



“The Historic Fans of the Pope Now at the University of Pennsylvania”

Thus was announced the arrival, on December 28, 1902, by the *Philadelphia Press*, of two rare artifacts at the Penn Museum: a pair of eight-foot fans, which until then had been carried before the Pope in ceremonial processions. This publicity photograph shows them before installation, inside the former Museum Library (now the Archives). The fans of Pope Pius IX (reigned 1846–1878) were obtained by Mrs. Lucy Wharton Drexel from Pope Leo XIII (reigned 1878–1903) for inclusion in her unique collection of fans at the Museum. Mrs. Drexel was given the fans by replacing them with a pair more gorgeous and more costly.

The fans consist of ostrich plumes tipped with peacock feathers, Papal arms in the center on red velvet, and a crown encrusted with rubies and emeralds. The overall effect is crimson, white, and gold. Lucy Wharton Drexel’s fan collection never fully fit into the scope of the Penn Museum, and was eventually returned to her family in 1930. But she is remembered today at the Museum for her wonderful collection of Greek and Roman marble sculptures, and for the establishment of the Drexel Medal for great achievement in archaeology.

—Alessandro Pezzati, Senior Archivist

UPM image #253116. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Archives.