

Now & Then in Ripon ... Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society

Antiquities are a legacy of former RC professor

Ripon College holds a significant collection of antiquities thanks to Edward W. Clark (1868-1949), who served as professor of Latin and Roman archaeology at the college from 1895-1909.

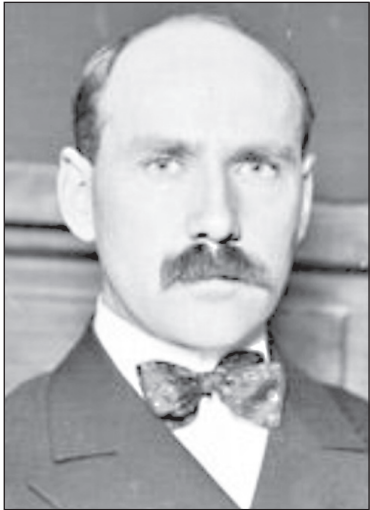
He purchased his collection while on sabbatical in Italy during the 1904-05 academic year.

Among his various artifacts are Classical Greek, Etruscan, and Hellenistic vases, wine pourers, oil containers; Greek, Villanovan and Iron Age bronze artifacts; Roman glass vessels; Roman oil lamps; and Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets. These artifacts remain a treasure to the Ripon community today.

About Edward Clark

Edward Clark moved to Ripon to be a professor. Here he pioneered a hands-on method of teaching about the ancient world. It was Clark's opinion that the learning of the classics could only be truly successful through the use of the laboratory method. If a student holds a relic or an artifact in their hands and learns the name of the piece in Latin or Greek, complete with an explanation of the piece's history, a lasting understanding and memory will occur. Today, this learning method is known to be true due to multisensory engagement that causes mind retention.

During his tenure, Clark presented his antiquities collection to students at Ripon College, local high school students and



Edward W. Clark

the broader Ripon community.

Clark also presented his collection to small communities throughout the Midwest. As his lectures gained in popularity, he was included on the staff of the *Chicago Daily News* lecturers.

At times, people numbering more than a thousand filled auditoriums to attend his lantern slide presentations and view images of his travels.

Following his time at Ripon College, Clark remained a lecturer on tour until 1910, when he became director of educational work in Rome for the Bureau of University Travel.

During his time in Rome, in March of 1912, Clark's wife Lottie died of Typhoid fever at the age of 44 and was buried in Rome. That same year, in November, Clark remarried Rhoda Hawley Stewart in New York. In 1916, Clark relocated to the

Los Angeles, Calif. area to become the principal of Venice High School. While there, he once again used the laboratory method of learning.

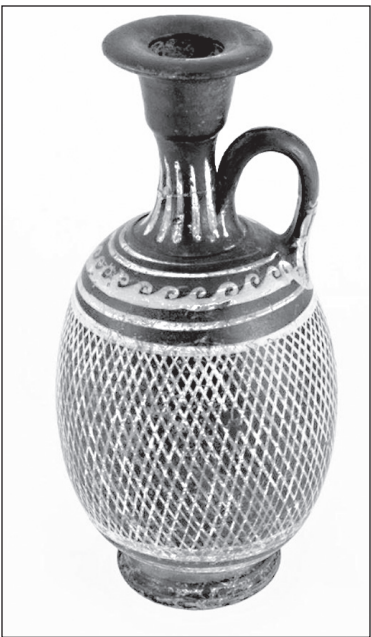
Clark also became the founder of the Latin Museum at Venice High School in the 1930s, causing the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to be the benefactor of a range of antiquities.

The Venice High School Latin Museum stood as the crowning achievement of Clark's career. Clark died in Santa Monica, Calif., in 1949.

To this day, in partnership with the University of South-



THESE ARE JUST some of the artifacts which make up the collection of former Ripon College professor Edward W. Clark at the campus' Lane Library.



ern California, pieces from the LAUSD Art and Artifacts Collection (some of which are Clark's) still are taken into area schools to provide students a hands-on experience with the evidence of people's lives in the ancient past.

Continuing the legacy

Clark's legacy and the practice of providing students an opportunity for hands-on experience also continues today at Ripon College. Much of Clark's collection is on display on the entrance level of the Lane Library, and is open to the public.

Adjunct Scholar of Museum Studies Caron Sisko designed a display with informative labeling and thematic groupings of artifacts. She also photographed and catalogued the collection for an online exhibit.

"The antiquities collection has an unfortunate history of periodically becoming marginalized and forgotten," said Sisko, who has a Master of Library and Information Science degree with a specialization in

archives.

Surprisingly, the collection was packed and hidden for decades in the attic of the Lane Library until 1995. In 1998, the collection was assessed by a conservator, photographed and featured in an online catalog.

Despite occasional use in classes, by 2021 the collection was disorganized and objects were missing. There also was no informative display. The online catalog, with photographs and research data, had become inaccessible. File formats needed updating.

"My hope is that, with the new exhibit and increased exposure online, the collection will remain a resource of enduring educational value for students, faculty and the community," Sisko said.

In keeping with Clark's practice of the laboratory method, a portion of the collection now has been set aside into "educational boxes" for classroom and broader educational use. Ripon College Professor Travis Nygard, who teaches art history and museum studies, said "this collection is a unique

asset that would be irreplaceable, as the trade of antiquities has slowed since the 1970s. My students love to be able to see these artifacts and hold something that is 1,000 years old."

In addition to use in college classes, the artifacts were recently shown to the Ripon Rotary and PEO club and the historical society hopes to host a program this year for the public at large to enjoy viewing the artifacts.

The public may visit the Lane Library and view the antiquities exhibit during regular operating hours Mondays to Fridays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The online exhibit may be viewed at www.artwork-archive.com/profile/riponcollege/collection/ripon-college-antiquities-collection.

The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wisconsin. It is open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information follow it at Facebook/riponhistory or www.riponhistory.org

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