

# Menkaef

Impact ID: IMP00032

Institution: Wayne County Historical Museum

Designation:

Date of Acquisition: 1930

Contact:

Image Modality: CT

Country: Egypt

Dig Site: Thebes

Time Period: Third Intermediate Period

Dynasty: 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty

Date: 1116-822 BC

Sex: Male

Age: 35-49 years old



Figure 1. Mummy's display at WCHM

## Background:

In 1929, Mrs. William Gaar travelled to Egypt with the intent to purchase a mummy to bring back to Richmond, Indiana (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). When purchasing the mummy from well-known E. Hatoun, Mrs. Gaar was told it was the remains of an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty princess and had come from the Valley of Kings near Thebes and had been at the shop for 40 years (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). She reportedly paid \$3000 for the mummy and an additional \$350 for shipping to Richmond (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). The mummy arrived in Richmond in 1930, the same year the building for the historical museum was purchased (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). When Mrs. Gaar inspected the mummy upon arrival, she realized that Egyptian authorities had opened the mummy's wrappings in a destructive attempt to look for hidden jewellery or amulets in the wrappings before it was shipped to America (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

In 1974, the mummy was sent to Reid Memorial Hospital to be x-rayed (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). These x-rays proved it was a real mummy and contained a complete skeleton of an adult individual, but the bones were out of anatomical order, making further analysis difficult

(McClelland Sampsell, 2010). Many events in the mummy's history could have led to the dishevelment, including standing upright at the shop for 40 years, being invasively searched by Egyptian authorities, and the shipment from Cairo to Richmond if not treated fragily (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). These x-rays also did not reveal any amulets or jewellery in the wrappings, which are found in most mummies (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

In 1993, a special Egyptian Gallery was constructed inside the historical museum to feature the mummy among the other Egyptian artifacts in the museum's possession (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

In 2000, the mummy was sent back to Reid Hospital for a CT scan instead of x-rays (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). This CT scan informed the museum that all the soft tissue of the mummy had actually disintegrated, likely due to incomplete desiccation before wrapping, and as a result the connective tissue holding bone in place is no longer there, allowing them to fall out of place (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

In 2006, the Egyptian Gallery was redesigned and turned into the exhibit called *Life and Death in Ancient Egypt* (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

In 2007, Dr. Azza Sarry el-Din, a physical anthropologist at the National Research Center in Cairo studied the scans and pictures of the unwrapped skull and determined the mummy was likely a male between the ages of 30-35 years old (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). This disagrees with what the museum has thought since the mummy arrived, showing the coffin and mummy do not actually match (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

In 2009, Mrs. Brenda Robertson Stewart performed a facial reconstruction on a model of the WCHM mummy's skull (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). Before completing the reconstruction, Mrs. Stewart arranged for several physical anthropologists from the University of Indianapolis to examine the skull (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). These anthropologists concluded it was of a man, but between the ages of 35-49 years old (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). During this examination two samples of linen, a rib bone sample, and a cartilage sample were taken for radiocarbon dating (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). This examination discovered an odd cross of sticks wrapped in linen that had never been seen before amongst the loose bones, the anthropologists concluded it was intended to prop the body up (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). The two linen samples dated to 926-836 BC and 975-845 BC, while the rib bone dated to 915-822 BC and the cartilage sample 1116-941 BC (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). Since the mummification itself appears to be done cheaply, with no excerebration and rushed pace causing partial desiccation, it is believed the family may have purchased a coffin going out of style for a cheaper price than it once was (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). Since the museum was under the impression the mummy was that of a female for most of its known history, the reconstruction was done for a female (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). Since the true name of the mummy was lost, the museum allowed visitors to help pick a name when the reconstructed head was put on display, they chose Menkaef (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

The lid of the coffin shows a woman with a wide collar of beads and flowers, which is distinctive for Priests and Priestesses of the Third Intermediate Period at the Temple of Amun in

ancient Thebes, which became popular in the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty and beginning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). Dr. Andrzej Niwinski, an expert on coffins of this historical period, told the Wayne County Historical Museum the coffin was made in or near Thebes in the early part of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Dynasty, likely between 900 and 870 BC (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). The area on top of the feet was left blank, where the name of the individual should be, indicating the coffin was made ahead of time for someone to purchase and the name would be painted once bought, but this did not happen (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

The mask of this mummy does not match the coffin or the mummy inside. Dr. Lorilei Corcoran dated the fine cartonnage mask to 1<sup>st</sup> century BC or 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the end of the Ptolemaic Period and beginning of the Roman Period, known as the Greco-Roman Period (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). Mrs. Gaar reported that she bought the mummy and coffin together and the mask separately, but it is unknown if she intended to put the mask on the mummy when purchasing it (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). Museum staff speculates if she placed the mask on the mummy when realizing how much damage the Egyptian authorities cause the mummy has always been displayed wearing the mask at WCHM (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

#### Pathological Features:

There are no signs of injury or fatal disease on the skeleton, meaning the cause of death is unknown (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). His dental health was very poor, which is typical of ancient Egyptians. He had lost many teeth during his life and the remaining ones show severe wear patterns (McClelland Sampsell, 2010). The delicate nasal bones are still intact, so the brain was not removed at all, let alone by a transnasal craniotomy which is the most common method (McClelland Sampsell, 2010).

## References

McClelland Sampsell, B. 2010. An Introduction to the Egyptian Gallery at the Wayne County Historical Museum. Report prepared for the Wayne County Historical Museum in Richmond, Indiana.