

From the family history book of Eduard Morike we know that Eduard Morike visited the natural history collection in the Mergentheim castle on the 22nd of May in 1846 for the cost of 12 Kreuzern. The possibility that a collection of studies from a Duke was available to interested visitors was extraordinary during those times and tells of the "enlightened" mentality of the Duke. The possibility of visiting such an important collection was available even after the death of Duke Paul Wilhelm up until the "family" was dissolved in 1867. The administrator of the Museum was the taxidermist Burchartz.

The sketch from Eduard Morike of the natural history specimens in the family history book gives a small glimpse of the Duke's collection. There is a picture of a room with an open bookshelf which holds jars of preserved items, a stuffed crocodile is fastened vertically to a wall next to a window and in the middle of the room is a stuffed snake winding around a pole. The man figure with coat and cylinder may perhaps be Morike himself. Additional writings from Morike, which explain this visit or give more detail into his studies are not known by me.

The natural history collection was located in the second floor of the castle, in the wing where the red hall is located today, and in the rooms of the third floor, which today hold the story of the German Order of the Middle Ages. The collection of rarities encompassed a total of twenty rooms.

There is a description of the ethnographic collection of the Duke, which was published three years before Morike's visit by the priest from Wachbach and friend of Eduard Morike, Ottmar F.H. Schonhuth:

... and hurrying to visit the beautiful collection, which his majesty the Duke has displayed in the vast halls of the castle, which is open to all foreigners and locals of noble readiness..... from the natural history collection we go to the ethnographic collection.

Similar items are surely not found in Germany. All weapons and hunting objects of North American people: battle clubs, axes, shields, bows and quivers of different kinds, even scalp knives in various forms hang there; also clothes of the natives, the decorated clothes of a chief and of normal men, from the headwear to handmade shoes; all utensils and tools, which were used in daily life, especially the peace pipes, many items which were rare possessions of travelers, especially the trophy items, located in hair of enemy scalps which were attached to tools and clothes. Especially interesting is the jewelry of scalps which still had earlobes attached.

We are mesmerized how a single collector was able to amass so many rare and precious items in only two visits with the north American tribes. In one of the halls on the second floor there is the interesting collection of North Africa, especially of remarkable Egyptian items, all items which the Duke collected on his last visit to the Orient and North Africa.

Schonhuth's description proves that he appreciated the worth of the zoologic, botanic and ethnographic collections even back then. It is thought that Duke Paul Wilhelm was in Mergentheim at the time of Morike's visit, as he did not travel anywhere during that year. Duke Paul Wilhelm amassed his vast collection during his travels.

He visited America four times. His first visit to North America was from October of 1822 until February of 1824. We can get a complete picture of this journey from his travel diary. That is also an excellent source of his acquisitions, barter and ethnographic presents given to him. His journey took him from New Orleans, with a side trip to Cuba, up the Mississippi river to St. Louis then on the Missouri river to Fort Atkinson, which today is in the state of Nebraska, the northern most spot of his journey. We can only approximate his other journeys from various documents as his travel diaries were never published during his lifetime or after his death. Also, his original manuscript is thought to be missing. The travel diary of his first journey to North America was only published four years after the end of his second journey. From it one can only partially reconstruct details of his second journey to North America which was from 1829 to 1831.

There are 18 documents in the Missouri historical society archives in St. Louis, Missouri. They contain the letters of the Duke and of several employees of the American Fur Company along with bills from the company to the Duke. Important dates were able to be established from these documents. The journey took the Duke to the upper Missouri river, which today is in the state of Montana, to the outflows of the Rocky Mountains and the three springs of the Missouri river. Thus, that makes him the second explorer in this part of the United States, after the Lewis and Clark Expedition from 1804 to 1806. The ethnographic items collected during this journey are some of the rarest and first items found worldwide. He undertook various scientific research studies during his journey and in this correlation various animals and plants were able to be scientifically determined and collected.

A bear paw obtained on the 24th of July by the Duke is listed among other items on a bill dated August 1st of 1830 from the American Fur Company of Fort Union. At that time Fort Union, at the junction of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, was the biggest and furthest west trade post of the American Fur Company. It was reconstructed fifteen years ago and recognized Duke Paul Wilhelm as the first European explorer in the Northwest Territory.

In October of 1839, the Duke traveled to North Africa, including Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan. The costs of these trips and the political revolutions in 1848 almost bankrupted the Duke. That was prevented only with help of King Wilhelm the First of Wurttemberg. Duke Paul Wilhelm went on several trips around the globe from 1849 – 1856 even under the impression of losing his entire fortune. It was thought he wanted to flee. One gets an impression from several letters from that time that the Duke was serious about leaving Europe forever to go live near his daughters Louise Jager and Pauline Dermuhl in the United States. On his third trip to North America, he went to west Texas, New Mexico and California then back to New Orleans and up the Mississippi river. The German travel writer and fiction author Balduin Mollhausen accompanied the Duke on part of this trip.

The Duke's journey to Australia was interrupted for eight months for an additional trip to North America. He visited the cities of New York, New Orleans and Cincinnati. After returning to Australia, the Duke visited Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Peru and the Land of Fire on his way home. He again traveled to North America to Texas all the way to Canada before returning to Europe in 1856.

The starting point of the research of the whereabouts of the ethnographic collectibles from North America was a historical list located in the Ethnographic Museum in Berlin: 'Ethnographic Collection from his Majesty the Duke Paul von Wurttemberg'. Unfortunately, one cannot detect from the list, which was printed by August Kranabacker in Zweibrücken, if it was created by the Duke during his lifetime or by the third after the Duke's death. The reason that this list was printed can only be presumed. Perhaps the list was given as a sales catalog to visitors of the collection at the castle. But, perhaps it was only created in 1866 from the Duke's records as a sales catalog for his collection (after his death).

The list contains 307 entries of which 128 items are Indian artifacts from North America. Unfortunately, the item descriptions are only partially listed with details. Records, which would show from which of the Duke's journeys the items were collected, are missing.

The other 181 entries include the Duke's personal travel items along with natural history specimens, dirt samples and ethnographic items from South America, Africa, India, Asia and New Zealand.

In 1867, the 'Museum of Kings' in Berlin obtained 30 objects of the Duke Paul Wilhelm collection from Leopold Metzler from Sobernheim. Metzler was probably the agent of the dissolution of the collection of the deceased Duke by order of the Duke's son, Duke Maximilian of Wurttemberg. 21 of the 30 objects came from North America. Except for one piece of hair jewelry (roach), all objects were kept in the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin.

Since the 'Museum of Kings' in Berlin only obtained a small part of the collection, other objects were sold to tradesmen in and around Hamburg. The curator of the British Museum in London, Augustus Woolaston Franks, bought 21 items from these tradesmen and gave the items to the museum in 1869. One of these objects was an important peace pipe, which Captain William Clark obtained 200 years ago during the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Clark gave the peace pipe to Duke Paul Wilhelm in St. Louis in 1823. The third and biggest part of the Duke's collection of Indian artifacts from North America was obtained by the Wurttemberg club of geographic trade and promotion of German interests abroad from the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart. The artifacts were given to the Linden-Museum in September of 1900, by the Duchess Hermine of Wurttemberg, the widowed daughter-in-law of Duke Paul Wilhelm, with the help of Earl Karl of Linden.

In 1918, the Linden-Museum bought an additional 19 items from the Duke's collection from the Privy Councillor Ludwig Loew of Sigmaringen. It contained a bag made from sea otter skin, which was also from the Lewis and Clark Expedition. It is not known how the Privy Councillor Ludwig Loew obtained these items from the Duke's collection.

The Linden-Museum in Stuttgart possessed a total of 101 items of which 56 were able to be determined. Of that inventory 45 arrows of the bow and arrow collection were counted separately and were not included in the list of the Duke's collection of items. A powder horn, a lasso, a whip and a bow are presumed missing.

Two items of the Duke's collection were found in the collection of the Karl May Museum in Radebeul. It is not known how the collector Patty Frank obtained these artifacts. A pair of leggings of the Oto Indians have since been exchanged or sold by the Karl May Museum via the collector Arthur Speyer to the Ethnological Museum in Freiburg.

Another important piece of my research was a hand written description along with pencil drawings of several North American artifacts from the Duke's collection at the Linden-Museum before the collection was dissolved. An additional 61 artifacts were able to be identified by comparing these descriptions and drawings with the detail of the list of Duke Paul Wilhelm. One of the items was the bear paw mentioned earlier that was obtained by the Duke in Fort Union. What happened to this interesting item though is still a mystery.

Due to much research, 100 North American artifacts were able to be identified. A complete clarification is not yet available for 67 items on the list.

Dr. Monika Firla and Dr. Herman Forkl of the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart have worked on a list of scientific collectibles from Africa. In the Duke's list there are 72 numbers with objects from that continent.

In the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, eight items were able to be identified but one shield is missing. In the Ethnology Museum in Berlin, three of the eight items were able to be proven.

The whereabouts of the natural historical collection of Duke Paul Wilhelm has not been scientifically researched even though there was an inventory from 1849 in the main state archives in Stuttgart. In 1857, about 8,000 – 10,000 preserved bird skins from the west coast of North, Central and South America went from the 'Duke Depository' in Bremen to the Natural History Club in Bremen which now belongs to the Overseas Museum in Bremen. After 1890, the Zoological Institute of the Tübingen University took possession of a great part of the natural history collection. In 1937, most items of this collection went to the Natural History Collection of Stuttgart which today is the Natural History Museum. Additional items of the Duke's collection are in Wien and in St. Petersburg.

In 1846, Eduard Morike saw in this castle one of the most important natural historical collections in Europe featuring ornithologic and ethnographic artifacts from North America, which was obtained by the founders of the museums. This one of a kind collection was open to the public for thirty years. After the museum was dissolved, a big part of the collection is missing. The remaining artifacts from North America are one the earliest collected items of various cultures from around the world. Today, they are a valuable part of the British Museum in London, the Ethnologic Museum in Berlin and the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart.



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Notation to first picture:

In the natural history collection of Duke Paul Wilhelm of Wurttemberg in the Mergentheim castle with Wilhelm Hartlaub, his sister and wife.

(A sketch by Eduard Morike on May 22 of 1846 of the family history book. On loan by the city of Bad Mergentheim, Inv. No. 1454)

Notation to second picture:

Duke Friedrich Paul Wilhelm of Wurttemberg (Carlsruhe/Schlesien 1797-1860 Mergentheim)

(chalk drawing of an unknown artist, on loan by the city of Bad Mergentheim, a present from Karl Fleck, Inv. No. 2532)

Notation to third picture:

Duke Paul Wilhelm of Wurttemberg with the Indians

(the picture is probably from the first trip to America of Duke Paul Wilhelm. In the center of the illustration, Duke Paul is sitting in a circle with the chiefs Wakann-zie and Sa-ba-No-sche along with other Indians.)

(Gouache "the camp of the Kanza at the blue river, third of July 1823", from sketches from Duke Paul of Wurttemberg in the German Museum of Order in Bad Mergentheim. On loan from the city of Bad Mergentheim, a present from Dr. Karl Stutzle, Inv. No. 2533a)