A HISTORY OF THE MCCLUNG MUSEUM
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

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The first museum at the University of Tennessee was in the Agricultural Building (also known as Morrill Hall, which was renamed Carrick Hall in 1908). Constructed in 1880, the building housed an agricultural museum with models of farm implements and machinery, specimens of farm products, and samples of Tennessee soils and fertilizers. Later, when the Hesler Biology Building opened in 1935, a small room on an upper floor became a “museum” for zoological specimens, including butterflies, birds, and a Florida alligator.
In June 1934, UT accepted the Louis B. and Eleanor Deane Swan Audigier Collection of Art and Library of Art Appreciation, which comprised of over 5,000 art objects, photographs, and postcards. The Audigier Art Gallery was opened in the Hoskins Graduate Library to showcase the collection. The minutes of the August 7, 1934 Board of Trustees meeting observed:

“This [gift] was quite significant as the beginning of what we hope will some day be a great museum of art in the university. It likewise served to call attention to the fact that the university has no adequate provision for the collection, preservation, and display of similar materials of value, such as relics, heirlooms, and other history making materials or evidences of vanishing cultures. Nor is there provided here any facilities for the collection and preservation of those artifacts which furnish insight into the rich record of prehistorical man in this region.”
A major influence in the creation of a centralized university museum came in 1933 with the establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Concern for the retrieval and preservation of archaeological resources that would be inundated by the planned reservoirs led representatives of the TVA, the University of Tennessee, the University of Alabama, and the US National Museum (known today as the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History) to meet in December and formulate plans for archeological investigations.
With labor from the Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration, work in the Norris basin began in January 1934 with professor William S. Webb as senior archaeologist and Thomas M. N. Lewis as district supervisor. Upon closing the excavations, Webb asked university president James D. Hoskins to continue the archaeological research in the state.

In September, the Board of Trustees established the Division of Anthropology under the Department of History with Lewis as head. For the next eight years, large-scale excavations utilizing federal relief labor from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) investigated sites in Douglas, Fort Loudoun, Watts Bar, Chickamauga, and Kentucky reservoirs and other sites around the state. These excavations generated enormous collections of artifacts, photographs, and field records that were deposited with the Division of Anthropology at UT.

*Excavations at the Bell Site Mound in Roane County, TN, 1935*
With the massive quantities of material being generated from the excavations, Lewis sought research facilities at UT. In 1938, an archaeological laboratory was established in Ferris Hall and Madeline Kneberg was hired from the University of Chicago to run the lab and curate the collections. Thus was formed a team that would shape Tennessee archaeology for decades. In 1947, what was the Division of Anthropology became a full-fledged Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal Arts with Lewis and Kneberg comprising the faculty.

An exposed late prehistoric house floor at Ledford Island, Bradley County, TN, 1938
From the beginning of his tenure at UT, Lewis sought a museum. Letters to university president James D. Hoskins in the fall of 1934 sought display cases for Ferris Hall to exhibit material from the Norris basin excavations. In 1935, Lewis served as chairman of the archaeology sub-committee of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park Museum Committee for a state museum to be established in the park. Nevertheless, Lewis was steadfast in his appeals to university administration stressing the need to have it on the Knoxville campus. The archaeological collections were here, as were various de-
partmental “museums” which certainly contained the nucleus for a future state museum. In 1938, Lewis wrote to J.M. Smith, commissioner of education in Nashville: “You are, of course, aware of the fact that state museums are always directly associated with their respective state universities.”

Lewis persisted in his appeals to the university for a museum. In a prospectus for the Division of Anthropology he pointed out the primary objective “...for a public museum in which to display valuable archaeological collections and to portray the lives of the prehistoric inhabitants of Tennessee...” With characteristic persistence, he went on to state “It is inconceivable that a collection of material, the acquisition of which has involved an expenditure of more than a half million dollars, should remain in the obscurity of cardboard boxes stored in an inflammable building.”

“In a 1945 report to the Board of Trustees, Lewis reminded members of the diverse collections arriving at the university without a proper museum to receive them. In the same year, the executive council of the UT Alumni Association invited alumni to send in their war trophies and memorabilia; these collections were placed into a “museum” located in West Strong Hall. Then there was the Audigier collection of art in the Hoskins Library without proper temperature controls; an enormous Nella C. Moss pitcher collection stored in the attic of the Home Economics building; and a myriad of items stored in the dark basement of the biology building and at West Sophronia Strong Hall. In 1949, UT received the Grace Moore Collection—the costumes, music, and other items of the famed opera star from East Tennessee. In addition, collections that should have come to UT were drifting out of state because of the absence of facilities.

Although lacking a museum, Lewis was able to negotiate the purchase of three important archaeological collections. In 1940, UT purchased two sandstone statues that had been found at the Sellars Site the year before; in 1947, the state purchased the
famous Duck River Cache; and in 1949, money was appropriated to acquire the George D. Barnes collection of “many rare types of objects which are not included in our collection here at the university.”

A 32.5-foot dugout canoe that had been found in 1797 by Jesse Eldridge in Loudon came to the university in 1936 and had been moved from one basement to another. Unfortunately, the momentum for a museum was postponed by the Korean War.
At last, in August 1954, Lewis was appointed chairperson of a University Museum Committee to work out plans for a Hall of Tennessee Natural History, which would include a “program of activities involving the various arts and sciences.” It had been decided that an appropriation of $500,000 be requested for the building at the January 1955 meeting of the State Legislature. Unfortunately, the museum appropriation fell through, but two months later, Lewis learned monies had been assigned to a “natural history building” in the wills of Judge John W. Green and his wife Ellen McClung.
Green. It is interesting to note that in a letter from Tom Lewis to Lewis H. Larson, Jr in April 1959, Lewis states: “I might mention that it was the [Duck River] cache more than anything else that prompted the late Judge Green to will his estate to the university for the construction of a museum.”

In June 1957, a bequest of $550,000 became available in accordance with Ellen’s will “…to establish a museum as a memorial in honor of my father, Frank H. McClung, a native and throughout life a citizen and resident of Knox County, Tennessee, who in his early youth attended the University of Tennessee, then known as East Tennessee University…The said museum shall be erected of brick or stone, or some other durable material, and made as near fireproof as possible, which shall be named and called the “Frank H. McClung Museum” and shall be used for the display, preservation, and study of paintings, works of art, objects of natural history, historical objects, and such other uses and purposes as generally appertain to museums.”

In October 1957, Tom Lewis called the first meeting of the “museum committee,” which resulted in a document on the general program and activities of the new museum with its purposes “... to tell a simple connected story of the natural earth, and of the people on the earth, particularly that part of the earth and its people that is the state of Tennessee...to inspire greater understanding and appreciation of knowledge through attractive and dramatic presentation of the results of the search for knowledge of man and the universe.” In addition to its campus purposes for the students, the museum was to reach out to the people of the state and the nation.
In 1958, the university received an important bequest from Frederick T. Bonham, a 1909 Law School graduate and former personnel director at the New York Times. Bonham’s bequest established a scholarship endowment that continues to support undergraduate and graduate students across the campus. In addition, he donated a number of objects of art to the emerging museum, most importantly The Vine, a large bronze statue of a dancer by the American sculptress Harriet Whitney Frishmuth, which he stipulated be in a fountain setting.
In May 1959, the university purchased the Henry Hudson house and land for $89,000 on Circle Park for the construction of the museum (today, one of the stained glass windows from the Hudson House is installed in the entrance to the Decorative Arts gallery). In October, Lewis was appointed director of the soon to be museum, and Madeleine Kneberg was made assistant director. By December, the preliminary plans were in the hands of the architects Barber and McMurry and university architect Malcolm Rice. Bids were let and a contract was awarded on May 12, 1960 to V.L. Nicholson
Company, Knoxville, with a low bid of $538,590. On March 8, 1961, the architects recommended the building be accepted as completed. In preparation for the new museum, the university hired Joseph W. Hoskins in 1960 from the Atwater Kent Museum in Philadelphia. For the next twenty-one years, he would oversee the installation of both permanent and temporary exhibitions.

In June 1961, Tom Lewis and Madeline Kneberg married, and retired later that year. In recognition of their contributions in archaeology, the Board of Trustees designated the majority of the museum’s archaeological collections as the “Lewis-Kneberg Collection.” With Lewis’ departure, Alfred K. Guthe became director of the McClung Museum and head of the Department of Anthropology. Guthe had been the curator of anthropology at the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences in New York and was the son of Carl Guthe, former director of the University of Michigan’s museum and the New York State Museum, who had consulted on the museum in the 1950s.
DESIGNATING SPACE

“... to inspire greater understanding and appreciation of knowledge through attractive and dramatic presentation of the results of the search for knowledge of man and the universe.”

~Tom Lewis in a 1957 museum purpose statement

The new three-story museum had 35,000 square feet of floor space. On the first floor, the grand domed foyer was graced by the Frishmuth bronze dancer in a fountain setting. The east gallery became an art gallery supervised by the Fine Arts Department under Professor Kermit Ewing. This gallery remained under the Department of Art until 1982 when the Ewing Gallery opened in the new Art and Architecture Building.
The 5,300 square foot main exhibition hall had originally been designated for an interpretive diorama of the southeastern Indian Busk ceremony utilizing twenty-five plaster life-size Indian figures cast from molds of living Zuni Indians and donated to the future museum by the Bernheim Foundation in Louisville, Kentucky. Although single figures were used for exhibits from time to time, the diorama did not materialize, perhaps due to the retirement of Lewis and Kneberg, and the gallery was used for smaller natural history exhibits. The west gallery was designated the Green Memorial Room and furnished with objects from the Green estate and exhibits relating to East Tennessee history. The large windows to the north and west of the foyer would enable future expansions of the museum.

The Bonham Room on the middle floor exhibited the Bonham collection of fine furnishings and art, and two long exhibit cases for temporary displays. In addition, there was a lecture hall, research laboratory, museum library, and offices. The basement level contained collection storage and a shop for exhibit preparation.

In early September, 1961, the museum opened on a limited basis. The first researcher to use the archaeological collections was Elizabeth Bowen who used material
from the Obion site for her dissertation, which was submitted to Harvard University. The first exhibition, “Paintings of the Year,” was installed by the Fine Arts Department in the art gallery. In 1962, two exhibits in the main gallery were ready for visitors—“The Anatomy of Nature,” a photographic exhibit from the Smithsonian, and “UT and You,” a perspective on the past and future developments of the university, its size and scope of public service, and research capabilities. The Green and Bonham rooms were open and the museum was on its way as the new “campus cultural and historical center.”

At last, the Frank H. McClung Museum was dedicated on June 1, 1963 in a program in the auditorium. Presiding was C. E. Brehm, president emeritus. Tracy Lamar, Jr., Rector of St John’s Episcopal Church, delivered the invocation; Mrs. Richard McNabb, great-granddaughter of Frank H. McClung, presented the building, and university president Andrew Holt gave the acceptance of the building. The next fifty years would be exciting, productive, and would more than fulfill the vision of the founders.

Dr. Alfred Guthe, second director of the McClung Museum, and Mrs. R. McNabb, great-granddaughter of museum namesake Frank H. McClung, look at a museum brochure together on June 1, 1963—the day of the museum building dedication.
With the end of the WPA excavations in 1942, archaeological work ceased, as did reservoir construction. Lewis and Kneberg focused on analysis and curation of the collections, producing a draft report of the Chickamauga Basin investigations, a portion of which was published in *The Prehistory of the Chickamauga Basin in Tennessee; A Preview* in 1941, *Hiwassee Island: An Archaeological Account of Four Tennessee Indian Peoples* in 1946; *Tribes That Slumber: Indian Times in the Tennessee Region* in 1958; and as a married couple, Lewis and Lewis, *Eva: An Archaic Site* in 1961. Lewis and
Kneberg also launched the Tennessee Archaeological Society (TAS) in 1944, an organization directed toward the avocational archaeologist and actively sponsored by the Department of Anthropology and the museum. The most lasting legacy of the TAS lies in the journal Tennessee Archaeologist, published between 1944 and 1981.

Fieldwork directed by the Department of Anthropology began again in 1959 with the Barkley Reservoir on the Cumberland River and the Melton Hill Reservoir in 1960–61 on the Clinch River. These projects were followed by Nickajack Reservoir in 1964, Tims Ford in 1966, and smaller single site investigations. The largest of these projects was the Tellico Reservoir that extended from 1967 to 1982. Because the Department of Anthropology was in the McClung Museum until 1971, all of the artifacts, notes, and photographs are curated at the museum. Since Alfred Guthe was the principal investigator, the Tellico Project also continued to be run from the museum where it had started, with contracts through the Department of Anthropology in South Stadium Hall. The archaeological data from all these investigations, along with the WPA material, and collections donated to the museum over the years, have created a world-class research collection. The McClung continues to work closely with the TVA who own most of the reservoir excavated material in the curation, in compliance with federal laws pertaining to collections.
There have been four directors of the McClung Museum. T.M.N. Lewis (1959–1961) was the first and, as discussed, was instrumental in the establishment of the museum.

Alfred K. Guthe (1961–1977) oversaw the completion of the museum and its first exhibitions and programs. He dividing his time between museum duties and administering the archaeological contracts as principal investigator. Eager to legitimize the museum and underscore its first-rate collections, Guthe undertook the process to be accredited by the American Association of Museums, which was granted in 1972—among the first in the country. In 1977, Guthe stepped down as director and returned to teaching anthropology.

Replacing Guthe was Paul W. Parmalee (1977–1990), professor of zooarchaeology in the Department of Anthropology. Prior to joining UT, Parmalee served as cu-
rator of zooarchaeology at the Illinois State Museum. Parmalee oversaw the second AAM accreditation of the McClung in 1981 and the move of art history faculty to the new Art and Architecture Building, thus freeing up offices and the east gallery for museum use. Parmalee retired in 1990, but stayed on to curate the freshwater mussel collection until his death in 2006.

The fourth director, Jefferson Chapman, joined the Department of Anthropology in 1975 as an archaeologist with the Tellico Archaeological Project. Since the Tellico material was coming to the museum, when the project ended in 1982, Chapman joined the museum staff as curator of archaeology. With the retirement of Parmalee in 1990, Chapman became director serving in that role until 2019.

Chapman believed that education is central to the mission of a museum. His first hire was a museum educator, creating a program that has provided learning experiences for thousands of school children and university students. Since 1990, the museum has been accredited three more times by the AAM; in 1994, 2001, and 2012. In 2002, the McClung became a Smithsonian Affiliate. Chapman also established a museum membership program to increase private support.
The Board of Advisors was established in 1994. In 1995, the museum moved from the College of Arts and Sciences to Academic Affairs, where the director now reports to the Chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

By fiscal year 2012, the museum had eleven full-time, two part-time, and twenty-three part-time student employees; all but ten of these were funded by private money from annual giving and endowment income. In addition, sixty-six volunteers provided more than 2,500 hours of service, primarily as education docents.
With a museum in place, donations increased. As a general museum without a defined collections policy, the objects were diverse in materials and provenance. Between 1962 and 1970, Mr. and Mrs. John L. Greer donated thirty-one bound volumes and loose folios of hand colored lithographs of birds by John Gould, the British contemporary of John James Audubon. This collection formed the foundation for later gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Joel E. Rynning and Graham Arader, creating a premier collection of over 3,000 antique ornithological prints. In 2003, Simone and Alan Hartman of New York
City donated seventy-two pieces of Chinese Tang Dynasty (AD 618–907) art, strengthening the museum’s Asian collections. Costumes, ethnographic objects from around the world, furniture, paintings, decorative arts, tools, weapons, archival material, silver, postcards, architectural elements, and many other objects found their way through gift and bequest to the museum’s collections. Provenanced archaeological collections numbering in the thousands of specimens from individual donors continued to come to the museum.

In 1987, the museum acquired the Samuel Joseph Platt Medical Collection, which was transferred from the Knoxville Academy of Medicine. The Bonham Room was converted to a mock nineteenth- to early twentieth-century doctor’s office to display some of the objects. Numbering in the thousands of items, and lacking a curator with medical knowledge, in 1999 the museum transferred the collection to the Museum at Mountain Home in affiliation with the Quillen College of Medicine in Johnson City, Tennessee.

In its recurring accreditations by the AAM, the collections’ care, focus, and policies were forefront. The addition of a registrar brought inventories and the development of an electronic collections management system. The museum also became more selective in what it chose to accept into its collections. Recognizing the care and cost required in maintaining textiles, the McClung transferred the Grace Moore Collection to the Tennessee State Museum in 2008. In 2001, the McClung acquired off-site storage in the university’s Middlebrook facility.
The museum collections are best appreciated by the results of our inventory and database. There are 948 separate accession records that comprise 25,517 objects. With few exceptions, these are all items that have been donated to the museum. This number does not include the archaeological, paleobotanical, or malacology collections that number in the millions of specimens.

The McClung Museum collections have been a greatly used source of illustrations for textbooks, art books, archaeological and historic monographs, and various video productions. The kneeling, prehistoric Native American sandstone effigy figure, was featured on a US postage stamp in 2004. Parts of the archaeological collections have been loaned to a number of major museums including the Art Institute of Chicago, National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Detroit Institute of Arts, St. Louis Art Museum, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The effigy figure has even traveled to the Musées Royaux d’Art et d’Histoire in Brussels, Belgium.
Since June 1963, the McClung has welcomed over 1.4 million visitors and has installed 160 special temporary exhibitions, in addition to long-term exhibitions, that reflect the McClung’s mission. Artistic and scientific endeavors from all times and all parts of the globe, even the moon, have been represented. Topics have spanned historical, zoological, botanical, geological, archaeological, anthropological, paleontological, mechanical, and electrical discoveries and inventions.
The main exhibition gallery has undergone various configurations. Initially, multiple temporary exhibits were installed in the gallery. In 1978, the Audigier collection, comprising roughly 5,000 decorative art objects, postcards, and photographs, was moved to the museum, with select objects put on display. In 1984, curator Elaine Evans installed an exhibition on burial practices in ancient Egypt in the second floor hall cases. The exhibit’s popularity, combined with the purchase of more than 150 ancient Egyptian artifacts from the Toledo Museum of Art in 1991, prompted plans to install a larger, permanent Ancient Egypt exhibition.

As a result, the Audigier gallery was converted to house the permanent exhibition *Ancient Egypt: The Eternal Voice*, which continues in that location. Many Audigier pieces were subsequently installed in the permanent exhibition *The Decorative Experience* that opened in 1995 and was refurbished in 2010. The largest temporary exhibition...
hosted by the museum was the 1999 exhibition *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur*, which was rented from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology and completely occupied both the main exhibition gallery and the Decorative Arts gallery.

After this exhibition, the gallery was further subdivided to accommodate two permanent exhibitions: *Archaeology and the Native Peoples of Tennessee*, and *Geology and Fossil History of Tennessee*. Other permanent exhibitions that continue at the museum are: *Human Origins: Searching for our Fossil Ancestors* (2004); *Treasures Past and Present: Freshwater Mussels* (2005); *Selections from the Museum’s Antique Bird*
The museum’s exhibits have received forty-five awards of excellence and commendation from the Tennessee Association of Museums and the Southeast Museums Conference.

The museum website, mcclungmuseum.utk.edu, was launched in 1997. More recently, the museum has become active on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.
The archaeological collections curated at the museum are enormous and contain cultural materials spanning the past 15,000 years in Tennessee. Since 1974, there have been seventy-five theses or dissertations and numerous journal articles, professional papers, and scientific monographs prepared using data from the collections. With the addition in 1999 of Lynne Sullivan as curator of archaeology, collections usage and organization was greatly enhanced. Photographs of objects appear in textbooks, art books, videos, and other publications and media in the US and Europe. The McClung
has received grants from the National Science Foundation and Save America’s Treas-
ures federal program.

Gerald Dinkins assumed curatorial responsibility for the Parmalee Malacology
Collection in 2007. This important collection continues to grow and attract students,
state and federal scientists, and other researchers from throughout the eastern US.

Under Gary Crites, the paleoethnobotanical collections also have grown and been
systematically curated. At present, 8,100 catalog numbers for archaeologically recov-
ered plant remains from 112 sites in fourteen states have been assigned. Data from
these collections have been used in theses and dissertations, as well as for scientific
identification reference.
Under director Chapman, a major effort began to establish a private funding base for museum operations. As a university building, insurance, utilities, and maintenance are covered by central administration. The museum receives an annual appropriation, at first from the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and after 1995, from the chancellor in Academic Affairs. This appropriation covered the salaries and benefits of full time staff, as well as a small operations budget. As museum operations, the price of exhibition installations, and the need for additional staff and student help have increased, so too have the need for funds. A museum membership program began in 1990 and sponsorships were sought for all temporary and permanent exhibitions. Endowments were sought through planned giving; as of June 30, 2013, there were nine endowments with a market value in excess of $3.4 million.
In Fall 2011, the museum engaged Jason McNeal and Gonser Gerber LLP, to prepare and conduct an exploratory campaign planning survey. Of the primary recommendations emerging from this survey, the need to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the McClung was tantamount. Beginning in the spring of 2012, more than thirty university and community leaders began a yearlong strategic planning process. The Museum Advisory Board approved the resulting plan on January 15, 2013.
The plan established three aspirations: (1) to be a nationally-recognized museum in support of the university’s strategic efforts to become a Top 25 public research institution; (2) to be an accessible institution that provides leadership for cultural and natural history education in our region; and (3) to be an institution that strengthens its engagement of volunteer leaders, enhances donor and other constituent involvement, and increases financial services.

Within each of these aspirations were a series of goals and measurable objectives with identified markers and dates.

The strategic plan will guide the McClung Museum into the future. One objective has already been achieved that members of the Museum Planning Committee in the 1950s would applaud: On March 1, 2013, the University Board of Trustees voted to better define the mission of the museum to the public. As a result, the museum’s name has been officially modified to the McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture.

As the McClung Museum enters its next fifty years, it will continue to be a crucial institution of the University of Tennessee, the local community, and the nation through the fostering of education, ideas, creativity, research, and public service.