Special Collections Research: Locating Delaware Artifacts at External Institutions

Julie Knoepfler

Main Objective
The goal of this project was to learn if any artifacts from the Delaware Tribe, procured by donors whose collections have ended up at BMC Special Collections, are also being held at other institutions. Due to the great imposition this research would have on tribe members, and the necessity of repatriation happening in as few rounds as possible, it is essential that this research was conducted.

Researching the Delaware Tribe's History
Through the tribe's website I learned key information on what the tribe has gone by (or have been called) throughout their history and where tribe members lived from about 1800-1920. Tribe names (Delaware and Lenni Lenape), and the location of tribe members were critical pieces of information as I searched museum databases.

Census Research
Census research was the main way I learned the identities of various donors. Census information could often confirm:
• Full names and relatives
• Dates and places of birth and residence
• Biographical information
• Wills

Utilizing the Internet
With the information gained from census data and various archives I could also utilize online biographies and documents, to search for linking institutions.

Archival Deep Dives
I then visited Haverford, Swarthmore, and The Academy of Natural Sciences to conduct in depth archival research on donors.

Museum Searches
By employing information I had gathered from my research on both the Delaware Tribe and through census data and archival documents, I was able to search various museum collections effectively.

Results & Next Steps
Through my research I have found the identities of up to eight donors and located objects, donated by James McBride, Samuel Haldeman, and James Jenkins, at the Ohio History Connection and the Smithsonian. It is now necessary for BMC Special Collections to work with the tribe to confirm whether these objects are of Delaware origin and work towards the larger goal of repatriation.

Special thanks to my supervisors Allison Mills and Carrie Robbins, professors Monique Scott and Matthew Feliz, and Praxis Coordinator Tiffany Stahl.