



Smithsonian

*National Museum of the American Indian*

Henry L. Ferguson object and excavation  
photographs from Fishers Island

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Museum of the American Indian
<b>Title:</b>	Henry L. Ferguson object and excavation photographs from Fishers Island
<b>Date:</b>	1934 Undated
<b>Identifier:</b>	NMAI.AC.150
<b>Creator:</b>	Ferguson, Henry L.
<b>Extent:</b>	17 Negatives (photographic)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	This collection includes photographic negatives taken by Henry Lee Ferguson in 1934 of an archaeological excavation and accompanying artifacts on Fishers Island, New York.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Gift of Henry Lee Ferguson, 1936.

### Processing Information

Collection record written by Mikaela Hamilton, Archives Center intern, in 2020.

### Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; 1934; Henry L. Ferguson object and excavation photographs from Fishers Island; image #, NMAI.AC.150; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archives Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: [nmaiarchives@si.edu](mailto:nmaiarchives@si.edu)).

Restricted: N21127-N21130 are restricted due to cultural sensitivity.

### Conditions Governing Use

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## Biographical / Historical

Henry Lee Ferguson (Henry L. Ferguson) was born on March 28, 1881 in Fairfield, Connecticut. He married Marion Benner (1890-1982) and had one son named Charles Benner Ferguson (1918-2018). Ferguson's father and uncle purchased Fishers Island in 1889 to develop it as a seasonal resort. Henry L. Ferguson therefore grew up on Fishers Island, and became interested in its history and wildlife. From 1912 through the 1920s, Ferguson collected 63 species of birds native to Fishers Island. Also beginning in 1912, although having no formal training in archaeology, Ferguson began to collect Native American artifacts with his friends Harold J. Baker, Blair S. Williams, and William Shirley Fulton.

In 1929, he began to carry out archaeological excavations on the island. In 1935, Ferguson published a summary report of his findings for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation (NMAI's predecessor museum), of which he had become a trustee. The report was titled "Archeological Exploration of Fishers Island, New York" (available at NMAI, and online on the Henry L. Ferguson Museum's website). The report notes that "possibly the results to date lack full scientific value, as proper records have not been kept." However, Ferguson's efforts served to generate interest in the archaeological record of Fishers Island. George G. Heye, Director of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, remarked that "Due to the enthusiasm and perseverance of Mr. Henry L. Ferguson, it is now made possible to present...[a] report of an island culture off the Eastern coast of the United States." The Henry L. Ferguson Museum, dedicated in 1961, houses a variety of birds and archaeological artifacts collected by Ferguson, in addition to artifacts collected during modern excavations. Ferguson died at Lawrence Memorial Hospital in New London, Connecticut on February 23, 1959, at age 77.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection is currently unprocessed. Negatives include N20924-N20936, N21127-N21130.

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## Arrangement

Arranged by catalog number.

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

Places:

New York (State) -- Long Island  
United States of America -- New York -- Suffolk County -- Fishers Island