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## 'The Hand That Spanked Moses'

# Mummy Hand Mystery Grows; Egyptian Museum's Aid Asked

By C. VERNE BLOCH

Journal Star Staff Writer

A first-class mystery story is developing around "The Hand That Spanked Moses," the "newest" addition to the Peoria Regional Museum at Glen Oak park pavilion.

So intriguing is the tale of the mummified hand—reputed to be that of the Pharaoh's daughter who found the baby Moses in the bulrushes along the Nile river several thousand years ago, that the Journal Star is seeking the truth from the Egyptian Museum at Cairo.

**THE UNUSUAL PIECE** was presented to Bradley university back in 1911 by Mrs. A. E. D. B. Petherbridge, who lived in Peoria and was a world traveler with her husband. She called it "The Hand That Spanked Moses" and described it, briefly and rather vaguely, in a book she wrote entitled "Here and There."

This book containing articles and poems about her travels was published in Peoria in 1914. It is on display at the museum at Glen Oak park pavilion, along with the mummified hand and an x-ray photograph.

**BRADLEY UNIVERSITY** recently loaned the hand to the museum. Wrapped in Egyptian embalming cloth, the hand was never actually determined to be from a human mummy until it was x-rayed by Dr. Dan Morse, medical director of the Peoria Municipal Tuberculosis sanatorium. He is on the museum's exhibit committee.

After a story and photographs about the hand appeared in the Journal Star evening edition July 8, Dr. Morse received more information about how the hand was obtained. Previously, Mrs. Petherbridge's book indicated she had obtained it herself while traveling in Egypt.

**THE ADDITIONAL** information Dr. Morse has received came in a letter to him from H. H. Herschberger of Minneapolis, a nephew of Mrs. Petherbridge.

This letter follows:

I have before me the issue of the Peoria Journal Star of Tuesday July 8, 1958 and am writing you as a member of the museum's exhibit committee relative some further information as to "The Hand That Spanked Moses". I am a nephew of Mrs. A. E. D. B. Petherbridge, deceased, and accompanied her and her husband in 1910 on their Trip Around the World, which I know was taken for the purpose of verifying her belief that the mummified hand you have was truly "The Hand That Spanked Moses."

About a hundred years ago, before I was born—I am now 75—Mrs. Petherbridge's brother, Mr. James Bastow, took a trip around the world and when he arrived at Cairo Egypt and knowing his sister's keen hobby of hoarding at least one of everything possible to secure, which she kept in her home museum behind glass, he bribed a guard at the building that housed the Sarcophagi—royal personages of 4,000 years ago mummified—to cut off the right hand of Pharaoh's daughter. He kept it very secret until he had arrived back in the United States and gave it to his sister.

Many years after the death of her brother who brought her this relic, she told me its history and advised me not to tell anyone inasmuch as native Egyptians, who hold such items very dear and who will risk their lives to get them back, might break into her home to get this amputated hand. Mr. and Mrs. Petherbridge, who lived at 121 North Monroe St., in the same block as the Peo-



... THE MUMMY HAND

lives, had been across the Atlantic 12 times to visit their native country, England (Buckfastleigh near Southampton) and they planned to make one more trip and decided to combine it with the 1910 Clark's Tour of the World. The Peoria group of 15 or 20 who went on this trip was made up by Charles D. Clark, of Clark Hardware, long ago deceased. As stated above, I went with my Aunt and Uncle to look after them and returned to Peoria in July 1910 and in August of that year I moved, with my wife, to Minneapolis, where we have lived for 48 years.

I know that Mrs. A. E. D. B. Petherbridge planned that around the world trip to try to confirm if possible the fact that that HAND was the right hand of Pharaoh's daughter. When we reached Cairo and went to the Museum she requested me to let her do the talking. Apparently she must have had some doubt as to whether it was really the said hand. We saw in glass cases the royal personages of

feet, hands and bodies and heads encased in such embalmed cloth that he had withstood the conditions of thousands of years so that the flesh and finger nails and toe nails were still as they were when embalmed. When we came to the case in which lay the form of Pharaoh's daughter, the top of the head, the feet and body were visible in mummified cloth but the hands only were invisible. When my Aunt questioned the guard about it without exciting his curiosity, she was informed that there was a reason why the hands were not shown altho the hands of all the other mummified kings were shown. (Reference is on page 207 of "Here and There" written by Mrs. Petherbridge and published in 1914 in Peoria).

After this visit to the Museum at Cairo, Mrs. Petherbridge, under the circumstances, became convinced that her doubt was removed and I, too, on talking it over with her, felt that she really possessed THE HAND THAT SPANKED MOSES. I would suggest that very great care be taken of that ancient hand as, after the advice in the July 8th Peoria Journal Star (Evening), someone may think it worth while to try to steal it. She bequeathed most of her museum items to Bradley University back in 1911 and a few coins, etc., to myself.

During the trip around the world, I happened to be the only stenographer on the S.S. CLEVELAND which had 768 passengers making the trip and by dictation from many newsmen and writers I wrote the contents of a dozen or more books written about the various land-trips to the various countries visited and after writing letters home for a President of an Investment and Bank Holding Company, I was offered a position in Minneapolis, which I



## Ancient Mummies Puzzle & Please Peoria

For more than a century, European and American curiosity cabinets and museums have been filled with exotic souvenirs. None of these souvenirs were more exotic and more mysterious than the mummies and related Egyptian artifacts looted from tombs. Two mummies ultimately arrived in Peoria, where they were exhibited, and admired by curious and credulous viewers, eager to see something from the Land of the Pharaohs.

The most famous Peoria mummy is actually a mummy part, a severed hand, called *"the hand that spanked Moses."* It has the distinction of having been sold to an American tourist from Peoria as a Biblical relic. Peoria druggist, James Bastow, purchased the hand as a gift for his sister, Mrs. Thomas [Ann] Petherbridge, while on a trip to Egypt in the early 1880's. Mrs. Petherbridge donated the mummified hand to Bradley Polytechnic in 1911. It is now stored at Lakeview Museum.

The second mummy was *"a mummified child,"* donated to the Peoria Scientific Association by well known Peoria funeral director H.E. [Harry] Cummerford on March 25, 1898. (PSA records, op cit.) The mummy was displayed in the association's museum in the Peoria Public Library until the association disbanded in 1901, and its collection donated to Bradley Polytechnic or stored in the library vault. The mummy has not been seen in many years and is presumed buried.



## The Mummy in Mrs. Petherbridge's Parlor

Mrs. Petherbridge, pillar of Peoria society, had a secret. A grizzled, mummified Egyptian hand rested in a glass case in her stylish Victorian parlor. Mrs. Petherbridge worried about its safety, and warned her curious nephew, H.H. Herschberger, *"not to tell anyone, inasmuch as native Egyptians, who hold such items dear and who will risk their lives to get them back, might break into her home to get this amputated hand."* (Peoria Journal Star, Mummy Hand Mystery Grows, July 20, 1958, Sec. B, Pg. 1.)

The hand was a family treasure, and the Petherbridge's guarded it with the tenacity of medieval monks guarding relics of the "true Cross". It was, they asserted, the severed hand of Thermuthis, Neferari, a daughter of Rameses II, the woman who rescued baby Moses from the bulrushes and raised him as her son. Exactly how and where Mrs. Petherbridge's brother acquired the hand remained a family secret, but they admitted that Bastow had acquired it in Egypt. Over the years, they gave conflicting accounts of the probably illegal and certainly unethical purchase.

In 1914, Mrs. Petherbridge told Peoria Star reporter, Ernest East, that her brother *"was touring in Egypt and was in Cairo when he met a party of British archaeologists. They invited him to accompany them on an expedition which was organized for the purpose of seeking the tombs of the Pharaohs, the royal name of the kings of the early dynasties. The excavators were successful in unearthing tombs of the ancient monarchs, and the mummy of Thermuthis was among those found. The right hand became severed in some manner not fully explained, and became the property of Dr. Bastow. He brought it to Peoria."* (Peoria Star, The Hand that Spanked Moses, March 29, 1914, pg. 32.)

In 1958, a second story emerged from the Petherbridge family. Petherbridge nephew, H. H. Herschberger wrote to the Journal Star, stating that *"Mrs. Petherbridge's brother, Mr. James Bastow, took a trip around the world and when he arrived at Cairo, Egypt, and knowing his sister's keen hobby of hoarding at least one of everything possible to secure, which she kept in her home museum behind glass, he bribed a guard at the building that housed the sarcophagi - royal personages of 4,000 years ago mummified - to cut off the right hand of Pharaoh's daughter. He kept it very secret until he had arrived back in the United States, and gave it to his sister."* Mrs. Petherbridge visited the Egyptian museum in Cairo in 1910, and asked the attendant to show her the entire mummy attributed to Thermuthis. When they refused to do so, she concluded that they were hiding the fact that the hand had been amputated. She returned to America, assured that she did, indeed, have a Biblical relic - *the hand that spanked Moses.* (ibid.)



# Mummy's hand returns to Lakeview

By KATHLEEN WOITH  
for the Journal Star

One of the most famous objects at Lakeview Museum is back on display. After many years of being stored in the vaults, the famous mummy's hand has reappeared. Today's adults, who remember the mummy's hand from museum tours as students, still ask about the legendary article.

The hand, which, according to myth, is the one that spanked Moses, is on exhibit as part of Lakeview's Make An Impression exhibit. Make An Impression lets visitors look at selected pieces from the museum's permanent collection, and then create art to express what the museum or the art means to them. The art materials needed for the creation of the artwork are provided by the museum. The exhibit ends Aug. 22. The artwork created during Make An Impression will be put on display for a community art exhibit Oct. 2 to 17.

The mummy's hand has a history in Peoria that dates to the turn of the century. An article in the March 29, 1914 issue of the Peoria Sunday Star tells the colorful story of the hand. The following is a reprint:

The hand that spanked Moses, the prophet who lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, is in Peoria.

It is the mummified right hand of Thermuthis, or Nefer-Ari, a daughter of Rameses II, the Pharaoh of the Oppression, who ruled in the great 19th dynasty of Egypt, more than 3,000 years ago. This relic of antiquity is the property of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Petherbridge, 121 N. Monroe St.

The possessors vouch for its genuineness. It came into their family upon the death of Dr. James Bastow, brother of Mrs. Petherbridge, who brought it himself from the land of the Nile. Just how he got it is a story that will never be written, for he never told and has passed to the great beyond. He did, however, tell his sister that it cost him "as much as his head is worth." Bastow was touring in Egypt and was in Cairo when he met a party of British archaeologists. They invited him to accompany them on an expedition which was organized for the purpose of seeing the tombs of the Pharaohs, the royal name of the kings of the early dynasties. The excavators were successful in unearthing tombs of the ancient monarchs and the mummy of Thermuthis was among those found. The right hand became severed in some manner not fully explained and became the property of Dr. Bastow. He brought it to Peoria.

Mrs. Petherbridge made the statement that no newspaper writer or scientist ever before had discovered the presence of the relic in Peoria. It is carefully preserved in a glass case. When Mr. and Mrs. Petherbridge are out of the city they place it in a safety deposit vault. Dr. Bastow was responsible for placing on the relic the inscription: "The hand that spanked Moses." It was more than 25 years ago that the body of the princess was discovered. Mr. and Mrs. Petherbridge four years ago made a trip around the world and visited the Egyptian museum in Cairo in which is preserved the bodies of Rameses II and his daughter Thermuthis. They went to the museum the second day before they were enabled to view the sarcophagus in which lied the embalmed body of the Pharaoh's daughter. They did not tell the guide they had the hand of a mummy they were confident was that of Rameses' daughter and awaited with

great expectancy an observation of the body in the museum.

They were disappointed. The lid of the coffin was tipped but only the feet and the top of the head of Thermuthis were visible. They urged the attendant to admit them into the glass case in which the mummy was resting but the suggestion shocked him, for the rules of the museum are very strict. Accordingly they left the land of the Nile still confident in the belief that they held a memento of ancient and of priceless value to archaeologists.

The member is the size of a small hand in life, being about five inches long. Exposure to the air for a quarter of a century has caused the linen bandage encasing the hand to turn black in spots. The lining in other places is a dull brown color. In the palm of the hand the fibre through which the blood of life once coursed has shrunk slightly, leaving the bone of the thumb prominent under the wrapping. Each finger is wound separately and so artistically that the outline of the nails in the fingers are plainly discernable.

Mrs. Petherbridge says the matter of wrapping indicates beyond question that the sub-

ject in life was a royal personage, for only the bodies of royalty were wrapped in this fashion. Only a portion of the Egyptians were permitted to embalm their dead and in this group were three classes. Bodies of persons in the third or lower class of this group were wrapped from head to foot in a strip of linen that was continuous. Head, arms, and legs were bound within this roll of cloth. Those of the middle class were permitted to wrap the arms and legs of their dead separately from the trunk, but the toes and fingers were included in the strip of linen which bound their legs and arms.

Moses was adopted by the daughter of Pharaoh Rameses II of bible history. Her discovery of his little body in the bullrushes is a familiar story to every Sunday school pupil. She is not named in Bible history, but is believed to have been Thermuthis, one of the daughters of Rameses II.

The second chapter of Exodus says:

"And there went a man to the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

"And the woman conceived and bore a son, and when she

saw that he was a goodly child she hid him three months.

"And when she could no longer hide him she took for him and ark of bullrushes and daubed with slime and pitch and put the child therein and she laid it in the flags by the river's bank.

"And his sister stood afar off to wait what would be done to him.

"And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river's side, and when she saw the ark among the tags she sent her maid to fetch it.

"And when she had opened it she saw the child; and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said: This is one of the Hebrew's children.

"Then said his sister to the Pharaoh's daughter: Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee.

"And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's

mother. "And Pharaoh daughter said unto her, Take this child away and nurse it for me and I will give thee wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it.

"And the child grew and she brought him unto Pharaoh daughter, and he became her son. And she called him Moses, and she said, because I drew him out of the water."

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