

Associated Documentation at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

As you begin your research of Peabody Museum collections, staff will send you the associated documentation related to the piece(s) you are studying.* This guide will walk you through the documentation you are likely to receive, so that you can understand what you are being sent, and how it relates to your research.

*Please note: the documentation discussed here relates to the materials used by the Museum to maintain an inventory and history of collections *as they entered the institution and came under the Peabody Museum' care* – a process broadly known as “accessioning.” This documentation is not the same as what the Peabody Museum would refer to as its [Archives](#). To inquire after Archival materials, please complete the [online request form](#).

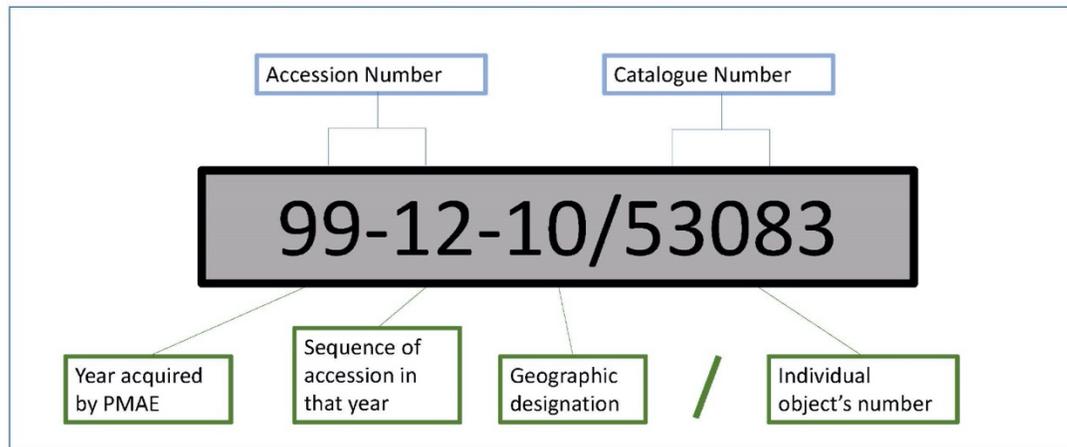
Collections records may contain language, reflecting past collecting practices and methods of analysis, that is no longer acceptable. The Peabody Museum is committed to addressing the problem of offensive and discriminatory language present in its database. Our museum staff are continually updating these records, adding to and improving content.

When citing information from the Peabody Museum sources provided, please refer to the [citation guide](#) available on our website.

Collections Numbering System

Each item in the Museum's care is assigned an individual number, as a way of keeping track of it and its associated documentation. This becomes its *Peabody Museum number* (or PM#), which is in fact a sequence of numbers, each providing a different piece of information:

Peabody Numbering System



Accession Number

The Peabody Museum was founded in 1866, and its numbering system begins from that year:

- The first two numbers in the sequence, separated by a hyphen, are the item's *accession number*. All items from the same accession begin with these same two numbers: the first designates the year of acquisition; the second designates the sequence of the accession in that year.

From the example above: Accession 99-12 came to the Peabody Museum in 1899, and was the 12th accession of that year

Because the number of each accession must be distinct in order to avoid confusion, a new accession number system was introduced in 1967:

- Two digits designate acquisitions from 1867-1966; three digits designate acquisitions from 1967-1999.

E.g. 67-15-10/588 was accessioned in 1867

967-15-30/8473 was accessioned in 1967

A new Peabody Museum number system was introduced in 2000, using compound numbers:

- Accession numbers are comprised of a four-digit year followed by an accession sequence number, separated by a period.

E.g.. 2000.1 was accessioned in 2000, and was the first accession of the year

Geographic Area Designators

From 1867-1999, the Museum used geographical markers as part of its numbering system. This is the third number in the sequence, separated by a hyphen following the accession number:

- 10 - North America
- 20 - Central America
- 30 - South America
- 40 - Europe
- 50 - Africa
- 60 - Asia
- 70 - Oceania

From the example above: all items within accession 99-12 from North America begin with 99-12-10

Geographic areas were dropped from the numbering system in 2000 and were not replaced.

Catalogue Number

The final number in the sequence, following the slash, is the item's individual *catalogue number*. This is the item's unique identifier within the accession.

In the current numbering system, the catalogue number comes immediately after the accession number, separated by another period.

E.g. 2000.1.550

Suffixes

Some catalogue numbers contain suffixes. Suffixes are used when a single catalogue number contains multiple components (e.g. a pair of shoes; a sheaf of documents; a bag of sherds) and the Museum wants to track them separately.

E.g. 88-41-10/46209.1
2005.2.438.1

Accession Cards

Accession cards refer to an accession in its entirety. An accession may consist of a single item, or it may include tens of thousands; the accession card will refer to all these items collectively. The information on the accession card will be inclusive of the item(s) you are researching, but not all information on the card may apply to the individual item(s) you are researching.

Accession No.	38-58	<u>Gift</u> Exchange Loan Purchase Expedition
Description	Archaeological collection consisting of: wooden fire stick; wooden dice; gourd; potsherds;	
No. of specimens	498	Catalogue Nos. 10/12987 - 10/12997
Locality	New Mexico: Chacra Mesa - Chaco Canyon region	
Stock		Tribe
Culture	Basket-maker III; Pueblo; Navaho;	
Collector	Roy Malcom, graduate student, 1936-1938	Date Collected 1937
Donor	University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico	Date Received October 1937
Fund		Date Purchased
Remarks	This was rec'd in the Museum in October, 1937, but, at the request of Dr. Kluckhohn, was not accessioned until June, 1938.	
Catalogued by	B. Cornett	Identified by Dr. Kluckhohn & Roy Malcom

Every piece within the accession does need to be documented individually. Prior to 1932, this was done using ledger books. Beginning in 1932, the Peabody Museum began to transition to catalogue cards. (Some collections continued to be tracked in ledgers after 1932, but they are the exception). An item will *either* have a ledger book entry *or* a catalogue card – never both:

Ledgers

Ledgers are organized by catalogue number and are read line-by-line across both pages of the open book. Information you can expect to find here includes a short description of the item, geographic and/or cultural information (where a piece was collected, and/or from what cultural group), the name of the individuals who collected the piece and those who donated or sold it to the museum, and the years of collection and accession.

Catalogue Card

Catalogue cards function similarly to the ledger books in providing an individualized listing of each item within an accession, moving this information from a book listing to single index cards.

Cat. No. 30/5510	Name One feather cape
Acc. No. 46-81	
Orig. No. 33	Locality Peru: Dept. of Arequipa, Province of Camana, Churunga Valley, "La Victoria" mine
Phot. No. 58844 T632	Situation
Stock	Tribe
Culture	
Remarks	See memo X file
Figured	
47-10000	

Digital Database

In 1984, the Peabody Museum transitioned to using a digital database ("The Computer") to record and track collections in its care. While the Museum still maintains associated accession files, it no longer requires accession cards, ledger books, or catalogue cards, instead entering this information directly into the database.

To access the information generally recorded in these previous forms of documentation, use the Peabody Museum's [Collections Online](#) and enter the complete PM# of the item you are researching to locate its individual record; a Boolean search of the accession number (e.g. 2000.1.*) should help you locate the other items in the accession, to provide this further context.

Accession Files

Accession files (aka "x-files") provide additional information associated with each accession as a whole. It is possible you will find reference here to the specific item you are researching; it is also more than possible you will not. References to individual items are likely to be specified by their catalogue numbers.