

**THE REMOVAL OF ANTIQUITIES FROM NICARAGUA
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE CASE OF EARL FLINT**

David E. Whisnant
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Latin American Studies Association
Atlanta, Georgia
March 10-12, 1994

Two of the more disquieting qualities of modernism, James Clifford has observed, are "its taste for appropriating or redeeming otherness," and its concomitant tendency to remain quite oblivious to the politics of the enterprise. What Clifford has called "the restless desire and power of the West to collect the world" was evident in Latin America from the conquest onward.¹ The *conquistador* Gaspar de Espinosa looted graves in Panama as early as 1519.² The splendid feathered headdress of Moctezuma now exhibited in the Museum of Anthropology and History in Mexico City is a replica; the original ended up in a museum in Vienna.

The first special purpose museum buildings appeared at the end of the seventeenth century.³ In the modern era museums proliferated rapidly through a process formally held to be in the disinterested service of an undifferentiated "humanity," but which was in fact intensely value-driven, political, and markedly unequal in its assessment of costs and allocation of benefits. In the late nineteenth century especially, national museum collections served as concrete evocations of the remote cultures being dominated, as measures of the value of the "higher" home culture to which the dominated cultures had made "contributions," and thus as warrants of imperial power. Intensely competitive collecting expeditions swelled storerooms and exhibit rooms, and magnificent cultural treasures anchored the burgeoning collections.⁴

Occupying a special niche in politics of this process were the post-1830s European ethnological museums.⁵ The advent of the "museum age" in the 1870s saw the opening of new ones in Rome, in Bremen, Leipzig, Hamburg, Berlin and Dresden, in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Hague, in Stockholm and Oslo. The new German empire committed major resources to the Prussian Museum für Völkerkunde, which in 1886 opened the world's first major museum building devoted to anthropology and ethnography. By the end of the century it had assembled the largest ethnographic collection in the world.⁶

Such developments were a special threat to the cultures of small, poor countries, which usually lacked any museum at all, had few if any native archaeologists or ethnographers, and had enacted little if any protective legislation.

Although located outside the pre-conquest "high culture" areas to the north and south that drew far more archaeological attention, Nicaragua nevertheless had abundant cultural treasures.⁷ Those treasures came to attention of museum-linked collectors at the fortuitous conjunction of Nicaragua's emergence into strategic importance as an interoceanic route after 1848, the advent of the "museum age," and the emergence of ethnology and anthropology as scientific disciplines.

Nicaraguan antiquities caught the attention of collectors as early as 1838, and the first of its stone monoliths was shipped the next year to Vienna's Museum für Völkerkunde.⁸ In less than a half-century, Nicaragua saw vast quantities of irreplaceable archaeological artifacts shipped from its shores in a process that was awesome in its finality, but whose social, political and cultural meanings and implications remain unsettled even yet.

Science, Nationalism and Ideology in the Collecting Enterprise

From currently available data, one can tentatively conclude that between the late 1830s and the end of the nineteenth century, at least a half-dozen major collectors representing as many museums in the United States and Europe worked systematically in Nicaragua. An unknown number of other collectors, dealers, and grave robbers also plied their trades but left no record of their activities. Here I wish to focus on Dr. Earl Flint, who lived and collected in Nicaragua longer than any of them--first for the Smithsonian and then for Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.⁹ Flint, who by the mid-seventies had lived in Granada for more than twenty years, began sending antiquities to the Smithsonian at least as early as 1869.¹⁰ Unable to match the European museums' funding or modern facilities, or mount elaborate collecting expeditions, the Smithsonian relied upon a series of volunteer collaborators, of whom Flint was one.

Although Flint said later that "What little I have done was out of love for the thing," he in fact both resented the financial sacrifices necessitated by his volunteer work for the Smithsonian, and felt caught in the sordid politics of a burgeoning collecting system.¹¹ A lucrative market was developing for things that "have cost me much time and trouble to collect and money besides," Flint wrote to Secretary Henry, alluding obliquely to "what I have been offered for these antiquities." "What I have sent [the museum] I could have sold for a good price," he told Baird, adding later that "Many times was I tempted to sell my collections, as they pay good prices for them here--the French pay well & have [driven?] the price up."¹²

For Flint the personal costs of the enterprise continued to mount. Noting that local residents were digging feverishly into the best untouched sites, he pleaded to be provided with "funds . . . to collect all I can, doing nothing else, for four or five years." Meanwhile the market continued to beckon; "I could get \$200 from the Frenchman" for a single stone found on the trip, he told Baird.¹³ In mid-1877 the Smithsonian's Spencer Baird replied that the museum had no money to keep Flint employed as a collector, suggesting that the Peabody Museum had more. Within weeks, Peabody director Frederic W. Putnam had offered to

employ Flint for \$200 per month.¹⁴ Shifting from the Smithsonian to the Peabody Museum proved much less advantageous financially than he had hoped, however. Repeatedly he wrote to Putnam asking for more money to do the work, but the tight-fisted Bostonian museum managers were intent on getting the maximum yield for minimum outlay; a decade later Flint was still complaining of his "Peabody poverty."¹⁵ Nevertheless, Flint collected assiduously for the museum for nearly twenty years. Frustrated by having to "leave mounds unopened for lack of time," he continued to ship cases of artifacts, and promised Putnam that "If you want enough to fill your museum from floor to ceiling, all you have to do is to find the means."¹⁶

Although the museum-linked collectors saw their work as disinterested and scientific--as simply in the service of a generic and apolitical "greater understanding," as benefitting an undifferentiated "humanity" in undifferentiated ways, even the most scientific and disinterested of them worked within particular ideologies, and in the service of particular centers of power. Hence considerations of class, gender, race, state, power, and (very frequently) empire were amply in evidence in their work (cf. Greenfield 1989:232ff.). The process illuminates some aspects of the cultural politics of great-power expansiveness, of arguments over human origins and cultural development, and of an emerging ideology of science.

These larger politics of the museum-building enterprise are clearly evident in Flint's endeavors. Although he preferred to see himself as working unselfishly and disinterestedly "For the benefit of mankind," the unsavory truth was, as he became increasingly aware, that the process was ridden with corrosive competitiveness, suspicion, personal jealousy, and nationalistic pride.¹⁷ "The fact is," Flint himself admitted in the early months of his collecting for the Peabody Museum, "[I] am afraid of competitors . . . [and] selfish in wishing to be the first one in. . . . [I] am also jealous of collections going to Europe."¹⁸

His enterprise beset with multiple impediments, Flint was unable to hold himself completely above the politics of the larger enterprise. "[I] offered a very intelligent guide at Teustepe any price to find a vase entire and cure his wife in the bargain," he told Putnam. "He found one small one and so I cured his wife and gave him 40 cts--got off cheap. But the jar is unique."¹⁹ More difficult to deal with were the local people for whom artifacts retained spiritual value. Toward the end of his first year's work for the Peabody, Flint told Putnam that the "superstitious fears of . . . natives [determined to] preserve their relics" made it difficult to visit some of the sites found for him by local people. One cave visited seventeen years earlier by a priest who tried to "conjure away the evil spirits" was still "held in awe by the ignorant," he reported.²⁰

Complicating Subtexts

Whatever his commitment to relieving human suffering or advancing scientific knowledge about human origins, Flint's own life in Nicaragua was entangled in the contradictions common to most of those who go from rich countries to seek their fortunes in poor ones.

At the same time that Flint was helping museums "save" some pieces of Nicaragua, he was trying to carve out his own little private piece of it. In 1872, he bought a large tract of land and attempted (as many others were doing at the time) to remove the *campesinos* who were living on it--in his view, as "squatters".²¹ His efforts mired him in a series of expensive lawsuits, debilitating him and distracting him from his primary obligations: to raise his growing family, maintain his medical practice, ship antiquities northward, and seek recognition as a scientific archaeologist.²²

Thus Flint's increasingly agitated appeals to the museums for money must be seen as arising both from a commitment to scientific archaeology and from the growing debt deriving from his land venture. Similarly, his demonstrable debilitation over the years must be understood as the result of both his aging and fatigue from his actual work on the one hand, and the enervating encounter with its contradictions on the other. As the years passed, more and more doctors set up their practices, and as Flint was absent more and more on collecting trips, his patients deserted him. By early 1880 his debts forced him to mortgage his house and rent it out.²³ The older he got, the more the legal costs for the lawsuits mounted, and the constant struggle fatigued him. To make matters worse, the supply of antiquities was drying up. "My life is embittered," Flint at length admitted, "I am getting old and rusty. Don't make any more [collecting] excursions."²⁴ His eyesight failing and his handwriting increasingly shaky, Flint shipped his last little batch of specimens to the Peabody Museum in late March, 1899: a few pebbles from the beach, a ceremonial pendant, and a clay whistle from the much-worked island of Ometepe.²⁵

Earl Flint was more candid than most other collectors, but the motives, anxieties and fears, and jealousies he confessed to were broadly characteristic of all of the major collectors who worked in Nicaragua: the Smithsonian's E. George Squire, Carl Hermann Berendt, J. F. Bransford, and Charles Nutting; the British Museum's Thomas Boyle; and the Royal Swedish Museum's Carl Bovallius.²⁶

Alternative Scenarios

The story of Earl Flint's collecting invites attention to larger political and ethical questions: Upon what grounds, if any, may a nation state lay claim to artifacts that predate the existence of the state itself? Whose interests, defined how and by whom, are most likely to be served by museum-focused cultural conservation and preservation? And what are the larger social, political and cultural implications of those "contested encodings of past and future" which inform all such enterprises?²⁷

What would have happened if foreign museums, dealers and grave robbers had left Nicaragua's aboriginal artifacts alone is impossible to say. At the very least, had the museums not called attention to them and thus helped to stimulate the market, the dealers and grave robbers would likely not have pursued their depredations so urgently, thus presumably leaving more undisturbed sites for future investigation.²⁸

The records that remain suggest, in any case, that Nicaragua's antiquities were most often removed by simple and mostly unopposed means. Opposition from local people for whom the objects still had religious, cultural, or political significance appears to have been sporadic and largely ineffectual. Official opposition was even rarer, apparently, and also of little effect. In February 1852 an official of the Nicaraguan government complained to the U.S. *chargé d'affaires* that the Atlantic Pacific Canal Company, operating under contract to the U.S. government, was destroying "the Old Castle" at San Juan del Norte and reusing materials from it "without even having the courtesy to advise the Supreme Government." Even after the U.S. promised to investigate, the depredations continued, and the Nicaraguan government complained to the *chargé* again about the "scandalous . . . violence which was committed under International Law without any motive whatever," and promised to "make proclamation of [our] rights in all the civilized nations of the world . . . notwithstanding [our] debility in opposition to the strength with which [we are] threatened and cannot resist."²⁹

As Flint learned, the country's few protective laws were easily circumvented. "Father is trying to get out a couple of idols ere they are prohibited," his son wrote to Putnam in the spring of 1883, enclosing a letter from the Nicaraguan government informing Flint that since President Chamorro's government could not at present give him a license to remove the statues from the Solentiname islands, but would inform him should there be any change in policy.³⁰ But within a month, Flint had talked his old friend President Chamorro into giving him permission to remove the statues.

Chamorro's object in refusing at first, Flint reported, "was to establish a museum here, and in the meantime prevent the indiscriminate excavations for mercenary purposes."³¹ Meanwhile, Flint confided to Putnam, "The President hinted to me of his intention of [securing?] my work for commencing a new museum."³² "I told the President," Flint reported later, "that to establish a museum required a building, money and curator and that the latter were scarce, even in the states."³³

It would be too facile to assume, in any case, that had none of these processes of removal ensued, Nicaragua would have cherished and protected its own antiquities in what came (especially during the late nineteenth century) to be the accepted scientific (i.e., museum-based) manner.³⁴ As early as 1871, historian Pablo Levy lamented that in Nicaragua there were "no collections public or private, no astronomical observatory, no botanical garden. National antiquities [lie] buried, and there [is] no collection of them. There [are] no schools of art."³⁵ More than two decades later, President Zelaya began to consider forming a national museum.³⁶ Nicaragua's Industrial, Commercial and Scientific Museum was established in August 1897 and opened in 1900.³⁷ By the time the museum was renamed in 1902, the 3,500 or so items in its collection included minerals and mining machinery, medicinal plants and precious woods, agricultural and industrial products, live animals, and *bellas artes*, but apparently none of the preColumbian artifacts so avidly collected earlier in Nicaragua by foreign museums.³⁸

The years beyond the end of the Zelaya period brought hardly any improvement in the situation. Although large-scale removals by major foreign museums appear to have ceased by the 1890s, private collections swelled steadily with artifacts through the early decades of the twentieth century.³⁹ Zelaya's successor President Madríz had wanted to close the country's fledgling museum, but its director agreed to continue on as a caretaker on minimal salary.⁴⁰ He personally renovated for museum use a former school building (*La Momotombo*) located next to a women's prison and a military barracks. When Adolfo Díaz became president in 1911, the director went without salary for a year.⁴¹ During the war with Sandino (1927-33), when the government wanted to use *La Momotombo* as a hospital for Somoza's National Guard, the U.S. Marine Corps ordered the museum director to store the collection and move elsewhere. The museum later returned to *La Momotombo*, but the building was reduced to rubble by the earthquake of 1931. National neglect continued through the 1950s and 1960s. In 1968, the National Museum had a staff of only five and an annual budget of approximately \$2000 (compared to a \$54,000 budget for the military bands of the National Guard).⁴² Even an official tourist guide of 1971 admitted that the museum was located in an "inadequate" building and could not be considered "a true museum in the strict sense of the term" (Rizo 1971:68).⁴³

The museum acquired the best quarters it had ever had when Anastasio Somoza García renovated a modest house for its use in 1977 as a birthday gift to his wife, who for years had been rumored to be selling Nicaraguan archaeological artifacts through a boutique in Miami, and who in any case had separated from him the year before.⁴⁴ It remained for the Sandinista government to initiate the country's first serious museum program in 1979 (more than a century after Levy noted the lack). And that initiative quickly foundered in the social, economic, and cultural chaos of the contra war.⁴⁵

Hence Earl Flint's life in Nicaragua as medical doctor, collector of antiquities, aspiring scientific archaeologist, confidant of the powerful, and sadly inept entrepreneur offers suggestive insight into a complex and long-running historical-cultural process that reached into the rapidly filling storerooms of the world's most prestigious museums, and from thence to the seats of national power in whose service they were being filled.

NOTES

1. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 193-96.
2. Frederick Lange and Doris Z. Stone (eds.), *The Archaeology of Lower Central America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), p. 30.
3. J. Mordaunt Crook, *The British Museum* (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 19-32.

4. Jeanette Greenfield, *The Return of Cultural Treasures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 106ff. In *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974), pp. 198-201, Edward Miller enumerates some prime examples were the Elgin marbles, the head of Ramesses II, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, the Koh-i-noor diamond and the Benin bronzes in the British Museum; the frieze of the temple of Aegina in the Bavarian museum; the bust of Queen Nefretiti in Berlin; and the Assyrian sculptures of Khorsabad in the Louvre.

5. Ethnological museums had opened as early as 1837 in Leiden and St. Petersburg, and 1841 in Copenhagen.

6. Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), pp. 9-10.

7. Lange and Stone, *Archaeology of Lower Central America*, pp. 165-94; Frederick Lange, Frederick D. Sheets, Anibal Martinez, and Suzanne Abel-Vidor (eds.). 1992. *The Archaeology of Pacific Nicaragua* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992).

8. Edward Belcher, *Narrative of a Voyage Around the World Performed in Her Majesty's Ship Sulphur, During the Years 1836-1842* (2 vols., 1943; reprint. Folkestone and London: Dawson's of Pall Mall, 1970), I:165; R. E. Taylor and C. W. Meighan, *Chronologies of New World Archaeology* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), p. 395; Karl Anton Nowotny, "Ein Zentralamerikanischer Monolith aus dem Besitz von Emanuel von Friedrichsthal," *Archiv für Völkerkunde* 11 (1956):104-15 and 16 (1961):135-39. The monolith remains in the museum (item number 12592).

9. With regard to the collection of cultural artifacts from Central America, the Smithsonian was founded at a propitious moment. The Smithsonian bequest of 1829 came seven years after the initial Maya discoveries, and the museum's doors opened not many months before the rush of California-bound gold seekers brought intense attention to the region.

10. Nos. 7838-41, 17283-17304, 17321; mss. Museum Catalog: Anthropology, vol. 4; Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 305, Registrar, 1834-1958 (accretions to 1976), Accession Records [U.S. National Museum], Reel 38. Flint's letter of 19 Aug. 1876 (Flint to Spencer Baird, Accession 5213, Reel 43) refers to his "quarter century of residence" in Nicaragua, and in an undated letter (missing its first page) of approximately April 1877 (ibid.) he mentions having arrived "in this country in 1850." Flint continued to send artifacts to the Smithsonian at least until the fall of 1877. U.S. National Museum Accessions Record, Office of the Registrar 1834-June 1899, Reel 43, accessions 5157 and 5213, nos. 22076-87, 23266-95, 23276, 23293, 29001-13. Earl Flint, "Antiquities in Nicaragua," *American Antiquarian* 4 (1882):289-302, refers to other travels and archaeological studies in Colombia, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia and Peru.

11. Flint to Baird, 12 Jan. 1878, U.S. National Museum Accessions Record, Office of the Registrar 1834-June 1899, Reel 43. The American Antiquarian 11 (1889):388 warned its readers about "the great difference between a dealer in relics ("mere traffickers") and an intelligent collector."

12. Flint to Henry, 17 Apr. 1875; Flint to Baird, 8 May and 19 Mar. 1876. U.S. National Museum Accessions Record, Office of the Registrar 1834-June 1899, Reel 43.

13. Flint to Baird, 10 May 1877; U.S. National Museum Accession Record, Office of the Registrar 1834-June 1899, Reel 48, Accession file 6017. The identity of "the Frenchman"--mentioned several times by Flint--is never specified. The foreword to Henri Adrien Prevost Longpérier, *Notice des Monuments Exposés dans la Salle des Antiquités Américaines (Mexique et Pérou)* (Paris: Vichon, Imprimeur des Musées Nationaux, 1850), mentioned by Squier and cited above, mentions--but does not further identify--a number of French citizens who were collecting and writing about Latin American antiquities (which it called "the debris of the transatlantic civilization"), including the French consul in Lima. The Louvre was careful to point out that such objects "do not offer the strong interest that the monuments of Egypt owe to their intimate connection with our sacred history."

14. Baird to Flint, 14 June 1877, quoted in Flint to Putnam, 19 Sept. 1877, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology Accession File 78-42 (hereinafter cited as PMAE Accession File); Flint to Putnam, 17 Jan. 1878, *ibid.*; Flint to Putnam, 19 Nov. 1877, *ibid.* Flint noted that Dr. Bransford was currently charging \$300 per month. From 1879 until at least 1891, Flint worked as "Assistant in the Field" for the Peabody Museum (Twenty Third Report [1891] of the museum, p. 66). The museum's 1895-96 report noted (pp. 6-7) that Flint "several years ago" sent to the museum two of the "large sculptures" from Zapatera earlier described by Squier. The Peabody Museum continued to collect Nicaraguan archaeological artifacts as late as 1959, when Gordon R. Willey and Albert H. Norweb led an expedition (officially sanctioned by the Nicaraguan government) that brought back 64,000 specimens (mostly potsherds) (Paul F. Healy, *Archaeology of the Rivas Region, Nicaragua*. [Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980], pp. xxv-xxvi). One splendid Nicaraguan piece from the Peabody collection appears in Linda A. Newson, *Indian Survival in Colonial Nicaragua* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), following p. 206 (plate 4).

15. Flint to Putnam, 17 Jan. 1878, PMAE Accession File 78-42 and 27 Mar. 1889, PMAE Accession File 84-14.

16. Flint to Putnam, 18 Feb., 18 June, 16 July and 23 Nov., 1878; PMAE Accession File 78-42; Flint to Putnam, 20 May 1879, Peabody Museum Correspondence, Harvard University Archives, Box 2, Folder 1879 F-J; Flint to Putnam, 20 July 1879, PMAE Accession File 78-42; Flint to Putnam, 30 Feb. 1883; PMAE Accession File 83-72.

17. Flint to Baird, 16 Apr. 1877; Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 305, Registrar, 1834-1958 (accretions to 1976), Accession Records [U.S. National Museum], Reel 43, Accession 5157.

18. Flint to Putnam, 18 Feb. 1878; PMAE Accession File 78-42; cf. Flint to Putnam, 31 May 1878; PMAE Accession File 78-42.

19. Flint to Putnam, 18 June 1878, PMAE Accession File 78-42.

20. Flint to Putnam, 17 Sept. 79, PMAE Accession File 78-42.

21. Flint to Putnam, 12 May 1890; PMAE Accession File 99-43. Flint's efforts to possess and "clear" his land of the *campesinos* who were living on it were financially disastrous for him. He sued repeatedly; he appealed to the President; he asked the U.S. government for assistance; in desperation, he even tried to sell the land back to the Nicaraguan government. Flint to Putnam, 17 Dec. 1885, PMAE Accession File 86-2; 18 Mar. 1887, Frederic W. Putnam Papers, Harvard University Archives, Box 6.

22. At length a few of those contributions came to be recognized by the scientific community. Stone credits Flint with having identified the Tola pottery style, and presenting "the first scientific report on the human footprints of Acahualinca" near Managua (Lange and Stone, *Archaeology of Lower Central America*, pp. 25f.). Flint also supplied data to linguist Daniel G. Brinton, then engaged in the study of aboriginal American literature (Daniel G. Brinton, *The Güegüence; A Comedy Ballet in the Nahuatl-Spanish Dialect of Nicaragua* [1883; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1969], pp. x, xxxix, xli).

23. Flint to Putnam, 23 Nov. 1878, PMAE Accession File 78-42; 23 May 1880, PMAE Accession File 80-27; 9 Mar. 1881, PMAE Accession File 81-27; 21 Feb. 1882, PMAE Accession File 83-72; 17 Dec. 1885, PMAE Accession File 86-2.

24. Flint to Putnam, 17 Dec. 1885; PMAE Accession File 86-2.; Flint to Putnam, 9 Sept. 1886, PMAE Accession File 86-2.; Flint to Putnam, 12 May and 18 Aug. 1890, PMAE Accession File 99-43.

25. Flint to Putnam, 28 Mar. 1899, PMAE Accession File 99-43.

26. For accounts of these collectors' activities, see E. George Squier, *Nicaragua: Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and The Proposed Canal* (2 vols. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1852); C. H. Berendt, "Report of Explorations in Central America" in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution Showing the Operations, Expenditures and Condition of the Institution for the Year 1867* (Washington, D.C., 1868); J. F. Bransford, *Archeological Researches in Nicaragua* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1881) Frederick Boyle, *A Ride Across a Continent: A Personal Narrative of Wanderings Through Nicaragua and Costa Rica* (2 vols., London: R. Bentley, 1868); and Carl Bovallius,

Nicaraguan Antiquities (Stockholm: Kongl. Boktryckeriet, 1886). Translated and reprinted 1970: Managua: Fondo de Promoción Cultural, Banco de América.

27. Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, p. 218.

28. Stone has recently pointed out that reports on archaeological finds in the 1860s stimulated looting (Lange and Stone, *Archaeology of Lower Central America*, p. 30). She also notes that a traveler's 1895 report of gold-filled graves at Chiriqui in southern Costa Rica resulted in the looting of 4,000 graves in the area and "stimulated expeditions by foreign institutions."

29. Jesus de la Rocha to U.S. *chargé d'affaires*, 8 May 1852; Franco Castellón to U.S. *chargé d'affaires*, 12 July 1852. Despatches from United States Ministers to Central America, 1824-1906, Reel 9, National Archives and Records Service (NARS) RG 59. The record does not reveal how the matter was ultimately resolved.

30. Rufus Flint to Putnam, 24 May 1883, PMAE Accession File 83-72. Whether the government had a normal policy of requiring and granting licenses is not clear; I encountered no other reference to such a practice.

31. Flint to Putnam, 18 June, 9 July and 22 Aug. 1883, PMAE Accession File 83-72. Flint's reference to "private lands" suggests that the government's restrictions--whatever they were--may have applied only to public lands. Early the next year, Flint spoke of being "afraid the permission will not continue" (24 Jan. 1884 to Putnam, PMAE Accession File 84-14).

32. Flint to Putnam, 24 Jan. 1884, PMAE Accession File 84-14.

33. Flint to Putnam, 24 Dec. 1884, PMAE Accession File 84-14. Even Spencer Baird of the Smithsonian was aware of such a danger within the United States itself. "I wish there was some law," Baird wrote to the Institution's northwest territories collector James G. Swan, that would prohibit foreigners from "coming in and carrying off all our treasures" (Cole, *Captured Heritage*, p. 37).

34. Several commentators have noted that Lord Elgin was eager to remove classical statuary from Greece partly because so much of it had already been ground up by local builders to make new cement.

35. Quoted in Mariano Fiallos Gil, "Los primeros pasos de la reforma universitaria en Nicaragua." *Ventana*, no. 2 (July 1965):59 from Pablo Levy, *Notas geográficas y económicas sobre la república de Nicaragua* (Paris: Librería Española de E. Denné Schmitz, 1873. Jorge Arellano, *Panorama de la literatura nicaragüense* (4th ed., Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1982), p. 29, mentions that when the Colegio de Granada opened in 1874 it had a "cabinet of physics, [and] a museum of natural history," but I have encountered no additional or corroborating information on that museum.

36. Zelaya's move came too late to prevent the transfer of another large collection of Nicaraguan antiquities to the Smithsonian. Assembled by the Nicaraguan government for exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in Madrid (1892-93), the collection included wood, gold, stone, and ceramic pieces from the archaeological "mines" of Ometepe and Zapatera, the Solentiname islands, Rivas and elsewhere (Smithsonian accession 29404; nos. 171890-172310, 172701-09, received June 1895). Since no accession correspondence related to this collection appears to have been preserved, how it came to be assigned to the Smithsonian is not known. A full listing is available in Catálogo de los objetos que envía la República de Nicaragua a la Exposición Histórico-Americana de Madrid (n.p., n.p., n.d.). Stephen B. Luce, "History of the Participation of the United States in the Columbian Historical Exposition at Madrid" (in *Report of the U.S. Commission to the Columbian Historical Exposition at Madrid*. Executive Documents of the U.S. House of Representatives: Document 100: Columbian Historical Exposition. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), pp. 7-278, and Walter Hough, "The Ancient Central and South American Pottery in the Columbian Historical Exposition at Madrid in 1892" (in *Report of the U.S. Commission to the Columbian Historical Exposition at Madrid*. Executive Documents of the U.S. House of Representatives: Document 100: Columbian Historical Exposition. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895) contain further information on U.S. participation in the Exposition and on the Nicaraguan exhibit. Luce reported that the Nicaraguan collection had been assembled "with great care from comparatively recent excavations" (p. 35). Item nos. 740-1201 were from the private collections of Julio Arellano, Spanish Minister to Central America, and Julio Gavinet (not further identified). Presumably those portions of the exhibit were returned to their owners, since the portion shipped to the Smithsonian included only about 440 items.

The Smithsonian continued to receive archaeological specimens from Ometepe at least up into the 1930s, when Marine Corps Corporal Emil M. Krieger, stationed in Nicaragua in the U.S. campaign against rebel General Augusto C. Sandino, sent a collection of 26 earthenware and stone objects taken from La Finca Casa Blanca (accession 123959, catalog nos. 364926-945; cf. ms. Museum Catalog: Anthropology, vol. 75).

37. Crisanta Chaves, "Historia del Museo Nacional" (undated, unpublished typescript in office files of the Director of the Museo Nacional, Managua [1970s?]), p. 4. The decree establishing the museum was published in Diario Oficial, Tercer época no. 319, 26 August 1897.

38. David J. Guzmán, "Museo Nacional de Nicaragua." *La Patria* (León) 4:10 (Jan. 1902):290-91. I am indebted to Charles L. Stansifer for supplying extracts from this article.

39. Frédéric Thieck, *Idolos de Nicaragua* (León: Departamento de Arqueología y Antropología de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua, 1971).

40. Chaves "Historia del museo nacional"; Humberto Osorno Fonseca, *Diacleciano Chavez* (Managua: Editorial Atlántida, 1944); and interviews with Museum director Leonor Martínez de la Rocha, Jan.-May 1988.

41. The few sources I have located which refer to Chaves's work indicate that he was involved in these activities, but I have encountered no corroborating data. His publications include Apuntes de historia natural (Managua: Tipografía Nacional, 1901) and Lista preliminar de las plantas de Nicaragua (Managua: Imprenta Nacional, 1931).

42. For the first time in 1966, the official Boletín de Estadística (III época, no. 11 [Oct. 1966]: 125f.) reported on museum visitors during the past two decades. The figures (which I suspect are not trustworthy) showed a rise in attendance from 20-25,000 in the late 1940s to double that number in the mid-1950s and 75,000 in the early 1960s (the overwhelming majority in Managua).

43. José Rizo, *Manual del guía de turistas*. Managua: Secretaria de Integración Turística Centroamericana, 1971.

44. Charles Stansifer, *Cultural Policy in the Old and the New Nicaragua*. Hanover, N. H.: American Universities Field Staff, 1981), p. 9; Bernard Diederich, *Somoza and the Legacy of U.S. Involvement in Central America* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1981), p. 116.

45. A more extensive consideration of this history is to be found in my forthcoming book *Beautiful and Pleasant Land: The Politics of Culture in Nicaragua* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).