

MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

FOUNDED BY JULIUS ROSENWALD

57th STREET AND LAKE MICHIGAN

JACKSON PARK - CHICAGO

TELEPHONE: PLAZA 8100

June 9, 1936

Miss Laura Gilpin
317 Cheyenne Road
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Dear Miss Gilpin:

Your letter of June 2nd has been received. I immediately instructed Mr. Block to have your collection of photographs taken down and returned to you in Colorado Springs.

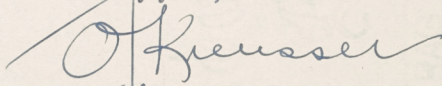
You will be interested to learn that during the exhibition (April 12th to June 8th) over 56,000 people visited the Museum. Quite incidentally, members of the staff picked up some very favorable comments upon the general excellence of your work and several collectors asked for your address at the information desk. Everything considered, we are pleased with the interest the public has shown in the exhibition.

We are enclosing a typewritten copy of the explanatory material accompanying the charts, maps, etc., shown in connection with your collection of Mayan photographs.

As time goes on, it is likely that your uses for the collection will give way to your newer work. When that time comes, we should like to have you consider sending us the prints for the Museum's collection. Even though they may be a bit shopworn, we can make good use of them in planning our exhibits of ancient architecture and textiles.

With appreciation and kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,



O. T. Kreusser
Director

OTK/nm
Enc.

June 9, 1936

Labels used in Connection with an Exhibit of Photographs
by Laura Gilpin of Mayan Architecture at Chichen Itzá,
Yucatan

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ARCHITECTURE OF PREHISTORIC AMERICA

MAYAN MASTERPIECES FIVE TO EIGHT CENTURIES OLD

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AN EXHIBITION OF
PHOTOGRAPHS

by

LAURA GILPIN
COLORADO SPRINGS

of

RUINS AT
CHICHEN ITZÁ
YUCATAN

On Exhibition April, May, and June

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A large map showing centers of Mayan Indian civilization. This map of Mexico, including part of the United States and of Central America, showed, in different colors, the Old Mayan Empire in southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras, and the New Mayan Empire in Yucatan, with particular reference to the location of Chichen Itzá and the dates of its occupation.

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A large colored diagrammatic Air View of Chichen Itzá, Yucatan, The Mecca of Ancient America. This drawing, based on an aerial photograph by Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, showed the locations of the Ball Court, the Castillo, the Temple of the Warriors and the Group of the Thousand Columns, the Caracol (Observatory), and the Casa de las Monjas.

Descriptive Labels

EARLY INDIAN CIVILIZATIONS

Where the Indians
came from

The first Americans were nomadic tribes who came from north-eastern Asia by way of the Bering Straits where the continents are separated by less than forty miles of water, bridged during the winter by a solid mass of ice. Pushed by successive waves of migrations, lasting several centuries, these tribes gradually moved southward and scattered throughout the two continents. From among them grew up several civilizations.

Pueblos A.D. 700

The Pueblos of the Southwest built apartment buildings seven stories high.

Incas A.D. 1200

The Incas in South America created a great political empire, built an extensive system of roads, and wrought beautiful objects in precious metals.

Mayas

600 B.C.-A.D. 1450

Toltecs A.D. 800

Aztecs A.D. 1500

In Mexico, the Mayas, most brilliant of all, erected monumental buildings and perfected a calendar. They were eventually absorbed in the empire of the Toltecs, and then dominated by the warlike Aztecs who remained in power until conquered by the Spaniards.

(This label included a map of the North and South American continents, with arrows showing direction and extent of migrations).

THE MAGNIFICENT MAYAS

Greatest of prehistoric Indians were the Mayas. Gradually moving southward from the plateau of central Mexico, they established, in Guatemala and Honduras, the Old Mayan Empire. Enduring for many centuries (see table below), this empire included Palenque in southern Mexico, Copan in Honduras, and Tikal and Uaxactun in Guatemala.

Moving northward into Yucatan, probably because their soil had become exhausted, they founded, in the fourth century, the New Empire. Its principal cities were Chichen Itzá, Mayapan, and Uxmal. The Ancient Mayas were great mathematicians and astronomers. Their calendar, based on their remarkable astronomical knowledge, was more accurate than anything known in Europe.

PERIODS OF MAYAN HISTORY

Prehistoric Period - beginning of the
calendar - 613B.C. - A.D. 176
Early Period) The A.D. 176-A.D. 375
Middle Period) old 373-471
Great Period) Empire 471-629
Transition Period - the "Dark Ages" -
629 - 964

Period of the League of Mayapan
A.D. 964-A.D. 1191
Period of Mexican Influence - the great
period of architecture - 1191 - 1487
Modern Period - the decline of
Mayan civilization - 1487 - the present

(This label included a diagram showing how the Mayas observed the change of seasons.)

CHICHEN ITSÁ, YUCATAN

The ancient Mayan city shown in these photographs. During the seventh century the old Mayan empire was abandoned; and a new empire grew up on the peninsula of Yucatan. It is a land without rivers, and cities grew up where large natural wells had been formed in the cavernous limestone. Chichen Itsá, which had been but a provincial city of the Old Empire, assumed importance because it had two such wells. One was used for water supply - the other held sacred and used for human sacrifice.

"Chi" in Maya means mouths. "Chen" means wells. Itsá was the name of a Mayan tribe - thus Chichen Itsá (pronounced chee-chee-eet-zah') -- "The mouth of the Wells of the Itsa."

This sacred city was occupied from A.D. 452 to 668, abandoned, and reoccupied in 964. In the year 1000 a triple alliance was formed with Uxmal and Mayapan. From 1201 until abandoned in 1448 the city was held in thrall by Toltec-Aztec allies. That period produced the great building boom, results of which are shown in the photographs.

(This label included a colored drawing of Kukulcan, the legendary founder of Chichen Itsá).

MAYAN CONSTRUCTION

The great Mayan buildings were faced with smooth or cut stones. Behind this outer facing was a fill of broken limestone or rubble mixed with lime mortar. Practically all monumental buildings stood upon pyramidal substructures with long steep stone stairways.

The Maya architects did not understand the principle of the true arch and used a false arch, as shown in the sketch, consisting of a series of overlapping stone courses. This requires a great mass of masonry for support and results in narrow interiors. Later, wood beamed roofs were used, though few remain intact, owing to the decay of the wood. The buildings were richly ornamented with sculpture naturalistically colored. Stone cutting was done with stone tools.

Private dwellings were built of wood, thatched with palm leaves, with walls sometimes covered with adobe.

(This label included a diagrammatic section showing the construction of the Mayan false arch).