

Treasures Most Wondrous



According to Dr. Richard Kurin, Distinguished Scholar and Ambassador-at-Large at the Smithsonian Institution, famous objects tell the larger story of the American people, a thesis presented in his recent book, *The Smithsonian's History of America in 101 Objects*. His work is based on a 2010 collaboration between the BBC and the British Museum that attempted an even bolder scholarly feat: *A History of the World in 100 Objects*.

Let's take a quick trip through the Aurora University and George Williams College archives to learn more about some of the significant objects that comprise our institutional story.



OUR BIRTHDAY *wish* FOR AU...

May you continue to grow and affect so positively the lives of your students. The values of AU are our values, and we wish that AU will be as meaningful to the worthwhile lives of current students as it has been to us.

—Don '51 HON '11 and Betty (Parke) Tucker '52 HON '11

MY BIRTHDAY *wish* FOR AU...

Honor and revere the faithful past; respect and celebrate the dynamic present; be bold and daring in visioning the future.

—John Alan Boryk '65

Prophetic Chart

As 19th and early 20th century Advent Christian evangelists traveled from camp meeting to camp meeting to share the denomination's distinctive message, they relied upon prophetic charts to illustrate the events leading to the end of time. The lengthy and dramatic muslin banners were strung between trees or draped across stages to illustrate a preacher's message. The charts relied upon a mix of symbolism, biblical interpretation and fire and brimstone. So historic are the prophetic charts that Aurora University once collaborated with the American Bible Society to share these extraordinary artifacts in a New York City exhibit. AU owns many of these historic treasures. This particular lithograph portrays scenes from the books of Daniel and Revelation.



Dr. Pat's Microscope

Dr. Samuel H. McFarlane — known as Dr. Pat — taught biology at Aurora College from 1934 to 1970. His specialty was parasitology, a field sure to make his students both squeamish and enthralled. Aurora College President James Crimi once commented that “serious students have acquired his love of the natural world and of the scientific laboratory and have been influenced by the humility and gentleness of his human spirit.”

William Miller's Trunk

Early in the 20th century, Aurora College President Orrin Roe Jenks traveled the country to recruit prospective students, encourage donors to the small institution and collect important artifacts from the Advent Christian movement. Many of his “finds” are housed in the archives. The travel trunk of evangelist William Miller is one particularly noteworthy item. When discovered, the trunk contained sermons and some 800 pieces of correspondence written to or by Miller. His tent meetings played a vital role in rekindling the Second Great Awakening in the 1830s and 1840s. He is known especially for his proclamation that Jesus Christ would return at a specific point in the 1840s. When the day for the return came and went, the Millerite movement became more denominational in nature. The university's Advent Christian founding can be linked directly to Miller's work.



Sundial

It is traditional for classes to give a gift in their graduation year, and for the Aurora College class of 1921, a sundial had special meaning. One description called it “an ageless symbol representing the many lives of students who have cast their shadows on this campus.” So special is this symbol to AU that a sundial graces a stained-glass window in Lowry Chapel in Eckhart Hall. This is the original face of the sundial from the class of 1921.

MY BIRTHDAY wish FOR AU...

I wish others the same high-quality liberal arts education I received from AU between 1966 and 1970.
—Marvin McMickle '70

MY BIRTHDAY wish FOR AU...

I hope that AU continues to help students find their passions and equip them to make effective contributions for another 125 years.

—Pat (Smiles) Ziebart '75

Deacon White's Catcher's Mask

Early baseball great James "Deacon" White was known for many firsts, among them a controversial pitching windup and the first hit in any major league game, against the Fort Wayne Kekiongas. White boasted a lifetime batting average of .312 and once played all nine positions in the course of a single game. Most of the time, he played third base or served as catcher. White was a wizard of the "bare-handed catch" and is credited with the development of one of baseball's first catcher's masks. After retiring from baseball, he and wife Marium accompanied their daughter, Grace, to Mendota College, where Grace was a student and they took on roles as head residents of the women's dormitory. Later, his family moved to Aurora. The Deacon, known for his commitment to upright living, was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2013. He is the oldest player enshrined. The catcher's mask is on loan to AU from great-grandson Jerry Watkins.



Herb Schingoethe's Square Dancing Boots

Herb and Martha Schingoethe were collectors of ... well, lots of things. But they are most associated with Native American culture and art, thousands of pieces of which they donated to become the basis for the Schingoethe Center (among their many other contributions to the campus). Perhaps less well known is that Herb long belonged to the Chicago Square Dance Callers Association. These are his square dancing boots.



Lowry Chapel Pulpit

For decades, this pulpit played an important role in Lowry Chapel, which honors Dr. Orrin Roe Jenks and serves as a site for services and ceremonies and as a hideaway for contemplation. Josephine Lowry began attending Mendota College in 1895 and graduated three years later. In 1986, the chapel was restored, thanks to a gift from Helena Wackerlin, who was born in 1898, the year of Lowry's graduation.



Art by Ruth Van Sickle Ford

Artist Ruth Van Sickle Ford was a professor of oil and watercolor painting at Aurora College from 1964 to 1973. A graduate of the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, she later served as president and director of the organization for 23 years. Ford was the first female member of Chicago's Palette and Chisel Academy. Today, her paintings hang in a wide range of galleries and museums, including the Art Institute of Chicago. In recent years, Aurora University leaders have acquired a number of Van Sickle Ford paintings for the institution's collection. This large still life, known as one of the artist's finest works, hangs today in the President's Office.

MY BIRTHDAY wish FOR AU...

Continue being mindful of new needs, offering affordable higher learning attractive to students, representing the cross-section of our society, being inspired by dedicated and enthusiastic educators.

—Ole Hovland '61

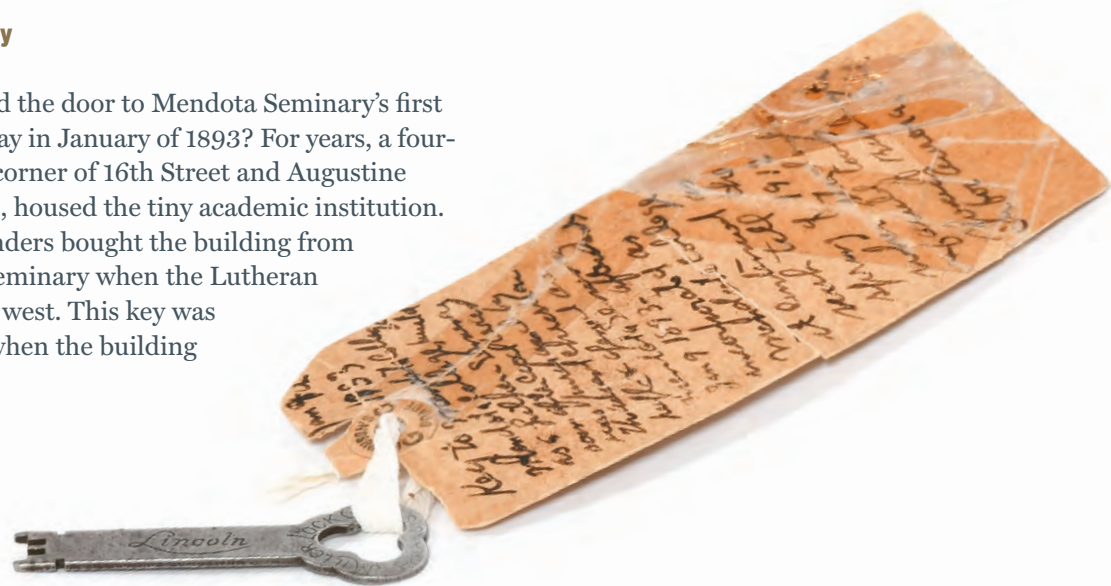
MY BIRTHDAY wish FOR AU...

May the success of all the years of education that has enlightened the minds of your students and propelled them into their chosen profession, leading to security and family, continue and the pride of making a difference add to the spirit of Aurora University.

—Les Suhayda '76

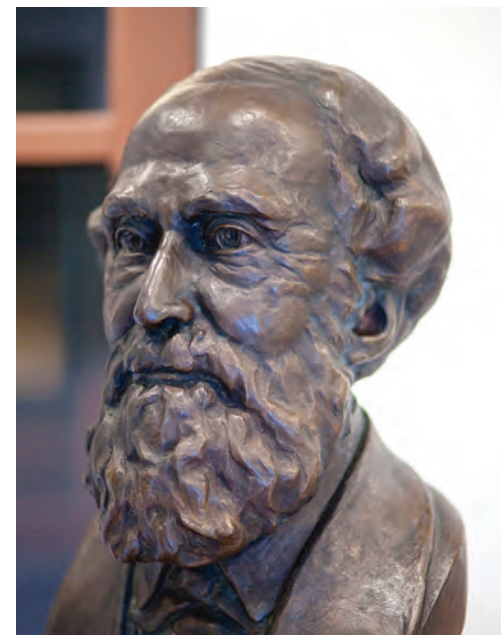
Mendota College Front Door Key

Was this the key that opened the door to Mendota Seminary's first three students on a snowy day in January of 1893? For years, a four-story brick building on the corner of 16th Street and Augustine Avenue in Mendota, Illinois, housed the tiny academic institution. In 1892, the seminary's founders bought the building from early leaders of Wartburg Seminary when the Lutheran organization opted to move west. This key was recovered from the rubble when the building was demolished.



Percy Snell's Playbook

For years, the baseball Spartans played on a home field named for Coach Percy Snell. Though his name was later associated with baseball, Snell was a man of many sports, including football. As a member of Aurora College's staff from 1926 to 1938, he was able to transform limited resources into dedicated teams. His abilities as a coach elevated not only the athletes' performance but also the morale of the entire college, the latter to such an extent that after a historic 12-7 win over Wheaton in October 1929, the first Homecoming was held the following year.



Bust of Sir George Williams

When George Williams arrived in London at the age of 15 to work in a draper's shop, he was disgusted by the working conditions during the Industrial Revolution. In summer 1844, he and 11 friends formed the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). He continued to advocate on behalf of the working class, fighting for workers' rights and promoting a standard workweek. His ideals inspired the founders of his namesake college in Wisconsin. Queen Victoria made him a Knight of the British Empire in 1894, some 50 years after he created the YMCA. Upon his death in 1905, he was buried among Britain's heroes and statesmen in St. Paul's Cathedral.

The Birch Bark

On the evening of Thursday, August 12, 1886, Robert Weidensall, William Lewis and Isaac Eddy Brown lit a dedicatory campfire to celebrate the founding of the Western Secretarial Institute. The campfire was the culmination of two years' work by the men to establish a YMCA training camp on the shores of Geneva Lake. Earlier that summer, William Lewis had purchased four acres of lakefront property on what is now the George Williams College campus for \$3,000. The three men gathered after clearing land and elected themselves to offices. Lewis was president, Weidensall was vice president and Brown was treasurer. Weidensall offered a prayer that dedicated the grounds to God and the work of training young men for the YMCA. Said Brown, "The Holy Spirit brooded over that quiet gathering under the trees; no one who was there can forget the hush and thrill and uplift of those moments with God." The men signed their names on a piece of birch bark to commemorate the event.



MY BIRTHDAY wish FOR AU...

My wish for AU is for many more 50-year reunions of alums remembering the best years of their young lives. Memories of lifelong friends, remarkable professors, loving relationships and most of all, discovering what matters.

—Carol (Schwarz) Bragg '65

MY BIRTHDAY wish FOR AU...

My wish for current and future students at Aurora University is that you will cherish this special time in your life and in this very special place. May you allow the experiences and opportunities while attending AU to help mold you into the complete person you were created to be!

—Tom Gandee '69

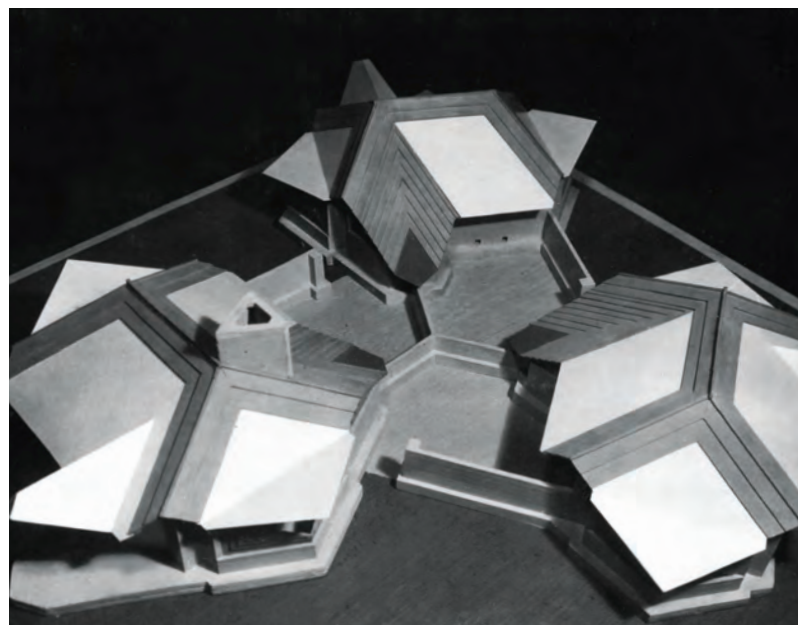


I.E. Brown's Diary

Isaac Eddy (I.E.) Brown founded the YMCA in Decatur, Illinois, and eventually became the YMCA state secretary. He was a published author, writing mainly about architecture of YMCA facilities, which later became standard reference for future Y buildings. He kept meticulous diaries. Daily entries detail trips around Wisconsin and Illinois. One such entry from Monday, August 11, 1884, reads, "Secretarial summer conference at Camp Collie. Committee met (Lewis, Weidensall and self) and named future gathering 'Western Secretarial Institute.'" More than 25 years later, on Wednesday, June 24, 1912, Brown posed with Weidensall and the class of 1912 at the water fountain. "Twenty-second Commencement" was his single diary entry for that proud day.

Frank Lloyd Wright Cabin Designs

In February 1931, GWC trustees were presented with a peculiar scale model of new cabins destined for the lakeside campus. They were modular and fit together like a honeycomb, sharing a common courtyard. The trustees were intrigued, especially since world-famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed the cabins. A Wisconsin native, Wright was familiar with the Lake Geneva area. Alas, the cabins were never built, perhaps as a result of the Great Depression. Trustees also questioned the logic in building structures not fit for year-round use.



MY BIRTHDAY wish FOR AU...

I wish for growth, prosperity and another 125 successful years for Aurora University!
—Russell Thompson '79



Robert Weidensall's Desk

Few names are more synonymous with the history of the GWC campus than Robert Weidensall. Railroad work called him to Omaha, where he became active in the Omaha YMCA and was elected its vice president in 1868. He was eventually made the YMCA's first international field secretary, tasked with organizing YMCAs along the Union Pacific rail line. This work put him in contact with William Lewis and I.E. Brown, and together they formed the Western Secretarial Institute. In 1905, Weidensall set out on a two-year around-the-world trip, visiting YMCAs wherever he could. With him was his Wooten desk, built in Indianapolis to his own specifications. The desk includes dozens of drawers and cubbies, a large writing surface and its own mail slot. Affectionately known as Uncle Robert, Weidensall dedicated 54 years of his life to the YMCA movement.

MY BIRTHDAY wish FOR AU...

I wish for Aurora University to hold tight to its roots and history while making itself available to all students.
—Marjorie (Cole) Thompson '62



1951 Music by the Lake Program

A longstanding tradition began on Sunday, July 8, 1951, when the De Paur Infantry Chorus took GWC's Lewis Auditorium stage for the first Music by the Lake concert. That season featured just four concerts, but the next year saw nine, including one by the legendary Isaac Stern. The original concert series lasted 19 seasons, concluding in 1969. Since its 2001 revival, Music by the Lake has welcomed a wide variety of musicians. This year, it celebrated its 100th Sound of Summer.