



*Message from the Director*

Many of you have no doubt read and seen media reports concerning “missing” artifacts at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and State Museum. These reports have surfaced as a result of an audit released this past week by State Auditor General Jack Wagner. We are pleased that the Auditor General and his staff took the time to highlight several long term issues which were exacerbated by last year’s deep staff and budget cuts. We have had a plan in place to address many of our building and collections problems for nearly ten years, but while the money was authorized in a capital bill, it has not been released in spite of those improvements being the agency’s top priority since 2001.

As for “missing” artifacts, the auditors were, in some cases, reviewing un-reconciled inventory lists for specific collections created by our collections management between 1998 and 2008. Within minutes of the Auditor General’s October 28 press conference, staff located the reconciled inventories for one of those collections which verified the whereabouts of at least 300 artifacts on the “missing” list. Many more objects on the lists will be “found” as staff continues to reconcile the audit report lists.

In fact, some of the objects listed as missing may be among a large number of objects labeled with different numbers decades ago before today’s professional collections standards were established. In the words of our registrar Mary Jane Miller, “We’re dealing with 100 years of collecting and six or seven different inventory numbering systems used between 1905 and the present day. When you’ve got different generations of people trying to manage collections with different numbering systems, you’re bound to have gaps.”

Considering that The State Museum was recently reaccredited with high marks – particularly in collections management and storage – by the leading national museum organization, the American Association of Museums, we feel we are doing our level best to preserve and protect the treasures of the Commonwealth. Truly, your support of your State Museum is now more important than ever – and another treasure that we value highly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David W. Dunn".

David W. Dunn, Acting Director  
The State Museum of Pennsylvania