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National Museum of Natural History

MS 2014-03 Robert C. Mainfort, Jr. and
Mary L. Kwas papers on the Bat Creek stone

National Anthropological Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	MS 2014-03 Robert C. Mainfort, Jr. and Mary L. Kwas papers on the Bat Creek stone
Date:	1987-2005
Identifier:	NAA.MS2014-03
Creator:	Mainfort, Robert C., 1948- Kwas, Mary L.
Extent:	33 Items (0.33 linear feet (1 box))
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Provenance

These files were donated to the National Anthropological Archives by Mary L. Kwas and Robert C. Mainfort in 2014.

Other Archival Materials

The Bat Creek stone (Accession A134902-0) and a cast (Accession A134902A-0) are held by the Department of Anthropology Collections, National Museum of Natural History. The records of the Mound Survey, MS 2400, are at the National Anthropological Archives.

Citation

Manuscript 2014-03, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical / Historical

The Bat Creek stone is a small inscribed rock that was reportedly excavated from an undisturbed burial mound at Bat Creek in Loudon County, Tennessee, by John W. Emmert, a Smithsonian field assistant for the Bureau of American Ethnology Mound Survey. Cyrus Thomas, director of the Mound Survey, claimed the marks resembled Cherokee syllabary in his publication, "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology" (1894). In 1970, Cyrus Gordon, a Semitic languages scholar, identified the marks as Paleo-Hebrew. The tablet has since been cited (most notably by J. Huston McCulloch) as evidence of Precolumbian contacts between the Old World and New World. Robert C. Mainfort, Jr. and Mary L. Kwas refuted this claim in their 2004 article in *American Antiquity* 69(4), "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed." According to Mainfort and Kwas, evidence suggests that the inscription is a forgery, likely perpetrated by John W. Emmert.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains Robert C. Mainfort, Jr. and Mary L. Kwas' research files for their article "The Bat Creek Stone Revisited: A Fraud Exposed." The files include a copy of their article, correspondence, notes from archival and bibliographic research, and reference sources.

Local Numbers

NAA MS 2014-03

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Hoaxes
- Indians of North America
- Indians of North America -- Transatlantic influences

Cultures:

- Indians of North America

Types of Materials:

- Correspondence
- Research

Names:

- Emmert, John W., 1842-1917

Places:

- Tennessee -- Antiquities