Finding Aid to the Irene S. Vickrey Papers IT2002.210

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Title: Irene S. Vickrey Papers
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Contributing Institution: Autry National Center, Autry Library
Language of Material: English
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Date (inclusive): 1935-1941
Abstract: Irene S. Vickrey (1911-1946) was the Works Progress Administration supervisor at the archaeological project at Besh-Ba-Gowah, near Globe, Arizona. The papers in the Irene Vickrey collection reflect, for the most part, her work on the Besh-Ba-Gowah archaeological project.
creator: Vickrey, Irene S.

Scope and contents
The papers in the Irene Vickrey collection reflect, for the most part, her work on the Besh-Ba-Gowah archaeological project.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged into three series: Besh-Ba-Gowah Project Records; Personal Papers; and Photographs. The Besh-Ba-Gowah Project Records are largely comprised of Vickrey's field notes concerning ceramics and other objects found at the site, as well as graves and rooms that were excavated. Since the project was carried out between 1935 and 1940, all material found in this series is dated "1935-1940" except where more exact dates could be located in the notebooks or files themselves. There is only a small amount of material in the Personal Files. All of the material is listed in the container list. The Photographs are arranged by subject (i.e. "landscapes," or "Ceramics and Implements Displays"). Many appear to be of the Besh-Ba-Gowah excavation site. Few are dated or numbered. Thus, like the Besh-Ba-Gowah Project Records, they are all assigned the date "1935-1940." The Grave Record and photographs of graves and burials are restricted.

Biographical note
Irene S. Vickrey (1911-1946) was the Works Progress Administration supervisor at the archaeological project at Besh-Ba-Gowah, near Globe, Arizona.

Vickrey was born in Hume, Illinois, on April 4, 1911. She first studied archaeology at the University of Indiana, where she met and married Parke E. Vickrey. Both of them were selected to attend University of Arizona summer archaeology camps, directed by Dr. Emil Haury. Vickrey went on to study at the University of Arizona for an additional year, including two summers of field work.

In 1935, Vickrey was one of three people elected to the Board of Directors of the newly formed Gila County Archaeological Society. She began a formal excavation of the prehistoric ruins near Globe, Arizona. The area had first been surveyed by Dr. Adolph Bandolier in the 1880s, and further explored by amateur archaeologist William Davenport. During the Depression, Dr. Emil Haury of the University of Arizona organized a statewide archaeological project as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA project funded the excavation at Besh-Ba-Gowah as well as providing for a museum to house the excavated items. Since federal policy prohibited married women from holding government jobs, Vickrey was appointed 'sponsor supervisor' instead of 'foreman' of the project. Picking up where Davenport had left off, Vickrey named the site "Besh-Ba-Gowah," an Apache word meaning "place of metal" or "metal camp." She directed the project from 1935 to Oct. 4, 1940.

The site is located just south of Globe, Arizona at the confluence of Pinal Creek and Ice House Canyon Wash. Archaeological evidence indicates that the site was occupied as early as 550 AD, with continuous occupation through approximately 1450 AD by the Hohokam and then Salado cultures. During the Salado period (1150-1450), the site functioned as a ceremonial, redistribution and food storage complex since it was located on a major trading route from Casas Grandes, Chihuahua, Mexico to the Salado River. The activities of the Besh-Ba-Gowah project included excavation and repair of significant ruins, and the preparation of any collected materials. It ended abruptly in 1940 with the death of the director of the project. Between 1935 and 1940, all of the surface rooms at the site were completely excavated and 350 burials were located. Unfortunately, Vickrey had many health problems and she died very young, at age 25 in Jan. 1946. After she died, her extensive field notes for Besh-Ba-Gowah were set aside for 40 years, until archaeologists returned to the site. Today, the ruin is part of a city park. Parts of it have been bulldozed.

Access
Collection is partially open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at room@theautry.org. An item-level inventory is available from library staff.

Use
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**Preferred citation**

*Irene S. Vickrey Papers*, 1935-1941, Autry National Center, Los Angeles; MSA.44; [folder number] [folder title][date].

**Acquisition**


**Historical note**

Besh Ba Gowah Pueblo is located at the confluence of Pinal Creek and Ice House Canyon Wash, south of present-day Globe, Arizona. Besh-Ba-Gowah has one of the largest single site archaeological collections in the southwest and is one of the most significant finds of Southwest archaeology. It is one of the largest and most complex of the Salado communities. Archaeologists consider Besh-Ba-Gowah a ceremonial, redistribution and food storage complex. Salado Culture is identified as the cultural period from 1150 to 1450 in the Tonto Basin.

Besh-Ba-Gowah is an Apache word meaning "Place of Metals," and refers to modern mining activity. First archaeological investigation was by Adolf F. Bandelier in 1883. Bandelier surveyed the ruin and produced a map. In 1935 excavation was begun. Complete excavation of the surface rooms was eventually accomplished. Three hundred and fifty burials were found. The project ended in 1940 and results have not been published due to the untimely death of the project director.

Half of the pueblo ruin has been bulldozed. The north quarter of the ruin and parts of the east and west edges have been bulldozed. In 1948 the Army Corps of Engineers bulldozed part of a ruin to smooth an area for a Boy Scout gathering. In 1982 the eastern edge was bulldozed for a softball field. The ruin is part of a city park.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Besh-Ba-Gowah Site (Ariz.)

Diaries

Excavations (Archaeology) -- Arizona

Field notes

Indians of North America -- Arizona -- Antiquities

Photographs

Salado Culture -- Arizona

Women archaeologists

**Box 1: Besh-Ba-Gowah Project Records**

1. Field Notebook no. 1, [1935-1940] Numbered list of objects found at the excavation site and their locations.
2. Field Notebook no. 2, [1935-1940] Numbered list of objects found at the excavation site and their locations.
3. Field Notebook no. 3, [1935-1940] Numbered list of objects found at the excavation site and their locations.
4. Field Notebook no. 4, [1935-1940] Pocket-size notebook with miscellaneous information about pottery and other materials found at the excavation site, and burial data.
5. Grave Record binder Three-ring binder that housed the Grave Record.
7. Room Excavation and Ceramic Analysis Notes, [1935-1940] Detailed information on pottery types found at the excavation site and excavated rooms (such as room dimensions, height of walls, wall construction, floor and floor perforations and fire pits).
8. Room Excavation binder Three-ring binder that housed the Room Excavation and Ceramic Analysis notes.
9. WPA Project Proposal, July 22, 1936 Project proposal submitted to the Works Progress Administration by Dr. Byron Cummings to continue to fund the project.
Box 2: Personal Papers and Photographs

1. Personal Papers, [1937-1941] Undated registration card for a correspondence course at Indiana University, undated newspaper clipping about archaeological findings in Mexico, a letter dated April 8, 1937, from the National Rifle Association attempting to identify a gun owned by the Gila County Museum (?), and a May, 1941 copy of "The Mountain Canary"- a newsletter published by the Globe Business and Professional Women's Club (of which Vickrey was a member).


3. Photographs: Besh-Ba-Gowah Room Excavations, [1935-1940] 32 photographs of room excavations. Many are numbered according to room (nos. 4, 5, 16, 18, 20, 21, 51, 56, 65, 95, 121, 123, 130, 144 are represented) and have descriptive information about the type and location of walls. Two photographs are labeled "Picture #1, W.P. 516" and "Picture #2, W.P. 516"; one is simply labeled "Room A." There are also eight unnumbered photographs.

4. Photographs: Landscapes, [1935-1940] 15 photographs of landscapes. Six are of a decrepit log cabin. None of the photos appear to be of the Besh-Ba-Gowah site.

5. Photographs: Ceramics and Implements Display - Gila County Museum, [1938?] 29 photographs, mainly of whole pots and pottery shards. It is not clear if any of the pottery or implements photographed are from the Besh-Ba-Gowah site. Only one photograph is labeled: "Gila Co. Museum, Gila Arizona. Showing archaeological, geological and historical displays." A second is labeled "Picture #8 W.P. 516." Several are stamped with the number 21.

6. Photographs: Ceramics Processing - Gila County Museum, [1938?] 24 photographs showing women working with ceramics. Only one photograph is clearly labeled with a Works Progress Administration stamp that indicates date photo was taken (11/9/38), project number (1102), city (Globe, Arizona), county (Gila), title (Gila County Museum), and descriptive caption ("Pottery being reconstructed and mended. The completed olla at right is one of the largest found at Besh-Ba-Gowah.").

7. Photographs: Vickrey (?) at Excavation Site, [1935-1940]

RESTRICTED ITEMS