

## A Bit of Yale in Farmington

While the Peabody Museum of Natural History is the larger and more well-known Yale facility which houses Connecticut archaeological materials, there exists another, much smaller building, called the William Day Museum of Indian Artifacts, situated at the Lewis Walpole Library in Farmington, Connecticut. Its presence on the library's campus owes its existence to Wilmarth S. Lewis and the keen eye of his groundskeeper, Bill Day. While it was Day who consistently picked up various types of prehistoric lithic materials from the Lewis's backyard, it was Lewis, an ardent collector of materials by the 18th-century English figure Horace Walpole, who got the idea of displaying Day's numerous finds to the public.

Lewis was no stranger to Yale, the Peabody Museum, or even to archaeological artifacts. A graduate of Yale Class of 1918, he corresponded as an interested alumnus with Cornelius Osgood, Peabody's director, about bringing together other Yale alumni who were collectors to create a web of contacts and publish information about Yale's extensive collections in the alumni magazine. Through Osgood, Lewis learned of the University's attempt to purchase Edward Payne's large private collection of Mississippi Valley Indian artifacts in 1935. That assemblage, valued in the millions of dollars, was said to be the "largest and finest aggregation of Stone Age materials of this country which has ever been made." It was so large, in fact, that it could easily have filled nine regulation railroad freight cars. The sale eventually fell through, and after Paynes' death the collection was divided, sold, and scattered throughout the country. But Lewis's connection to the Peabody continued to grow stronger.

By 1938, Lewis was a member of the Yale Corporation and by the next year was advocating building of a new wing of the Peabody devoted solely to anthropology. In 1944, Lewis had tried to persuade Norris Bull -- a local artifact collector from West Hartford--to leave his substantial collection to Yale. Although these two endeavors were unsuccessful, Lewis revived an earlier idea in 1946 and published a widely-read report of Yale's extensive collections in a monograph which included a chapter on the Peabody's natural history as well as its anthropological assemblages. Perhaps inspired by this experience and his interest in the topic, he read books on archaeology and anthropology sent him by Osgood. Thus when Bill Day kept digging up stone artifacts in Lewis's property, Lewis had an idea. He arranged to have an old eighteenth-century cabin, built by a Farmington Indian, moved to his garden to serve as a museum of sorts for the growing collection. This building Lewis dubbed The William Day Museum of Indian Artifacts, a grandiose title, he admitted, but one he liked immensely.

In 1966, Lewis contacted the Peabody's Ben Rouse and asked if there would be any interest in excavating the garden and fields where the artifacts were being found. Rouse was skeptical at first but quickly agreed once it was determined that the surface finds that Day was gathering were quite old and significant. In fact, some material was Paleolithic, about 10,000 years old. Moreover, the diversity and number of the finds convinced Rouse that a systematic excavation of the site would be needed.

The discovery of the Farmington site occurred at the same time that Yale was considering offering archaeology as an undergraduate major. With Lewis's support and financial largess, the Anthropology Department was able to offer an undergraduate course in modern field techniques, using his property as a training ground for budding archaeologists. From 1967 to 1977, undergraduate and graduate students conducted numerous excavations under the watchful eye of a number of Yale faculty--Michael Coe, Barbara Stark, and David Starbuck--the artifacts going into exhibits at both the Day and Peabody Museums. By the time Lewis died in 1979, however, the Department felt that the time and expense of transporting students from New Haven to Farmington outweighed the benefits of using the site and

discontinued its field school there, opting instead for an historical project within a short driving distance of campus.

In the Spring of 1991, the William Day Museum opened to the public on a limited but regular basis under the aegis of the Farmington Historical Society. Until its close in 2005 for the construction of new facilities for the Lewis Walpole Library, the museum attracted hundreds of visitors and school groups interested in the prehistory of the Farmington area.

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