and, artifacts that helped compose it (Dever 1985: 58, 61; Davis 2004: VIII). The movement's membership was primarily composed of protestant American religion and theology professors who joined excavations at the end of the academic year and for whom archaeology functioned as a subsidiary complement to biblical studies (Silberman 1998: 178).

In my discussion of May, I will begin by focusing on his transformative years living in Palestine as part of the Megiddo expedition. Whereas prior to the expedition, May primarily viewed archaeology as a means to obtain textual evidence related to the Bible, I will show how, in the aftermath of his three years in Palestine, May came to believe that the archeological record had a significant contribution to make to biblical studies and even popular theology. After discussing this transformation, I will discuss May's first years at Oberlin to argue that the expansion of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection between 1939 and 1941 primarily came about

due to May realizing that artifacts alone held the unique power to authenticate the biblical past and make it real. I argue that this authentication was especially significant in light of the remoteness of the Holy Land and biblical text in both space and time (Vogel 1993: 219). I will then turn to discrete artifact categories to examine how Herbert May would have viewed and used them in his classes. Understanding how May imagined artifacts and how his background shaped those views is essential to understanding what he collected and why he was so intent on collecting particular objects. These discussions will draw on both Herbert May's writings as well as the writings of May's peers to examine why both viewed the study of archaeology as an essential component of biblical studies and even religious practice. I will lastly briefly turn to May's successor, Harry Thomas Frank to discuss his own biases and how the deterioration of the biblical archaeology movement led to a dramatic shift in how biblical archaeologists viewed and used artifacts. With the differences in how May and Frank viewed and used artifacts in the classroom, I argue that Harry Thomas Frank's curation of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection represents a new chapter in the life history of the collection.

5.2.1 May at Megiddo: the Holy Land as Real and Archaeology as Transformative

Prior to joining the Megiddo expedition from 1931-1934, Herbert May had no practical experience or training in archaeology. His academic schooling was mainly in theology with his PhD work focused on Old Testament and Oriental languages (May to Kruse 1932). May's early biblical scholarship utilized ancient texts discovered through excavation but not non-literary archaeological sources (May 1931). His statement soon after his arrival at Megiddo that, "one written word reveals so much more of the past than a hundred or a thousand sherds. But as yet we have no more than a half-dozen written words...to lighten three thousand years." is broadly reflective of the contemporary attitude of many biblical scholars who still primarily viewed

archaeology as a means to acquire inscriptions (May to Shlomo 1932; McCown 1943: 1; Moorey 1991: 40). Within a short period of time of living in Palestine however, May's views on archaeology began to change significantly.

May's participation in the Megiddo expedition was initially uncertain. Prior to his joining the expedition in 1931, May was slated to become a minister at a small church in Iowa with only a last-minute invitation to join the staff of the Megiddo Expedition by James Henry Breasted's son, Charles interceding (Smith to Breasted 1931). Even after, May's efforts to join the excavation were temporarily thwarted by the dig's director P.L.O Guy who felt that May's presence was unnecessary logistically and would put financial strain on the expedition's budget. May was only able to join the expedition after James Henry Breasted personally intervened (Smith to Breasted 1931).⁷⁰ He arrived in Palestine in the fall of 1931 and began work as one of the site's recorders and as an epigrapher.

Reflecting on the importance of his presence at the dig just over a year later, May wrote that the purpose of his work at Megiddo was to, "acquire a background of knowledge of Palestinian geography, archaeology, etc. It is a sort of finishing school (May to Kruse 1932)" Though May had studied the Holy Land and its environment for many years, he had never before set foot in the land itself. Palestine's Westernization under the British Mandate led to a significantly larger number of visitors than had come under Ottoman rule, but owing to its distance from the United States, the Holy Land remained a far off place difficult for most Americans of the early 20th century to imagine outside of the pages of the Hebrew Bible (Cohen-Hattab 2004: 287-288; Vogel 1993: 219). Even May, who had studied that part of the world for years, had difficulty imagining the land as a real place. In January of 1932, May wrote, "Esdraelon, Shechem, Taanach, Jerusalem, Jericho,

⁷⁰ It is unclear how this letter found its way into Oberlin's archive, though it clearly demonstrates the beginnings of animosity between the two that would foment during May's arrest in June 1934.

the Dead Sea, and Bethlehem are emerging from **mere** name places into actualities in our experiences (May to Matthews 1932).”

May took advantage of being in the land and regularly took trips to sites and regions near Megiddo. Reflecting on his trips, May wrote of his appreciation for the beauty of Palestine expressing, “What a marvelous country as one climbs the heights beyond Galilee on route to Safad...the dolmens, the basalt hills, and the continuously recurring but unexpected views of the Sea of Galilee from above give this country a uniqueness in our eyes...the part of Palestine which lies buried in its tells is but a small part of its treasures (May to Shlomo 1932).” For May then, the experience of being in Palestine as a part of the Megiddo expedition served as a finishing school in the sense that it offered an experiential complement to his earlier studies. By visiting the places and regions of the Bible, May felt that he could develop a far more vivid picture of the biblical text than he could have achieved otherwise. This is not to say that May ever doubted the authenticity of the biblical places or the Holy Land, just that being in the Holy Land itself was transformative and constantly evocative for May who viewed the country as entirely beautiful, likely in part due to his prior religious convictions and previous distance from the Holy Land.

If being in the Holy Land was on its own transformative for Herbert May, his interactions with Megiddo’s archaeological remains would become equally so. May was not an archaeologist when he arrived at the site and initially denigrated the value of non-epigraphic archaeological material. Nonetheless, with his arrival, May began acquainting himself with literature related to how archaeological objects could shed light on religion in ancient Palestine and soon after took on an interest in how cultic objects found at the site could explain the religious lives of its inhabitants (May to Graham 1931). Reflecting on this interest a little over two years later, May wrote, “it is astonishing how much of the symbolism of the cult of Israel is evidenced in its material remains,

and links up with the written records (May to Graham 1933).” May’s interest in the religious lives of Megiddo and more broadly Palestine’s ancient inhabitants led to his publishing *Material Remains of the Megiddo Cult*, an excavation report specifically devoted to that topic (May and Engberg 1935). Soon after, May co-published *Culture and Conscience: An Archaeological Study of the New Religious Past in Ancient Palestine*, a book tracing the evolution of religion in Palestine from the prehistoric period until the time of the Hebrew Bible, with his PhD supervisor at the University of Chicago, W.C. Graham (Graham and May 1936). In both works, May made extensive use of a wide range of archaeological evidence synthesizing the biblical text with figurines, architecture, burial styles, altars, painted pottery, unique ceramic forms, and a multitude of other archaeological objects (May and Engberg 1935; Graham and May 1936).

May’s time at Megiddo not only gave him a greater appreciation for the reality of the Holy Land and its places, but also for the reality of some of the prominent figures in the Bible. Presupposing the historicity of the biblical text’s account, May and his peers associated particular strata with the reigns of ancient biblical kings including David, Solomon, and the Omride Kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (May to Graham 1933; May to Fiske 1933). Of these, Solomon was specifically associated with structures found at Megiddo including a group of pillared buildings filled with troughs which were ascribed as the stables in which King Solomon kept his stock of horses and imagined as a place that the actual King Solomon would have set foot inside of and seen with his own eyes (1 Kings 4.26; Graham and May 1936: 188-189; McCown 1943: 180).⁷¹ May attributed other structures to King David including a large palace found during the

⁷¹ The Israeli Archaeologist Yigael Yadin’s excavations at Megiddo in the 1950s would redate these stables to the time of the Omride Kings, removing one of the most significant biblical synchronisms from Chicago’s excavation. Yadin however declared he had found a Solomonic synchronism of his own in a six-chamber heavily fortified gate which he coined as ‘Solomonic’ (Yadin 1960).

1933-1934 season which seemed to vindicate his earlier prediction that, “David had his finger in the Megiddo Pie” (May to Graham 1933; May to Fiske 1934).

May’s appreciation of archaeological objects was not exclusive to items he could associate with ancient religion, as he also came to appreciate the value of the ordinary and ubiquitous pottery vessels and sherds found at Megiddo writing, “it is surprising...how important a part of culture a piece of pottery can be...all we have to distinguish between quite a number of ancient cultures and races as they are disclosed on our dig is the pottery associated with them. We use this data, however, to aid us in the better understanding of these variant cultures, rather than merely as evidence of the fact that they are different (May to Clinchy 1932).” In reaching this understanding, May tied himself to the cultural-historical archaeological approach which had developed in Palestine directly out of Petrie’s discoveries in the 1890s (Silberman and Small 1997: 24-25; Finkelstein 1997: 224). In the understanding he developed at Megiddo, a piece of pottery could represent an ethnicity tied directly to material culture assemblages. It could also represent the time period in which that ethnic/cultural group had occupied the site. By examining the totality of a culture’s pottery, May, reflecting contemporaneous archaeological theory, believed that differences in pottery types could be used to make broad generalizations about differences between distinct ancient cultures and that those generalizations in turn could say something about the history of a site and a broader region.

Approaching his final months at Megiddo in March 1934, May wrote to his mentor, William Creighton Graham that, “Three years in archaeology have convinced me that it is the only method by which one can reconstruct Hebrew history in order that it may become more than a subject academically studied, that it may serve the needs of the present (May to Graham 1934).” In comparison with his earliest statement’s on archaeology’s value, May’s views quite obviously

radically transformed over the course of his three years living in Palestine. In making this statement, May promulgated the notion that archaeology could serve a broad and key role that other areas of biblical studies could not. May never deviated from this belief which guided his scholarship and teaching for the rest of his life.

5.2.2 Connecting May's Collecting 1931-1934

Now that we have discussed May's archaeological experience in Palestine, we can examine how those experiences and the views he held at that time might relate to why he collected archaeological material from 1931-1934. In Chapter 3, I examined how May utilized his connections within Palestine's small archaeological community in order to acquire artifacts. Though May had some ability to select the material he collected, in many cases, his collecting was constrained by what artifacts appeared on the surfaces of most sites and what contemporary archaeological excavations were willing to part with and give away to a member of their community. My analysis here is somewhat tentative as the confiscation of over 200 objects from May in 1934 means that we will never know the full extent of May's collecting activity. The list of antiquities confiscated from May does however provide the general object categories that he was transporting, primarily sherds and lithic fragments. This means that while we may never learn the exact items May collected from 1931-1934, we know that the material at Oberlin is a representative sample of that larger whole.

According to the record of the 1934 arrest, May explained to the acting director of antiquities that the objects he was taking from Palestine only consisted of a few sherds he had taken from Megiddo's dumps which he would use for study (Cline 2020: 178). As we have already discussed, the material May collected from 1931-1934 was far more extensive than the small group of discarded sherds from Megiddo he claimed to have. What is less clear though is what May

meant when he stated that his collection was going to be used for study. In Cline's interpretation the word study directly relates to the idea of a study collection, which May would use after his arrival at Oberlin to teach students about archaeology and to show them the types of material that archaeological excavations produced (Cline 2020: 180). Since May did not use these artifacts in his teaching until 1940, this interpretation must be challenged.

The fact that May did not immediately use these objects in the classroom, complicates the interpretation of what May meant when he told the director of antiquities that the objects were for study. Rather than being for study in the classroom, it is possible that May was suggesting the objects were to be used for his personal study. This interpretation is supported by May referring to the group of artifacts he collected in Palestine from 1931-1934 as "my Megiddo stuff" in a 1940 letter and by the fact that May did not use these objects in the classroom until 1940 when he brought additional archaeological material to Oberlin (May to Fiske 1940a).

While May suggested that he would use the objects for study and possibly his own study, it is difficult to imagine the usefulness of the random pottery fragments, small number of complete vessels, and limited number of flint artifacts that May collected from 1931-1934 towards that purpose. Rather than being a systematically collected group of study objects then, I would suggest that May collected material from 1931-1934 as mementos or souvenirs of his transformative time in Palestine and experience with archaeology to which his objects were intimately tied. Souvenirs and mementos serve as reminders of and evidence that a traveler took a journey (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003: 142). Objects have the power to evocatively draw the past into the present by virtue of their perceived relationship to past events (Kersel 2015b: 368). While artifacts are generally thought of as holding this power in relationship to the distant past, as mementos or souvenirs, they may hold the same power for the recent past (Pearce 1993: 24, 206). Having mementos of his three

years living in Palestine was especially important since travel to Palestine at that point was still relatively uncommon making May's mementos all the more rare, unique, and personally valuable (Vogel 1993; Cohen-Hattab 2004; Pearce 1993: 33).

This is not to say that the objects would not have also served to tie Herbert May to the distant past. As a member of Mandatory Palestine's small archaeological community, May felt that he had a special connection to the distant past by virtue of his knowledge of and constant interaction with archaeology at Megiddo. Leaving Palestine, his possession of artifacts would have served to reinforce his connection to the land and its past, demonstrate his superior knowledge related to those subjects, and continue to mark him as a part of Palestine's biblical archaeology community (Kersel and Luke 2004: 38; Belk 1995: 87, 93).

5.3 The Biblical Past Made Real through Artifact

5.3.1 The Unreality of the non-Physical Past: May's first years teaching archaeology at Oberlin

3. The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible. Two hours.
Inscriptions, buildings, pottery, cult objects, and other material remains from ancient tells have made a fascinating contribution to Old Testament study. The "house of Ivory" at Samaria, the stables of Solomon at Megiddo, and the Ras Shamra epic tablets from Syria are but a few of the many discoveries which have recently illustrated and made vivid to our day the culture and civilization of the Near East. This study of the Old Testament in the light of archaeology will include an outline of the historical geography of Palestine, and it is an attempt to make more real to the student the life of the Hebrews and the revelations of the Old Testament literature.

Figure 4: 1934 Oberlin Graduate School of Theology Course Catalog. (Image from Oberlin College Graduate School of Theology 1934).

In Herbert May's course description for his class on archaeology of Palestine and the Bible, he focuses on two ideas (figure 1). The first is that archaeological discoveries have contributed to the study of the Old Testament by making ancient cultures and civilizations more vivid. The second key idea and May's declared pedagogical purpose in teaching the class is that by teaching students

about archaeology, he could make the Old Testament more real by giving it a historical and geographical basis. As examined in the previous section, May's lived experience of Palestine and archaeological excavation had served exactly that function. In his teaching, he wanted to bring the same impression across to his students, but encountered difficulties doing so.

In his lecture notes for the first day of his archaeology class, May explained, "We have a course on archaeology of Palestine because of the Biblical interests involved...our interest in Palestine is that of a pilgrim, and this course is a substitute for a pilgrimage to Palestine...the Pilgrim makes his pilgrimage because he hopes to come nearer to a realization of the reality...of his religious enthusiasm by seeing and visiting the actual spots where the events around which his faith centered transpired. He would get nearer to God by treading upon the ground upon which walked those through whom...he had received the revelation of deity (May 1936a)"

May's stated belief that archaeology could be a form of pilgrimage reads somewhat autobiographically. Though May traversed Palestine and its religious sites from 1931-1934, for him, archaeology above all else had been what made the biblical past real, tangible, and historical. Further, while pilgrims had for centuries visited sites with no surety of their authenticity as the actual locations of biblical events, archaeology and historical geography promised a reliable method of locating, contextualizing, and understanding the people, places, and stories of the Bible (Graham and May 1936: 319, 322; Davis 2004: 10). May thought that by learning about archaeology and how archaeology had illuminated the biblical world, his students would realize the historicity and reality of the Bible and through that greater understanding of the Bible, to God.

May's intentions were certainly lofty and as his archive suggests, perhaps foolhardy. When he began teaching with the purpose of supplanting pilgrimage, May did not utilize visual materials

be it artifacts or photographs.⁷² Already by late 1936, May recognized that his archaeology course could not truly supplant the type of transformational experience he had while digging and living in Palestine. Realizing the limitations of his archaeology course, in 1936, May told his class about his desire to establish an Oberlin-led excavation so that he could make, “the Old Testament vital and real.” for them just as archaeology had done for him (May 1936b). As discussed in Chapter 3, May also hoped that this excavation would allow Oberlin to acquire a, “representative collection of antiquities...extremely useful for study by...students and [helpful] in making realistic the presentation of Old Testament history (May to Bohn 1937).” When his excavation did not materialize, May began exploring other options for achieving his goal of making the Old Testament vital and real including the use of illustrations and photographs.

Recognizing that his course could not achieve its goals without visual aids, in 1939 May wrote, “It is difficult to teach archaeology without illustrations... I have found this sort of thing very profitable and if...illustrations could be made available it would be a real help (May to Engberg 1939).” As he was writing to his colleagues, May proactively began incorporating additional visual materials into his classes, framing 25 photographs and purchasing seventy-five additional lantern slides for his collection. Crucially, in his 1939 report to Oberlin’s President, May described both as images of “archaeological objects” and said that his use of the photographs can be taken as, “evidence of increasing use of visual education techniques (May 1939a).” If May thought that photographs of artifacts would improve his ability to teach archaeology, his acquisitions bonanza between 1939 and 1941 certainly demonstrates his belief that actual artifacts had all the more power to do so.

⁷² There is no indication that Herbert May used slides in his classroom during this period. While he seems to have delivered outside lectures with slides, I found no reference to him using them in his teaching in the 1930s.

5.3.2 Making it Real: Herbert May, Visual Education and Collecting from 1939-1941

In the same 1939 letter to Engberg, May drew a hierarchy in the educational value of photographs of objects versus actual archaeological objects writing, “[photographs] have somewhat the value of a museum for an institution where actual museum objects are not available. (May to Engberg 1939).” May’s pessimistic prediction that museum objects were not available makes sense in light of his excavation not materializing, but would turn out to be wrong as he was shortly after able to employ his connections within the world of biblical and Near Eastern archaeology to acquire artifacts from Haverford College’s Beth Shemesh collection, sherds and slag from Nelson Glueck’s explorations in Transjordan, and a cuneiform tablet from the Oriental Institute. May collected these items specifically to improve his biblical archaeology course using the power of the artifact to make the past seem real and tangible.

Throughout his correspondence related to the acquisition of these objects, May repeatedly posits his belief that artifacts could both make Old Testament history more real and demonstrate archaeological field methodology (May to Engberg 1939; May to Fiske 1940a). The unique power of an artifact to bring an authentic impression of the past into the present has been widely observed in anthropological studies of the relationships between people and things (Clifford 1988: 218). As I have already discussed, objects have the power to draw both the recent and distant pasts into the present (Pearce 1993: 24). As items that can be physically interacted with, artifacts elicit excitement from their observers and handlers who, while interacting with the artifact, feel as though they are touching an imprint of the past (Pearce 1995: 247). Simultaneously, on account of the age and perceived authenticity of an artifact, objects are assumed to hold truths about their time and place of origin, which can be extracted through proper techniques and procedures (Pearce 1995: 291, 299). By specifically utilizing archaeological objects and photographs of objects in his

classes then, May could give his students the same physical interaction with the authenticated past that he had access to through field archaeology. Further, by teaching his students about archaeological methodology he could highlight the authenticity and antiquity of his objects which would thereafter reinforce his student's understanding of the connections between themselves, artifacts, and the distant past. As the mediator between students and artifacts, May while teaching with objects would be perceived as having authentic knowledge of that distant past (Belk 1995: 87).⁷³

The artifacts May acquired between 1939 and 1941 seem to have achieved their desired effect and in the early 1940s, Herbert May became a proponent of the necessity of 'visual education' in seminaries, universities, and church schools. Though it never materialized, in 1940, May formulated a plan for the commercial sale of replica Canaanite gaming boards which he hoped would be played with by children in church schools (Engberg to May 1940). In 1941, May was invited to become a member of an ASOR committee named CAST which sought to distribute loan collections of archaeological objects and replicas to member schools (Burrows to May 1941). May, reflecting the overwhelmingly positive experience he had with the Beth Shemesh loan collection, enthusiastically accepted writing, "I can personally witness the value of loan collections and replicas as an aid to instruction (May to Nakarai 1941a).

In addition to his plans and committee memberships, May wrote two articles describing the benefits of visual materials and artifacts to religious education. May argued that despite a plethora of printed visual material and a large number of excavations taking place, both archaeology and images had been underutilized in religious education. In the first paper, *Biblical*

⁷³ Reflecting on her experience as a student of Herbert May's in the early 1970s, Annie Storr (who is herself an Art Historian) remembered May primarily using artifacts to authenticate the veracity of the material he was teaching. That is, he was not trying to teach that the Bible was true, but rather that the information he was teaching was undoubtedly true (Storr, Annie. Oral History, 2020).

Archaeology and Visual Education, May wrote that “archaeology is pictures” and that photos, “make real the life and time in which the Bible arose (May 1943a: 116).” By making the biblical text seem more historically grounded through pictures, May believed that the Bible itself could be a more edifying force (May 1943a: 117). In a follow-up 1945 article entitled, *Biblical Archaeology and Religious Education*, May clarified that for him historicizing the Bible was crucial so as to set it apart from an ordinary fairytale or a purely mythological tradition and stated his view that, “the use of visual education aids, slides, and exhibits in...a [biblical archaeology] course is...a prerequisite to the understanding of the subject (May and Stidley 1945: 235, 241).

By 1945 Herbert May was a partisan for the value of visual education as an instrument for demonstrating the historicity and tangibility of the biblical past. Whereas when he began teaching the course in 1934, May seems to have foregone the use of extensive visual aids, within a few years he realized that teaching the course without those aids was untenable. Acting to rectify his mistake, May spent the next few years gathering artifacts and photographs which he harnessed to huge effect in his courses. Following his collecting bonanza from 1939-1941, May felt that he had drastically improved his class through his use of artifacts to make the past more real. He retained this views of the general pedagogical and religious value of archaeological objects well into the 1960s writing, “Pictures of archaeological discoveries in Palestine...make the Holy Land seem more accessible and real [making] it...so obviously not a mythical country (May c. 1961-1962).

May began his course by stating his intention to replace pilgrimage with archaeological learning. Regardless of whether or not he succeeded, it is clear that May at least believed that by interacting with archaeological objects, students would be able to experience the same fundamental benefits provided by pilgrimage, especially in a time like the early 1940s when pilgrimage was not

possible.⁷⁴ As with pilgrimage, May thought that by interacting with artifacts, students would be able to give concrete and tangible meaning to the places, people, and times of the biblical text all of which would in turn act as vindications of their faith (Cohen-Hattab and Shoal 2015: 7).

5.4 What to do with the stuff of the soil: The many roles of artifacts in ONESC

5.4.1 Biasing the Oberlin Near East Study Collection's Artifacts

Now that we have examined why Herbert May brought objects into the classroom, we can use specific groups of objects in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection complemented by the scholarship of May and his peers to investigate what Herbert May believed their role was in making that past real and how he might have used certain artifacts in his teaching. Collected artifacts diverge from their original intended function to take on new, culturally specific interpretations and uses by their collectors (Kersel 2015b: 370). These at times radical transformations allow the meaning and use of an object to change over time dependent upon its circumstance (Appadurai 1986: 34, 41; Gosden and Marshall 1999: 169, 177). Though May and his colleagues felt that their use and interpretations of artifacts were objective, from the vantage point of the present, they too fell into the interpretational, archaeological, and religious paradigms of their own times (Albright 1940: 82; Davis 2004: 73-74, 93-94; Dever 1993: 26, 32; Pearse 1993: 257). In his beliefs regarding the role of artifacts, May echoed the broadly cultural-historical views of other biblical archaeologists but also took specific interests in objects demonstrating daily life, ancient religion, and humanity's social evolution starting in the Paleolithic period.

⁷⁴ One wonders if some part of May's belief in the value of the object as replacing a visit to the land was a symptom of the Second World War which raged throughout most of the period under discussion here. For May's students at this time, it truly would have been impossible to visit the land, leaving photographs, drawings, and artifacts themselves as the only means through which his students could come into contact with the Holy Land.

5.4.2 One more look at the humble Pottery Sherd

“For three years I lived with pottery, I spoke with pottery-obsessed minds, I dreamed of pottery, I examined pottery, its grits, its ware, its decoration...I have drawn pottery, photographed pottery, classified pottery, typed pottery...I can speak fluently about handles, rims, necks, shoulders, bases, and lips of pots. For the science of archaeology today is the science of pottery (May 1936b).”

In Chapter 2, I discussed Flinders Petrie’s application of seriation dating to Tell el-Hesi to build a relative chronology for Palestine anchored in the chronology of the broader Near Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean Worlds. Following Petrie, subsequent excavations used pottery as an indicator of chronology, ethnicity/culture, and the occupational history of a site or a broader region. By the 1930s, pottery’s importance was well established in the archaeology of the Ancient Near East (Moorey 1991: 67). In this section, I will discuss May’s views regarding the archaeological value of pottery as a way of understanding why he so widely collected ceramics and what concepts he illustrated to his class using the Oberlin Near East Study Collection’s pottery sherds.

Above all else, May collected pottery because it was easy to acquire. Sherds littered the surfaces of the sites he visited, found their way into dump piles where they could be picked up, and were given away by dig directors to other members of Palestine’s small archaeological community including May. The ease of acquiring sherds likely accounts for why nearly 50% of the objects in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection are pottery fragments.

The pottery May collected while living in Palestine had a limited value as a unified group of objects demonstrating daily life in ancient times. As I argued however, May valued these sherds as mementos and clearly attached importance to their locations of origin as evidenced by the fact that he wrote on many of the sherds he collected to indicate their sites of origin.⁷⁵ By indicating

⁷⁵ Unfortunately, May only marked a portion of his sherds. This means that in my discussion I can only analyze this subset of the collection as without information about where an object came from, it is impossible to deduce when May visited a site and his motivations for collecting an artifact at a particular time.

the provenance of certain artifacts, May elevated them from unmarked body sherds removed from any sort of connection to their original vessels and ancient users, into a transportable representation of an entire biblically and historically significant place (Kersel and Luke 2004: 38; Pearce 1993: 5).⁷⁶

In the early 20th century, a major focus of the archaeology of Palestine was relating the relative chronology of pottery found at sites to a political history drawn from the Bible and from contemporaneous ancient texts (Dever 1980a: 43; Dever 1993: 31). With archaeological and biblical chronology seemingly matched up, a plethora of ancient contexts and their associated pottery were associated with specific biblical figures including King David and Solomon at Megiddo. Though May recognized that it was very unlikely that the objects he collected could actually be related to specific biblical figures, in his classes, he nonetheless made use of pottery dating to the same periods as those figures in order to demonstrate a greater understanding of their lives, and the historical context in which they lived (May 1943: 116-117).

May told his classes that, “I could tell you the forms of pottery which Jeremiah saw when he went to the potters...[which] was different from that which Samson saw, or from that which was used in Jerusalem at the time of the Romans (May 1936b).” By associating his pottery with biblical figures and events, May used artifacts to demonstrate the tangibility and veracity of the Bible and its figures. Equally, by suggesting that biblical figures had used the exact types of artifacts in his classroom, May made it possible for his students to imagine that the Bible’s characters might have used the very objects in front of them (figure 2).

⁷⁶ May’s choice of which artifacts he would indicate the provenance of continues to have ramifications. In this paper, I have almost entirely focused on the objects which can be assigned provenance. Without that information, it is relatively impossible to answer the sort of who, what, when, where, and why that I have been able to connect for objects with provenance.



COOKING POTS
 8TH TO 7TH CENTURY B. C.
 A TYPE WELL KNOWN TO JEREMIAH

Figure 5: ONESC 004 Iron IIC Cooking Pot with its original May tag indicating its connection to the biblical prophet Jeremiah.

Pottery chronology was also used to study ancient demography and regional history, another area used by May's peers and especially Nelson Glueck to demonstrate the historicity of the Bible (Albright 1940: 31). According to Glueck's dating, Transjordan was largely unoccupied during the second millennium, a phenomenon which he associated with the Biblical destructions of Sodom and Gomorrah (Moorey 1991: 76). Glueck similarly dated the emergence of the Iron Age cultures of Transjordan with the Old Testament assuming that those cultures could not have emerged until the time of the exodus, which he dated to the 13th century B.C.E (Moorey 1991: 77; Davis 2004: 91). The ONESC's plethora of material from Nelson Glueck's surveys led to May

incorporating Glueck's theories into his classes and providing yet another means by which fairly ordinary pottery sherds could take on a much larger meaning (figure 3).

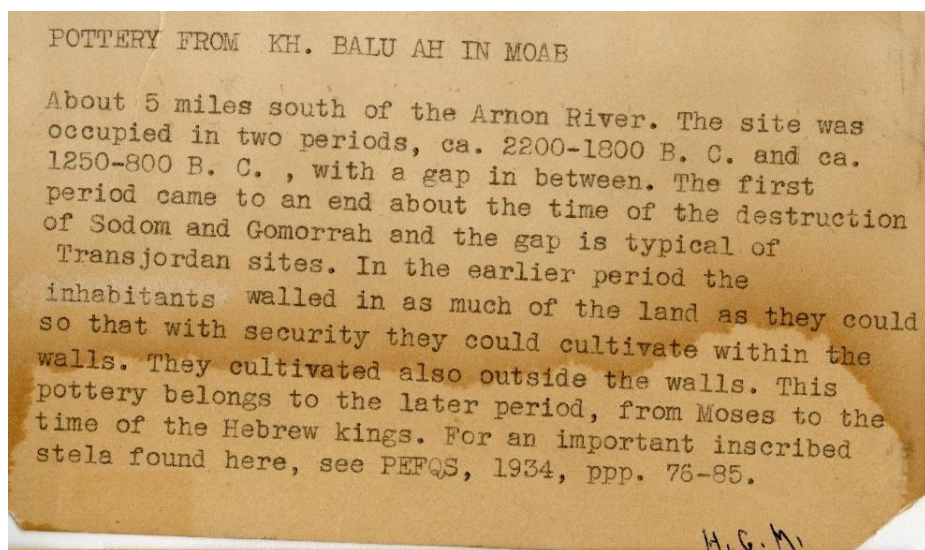


Figure 6: Label created by Herbert May conveying Glueck's demographic theories.

A final topic May taught about using the pottery sherds in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection was ethnicity. The plethora of cultures and nations in the Bible have led to large amounts of research focusing on separating out distinct ethnicities from the material culture assemblages and sites of the Holy Land (Dever 1998: 46-50; Finkelstein 1997: 224).⁷⁷ The most prevalent example of this relates to the collared-rim storage jar, which has been used since the 1930s as a cultural marker for the emergence of a distinct Israelite entity in Palestine around the 13th century B.C.E (Albright 1934: 12-13; Davis 2004: 117-118). The Oberlin Near East Study Collection includes at least one large collared-rim storage jar rim fragment (ONESC 246; Amiran 1969: 232) (figure 4) which came as part of Nelson Glueck's 1940 gift and which May quite possibly could have used to discuss the emergence of Israel.

⁷⁷ In my research I was unable to find an example of May discussing the collared-rim pithos which creates the possibility that he did not use it in his courses. Harry Thomas Frank however did note the collared rim pithos as an ethnic marker in *Bible, Archaeology, and Faith* (Frank 1971: 99). There has been tremendous push back against the idea that the collared rim pithos can directly be correlated to Israelites over the past 30 years (Glock 1995).



Figure 7: ONESC 246 Collared Rim Storage Jar

Many of the other pottery sherds that Nelson Glueck gave Herbert May in 1940 were used to attest discreet ethnic groups in Transjordan's archaeological record. In addition to creating regional histories of inhabitation, during his surveys, Glueck also associated the ceramics he found with ethnicities and ancient nationalities (Moorey 1991: 76-77). These ethnicities lined up directly with the three primary Iron Age states in Transjordan attested by the Bible, Ammon, Moab, and Edom (Albright 1938: 28). In the tags he created to go along with Glueck's sherds, May noted morphological and decorative aspects of these different groups of pottery indicating that he used them with the specific intention of teaching his students about the identification of different ethnic groups from the Bible in the archaeological record (figure 5).

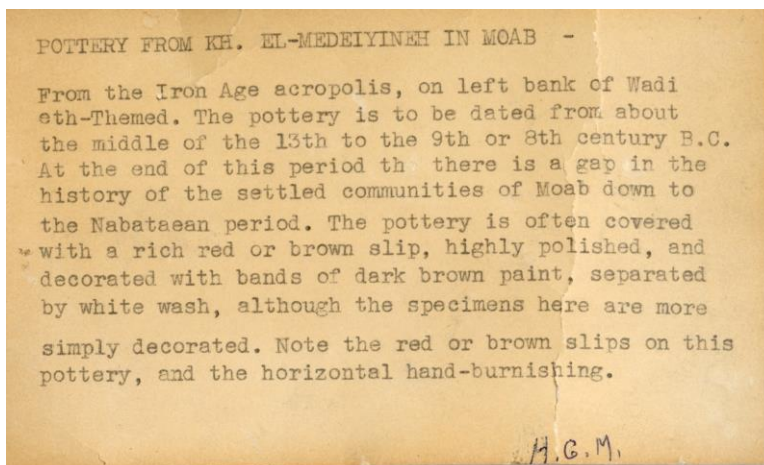


Figure 8: May label indicating the distinctive "Moabite" pottery style.

Pottery sherds in the Oberlin Near East Study collection would also have been used to demonstrate the clear differences between local Levantine material culture and further afield groups (May 1943: 118). As a crossroads in the eastern Mediterranean, foreign pottery is often present in not insignificant quantities at the Bronze and Iron Age sites that are the primary focus of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. Among the most common "foreign" pottery styles found at Levantine sites are those coming from Cyprus and Greece both of which are represented in the collection (ONESC: 29, 78, 79, 80) and would have been used for teaching about the broader Near Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean backgrounds against which the Bible is set (May 1962: 5)(figure 6,7).

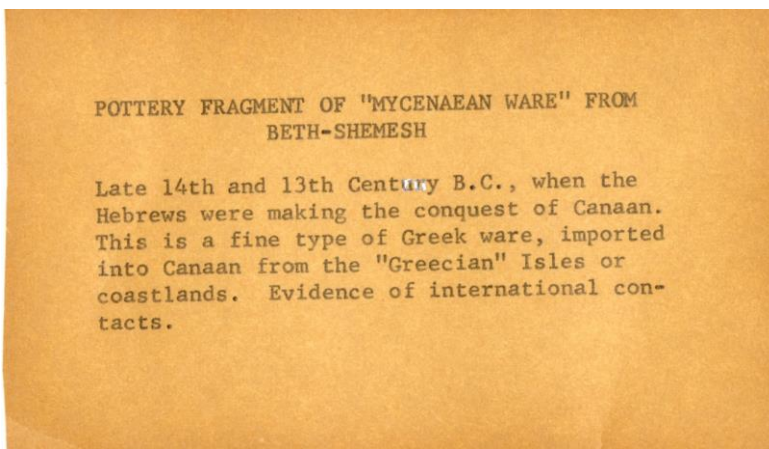


Figure 9: ONESC 029 label indicating May's use of sherds to demonstrate international contacts.



Figure 10: ONESC 79 fragment from Cypriot "milk bowl."

By collecting the ubiquitous pottery sherds found during archaeological excavations and at archaeological sites, May could achieve many of his pedagogical goals. Provided a sherd had provenance, it could be connected to a specific biblical location and even to biblical figures who could be imagined as physically interacting with an artifact. As objects indicating chronology, sherds could further be used to attest the validity of biblical history or to demonstrate an understanding of a region's inhabitation and how that could relate to the Bible's history. Sherds could lastly be used to indicate ethnicity, a particularly significant role considering the multi-ethnic world described in the Bible. In this period then, pottery sherds were primarily valued for their chronological connections or decorations. For biblical archaeologists at the time even laboratory methods of analysis such as petrography were primarily useful as indicators of provenance and age (Albright 1940: 23). With the pottery sherd being so easy to come by and fulfilling so many pedagogical roles and goals, it is easy to see why May collected them and accepted them when brought to him by figures like Glueck in the 1950s.

5.4.3 The Object and Daily Life: Collecting Beth Shemesh

Perhaps the most representative assemblage of the material found at an archaeological site in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection comes from the Beth Shemesh loan collection. This group of artifacts includes domestic pottery vessels, utilitarian flint and stone objects, and other materials that would have been used in the daily life of Beth Shemesh's ancient inhabitants. While daily life was perhaps not May's primary interest in archaeology, he did believe it was important to illustrate to his students (May 1945: 235-236). In the same sense that May thought a sherd could connect his students to a biblical figure, he also believed that artifacts from daily life could accomplish a similar connection. In his article about the use of visual teaching aids in biblical archaeology May wrote, "the more ordinary aspects of the material culture...knives, sickles...cosmetic pallets, perfume-boxes, lamps, jars, bowls, jugs, plates, spindle-whorls, whetstones, grinders, loom-weights....amulets, daggers...and myriads of other objects, dated to the time of Bible characters, may make real the life of Bible times, though they come from little-known sites, and are not directly associated with any particular character (May 1943: 116-117)."

Reading this statement, it is difficult to imagine that May was not directly describing the Beth Shemesh loan collection which has artifacts belonging to each listed category. As material that could be held and understood as complete by students, more than any other assemblage, the Beth Shemesh artifacts would have demonstrated the authenticity and antiquity of the biblical past as something that one could, through physical interaction, form a connection with (Pearce 1995: 247). May understood this and realized that the site of origin or specific history of an object often did not matter to his students so long as they could connect them with biblical characters, history, and stories. May also believed that objects from everyday life were essential to his students gaining a meaningful appreciation for the past. May thought that if he was able to demonstrate the life of

the ancient everyman, his students would be able to see reflections of themselves in the ancient world which in turn would make the distant past a more tangible concept for them and as a result, a subject of much greater interest (May 1943: 117).

5.4.4 Collecting Religion: May and collecting ritual artifacts

At Megiddo, Herbert May developed a specific interest in the ancient religious life of the site's inhabitants and Palestine more broadly. This interest led to him co-publishing two separate books about cultic life in ancient Palestine. May believed that cultic objects were especially important to study as they alone could demonstrate the origin and development of Israelite religion so that it could be traced from prehistory to Monotheistic Judaism, to Christianity and thereafter, to the present (Graham and May 1936: IX, XXV). May equally believed that studying cultic remains would illuminate the morphological forms of the cultic items that appear in the Hebrew Bible including the Ark of the Covenant, incense altars, and personal idols (May 1936c).

In both studies, May emphasized the idea that the writers of the Old Testament had not written an accurate account of the development of Monotheism. May believed that rather than the Israelites coming to Palestine with a formed religion, Monotheistic religion instead developed slowly over several thousand years before being codified by the Judahite State and a series of divinely inspired prophets (Graham and May 1936: 157). While May thought that the Old Testament had considerable value for understanding that development, he saw the Hebrew Bible as a "blurred record" that had to be used in tandem with archaeological evidence to suggest how ancient Israelite religion had truly developed. For May then, collecting cultic artifacts was essential for demonstrating both popular religion in the Iron Age and antecedent forms of religion that had developed from ancient Israel's broader Near Eastern context (Graham and May 1936: 175).

May collected several goddess figurines, which he believed demonstrated the evolution of Palestine's popular religion. In May's view, contrary to the biblical text's description, during the second millennium and into the first, Palestine had a flourishing polytheistic "fertility cult" (May and Engberg 1935: 1). May associated this cult with a group called the Hyksos that had ruled Egypt during the 17th and 16th centuries B.C.E and had cultural and linguistic connections to the land and people of ancient Canaan (Graham and May 1936: 68). May equated this group with the patriarchs Jacob and Joseph who, like the Hyksos, are depicted as coming from Asia into Egypt, achieve political significance there, and whose descendants eventually returned to Canaan (Graham and May 1936: 69). Of the two "fertility" mother goddess figurines in the collection, the first, ONESC 221, dates to the Middle Bronze Age II-III when May believed the Hyksos entered Canaan bringing a pan-Near Eastern form of goddess worship along with them. The second, an object known as a Judean Pillar Figurine (ONESC 47), dates to the Iron Age II, the same time period as the major Israelite prophets who in his view wanted to eradicate such popular cults in order to right social wrongs (Graham and May 1936: 240; May 1962: 109). By collecting these figurines then, May could have demonstrated how the biblical text represented a blurred record while also demonstrating one of the fundamental aspects of Hebrew society that the prophets of the Old Testament spoke out directly against, thus contextualizing biblical revelations for his students (Barton 1938: 44; May 1943: 117).

May collected other objects that he connected to the Canaanite and Israelite cult traditions. May might have used the collection's singular zoomorphic figurine (ONESC 217) (figure 8) to demonstrate a form of Canaanite sympathetic magic. According to May's scholarship, these figurines were used to convey to a deity a worshiper's desire for his flocks to increase in size and number (Graham and May 1936: 234). The object similarly could have conveyed a material

manifestation of the bull cult that appears throughout the Bible (May and Engberg 1935: 34). May may have collected a small pottery disk (ONESC 028) as evidence for the prevalence of a popular solar cult, which was also evinced in the names of sites like Beth Shemesh (House of the Sun) (Graham and May 1936: 242; May and Engberg 1935: 24). A final object in the collection that May could have used to teach about Canaanite and Israelite religion is (ONESC 151), an Iron Age I body sherd from the Beth Shemesh loan collection painted with what is known as the “palm tree” or “tree of life” motif (Amiran 1969: 161-165). May wrote that this motif formed a part of the broader ancient Near Eastern “fertility cult” brought by the Hyksos and was also related to the cult of the mother goddess (May and Engberg 1935: 35-43; May 1939b) (figure 9).



Figures 8, 9: ONESC 217 Zoomorphic “Bull” Figurine and ONESC 151 Iron Age I pottery sherd bearing “tree of life” motif.

5.4.5 The Artifact used to Historicize the Miraculous

In addition to expanding what was known about Israelite religion, Herbert May might also have artifacts in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection to demonstrate archaeology’s use for

historicizing elements of the Bible that would otherwise appear miraculous. In the Bible, King Solomon is depicted as fabulously wealthy, though the source of his wealth is attributed to his being in God's good graces as opposed to any particular industry. During the 1930s, Nelson Glueck, on the basis of his surveys of Transjordan, hypothesized that King Solomon's wealth came from extensive copper mining and trading (Glueck 1959: 36-37; Glueck 1940: 64; Glueck 1934: 28). Herbert May fully accepted Glueck's theories and would likely have taught about Solomon the Copper King using the pottery sherds and copper slag that Glueck gave in 1940 (May 1943: 119). By providing such a historicizing explanation, May believed that he could make Biblical characters who would otherwise seem otherworldly and superhuman into explainable, relatable, and undoubtedly real people. Writing in 1936, May explained that, "it is not hard to see that these copper mines were to Solomon's administration what oil fields are to some modern governments...much of the lavish...royal splendor of Solomon's regime may be explained by the exploitation of these mines (Graham and May 1936: 195)." Taken in such terms including the comparison to oil wealth, May was able to ground Solomon's biblically reputed wealth in believable terms and in the archaeological record. By replacing a supernatural element of the Bible with a historicized explanation, May could make King Solomon a more believable figure and could make unbelievable parts of the Bible believable and relevant.

5.4.6 The Artifact and the Broader Near East and Eastern Mediterranean

Herbert May could have used the collection's "foreign" pottery styles to illustrate the interconnectedness of the Near Eastern world and to demonstrate clear differences in the pottery styles of the Canaanites and Israelites from other civilizations. The Oberlin Near East Study Collection however contains several other artifact types from Egyptian and Mesopotamian contexts that May could have used to demonstrate the influence of those civilizations on the

development of Hebrew civilization and religion. Herbert May thought that, “understanding the life and times of Israel’s neighbors is essential to the fullest appreciation of Israelite religion and life (May 1962: 13).” May in particular took on an interest in how broader Near Eastern mythology and religion was coopted into Israelite religion and into the Bible (May 1962: 108).

Prior to May’s arrival at Oberlin, the collection’s group of cylinder seal impressions were already in place while the library had a substantial collection of Cuneiform tablets which May incorporated into the collection in 1965.⁷⁸ May himself however was also responsible for bringing material from the wider Ancient Near Eastern world into the collection including a cylinder seal from the Oriental Institute’s collection in 1941, several scarabs included in the Beth Shemesh loan collection, and a small number of replica versions of Mesopotamian tablets and statues. Though it never materialized, in the early 1940s, May attempted to bring casts of several other significant Mesopotamian objects including the Stele of Hammurabi and the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (May 1943b).

Using these objects, May would have been able to convey the link that existed between the stories in the Bible and the larger literature of the ancient Near East including the flood story represented in the collection by a replica Cuneiform tablet (ONESC 051). May’s interest in specifically bringing the Stele of Hammurabi demonstrates his interest in teaching about the connections that exist between the laws and ethics in the Bible and those already forming a part of the wider Near Eastern lexicon some thousand years earlier. The Black Obelisk in particular is significant for its depiction of the Israelite King, Jehu. Having a replica of such an object in the

⁷⁸ It remains unclear who is responsible for bringing these seal impressions to Oberlin. Based on a tag found with the objects, it seems that they were purchased by a figure named Adolph A. Berle who attended the Oberlin Theological seminary in the 1890s. Another explanation for the presence of these objects in the collection comes from the Oberlin College ethnographic museum accession book according to which several seal impressions came to the college as part of an exchange with the Smithsonian. These seal impressions seem to have been incorporated into the Graduate School of Theology collection May used.

collection then would have allowed May to demonstrate the ancient Israelites' direct relationship with the larger superpowers in the Near East and the extra-biblical proof from the broader Near East for the existence and significance of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in first millennium (May 1962: 105).

5.4.5 The Oberlin Near East Study Collection, Human Revolution, and Prehistoric Religion

A final possible function of artifacts in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection was to demonstrate significant “revolutions” in human history found in the archaeology of the Levant and the broader Near East. Among the most unique aspect of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection is its large group of artifacts that date to periods that antedate the time period depicted in the Bible. Even May in 1962 admitted that this material did not relate to the Bible writing, “with the centuries before 2000 B.C. the Bible story is hardly concerned (May 1962: 97).” While true that in most aspects the Oberlin Near East Study Collection was created in order to teach about the Bible and to make the biblical world more real, the presence of large quantities of prehistoric material from the Epipaleolithic, Chalcolithic, and Early Bronze Age demonstrates that Herbert May actively collected such material and incorporated it into his courses. May’s lasting interest in revolutions in human social development likely came about as a result of his training at the University of Chicago with James Henry Breasted (Silberman 1995: 16-17). This broad view manifested itself most clearly in *Culture and Conscience* where May’s discussion of the development of Israelite religion begins with a multi-page discussion of Neanderthals (Graham and May 1936: 18-26)!

In order to teach about these developments in his classroom, May had to account for the significant differences between secular and biblical chronologies, a problem he solved by endorsing the idea that, “God...took a million years to bring man to his present state” while maintaining that the date for the beginning of Palestine’s Bronze Age matched up directly with the

biblical date of creation (May 1936b; Graham and May 1936: 28). By endorsing God's role in prehistory, May attributed evolutions and revolutions in human society to the partial guiding influence of a divine figure. May collected a large number of flint tools from Dorothy Garrod's prehistoric excavations at el-Wad. For him, these tools likely served some of the same functions as the collection's pottery sherds. May viewed flint tools as the ubiquitous debris of prehistoric life that could assume a chronological function while also making prehistoric life seem more tangible for his students (Graham and May 1936: 19; May 1936b). With the same intent, May displayed several replica prehistoric crania in his classroom and collected at least one actual bone from the Lower Paleolithic (ONESC 422). This concern for the tangibility of prehistoric life was important for May for whom the objects may have helped illustrate his idea that the revolutionary concept of culture emerged in the Lower Paleolithic period and was accompanied by the first form of human religion, a cult of the dead (Graham and May 1936: 17-19, 24).

May might have utilized flint artifacts in the collection to demonstrate the beginnings of settled, agricultural life in the Neolithic period using sickle blades in particular to suggest the beginnings of domestic crop cultivation (Graham and May 1936: 29; May 1943: 118). The collection's flint sickle blades in particular could be used to demonstrate the principles of seriation. By illustrating seriation with flint tools, May made the case for the continuity of specific ideas and religious beliefs over the course of thousands of years. For him, the transition to agriculture and eventually the creation of cities involved a significant religious dimension which could be connected to an increasingly complex cult of the dead (Graham and May 1936: 30-31). May thought that this form of religious belief was the oldest religious movement in the history of the Holy Land and believed that its vestiges could be found in biblical prophecy related to the resurrection of the dead (Graham and May 1936: 33).

May viewed the advent of pottery and the beginnings of metal working as an important revolution in the lives of the Holy Land's ancient inhabitants as significant as the industrial revolution was for his own time (Graham and May 1936: 36). Though these developments are today dated to the 7th and 5th millennia B.C.E respectively, in the 1930s, both discoveries were considered to have been made in the 4th millennium (then correlated with the Chalcolithic), and improved upon in the 3rd Millennium (then correlated with the Early Bronze Age) (Graham and May: 36-37). He meanwhile saw the beginnings of pottery decoration in the 4th millennium as evidence for the rise of aesthetic values, a human revolution that could be demonstrated through archaeological evidence (Graham and May 1936; May 1942: 285). In connection with his interest in this revolution, May collected a large number of 4th millennium pottery sherds including fragments of Grey Burnished Ware (ONESC: 394, 570, 571) (figure 10), sherds decorated with a grain wash pattern (ONESC: 263, 335, 351, 402, 475) (figure 11), and ledge handles all of which, in his view, provided evidence for, "an incipient taste for beauty" (Graham and May 1936: 40; Greenberg and Iserlis 2014: 53-151). May's interest in the decorated pottery of this period might have above all else been responsible for Glueck's second gift in the 1950s, which was primarily composed of decorated pottery dating to the 4th and 3rd Millennia.

Though these periods all took place before the events described in the Bible, May still considered them significant for his students to learn about so that they would be able to connect even the distant past to the present. May thought that he could increase his student's faith in the historicity and reality of biblical times by drawing a continuous line of development and progressive revelation from the distant past, to the Bible, and thereafter to the present (May 1943: 118; May 1944c: 300; May 1945: 236). May's evolutionary view of history always kept the Bible in focus. For example, while he viewed the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age as important for

human development, he also believed that by demonstrating the “utilitarian” and “crude” material culture from those times, he could underscore the sheer miraculousness of the religious and cultural “advances” made by the Israelites and their prophets in the 1st millennium (Graham and May 1936: 42). For May, human social development comprised of various stages of linear advancement. Following this view, “crude” pottery from earlier periods demonstrated that Palestine’s inhabitants were at that time less socially and culturally advanced than other contemporary Near Eastern cultures and therefore could only have “caught up” and surpassed their neighbors through divine influence (Graham and May 1936: 37-38). In the same evolutionary sense, May might have used cultic artifacts from earlier periods to discuss which aspects of prehistoric religion found their way into the Bible, and which were crucially superseded by the Israelite prophets.

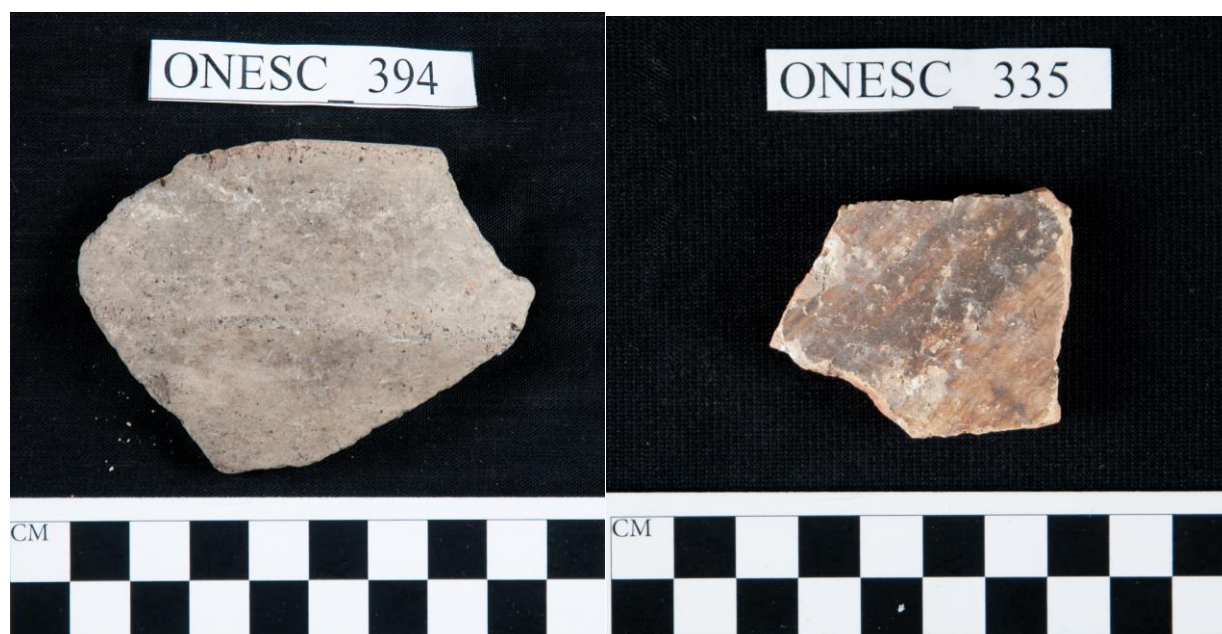


Figure 10: ONESC 394, a very worn-down example of Grey Burnished Ware from Megiddo’s Eastern Slope. Figure 11: ONESC 335, an example of a pottery sherd decorated with “Grain Wash.” This type of decoration is also referred to as band slip.

5.5 May, Biblical Archaeology, and Biblical Theology

Up to this point, we have examined why Herbert May collected artifacts. In summary, in May's view, artifacts had the power to make the biblical past and context seem real and tangible to students, while demonstrating a continuous pattern of religious and social development that could be traced from the distant past into the present. Seeing such a pattern then would increase a student's belief in the value and veracity of the Hebrew Bible. Though this on its own is a theological goal, up to this point, I have barely alluded to May's own theological views regarding the role of God in history and his broader theological beliefs that contributed to his view that archaeology was an essential part of theological education and essential to the Christianity of his day. Over the course of his more than 40-year career, May's theological views regarding the role of God in history and the value of archaeology changed significantly.

As a product of the University of Chicago's School of Theology, May began his academic career firmly in the liberal theological camp of the 1920s and 1930s. This group attempted to replace supernatural elements of the Bible with historical explanations and argued that God's miracles could be found in everyday life rather than in direct interventions (Davis 2004: 78). May opined this view throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s when his views came under the influence of the biblical theology movement led by the American biblical archaeologist/theologian G. Ernest Wright. In contrast with the liberal camp, this movement believed that God's actual acts and miracles could be seen in the archaeological record and that God had been an active rather than passive figure in history (Wright 1952; Dever 1985: 58; Davis 2004: 97-98). As May's theological views changed, the contents of his courses likely would have changed as well, as would some of the messages he attached to the artifacts he used in his classes. Understanding May's theology is

therefore essential to understanding the Oberlin Near East Study Collection's shifting role over time.

5.5.1 May in the Liberal Theological Camp and Seeds of Change

In contrast with most American excavations in the Middle East in the 1930s, the Megiddo excavation was not purely the product of biblical interest. Nonetheless, as a result of his work on the Megiddo expedition, May came to the theological conclusion that, "archaeology...is the only method by which one can reconstruct Hebrew history in order that it may become more than a subject academically studied, that it may serve the needs of the present (May to Graham 1934)." This view, which he shared with his PhD advisor William Creighton Graham, was most fully expressed in their joint publication *Culture and Conscience*.

Graham and May wrote with a purpose broader than simply demonstrating the evolution of ancient Israelite religion using archaeology. The Forward to *Culture and Conscience* was called "The New Past," an allusion to the idea that through archaeology and the explorations of the 19th and early 20th centuries, what was known about the human past had been radically transformed. Graham and May thought that by harnessing this newly uncovered history of Palestine's religious past, readers would be able to gain a better understanding of how that development affected the present, information which they could use to positively affect the future (Graham and May 1936: XXII).

Graham and May wrote that the organized religion of their time had failed in its goal of improving social wellbeing around the world and had failed to stop destructive and divisive forces including the rise of Nationalism (Graham and May 1936: 221). They saw many of the issues of the 1930s echoed in the crises, both political and religious, that had affected the Israelite kingdoms of the first millennium. In their view, the Bible provided a template whereby divinely inspired

prophets had tapped into the social issues and through the combination of divine inspiration and their own human genius were able to right social wrongs (Graham and May 1936: XXV-XXVI). At the end of the Forward, both authors confidently declared that, “it is with no little confidence that one prescribes as good medicine for these perennial ailments...the study of the new past (Graham and May 1936: XXIII).”

Graham and May believed that the Hebrew Bible contained blurred references to actual historical events that had been obfuscated by biased writers. They thought that through the application of higher biblical criticism and archaeology, the true nature of the Hebrew Bible and the divine plan revealed to Israel’s prophets could be understood (Graham and May 1936: 301, 304, 312). Graham and May viewed this divine plan as being apparent in the quick succession of inspired genius prophets who affected “Hebrew” social life in the first millennium. Though they viewed the Near East as a perfect social laboratory in which such figures would arise, Graham and May believed that Palestine had always been somewhat separate from its environment in terms of its geography, history, and population, factors which they partially attributed to a passively guiding divine hand (Graham and May 1936: 310-311).

Even with their belief that God had some role in Israel’s ancient religion, neither lost sight of their view that, “the Bible is significant because it grew out of a long **human** struggle...and there need be no fear when **science** has done its perfect work, that this priceless **literary** heritage will speak with less authority (Graham and May 1936: 337).” For Graham and May then, through the application of scientific methodology, the genius of the Bible’s prophets would become more apparent, the Bible’s context could be better understood, the divine plan could be made clearer, and the course of modern religion could be righted. These scientifically discovered “corrections”

would then return religion to its original purpose of improving society and uniting humankind, which they viewed as God's plan for the world (Graham and May 1936: 299, 312-313).

Though he co-published *Culture and Conscience*, by 1936, May's views differed slightly from the liberal theological camp and were already in conversation with the Biblical Archaeology movement and the seeds what would grow into Biblical Theology. May told his class that, "God writes in many ways, not only through the Bible and the written word, but also in the archaeological remains of dead civilization...the past is thus a mirror set by God so that man may better see himself by means of it (May 1936b)." In this bold statement, May assigns God a larger role in the formation of the Old Testament and figuratively suggests that archaeology holds the key to understanding the Bible and God's word. For May's students, most of whom would have known little to nothing about archaeology, such a statement would have immediately impressed upon them the theological significance of archaeology for their personal religious growth and understanding.

5.5.2 Herbert May and Biblical Archaeology

While May was the product of the liberal Chicago theological school, his views were profoundly affected by his contact with the preeminent American biblical scholar and biblical archaeologist of his day, William Foxwell Albright. In the two figures' correspondence, May cast himself as the devotee, writing in 1941, "I have always looked upon you as the one who has contributed most to my biblical studies, especially since those never to be forgotten days at Megiddo," and some twenty years later writing, "Although I have not been officially one of your students, I feel as though I had as truly sat at your feet as though I had been" (May to Albright 1941; May to Albright 1961). May praised Albright's magnum opus, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, and even admitted to Albright that, "where

my viewpoint differs from yours...your book is more persuasive than my lectures (May to Albright 1941).” It seems then that Albright affected May’s theology, his view of history, and perhaps even how he would have used artifacts in his courses.

In *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Albright drew on a broad number of academic disciplines to argue that Christianity had been the culmination of thousands of years of religious development in the ancient Near East and that as the singular largest inheritance from antiquity to the present, it should be regarded as providing a more direct pathway to theological truths than any other modern religion (Albright 1940: 309-310; Davis 2004: 93-94; Moorey 1991:73). As the prototypical biblical archaeologist, Albright thought that the study of the Near East was primarily significant for illuminating spiritual history rather than the general gospel of social and technological advance that Breasted and others like him saw as the primary reason to study the region (Silberman 1995: 17). Though Albright did not necessarily excavate to prove the Bible “true,” he believed that he could use archaeology to demonstrate the general historicity of the Bible’s most significant events and figures. In this sense, much of his scholarship was a reaction to German critical biblical scholarship that charged that the Bible was mostly ahistorical (Albright 1940: 183, 196; Dever 1985: 54; Dever 1993: 27, 32; Davis 2004: 89).

May retained his views regarding the evolutionary development of ancient Israelite religion and the importance of critical theology into the early 1940s, but by that point, his connections to the work of Albright had significantly influenced his views regarding biblical history, convincing him that the biblical record was far more historical than blurred (May 1941b: 289-291). In 1941, May wrote that demonstrating the historicity of a biblical narrative required several critical criteria including, “parallel references, inherent probability, literary criticism, archaeological data, and the like (May 1941b: 290-291).” While May may not have accepted historicity apriori, as has been

noted in studies of the biblical archaeology movement at large, a number of scholars, including Albright researched with preconceived notions of historicity built on their Christian faith which affected both their archaeological results and their conclusions (Davis 2004: 126; Moorey 1991: 70; Dever 1993: 31).

One such example of May coming under Albright's influence occurs in his evolving view of the biblical patriarchs. In *Culture and Conscience*, the biblical patriarch's role was limited to representing distant echoes of migrations resulting in the import of broader Near Eastern religion into Palestine. By 1941 however, May was convinced of the historicity of the patriarchs writing, "absolute skepticism towards the patriarchal narratives as historical records is difficult to maintain today in the light of the materials contemporary with the patriarchal period made available as a result of archaeological research (May 1941a: 113)." May drew this conclusion directly from Albright's scholarship, using *From The Stone Age to Christianity* as his primary reference.

In developing such views, May clearly bought into the burgeoning biblical archaeology movement's premise that archaeology could provide a corpus of objective data towards the goal of demonstrating biblical historicity and reliability (Davis 2004: VIII). Simply put, May fell into the traps and biases of the scholarship of his day. May ascribed the abandonment of Transjordan to the destruction of Sodom because his friend Glueck said it was the case and used physical evidence to prove it (Genesis 19; Moorey 1991: 76-77) Similarly, for May, the historicity of the patriarchal narratives and of the book of Joshua's account of the Hebrew conquest of Canaan at the end of the Late Bronze Age was confirmed because his friend Albright had proven both in his multidisciplinary scholarship (Moorey 1991: 72).

In order to understand May, it is vital to understand Albright and the broader Biblical Archaeology movement. In his 1957 textbook, *Biblical Archaeology*, Albright's chief pupil, G.

Ernest Wright offered up the most complete definition of what constituted a biblical archaeologist writing, “the [biblical archaeologist] studies discoveries of excavations to glean from them every fact that throws direct, indirect, or diffused light upon the Bible. He must be intelligently concerned with stratigraphy and typology...yet his chief concern is not with methods or pots or weapons in themselves alone. His central and absorbing interest is the understanding and exposition of scriptures (Wright 1957: 17).” Later writers noted that the Biblical Archaeology movement was a uniquely Protestant endeavor, where Protestant scholars of the Old Testament spent the non-academic year excavating at archaeological sites in the Holy Land (Dever 1985: 59, 61; Silberman 1998: 178).

May’s experience in archaeology at an early stage in his career had a transformative effect on his scholarship, which for much of the rest of his life involved the intersection of archaeology and biblical studies. May believed that the core theological work of the biblical archaeologist was to make the Old Testament’s context vital, understandable, and real to believers who would, by better understanding the text’s context and historical value, be able to better understand the message and worth of the Bible itself. By collecting artifacts, May could convey biblical reality so that his students could better internalize the Bible. Though he valued the role of archaeology in demonstrating social development and other human revolutions, May accepted that those topics were less relevant to the biblical archaeologist and that the biblical archaeologist needed to have a theological intention.

In a discussion of *What Mean these Stones*, a 1941 book discussing the bearing of archaeological discoveries on understanding the context of the biblical text, May wrote to Albright that, “there is still a need for a study of archaeology and the Bible which will be more typical of the approach of the Biblical Archaeologist (May to Albright 1942).” This statement can be better

understood by looking at May's review of *What Means these Stones* where he writes, "while it is true that accuracy of narrative is not essential to religious value of the Bible, whether or not we accept the author's dictum that 'religious truth is one thing, historical fact is another.' depends on our definition of religious truth (May 1942: 284)." In May's understanding then, the presence of a theological intention was the primary factor that separated the biblical scholar who used archaeological discoveries to contextualize the biblical world from the biblical archaeologist.

5.5.3 May and Biblical Theology

Herbert May was undoubtedly a member of the Biblical Archaeology movement. As such his intentions in collecting and teaching with artifacts were connected to a broader theological purpose. While the Biblical Archaeology movement had religious undercurrents, Albright's most prominent student G. Ernest Wright took these undercurrents and articulated them into a coherent theological belief system called Biblical Theology (Moorey 1991: 101). The central pillars of Wright's theology were that God's active role in the events of biblical history as described in the Bible could be uncovered through archaeology and that faith had been built upon history in the ancient past and could therefore be used to build faith in the present (Wright 1952; Dever 1980b: 10; Dever 1985: 58; Davis 2004: 97-98). In this section I will examine Herbert May's particular form of Biblical Theology that amalgamated his own views with the general pillars espoused by Wright. Over his career, May reviewed several of G. Ernest Wright's books. These reviews provide a helpful place to start when comparing the two's theological similarities and differences.

In May's 1944 review of G Ernest Wright's book, *The Challenge of Israel's Faith*, he largely agreed with Wright's two major conclusions, that the Bible holds authority as a record of God's attempt to reveal himself in history and that God's presence was more active in the history of the Israelites than in the history of any other civilization (May 1944d: 414). The two however

differed in their views regarding how God revealed himself in the past. Wright's theology viewed God as the controlling force behind the major moments in Israelite history. Conversely, May believed that God's presence was passive and durative (May 1944d: 415). For May, God's plan revealed itself through his election of humans who, through a combination of divine inspiration and their own genius, were able to save the Israelites (May 1944d: 417). In his view then, the Bible demonstrated that any person had the capability, through God's election, to affect positive change and to eventually bring the Kingdom of Heaven (May 1944d: 417).

By the mid-1940s, May began incorporating Wright's biblical theology into his courses, telling the college, "there is a new impetus in Biblical studies and a revival of Biblical theology. There is a general feeling that the Bible has been taught in our seminaries more as history for the sake of history, rather than as relevant history (May 1946)." At this time, May was not actively collecting artifacts, but nonetheless, such a statement is very likely an indication that, prompted by biblical theology, May changed the ways he used artifacts in his classes. With the Biblical Theology movement's focus on moments in history rather than diachronic history, May could have shifted his use of artifacts away from discussions of daily life and towards the role of artifacts in specific biblical events.

Over time, May's own theology adopted additional elements of Wright's. In 1950, Wright wrote *The Old Testament Against its Environment*. In it, he argued that Israelite religion was so fundamentally different from the other historical religions of the ancient Near East, that its differences could only have emerged due to God's personal intervention (Wright 1950: 7, 22, 28, 50). According to Wright, these interventions were the primary footing on which ancient Israelite faith was based with the Israelites of the first millennium looking back to their history to find the reassurance and guidance needed to deal with their present circumstance (Wright 1950: 71). May

was amenable to Wright's view and in his review of *The Old Testament Against its Environment*, noted that, "the reviewer is constantly pleasantly surprised at the degree of his agreement with the author's interpretation of the theological significance of the OT (Old Testament) (May 1951: 321)." In May's view, the role of the theologian was to separate out what in history could be explained by human creativity alone from where God's intervention could be ascribed as cause (May 1951: 322).

Wright elucidated his views in his 1952 *God Who Acts: Biblical theology as Recital* in which he argued that specific historical acts were God's primary means of providing revelations to humanity (Wright 1952: 13). According to Wright, the Israelite people had physically witnessed several of God's miracles including the exodus and conquest of Canaan. The fact that Israel's miracles were witnessed by the broader populace led to stronger belief centered on their historical witness (Wright 1952: 25). In his view then, the primary role of the biblical prophets was not to deliver a new revelation per se but was to remind the people of God's actions in their history and in doing so strengthen their belief and capability to face their current difficulties (Wright 1952: 82). In depicting the prophets as interpreters of history, Wright and those who followed his camp could cast themselves as modern day prophets carrying the gospel of the historical past and with it the knowledge of historical revelation needed to strengthen present day belief.

May adopted Wright's view that the biblical archaeologist was a figure who used their knowledge of the past to inspire modern day faith and change. In a 1958 convocation address describing his return to the Middle East after a 24-year absence, May told the student body of the Graduate School of Theology that, "God reveals himself in events. This, at least, is the biblical viewpoint, and events are a matter of history, and history is a matter of both time and space, and so of geography and archaeology...God has made a special revelation of himself in the historic

tradition preserved in our scripture...we must seek better to understand it and the truths it contains (May 1958: 4, 6).”

In conclusion, while May’s earlier views differed from Wright’s in several significant ways, by the late 1950s and into the 1960s, May’s theological views increasingly parroted those of Wright and the Biblical Theology movement at large. As May’s views shifted and evolved, so too would his use of archaeological artifacts. While May had always believed that archaeological artifacts could make the biblical past real for the purposes of positively affecting the present, under the influence of the biblical theology movement, artifacts would likely have been increasingly connected to biblical events. Put into the context of specific moments in Israelite history, May might have increasingly characterized his artifacts as witnesses to biblical events and characters directly touched by God. By adopting Wright’s historical and event-based view of biblical history, May could suggest that by studying the history of the ancient Israelites, his students were in fact patterning themselves after the Israelites. Just as the ancients had found evidence for God in their history which allowed them to confront the social issues of their day, so too could May and his students through archaeology.

5.6 Harry Thomas Frank and Collecting the Changing face of Biblical Archaeology

With our study of Herbert May as a collector now complete, we can move on to discussing Harry Thomas Frank. Though Frank did not directly purchase artifacts in 1967 and only contributed a small number of additional objects to the collection, as discussed in Chapter 3, he effectively initiated the 1967 purchase and was responsible for bringing the contents of Bab edh-Dhra’ tomb A7S to Oberlin. In addition to the artifacts he acquired for Oberlin, Frank was himself a collector filling his home with artifacts from Israel and Jordan. During his 16-year teaching

career, Frank actively used the collection in his biblical studies courses and was the primary figure responsible for establishing a new museum space for the collection after the closure of the Graduate School of Theology. Objects undergo transformations in meaning over time and when they are acquired by new collectors or curators. Frank's contributions, as well as his views about archaeology, then represent a new chapter in the life history of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection (Kersel 2015b: 370; Gosden and Marshall 1999: 169).

Prior to the late 1960s, few excavations focused on the illumination of the New Testament and its context (Moorey 1991: 171). The paucity of archaeological work in Palestine focusing on the New Testament's context was noted as early as the 1940s but was justified due to the extensive epigraphic and historical records left behind by the Greeks and Romans (McCown 1943: 254; May 1962: 112; Moorey 1991: 170). Even with his archaeological interests primarily relating to the New Testament periods (Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine), Frank only ever participated in one excavation season at a "New Testament site," Caesarea, in 1974 (Goodrich 1973). Nevertheless, by collecting and using artifacts from these 'later' periods, it is clear that Frank believed artifacts could play a significant pedagogical role when teaching about the New Testament and its context.

Before Tom Frank's arrival in 1964, Oberlin, through Herbert May, already had a sizable collection of biblical antiquities. It therefore bears explanation as to why Tom Frank felt that expanding the collection was important. In this section, I will examine the 1967 purchase as an exercise in collection completion, a common motivating factor in collecting. Though May collected prolifically, almost none of the artifacts that came to Oberlin under his purview dated to the Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods in which the crucible of Christianity formed, developed, and spread throughout the Mediterranean. I will then discuss Tom Frank's

limited published work and views on the role of archaeology, the archaeological artifact, and biblical faith in light of his relationship with Paul Lapp, who by the late 1960s was challenging biblical theology from its center.

5.6.1 Collecting for Completeness: The 1967 purchase and the Lure of the Lamp

Collections are created within the boundaries set by their collectors (Pearce 1993: 66). Generally, collectors continue to add to their collections until they have succeeded in locating the missing items within their created organizational scheme or they are impeded by outside factors (Pearce 1993: 87). As demonstrated in Chapter 3, Herbert May had no difficulty acquiring artifacts. Even when not making trips to the Holy Land himself, he could reliably count on the support of the biblical archaeology community to help him acquire items for his collection. That May hardly collected after his 1939-41 acquisitions speaks to the fact that, at least in his mind, he had succeeded with the organizational scheme he felt was needed to convey the reality of biblical history and context.

That the collection was so dramatically expanded and altered in the late 1960s suggests that May ceded exclusive curatorial control of the collection and thus new organizational boundaries were assigned to it by its new primary curator, Harry Thomas Frank who, but for his passing, could have incorporated the collection into his teaching as May had done. If the artifacts held by the Graduate School of Theology can be considered May's collection, then Frank's arrival, the transfer of the collection to the Religion Department, and Frank's additions transformed the collection and made it the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

Prior to joining Paul Lapp's excavations at Taanach in 1966, Tom Frank did not have much experience with archaeology. His doctoral work had focused on a late 19th to early 20th century theologian and his 1978 C.V. offers no indication that he afforded a particular significance to archaeological study prior to 1966 (Frank 1978b). Though it is not clear whether his experience

on that excavation was the sole impetus behind his vital role in creating the Religion Department's museum of biblical antiquities in Peters 217, it is noteworthy that Frank both began setting up the museum and started pushing May to acquire artifacts only after his experience at Taanach. Frank's participation affected his scholarly pursuits and interests throughout the rest of his career ("H. Thomas Frank Dies at 47": 1980). According to Frank's colleague, Grover Zinn, much of Frank's increased interest in archaeology came about as a result of his association with Herbert May (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019). Frank's C.V. shows, that shortly after 1966, his scholarship almost exclusively consisted of a series of popular handbooks discussing the Bible's historical context in light of archaeology, biblical history, and extra-biblical historical sources (Frank 1978b). At the time of his death, he was working on three books, two of which dealt with the bearing of archaeology and critical biblical scholarship on the lives of biblical characters (Frank 1978b).

In 1966 Herbert May understood that Frank was taking on an interest in archaeology and was also in the process of imprinting himself the collection's primary caretaker (May to Reynolds 1966b). Due to the division of his time between Oberlin and Vanderbilt, May understood that he would no longer be the only professor using the collection. With Professor Frank's interests in mind and taking into account the fact that Frank would be the primary figure to use the collection moving forward, May organized his 1967 purchases less around what had been useful to him, and more around expanding the collection in areas that would be useful specifically for Tom Frank. As such, the 1967 purchase included whole artifacts from later periods as well as a cadre of coins, one of Frank's archaeological interests (Cotleur 1979). While Frank added a small number of additional artifacts to the collection, he did not make any extensive additional artifact purchases. As such, it seems that the 1967 purchase was successful in filling in the gaps Frank felt existed in May's collection.

Perhaps the greatest indication that the 1967 purchase was made to achieve some sense of completeness as pertaining to the needs of Tom Frank can be found in the collection's 27 ancient oil lamps. Though the records from May's arrest and from his antiquities purchases from Farid Salman in 1962 indicate that May himself collected a number of Roman and Byzantine oil lamps, there is no indication whatsoever that he incorporated these lamps into his classes (Cline 2020: 176-177; May to Salman 1962). May purchased 7 oil lamps in 1967. In the 1967 inventory, these lamps are overwhelmingly dated to the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods though one is dated to the Middle Bronze Age, the traditional starting date for demonstrating nearly 2500 years of lamp seriation in the Levant and a period not represented by any other lamp in the collection (May et. al 1967; Amiran 1969: 189-190, 291-293). Reflecting on the purchase in 1967, Frank wrote, "our display of lamps is a strong beginning towards a **complete** and important collection showing the development of pottery forms (Frank to Carr 1967). Frank used lamps to demonstrate the principles of seriation in his 1971 book, *Bible, Archaeology, and Faith* where he even featured pictures of lamps from the Oberlin Near East Study Collection (Frank 1971: 24-25). A student of Frank's similarly remembered him using lamps to demonstrate pottery seriation, a task he only could have achieved with the supplementary help and completing nature of the 1967 purchase (Blakely, Jeffrey. Oral History. 2018).

Though Frank might have believed that the additional lamps and other items in the collection brought a certain completeness to the collection's chronological coverage, it is important to recognize that in reality, all that had changed were the chronological boundaries of the collection, which he himself had set. If Frank had wanted, he well could have continued the collection's chronological coverage further into the Islamic period as opposed to simply incorporating a single Umayyad lamp (ONESC 228) to represent the idea of continuity from the

Byzantine period into the Levant's periods of Islamization. Nonetheless, in bounding the collection's chronological coverage in such a way, Frank demonstrated that though his course was called Palestinian archaeology, it was really a class focusing on the archaeology of the Holy Land as it pertained to the Bible (Frank 1978b). This is not to criticize Frank as much as it is to say that any collection's completeness, even one as varied in content and chronological scope as the Oberlin Near East Study Collection, is ultimately a reflection of the views of its collector (Pearce 1993: 114).

5.6.2 Frank's other Additions: Mementos and Memorial

As discussed in Chapter 4, Tom Frank made relatively few contributions to Oberlin's collection.⁷⁹ Of the non-Bab edh-Dhra' artifacts that can definitively be ascribed to Frank, several are building fragments, mostly from the Judean King, Herod's palaces, while the rest are simply items he picked up from archaeological sites near Tell el-Hesi or in Jerusalem. With his broad interest in Herod, the pieces that come from the palaces can effectively be understood as a means through which Frank would have felt a personal connection to the ancient historical figure (Kersel 2015b: 369). Frank's fragments are unique in that they not only come from places that can be associated with Herod but are demonstrable parts of historical structures that were built under the direct instruction of Herod for his personal use (Frank 1971: 230; Moorey 1991: 121).

The other artifacts Frank collected were singular random fragments from archaeological sites and one small fragment of a mosaic he found while hiking in Jerusalem with his son, Malcom (ONESC 190). As reminders and evidence for his visits to sites and the experiences he had in the

⁷⁹ Several additional artifacts in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection might come from Harry Thomas Frank. According to the 1967 inventory, amongst the antiquities belonging to Harry Thomas Frank that were entrusted to the Department of Religion was a group of assorted and undated potsherds. Without additional information it is impossible to say how many sherds were in this group and therefore remain in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

Holy Land, these artifacts can be understood as souvenirs or mementos (Bar and Cohen-Hattab 2003: 142).

In Chapter 4, I suggested that the Bab edh-Dhra' tomb pots came to Oberlin primarily as a result of the personal relationship that had existed between Tom Frank and the Lapps. Objects hold the essence of environments, times, places, and people (Pearce 1993: 5, 198). The presence of a Bab edh-Dhra' tomb group at Oberlin would have served not only to illuminate burial practices in the Early Bronze Age, but also would have demonstrated the connection between Frank and Lapp, as well as Frank's appreciation for Paul Lapp's instruction and mentorship. As the acquisition of the Bab edh-Dhra' tomb group was at least partially construed as a gift, the presence of the objects would have also served to reinforce Frank's ties with Paul Lapp's widow Nancy beyond the death of her husband (Pearce 1995: 69). In the sense of the object's social role then, had Frank lived, they likely would have taken on the role of a memorial. The fact that the objects were never actively used in Religion classes following Frank's passing suggests that even he would have valued the tomb pots far more for their connective role to the Lapps than for their archaeological value.

5.6.3 Tom Frank, Paul Lapp, the humanistic study of Religion, and the changing face of Biblical Archaeology.

As a professor in the Graduate School of Theology, Herbert May incorporated a large theological component into his use of artifacts and into his teaching. With the closure of the GST, and the creation of Oberlin's Department of Religion, the study of religion and religious texts at Oberlin shifted towards a humanistic focus (Zinn, Grover. Oral History, 2019). This drastic paradigm shift likely affected the ways artifacts were used. It is therefore essential to explore Harry Thomas Frank's views on archaeology and its role in biblical studies in order to understand exactly how and why he would have taught using artifacts. Harry Thomas Frank's views were roughly

similar to those Paul Lapp expressed in his book, *Biblical Archaeology and History*, the published form of his four 1966 Haskell lectures at Oberlin College. Taken together with Frank's publications, *Bible Archaeology and Faith*, and *Discovering the Biblical World*, it is possible to summarize Frank's views on the intersections between archaeology, theology, and biblical studies.

Paul Lapp came right out of the biblical archaeology tradition as the student of both William Foxwell Albright and G. Ernest Wright. His dissertation on Hellenistic and Early Roman pottery was a product of biblical archaeology's focus on seriation and typology (King 1983: 153). Nonetheless, within a few short years, Lapp began to break from many of his mentor's theological and archaeological positions (Dever 1980b: 8). One of the clearest articulations of this break appears in Lapp's *Biblical Archaeology and History*. Lapp criticized the Biblical Archaeology movement's approach to archaeology and history, accusing biblical archaeologists of employing faith-based reasoning to attach archaeological finds to biblical stories and events (Davis 2004: 126, 128; Lapp 1969: 54). In his view, archaeology was as an independent body of knowledge that mostly spoke to the conditions of the average person rather than the events of history. Lapp believed that archaeology had been used to provide a physical basis for what ancient authors had written as opposed to being used to critically develop an understanding of the context and biases of historical writers including those of the Bible (Lapp: 1969: 20-21, 64).

In addition to criticizing the approach of biblical archaeology, Lapp also criticized the presumptions made by the biblical theology movement. To Lapp, the postulates accepted by biblical archaeologists had cast their entire field as "subhistorical" to the broader academic community and were dangerous for biasing both their results and archaeological conclusions (Lapp 1969: 58). Lapp drew a sharp distinction between historians and theologians saying that a historian attempts to describe findings and history in the perspective of the ancient person while the

theologian colors history to find God's role in the past according to the terms of their own modern faith (Lapp 1969: 64). In the book's final chapter, Lapp concludes that archaeology, even that of the Holy Land, often had nothing to say about the Bible if independently considered. He further rebuked the Biblical Theology movement saying that it was sacrilegious for the modern archaeologist to presume their own ability to see God in the archaeological record and to base their faith on physical evidence rather than on faith alone (Lapp 1969: 90).

Harry Thomas Frank echoed many of these ideas in his own biblical archaeology textbooks. In *Bible Archaeology and Faith*, Frank credits both Lapp and May for developing many of his ideas (Frank 1971: 8). Though Frank believed that many findings throughout the ancient Near East had a large bearing on understanding the biblical text and the context of its formation, he thought that the vast majority of objects were primarily useful for studying the people and culture that produced them (Frank 1971: 8, 12). Frank cast his book as a history book written from the soil, making the same crucial distinction Lapp did in the difference between using objects to validate the text as opposed to using text and object in tandem to develop a better understanding of a time period (Frank 1971: 7). Whereas May's views of the past had been riddled with optimism over the objectivity archaeology in tandem with text could provide, Frank, taking after Lapp, dismissed such a view seeing both texts and the interpretation of the archaeological record as inherently biased (Frank 1971: 26-27).

Frank thought that archaeology could contextualize the world of the Bible but viewed the Bible as a theological rather than a historical work (Frank 1971: 40-41). As such, while the Bible could be studied to suggest the historical conditions under which the prophets had prophesied in the first millennium, and how those conditions would have affected their prophecies, it could not demonstrate that historical events occurred specifically due to God's interference (Frank 1971:

43). Frank expanded these ideas in his 1975 book, *Discovering the Biblical World* in which he wrote that archaeologists, “cannot be influenced by historical theories or theological positions...it is important to keep all three roles separate to preserve both the proper character of Bible as a faith statement...and of scholarly historical reconstruction which must be as objective as possible (Frank 1975b: 17). Frank therefore thought that even if one did not consider the Bible to be wholly historical or reliable, they could still see the Bible as a holy and inspired document (Frank 1971: 100, 338-340; Frank 1975b: 31).

In my interview with Annie Storr, a former student of Herbert May and Thomas Frank in the 1970s, she helpfully clarified her view of the ways in which May and Frank’s approaches to using archaeological artifacts differed. In her characterization, Herbert May taught *about* artifacts. He would use them as accents to illustrate the points he was making in class and would tell a class exactly what the artifact meant, what its significance was, and how it tied in with his point. By using an artifact, May validated the information he was providing, characterizing himself as a purveyor of objective truths about the past. Through this model, May echoed the biblical archaeology movement’s approach where objects were similarly ascribed significance for their role as validating the text and as objective data (Dever 1985: 58).

By comparison, Storr characterized Frank’s teaching style as being *from* an artifact. Storr remembered several instances in which Frank would present his class with an archaeological object and no additional information. She remembers that the goal of those exercises was to display the complexity of the archaeological record by demonstrating the importance of context and how easy it was for an object to be misinterpreted or given interpretations based on a paucity of evidence. Storr remembered Tom Frank’s archaeology class as one in which the Bible and archaeological record existed in a bilateral relationship where critical examination alone would allow for one to

truly inform the other. Whereas May's use of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection had a theological purpose, Frank managed to use it for teaching Palestinian Archaeology as a humanistic course, and thus, through his curation, changed the collection's entire character (Storr, Annie. *Oral History*, 2020).

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined why Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank collected artifacts, as well as how they constructed their views of archaeological objects against their respective archaeological and theological backgrounds. During his three years at Megiddo, Herbert May came to value archaeology as a way of connecting with the biblical text, making that text relevant to the present, and making the people, places, and stories of the Bible seem more real, tangible, and historical. On account of how readily available pottery sherds were, over the course of his three years in Palestine, May was able to collect several hundred objects. May valued these objects as souvenirs and mementos.

While May did not initially use artifacts in his archaeology classes, over time he became aware that without visual aids, his students could not truly connect archaeology to their faith. To address the issue, Herbert May attempted to start an archaeological excavation, but with the excavation never materializing, he instead turned to photographs and later to artifacts. By using artifacts in his classes, May felt that he had succeeded in his goal of making the biblical past seem tangible and real and thereafter became a partisan for the value of a visual component in Christian education.

Once he had access to artifacts, Herbert May utilized them for a variety of purposes in his classes. May used pottery sherds to indicate places, times, people, and regional histories, all of which were deeply connected to the biblical past. He used artifacts that illustrated daily life in order to provide an idea of the physical background against which biblical events would have

occurred and in which biblical characters themselves would have physically lived. May collected figurines and painted pottery fragments to teach about the popular religion of Palestine and Transjordan in the distant past. Utilizing his sherds and copper waste from Nelson Glueck's excavations, May was able to historicize King Solomon and other biblical figures. The prehistoric objects in the collection meanwhile could be tied to the broader story of human evolutionary development.

At the beginning of his career, Herbert May was a member of the Liberal theological camp. Under the influence of William Foxwell Albright and other biblical archaeologists however, May's theology increasingly reflected the conclusions of biblical archaeologists that many of the Bible's events and characters were historical. May's changed view with regards to the historicity of the text would have led to his increasingly using artifacts to discuss the veracity of the Bible. In time, May adapted several of the core tenants of G. Ernest Wright's Biblical Theology into his own belief system. May took to the Biblical Theology movement's view that the prophets had primarily acted as conveyers of God's role in history in their own time and that just as they had found success conveying that revelation in the past, so too could the modern biblical scholar affect social change in the present.

The closure of the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology in 1965 led to a decrease in Herbert May's influence over the collection as Harry Thomas Frank became responsible for its curation. With Frank's interest in teaching the Archaeology of Palestine from a humanistic standpoint, the collection assumed a different role than it had under May. In 1967, May played an instrumental role in purchasing artifacts for Tom Frank's use. May specifically focused on purchasing artifacts from the periods of Frank's interest and from periods not before represented in the collection. That Frank barely added to the collection suggests that May's purchases were

successful in “completing” the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. Of the artifacts that Frank did collect, many can be ascribed as mementos while the Bab edh-Dhra’ artifacts were brought to the college in part to act as a memorial, a function they never took on due to Tom Frank’s untimely passing.

Whereas May’s academic emergence coincided with the Biblical Archaeology movement’s rise, Tom Frank’s occurred at a time when key precepts of biblical archaeology were being questioned, drastically affecting his own views of archaeology, and his use of artifacts in classes. As such, whereas May’s use of archaeological objects had relied upon their importance for demonstrating the reality of particular aspects of the Bible, Frank allowed archaeological artifacts to speak on their own terms, using them to teach about daily life, and about the process of archaeology itself. As Frank’s use and goals in his use of artifacts were fundamentally different from May’s, Frank’s curation of the collection represents another chapter in the life history of the ONESC.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: The Oberlin Near East Study Collection Yesterday and Tomorrow

6.1 The Decline of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection: Institutional or Representative?

By the time the Bab edh-Dhra' tomb artifacts arrived at Oberlin, Harry Thomas Frank had passed away. Though the collection remained in Peters 217 and was still used to teach introductory courses about the history of Western religions, ancient Judaism, and the rise of Christianity, after Tom Frank's death, the Religion Department no longer offered a specific course about "Biblical Archaeology." Frank was the last figure to expand the collection and with his death was lost vital information about its composition and history. Had Tom Frank survived and continued to teach, the collection's journey since 1980 would have been drastically different.

Neither of Tom Frank's direct successors in the department's biblical studies position utilized the collection in their teaching or took responsibility for the object's care and management. In 1981 the college hired Michael White, a scholar specializing in ancient synagogue and church architecture and after him, Leigh Gibson. Neither figure took up the mantle of curating, expanding, and teaching with the collection. Considering White's specialty, one would expect that he would have utilized certain segments of the collection. That White and Gibson did not use the collection can be tied to the fact that both were trained in biblical studies after the decline and collapse of the biblical archaeology movement.

Though Paul Lapp was one of the first to question the biblical archaeology movement's research goals and biases, he was hardly the last. In the 1970s and 1980s, another of G. Ernest Wright's students, William G. Dever argued that to remain a viable academic discipline, Biblical Archaeology had to rebrand itself as "Syro-Palestinian" archaeology. In Dever's view Biblical

Archaeology was an overly narrow discipline that was shaped by its religious character and presuppositions, both of which biased its results and separated it from other archaeologies. According to Dever, for the American archaeology of Palestine and Transjordan to evolve beyond its biblical roots and reintegrate into world archaeology, it had to adopt the paradigms developed by anthropological processual archaeology (Dever 1981; 1982; 1985; Davis 2004: 146; Moorey 1991: 138-143).

Lapp, Dever, and others attacked the pillars of Biblical Archaeology as established by Albright and Wright. They challenged the historicity of the Bible and argued that archaeological finds were biased rather than objective data (Davis 2004: 154). Lapp argued against the Biblical Theology movement and viewed it as sacrilegious to ground one's faith in archaeological findings. Harry Thomas Frank adopted many of these views in order to teach Biblical Archaeology as a critical humanistic discipline that contextualized the Bible's setting and writers (Frank 1971: 347-340; Frank 1975b: 17, 29, 31). He also played a key role in the Tell el-Hesi project, which was among the first excavations in Palestine and Transjordan to adapt to changing standards for archaeological excavation and publication. In contrast with earlier "biblical" excavations, the Hesi expedition spent its first seasons excavating Islamic graves as well as strata from the often-neglected Persian period. In line with American processual archaeology, the Hesi excavation also conscripted a corps of natural scientists who studied the site's geomorphology, plant remains, animal bones, and more (King 1983: 205-207). Though Frank was able to reframe Biblical Archaeology at Oberlin, across the discipline, many were unable to adapt or lost the support of their academic institutions before they had the chance.

By the 1970s, the wider field of biblical studies was becoming increasingly skeptical over the role archaeology had to play in their discipline (Moorey 1991: 139). Whereas biblical

archaeology once held enough primacy that its leaders could advocate for a popular theology based in their discipline, from the 1960s onwards, it became an increasingly relegated and provincial field within biblical studies (Dever 1980b: 5, 15). Contemporary scholars felt that it was nearly impossible to apply historical-critical and archaeological approaches to biblical studies to contemporary theologies including feminist and other reception theologies. As archaeology and history's importance declined, the importance of critical literary and theoretical approaches to biblical studies increased (Moorey 1991: 173). As a result, by 1981 when Frank's successor, Michael White, was hired, though his training included an archaeological component, it was hardly his primary focus and artifacts no longer held the same theological meanings May once ascribed to them. The same was true for White's successor, Leigh Gibson, who had even less of a basis in archaeological studies than her predecessor. That the Oberlin Near East Study Collection mostly went out of use then reflects sudden changes wrought by Frank's death, but also major disciplinary shifts that would have affected the collection at a later point in time had they had not been forced in 1980.⁸⁰ Biblical Archaeology has never recovered with even Dever's attempts to reframe the discipline petering out (Dever 1995).

6.2 The Holy Land, Tourism, Archaeology, and the Artifact: No Longer Distant

Several other external factors reduced the significance of archaeological objects in the classroom. When Herbert May joined the Megiddo expedition, he was one of a small number of Americans to visit Palestine. For most American Christians in that period, the Holy Land was a distant place that only existed on the pages of the Bible (Vogel 1993: 219). While tourism to British

⁸⁰ I do not mean to suggest that the collection went out of use, just that its role was reduced from being a central focus of an entire biblical archaeology course taught every single year using a large number of objects.

Mandate Palestine eventually averaged 80,000 tourists a year between 1920 and 1948, relatively few of those tourists were American (Cohen-Hattab 2004: 287-288).

Herbert May was far more than a tourist. For three years, May lived in Palestine working on an archaeological excavation at an “Old Testament site.” As I argued in Chapter 5, May’s experience at the Megiddo expedition convinced him that archaeology had a unique power to make the Holy Land and Bible “real” and relevant. While May began teaching under the assumption that the subject of archaeology alone could carry that power, within a few years he realized that in order to truly actualize the Holy Land for his students through archaeology, he needed to incorporate artifacts. As long as the Holy Land remained distant and Biblical Archaeology and Theology retained their primacy, so too did the importance of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection retain its importance to biblical studies at Oberlin.

By 1980, the Holy Land was neither distant nor was participation in archaeological excavation was no longer exclusive. In 1970, the annual number of tourists to Israel was nearly 450,000. By 1980, that number had jumped to almost 1.2 million (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). When May began excavating, working on an archaeological dig was a privilege granted to relatively few. In those days, the only Westerners who participated in excavations were staff members who oversaw the actual digging and recorded finds. In the 1970s, partly due to the high cost of labor in Israel, volunteerism became increasingly common on American excavations in Israel.

Though the Tell el-Hesi project was not the first American excavation in Israel to employ volunteers and students, in its time, it was the largest (Frank and Horton 1989: 89). In addition to receiving instruction in archaeological excavation techniques, volunteers at the site would learn about contemporary archaeological analysis and had the opportunity to go on guided tours to

various archaeological sites with Tom Frank (Frank and Horton 1989: 90-92). For their efforts, participating students would receive academic credit. In the first four seasons at the site (1970, 1972-1975), the Hesi volunteer program attracted 256 volunteers, many of whom were Tom Frank's students at Oberlin. According to Jeffrey Blakely's recollections, in the early 1970s, as many as 40 Oberlin students would travel to Israel every summer to excavate at Hesi (Blakely, Jeffrey. Oral History. 2018).

By the mid-1970s then, travel to the Holy Land was no longer exclusive, nor was participation in archaeological excavations. While archaeological objects could still make the past "real," artifacts alone could not compare with the actual lived experience of being in the land and excavating at an archaeological site. While it remains an expensive venture, many American seminaries are affiliated with Israeli excavations that provide a space for students to volunteer. In the view of one author, "only students who have participated in the actual work of excavation will have had the experience they need in order...to integrate archaeology and biblical studies (McCane 2004: 195).

Herbert May once told his class that learning about the archaeology of the Holy Land was a substitute for pilgrimage; that by learning about the land and actualizing it through contact with an artifact, it was as if his students were visiting the land itself. For May, a student's interaction with an artifact was a religious experience that tied them closer to their faith. While true that students today can visit the land and participate in archaeological excavations with far greater ease, artifacts retain their mystique and UNESCO, when used in classes, continues to inspire excitement and wonder. Though that enthusiasm might not be religious as was originally intended, UNESCO's artifacts still actualize the distant past and make an impression on students who feel that they are holding an important piece of ancient culture.

6.3 Who Owns the Oberlin Near East Study Collection?

When discussing archaeological objects from another part of the world, many of which were collected under a colonial administration, it is natural to ask who really owns or should own the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. As the collection was assembled in stages, the answer to this question depends on the group of artifacts under discussion, and as always, it is complicated. As discussed in Chapter 3, Herbert May was arrested for antiquities trafficking in 1934 with many of his artifacts subsequently confiscated and placed in the Palestine (Rockefeller) Archaeological Museum. Should the artifacts collected during that time period be returned to the museum?

Regardless of whether the Rockefeller Museum would even accept the artifacts from Oberlin's collection, the issue of returning any object collected during the British Mandate is tremendously complicated and political. By the time of Israel's 1967 conquest of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, Jordan had nationalized the Rockefeller Museum's collection. After the war, Israel claimed the contents of the museum for itself including its Dead Sea Scrolls. To this day, the ownership of the Rockefeller's collection remains disputed. The dispute over the ownership of artifacts from Mandatory Palestine between Jordan and Israel remains active to this day and complicates any hypothetical return of objects May collected between 1931 and 1934.

When learning about the Beth Shemesh loan collection, I was tremendously concerned about whether they should remain at Oberlin College. The crux of my concern was that in the original agreement, the Beth Shemesh artifacts were on loan for 5 years with privilege of renewal. It has been 80 years since the loan agreement was made and I never found evidence that the loan was ever renewed. That the University of Pennsylvania purchased all of Haverford College's artifacts in 1962 only increased my concerns. After a long email chain of discussion with various staff members at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the

museum stated that in their view, the artifacts did not belong to them. Apparently, the contract between the University of Pennsylvania and Haverford College only included the objects that were at Haverford in 1962, meaning that legally, the Beth Shemesh artifacts do not belong to the University of Pennsylvania. They may however technically belong to Haverford College. Though Haverford has no archaeology program and their archive contains no record of their biblical archaeology museum or John W. Flight, the figure who facilitated the loan, in the future, it is my opinion that it would be very worthwhile to establish a dialogue with Haverford College regarding a loan renewal or a transfer of ownership put in writing.

Dwelling on some of Harry Thomas Frank's collecting, several of the artifacts he collected are from national parks in Israel or the Palestinian Territories. Frank's roof tile from Masada and mudbrick from Lachish feel especially egregious. While these artifacts could rightfully be returned to their sites of origin, it is far more likely that they would instead make their way to storerooms. With recent archaeological work looking at fingerprints, one wonders if the roof tile from Masada with the imprint of a child's foot would be valuable for archaeological study and better served if repatriated to Israel.

The Bab edh-Dhra' tomb assemblage from A7S were legally purchased by Oberlin College from the Jordanian government with a small number of stipulations. It is worth remarking that when Oberlin purchased the artifacts, it agreed to place them on permanent display. While several of the tomb pots are currently outright missing, to honor Oberlin's original agreement with the Jordanian government, the artifacts should be exhibited either digitally or physically as soon as possible. While worth noting that the vast majority of institutions that received tomb pots through the 1978 distribution no longer display them, should a student wish, the abundance of information about these objects would make their exhibition relatively simple.

It is worth noting that while many of Oberlin's artifacts were purchased on the legal antiquities market in Jordan and later in Israel, scholarship in the past 20 years has exposed that most artifacts sold legally come from illegal back channels and looting. It is very likely that Oberlin's purchased artifacts were looted. This matter is however one of ethics rather than law or ownership and there is no doubt that Oberlin owns the collection's purchased artifacts.

Finally, while the Oberlin Near East Study Collection is today thought of as one unified assemblage of artifacts, as the 1967 inventory demonstrates, at that time, objects were differentiated between those owned by the college and those owned by Professors Frank and May. While nobody from either family has ever tried to reclaim more than one or two artifacts, it remains uncertain if the objects were ever legally left to the college. In order to make this determination, one would have to look at May and Frank's wills. Though it is today likely impossible to restore many objects to specific groups indicating their ownership by the May or Frank families, it remains possible that large swaths of the collection might not belong to the college at all.

6.4 Comparable Collections and Generalized Conclusions

Throughout this project, I searched for research analogous to my own. I found nothing. While there are catalogues for "biblical archaeology" collections, they often focused on the physical details of a small number of artifacts. Few catalogues explicated the origin of their artifacts, the means by which they were acquired, and most importantly, why they were acquired. Aside from broad generalizations, little was said about the individual collectors of "Holy Land" antiquities, and why they selected particular objects. Broadly speaking, the collections I found fit into two categories. The first category was institutional collections that were formed as a direct result of partage laws. These collections can be found at large institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania and University of Chicago, but also at smaller theological seminaries that had

sponsored digs in the past, but now have no archaeology programs. This type of collection is different from that at Oberlin as their contents are mostly from a single site and were only collected in one way. Elements of choice do exist in this type of collection, as their contents are at least partially predisposed towards the choices made by collectors/excavators while excavating. These choices however, are undoubtedly different from those made by figures like May as they travelled and gathered artifacts from any source they could.

The other major type of “Holy Land” antiquities collection in the United States is that formed by purchases on Jordan and later Israel’s antiquities markets. To this day, theological seminaries create collections of antiquities by buying them in Jerusalem’s legal antiquities stores. In this case, a tremendous degree of selection is involved as collectors can pick and choose exactly the material they wish to gather. Oberlin of course also benefited from the legal antiquities market, most visibly through the 1967 purchase. These collections, however, are also different from Oberlin’s as they too come from only a single source.

Perhaps what makes Oberlin’s collection so interesting is that it is the product of almost 50 years of collecting. In that time, Oberlin’s collectors utilized numerous strategies to bring artifacts to the school. They picked up artifacts from archaeological sites, visited contemporary excavations and received artifacts as gifts, arranged for loan collections, asked for the residue of archaeological surveys, and more. By exploring all these strategies, the clearest general trend was that as long as the small biblical archaeology community existed, its members facilitated the movement of antiquities within their academic network. That May was able to write to a colleague and immediately expect artifacts speaks to the central role these networks played in academics acquiring and dispersing archaeological collections. It is this exact mechanic that I believe deserves further research.

While my research suggested that between the 1930s and 1950s any member of the biblical archaeology community could employ their academic network to create study collections of Holy Land antiquities, in actuality, I just proved that Herbert May could rely on those networks. Herbert May's collecting might even be the exception rather than the rule. His festschrift chapters were written by the central figures of the Biblical Archaeology movement. He corresponded regularly with these figures and as the one-time president the Society for Biblical Literature and a Trustee of the American Schools of Oriental Research, had reached the pinnacle of his field. It is therefore vital that additional research is carried out on comparable collections before declaring outright that May's collecting strategies and the Oberlin Near East Study Collection is representative of common trends.

If I were to begin exploring comparable collections, I would begin by looking at the objects from the Haverford College Beth Shemesh loan. Oberlin's artifacts are marked with the roman numerals VI. As I discussed in Chapter 3, this number likely refers to Oberlin's being loan collection number 6. Over the course of this thesis, I also learned that Haverford had loaned Beth Shemesh artifacts to the University of Pennsylvania in the 1930s, some of which eventually made their way to Oberlin. These other loans prove that the movement of Holy Land antiquities within the academic world of the 1930s to 1950s was broader than Herbert May or the Oberlin Near East Study Collection. The question remains however, what other schools received loan collections, who collected those artifacts, and how else did they develop their biblical archaeology study collections. If additional research were carried out on these five collections, my conclusions would be greatly strengthened and might be considered widely applicable and revelatory to institutions that have legacy collections like our own.

6.5 The Social Lives of Things, and a New Chapter in the Collection's Biography?

At the start of this thesis, I introduced the idea that objects have social lives and biographies. I argued that the collection's acquisition and use by Herbert May and later by Harry Thomas Frank represent two chapters in that biography. Of course, the collection's history does not end there. From 1980 until 2002 the collection gradually went out of use and by 2002 was spread across Oberlin's campus with many artifacts in variant states of disintegration. If that period represented a decline in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection, the 18 years since have been a period of revitalization as the collection has been gradually reassembled, organized, and publicized. It is my hope that my work with the ONESC Initiative represents beginning of the end of that journey. If the ONESC Initiative organized and catalogued the collection, it is my hope that this thesis has contextualized it.

So, now what? What happens to the collection now that its condition has been stabilized? It seems obvious that the collection will never be used as it once was to teach a course about biblical archaeology covering the archaeology of Palestine and Transjordan from prehistory to the rise of Islam. While the ONESC Initiative did what it could, the work of making the collection accessible is not over. Before the collection can enter into wider use, its catalog and photographs must be made public or searchable on campus. Though the ONESC Initiative moved artifacts into several new boxes, those boxes are not organized by site, material, period, or any other category. As such, for the collection to be searchable and its contents accessible, there must be an online catalog that renders all its objects viewable.

Secondly, before the collection can be more widely used, it must be relocated. If the plans for Mudd's 4th floor to be repurposed as a hands-on study area for the campus' many collections ever materializes, the Oberlin Near East Study Collection will become widely available to any

number of departments whose courses intersect with the ancient world, object-based learning, and archaeology at large. While the possibilities for the future are almost endless, at present, the Oberlin Near East Study Collection will remain with the Religion Department on the fourth floor of the Rice Building. While this location may render the collection less useful than it can be in the long run, with proper care and coordination, the collection could easily make its way into several courses across Classics, Anthropology, Archaeology, and Religion.

Several years ago, a senior archaeologist visited Oberlin College and examined the ONESC. In her assessment, Oberlin's collection contained no artifacts of great value. While true that the Oberlin Near East Study Collection's artifacts are not unique or expensive museum pieces, they are still immensely valuable for other reasons. The Oberlin Near East Study Collection represents a particular period in the history of biblical studies. By studying the collection, it is not only possible to better understand Oberlin's relationship with biblical archaeology, but also, biblical archaeology's unique relationship with archaeological artifacts that imbued them with almost religious meanings. If one wanted to carry this to its furthest conclusions, objects in biblical archaeology study collections could be considered part of the same story as Medieval relics which were also objects dislocated from their original context and imagined as holding the essence of the Holy Land and the divine itself.

That Oberlin's collection was assembled between 1930 and 1980 means that it can be used to study how archaeologists working in Palestine and Transjordan continuously adapted to changing political circumstances and antiquities laws in order to collect artifacts. Oberlin's collection then not only offers the opportunity to better understand Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank, but to also explore broader trends in the collection of "Holy Land" antiquities by biblical scholars. While the relationship between artifacts and states has been written about extensively,

hodgepodge collections like those at Oberlin allow for insights into relationships between artifacts, academics, and colonial administrations like that of the British Mandate in Palestine. Though the study of Oberlin's collection represents a tantalizing glimpse at these issues, until they are further explored within other collections, my conclusions must remain tentative as they pertain to these larger issues.

It is impossible to say how exactly the use of ONESC will change in the future. Once the collection is accessible to a broader audience both on campus and online, the artifacts in ONESC will, as all artifacts do, shift in meaning according to their users and observers. Throughout my thesis, I explored some of the ways the objects in the Oberlin Near East Study Collection were understood in the past. Though I cannot predict the future of the Oberlin Near East Study Collection, I am optimistic that there will be many more chapters in its continuing life history.

Appendix: The Oberlin Near East Study Collection Since 1980

A.1 The Oberlin Near East Study Collection from 1980-2002

There is little doubt that the unexpected death of Harry Thomas Frank drastically affected the Oberlin Near East Study Collection's future. Frank was deeply devoted to archaeology and regularly incorporated the collection into his classes. Herbert May likely told him about the collection's history and when Frank passed away, much of that information was lost. He was also responsible for the final major contributions to the Oberlin Near East Study Collection.

After Herbert May's passing in 1977, Professor Frank was entrusted with his collection of pottery sherds. These sherds were kept in a large cardboard box alongside a small number of Palestinian ethnographic items including a pair of shoes. While these sherds are presently in the collection, it is unknown where the ethnographic material is. After Frank's death, professor Grover Zinn assumed personal responsibility for May's sherd collection. Zinn kept the sherds in his office and later in his new office in Mudd Library. As the senior member of the Religion Department and its acting chair, Zinn also took on personal responsibility for the whole collection's management and care.

Several years after Herbert May's death, one of his daughters gave Grover Zinn several artifacts that she claimed were previously a part of the collection. These artifacts were in her possession at the time of her father's death. It is unclear how many additional artifacts once at Oberlin are in the possession of Herbert May's descendants. Professor Zinn could not remember the exact year he was given this group of artifacts or much about which artifacts were returned. Additional artifacts from the collection also seem to have been dispersed in connection with Frank or May's passing including the department's collection of coins that may have been moved to the

Classics Department along with a replica of the Phaistos disk that is also presently in the Classics Department's possession.

When the Bab edh-Dhra' tomb group arrived in 1980, Professor Zinn placed the objects on display in Peters 217. By 1981 however, when prompted about the artifacts by Nancy Lapp, Zinn wrote that he could not specifically identify the Bab edh-Dhra' pottery. Zinn asked Nancy for photographs of the assemblage, which she sent, along with several other documents to help him identify the tomb group. That Zinn was unaware of the tomb group and the exact contents of the collection speaks to the fact that before his passing, the Oberlin Near East Study Collection was almost exclusively the domain of Tom Frank. While his colleagues may have used the collection, Frank was the figure who was most aware of its contents and history.

Though not an archaeologist, Zinn taught in Peters 217 and incorporated artifacts into his classes including cuneiform tablets, complete pottery objects, and flint knives. Zinn primarily used these artifacts in the Religion Department's introductory course covering Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. He also used them in his course on early Christian history. In the 1970s, Zinn and Harry Thomas Frank designed a course called introduction to Western Religions that began with ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and finished with a unit on Islam. At the start of the class, Zinn used the epipaleolithic lithics, which he referred to as "Neolithic knives", to teach about the transition to agriculture. Zinn used the collection's ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian artifacts to talk about the beginnings of Western Religion. He noted that he specifically used Annie Storr's necklace and the replica of the Wedding Scarab of Amenhotep the III.⁸¹ Of the pottery, Zinn mostly used the collection's oil lamps to discuss seriation, how archaeologists uncovered and understood the past, and as a way of showing the ancient origins of the Jewish tradition. Zinn never

⁸¹ This scarab is not presently in the collection. That Zinn taught with it and remembers it specifically indicates that the artifact was in the collection for as long as it was kept in the Peters building. Its current whereabouts are unknown.

passed objects around, but often pointed out objects in the Peters 217 display cases and suggested that his students look at them. Zinn also made occasional use of Herbert May and Harry Thomas Frank's slide collection which he viewed as illustrative and helpful. Outside of these introductory courses, Zinn did not make use of the collection as his primary academic focus is on Medieval Christianity.

Grover Zinn did not add artifacts to the collection except for ONESC 112, a replica of the Adda Seal, a famous cylinder seal in the British Museum collection. He did not add additional artifacts because he felt that since he was not an archaeologist, it was not his prerogative to do so.

Harry Thomas Frank was replaced by Michael White who taught at the college from 1981 to 1996 and later by Leigh Gibson.⁸² As Zinn recalls, neither White nor Gibson made extensive use of the collection. White's specialty in early synagogues and churches may have led to his occasionally using the collection. Zinn believes that Gibson never used the collection.

Until the early 1990s, the collection remained in Peters 217 while May's sherds remained with Professor Zinn. At that time however, the Peters building was condemned, necessitating that the artifacts be moved. Half of the artifacts were placed in cages in the King basement, while the other half were relocated to a then extant classroom on the fourth floor of Rice, in the space that is now the Religion Department lounge. At that time, the space was occupied by a small seminar room. Several upright glass cases surrounded the room and were filled with artifacts from the collection. It is unclear why certain objects were placed in the King basement while others were in the seminar classroom that was by 2002 nicknamed the 'archaeology lab.' When the Peters building was renovated in 1996, Peters 217 no longer existed, and the artifacts remained separated.

⁸² White currently teaches at the University of Texas Austin. I reached out to him to ask about his use of the collection but was unable to get a reply. Future research into this period in the collection's life history would benefit tremendously from an augmented account by Grover Zinn as well as the account of both White and Gibson.

According to Zinn, his use of the collection declined dramatically at this point due to logistical difficulties. Professor Zinn mostly used archaeological artifacts in large introductory courses rather than seminar courses. Whereas before introductory courses were taught in Peters 217, a classroom with glass cases for archaeological artifacts, in order to bring artifacts into his classes in the King building, Zinn would have to carry individual objects to the classroom and would thereafter have to ensure their welfare during the class period. At the same time, the objects in the King basement were difficult to reach and involved going through a high voltage area that made gathering them unappealing and difficult. Zinn described the move from Peters to Rice and the King basement as a “dislocation” of the collection. By 2002 then the collection was divided between Zinn’s office in Mudd Library, the King basement, and the seminar classroom on the fourth floor of Rice.

A.2 The Oberlin Near East Study Collection from 2002-2017

Beginning with the arrival of Professor Cindy Chapman in 2002, the collection has undergone a slow but steady revival. When Chapman arrived, she saw a neglected collection in complete disarray. When she saw the seminar room for the first time, she noticed that several of the 3x5 cards were with the wrong artifacts. Looking closer, she realized that some artifacts were in varying states of disintegration including a cuneiform tablet. Chapman specifically recalled several juglets, oil lamps, the replica game board from Beth Shemesh, and the Iron IIC cooking pot from the time of Jeremiah as some of the objects on display in that classroom. Ed Vermue, Oberlin’s Head of Special Collections and Preservation arrived at about the same time. When first shown the artifacts in the Rice fourth floor classroom, Vermue was immediately concerned about the integrity of several objects and also specifically noted that the cuneiform tablets were powdering. Vermue despaired for the future of the collection and at that time believed that the

collection would remain in disarray. In her first year, Chapman also became aware of the additional artifacts in the King basement

Coincidentally, 2002 was also the 50th anniversary of the Religion Department. In connection with the 50th anniversary, several artifacts including parts of the Bab edh-Dhra' tomb group were exhibited. This exhibition also included several printouts of Herbert May's slides. The 50th anniversary served as a reunion for several members of the Tell el-Hesi expedition. Two former members of the expedition, Jeffrey Blakely and John Spencer lectured on the history of Biblical Archaeology at Oberlin and the history of Oberlin's involvement in the Tell el-Hesi expedition in the 1970s.⁸³ Blakely's 2002 research on the history of Oberlin's involvement in biblical archaeology was the first time anybody had looked into the archival files of May and his predecessors to better understand their connection to the field, their archaeological experiences, and something about their collecting.⁸⁴ For Professor Zinn, the lectures were tremendously illuminating and shed new light on his former colleagues. On his part, Zinn researched the history of several of the Religion Department's manuscripts including its Torahs, codices, and papyri, all of which May exhibited as early as the 1930s, and all of which were also exhibited in Peters 217. Looking back on its significance, Vermue reflected that the 2002 lectures had served as a wakeup call for the faculty at large.

Professor Chapman resolved to improve the collection's storage situation and integrity. In 2003 the King basement was closed off and the Religion Department decided to do away with the 'archaeology lab' space on Rice's 4th floor. After clearing out both spaces, Professor Chapman ended up with the whole unorganized collection in her office. To consolidate the collection,

⁸³ Recordings of both lectures are available on cassette in the Religion Department's archival folder.

⁸⁴ Dr. Blakely's research into May's predecessors Kemper Fullerton and William Gaye Ballentine will be a useful place for future researchers to start if they want to expand our knowledge of biblical archaeology at Oberlin in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Professor Chapman purchased boxes and a storage case for the artifacts. This storage case remains in the Religion Department lounge and is used for departmental exhibitions related to multiple religious traditions.

To organize the collection and place it in boxes, Professor Chapman supervised two students, Shean Perry and Leah Fredrickson as they identified and organized the collection to the best of their ability. Perry and Fredrickson worked during the fall semester and winter term of 2003 into 2004. During their effort they decided to match up the historical 3x5 labels created by May with their corresponding artifacts. Almost immediately after this first organizational attempt, Professor Chapman began incorporating a small number of artifacts from the collection into her course on Jerusalem and introduction to the Hebrew Bible. Chapman used the artifacts to discuss the emergence of ancient Israel, the ancient Israelite household, and ancient Israelite religion. She made use of several ceramic artifacts, the collection's pillar figurine, and several groundstone objects. She also incorporated the collection's cylinder seal impressions into her Book of Job course. Reflecting on her efforts, Grover Zinn relayed his belief that Cindy Chapman had brought stability to the collection.

In late 2004 or early 2005 Ed Vermue was contacted by Paula Richman, a Religion Department Professor whose work focused on south Asian religion. Richman had a long-standing interest in Herbert May and Tom Frank and had in the 1970s been a student of both and a participant in the Tell el-Hesi expedition.⁸⁵ Richman contacted Vermue to see if he was interested in adding Herbert May's lantern slide collection to Special Collections. At that time May's original slides were stored in the basement of the Rice building in their original file drawers. Richman told Vermue that the Religion Department's collection of slides and artifacts had been assembled by

⁸⁵ While researching for my paper, I never had the opportunity to talk with Professor Richman. For any student who wishes to follow up on my research in the future, it could very well be worth talking to Professor Richman.

Kemper Fullerton, Herbert May, and Tom Frank and that all three had used the objects for teaching about the archaeology of the Holy Land. Vermue however remembers that beyond this and the information Dr. Blakely and Zinn had discovered during the 2002 Haskell lectures, nothing more was known of the collection's history. Vermue eventually received the glass lantern slides and with the assistance of a student named Kate Lansky, was able to catalog May's slides and add them to what is now the Herbert G. May Archaeology of Palestine online collection. Cindy Chapman and Grover Zinn assisted in this process, advising Kate. Since the cataloging, Professor Chapman has incorporated several of May's images into her lectures.

In the mid-2000s, Grover Zinn's Mudd office flooded. While Ed Vermue helped Zinn to dry his papers, Zinn asked Vermue to provide a temporary storage space for several boxes of antiquities that he was keeping in his office. These mostly comprised of May and Frank's sherds, but also included a small number of additional artifacts. Vermue kept the artifacts in the Special Collections vault for a number of years.

In the ensuing years, Cindy Chapman continued to use a small number of artifacts in her courses and also supervised independent readings and a senior project that incorporated the collection. While the earlier effort had placed the objects in boxes, they were not properly inventoried, making it impossible for her to find the objects she used regularly. To address the issue, Professor Chapman set aside a subsection of artifacts that she placed into what she called her Israelite/Philistine and Roman Teaching boxes. The Israel/Philistine teaching box contains artifacts related to ancient Israelite daily life as well as some Cypriot and Mycenaean sherds. The Roman teaching box contains the building materials from Herod's palaces collected by Frank, a few lamps, some pottery vessels, and Roman glass. Outside of these two boxes however, the collection was still largely inaccessible.

In 2009, Chapman supervised a PhD student at the University of Michigan named Craig Tyson who was part of an academic exchange program. As Tyson's specialty was in the archaeology of Transjordan, Chapman wanted to take advantage of his expertise and the interest of one of her students, Ondrea Keith. She therefore suggested that the two work together to inventory the collection. Tyson and Keith created an organizational system for the collection called the HMC (Herbert May Collection) system. Their system applied a unique number to most of the collection's complete artifacts. It relied on a primary category number (1=Pottery, 2=Lamps, 3=Replicas and Writing, 4=Metal) along with an ascending secondary number to differentiate each object within the categories. The HMC numbers were applied to artifacts using white nail polish. As a result, while my work has superseded these numbers, they remain useful for understanding the 2009 organizational system and as a backup reference in case an ONESC number somehow becomes separated from an object. While Keith took photographs of the artifacts she labeled, the digital files for these photographs have since been lost leaving behind only printed thumbnail sized photographs that remain atop the boxes Professor Chapman purchased in 2003.

In the fall of 2010, Ed Vermue turned over the sherds that were still in his possession to Cindy Chapman. That the sherds were still in Special Collections during Tyson and Keith's attempts to organize the collection explains why they were not labeled with HMC numbers. In 2014, Cindy Chapman became the chair of the Religion Department and moved into her present office. At that point, Zinn and Vermue gave Chapman some of the artifacts still held in Special Collections including the four large pottery objects, ONESC 526, 527, 528, 529. Two of these vessels were from tomb A7S, while the other two were purchased by Herbert May in 1967. It is possible that these particular large objects were separated because they were part of the 2002 library exhibition. After receiving the artifacts, Professor Chapman placed the four large vessels

on the shelf of her new office. Chapman also received several personal items belonging to May at that time including postcards, walking shoes, and May family photographs.

The next attempts to reorganize the collection came in connection with Jeffrey Blakely's presence on campus. Blakely led two separate Winter Terms both sponsored by Chapman. The first, *Locating Ancient Judah*, used the collection to teach about the archaeology of the ancient Judahite Kingdom. The second, the 2017 Winter Term (in which I participated) was an effort to completely catalog the collection by creating an excel database complemented by photographs of every artifact.

A.3 The 2017 Winter Term and its Aftermath

During the 2017 Winter Term, 9 students worked together to catalog the now unified Oberlin Near East Study Collection. The group worked in the Mudd 4th floor group study room and the Special Collection's photography studio. Early on, the group decided that the already existing HMC numbers would be retained while new numbers were created for the pottery sherds and four artifacts on Chapman's shelf. The new numbering system was made up of ascending number much like the current ONESC numbers. Part of the group's decision to use this simple system as opposed to something resembling the HMC numbering put in place in 2009 was that this system did not require collection specific knowledge to understand. At the start of the January 2017 Winter Term, the various sub-category meanings for the HMC artifacts had been forgotten and therefore needed to be deciphered. Throughout the Winter Term, the group worked together to create the database, accession artifacts, and with the help of Dr. Blakely, date individual artifacts.

Each student also participated in object photography using the Special Collections photography studio, guided by Oberlin's Visual Resources Collection Curator, Heath Patten.

Additionally, each student participant used the collection for a personal research project into a group of objects that interested them most.

The January Winter Term increased the collection's visibility on campus. In Spring 2017 and Fall 2018, The Oberlin Archaeology Society, a student run archaeology club, used the collection for two separate object handling workshops. These well attended events allowed over 30 Oberlin students to personally handle artifacts and to learn what was known at that time about their origins.

A.4 The ONESC Initiative Spring 2018-Spring 2020:

After participating in the 2017 Winter Term, I felt that the database we made could be expanded and standardized. I also recognized that most objects had not been photographed and that many that had been, were photographed using variant backgrounds, angles, and scales. At that time, I was looking for opportunities to engage with Levantine archaeology on a regular basis and taking up the mantle of what was started in January 2017 seemed like the best way to facilitate my continuing education in the archaeological region that interested me most.

With the help of Cindy Chapman and Amy Margaris, I established the ONESC Initiative, a collaborative student project where I and some of my classmates, with the support and advice of faculty, bagged, and photographed the entirety of the collection. From Spring 2018 until January 2020, members of the initiative worked together every week. The ability to catalog and photograph everything was greatly benefited by the willingness of Professor Margaris to sponsor a private reading and Winter Term during which I had the opportunity to finish large chunks of work. Heath Patten was especially invested in the initiative and kindly offered the use of his library studio and equipment at a regular time every week. He also taught several of us the basics of photoshop that

allowed us to standardize our photographs. Professor Amy Margaris gave us a working and storage space in the Anthropology Laboratory where the collection was stored throughout the project.

One of the goals of the Initiative was to make sure that every object in the collection had a unique space in an archival storage box. To facilitate this goal, additional storage boxes were purchased in Fall 2018. With those boxes, every object in the collection now benefits from storage in a unique plastic bag and in a unique space on a divided trays in archival boxes.

Without the catalog and photographic record created by the initiative, this thesis would not be possible. I want to again thank the ten students who helped me in the tedious work of accessioning, recording, and photographing. After working with this collection for four years, it is my genuine hope that I have helped revitalize it in some small way.

Note on Sources:

This appendix was compiled from a combination of Grover Zinn, Cindy Chapman, Ed Vermue, and my own recollections. Their oral histories along with the other oral histories I recorded for this project are IRB approved and will be given to the Oberlin College archives.

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