

READING PUBLIC MUSEUM

TREASURE:

Mummy

Nfr-ii-n (Anglicized Nefer-ii-ne)

Egypt, c 304 - 30 B.C.

30-318-1.3

Did you realize that there is an Egyptian woman of some importance entombed in the Reading Public Museum. Because the process that was used to preserve this body is called mummification, the woman is now just generally referred to as "the Mummy."

In fact, she has a name and we know what it is: Nfr-ii-n (Nefer-ii-ne), roughly translated, may our coming be good. Her father's name was Irt-Hr-r-w (Irethourrou), and he held honored titles given by cult personnel in the 8th and 9th provinces of Upper Egypt.

Nefer-ii-ne's mother was a housemistress and was in the service of the clergy of the god Min, as a sistrum player -- a percussion instrument with disks that was used in religious ceremonies and temple rituals to keep the beat for the orchestra, which consisted of harps, flutes, oboes, clarinets, tambourines, and trumpets. Her name is given as Ir (ty)-r-w (Irtyrou).

We know Nferr-ii-ne is a lady because she was, believe it or not, x-rayed at the Reading Hospital on October 26, 1972. Dr. George R Matthews, the Radiologist, reported that the bone structure remains in remarkably good condition, and he was able to determine several other things about her besides her sex. He described her as "elderly" (but that could mean as young as 50; life expectancy has grown significantly over the years), she apparently suffered from fairly severe arthritis, and she appears to have had some sort of right hip injury since the x-ray showed a "rounded dense object" inserted into this area (more than likely a scarab beetle - semi-precious carved stone, was used as a healing/curative agent.)

Important people were mummified so that they had their bodies available to them in the "afterlife." To preserve the body, specially trained priests took approximately seventy days to do what had to be done. Essentially, they methodically dried out the body so that it would not putrefy and decay. That process included removing all of the vital organs except the heart from the body. The organs did not dry as well as the rest of the body, so they were removed, wrapped up separately, and ultimately placed next to the wrapped body in a canopic jar when it was entombed. The heart was believed to be the center of a person's being and intelligence. When everything was dry, the body was carefully and elaborately wrapped with strips of linen. Fingers, toes, and the head were wrapped separately before the final wrap.

Next to the Mummy in the Reading Public Museum are some of the objects that went into such tombs including a barge by which the trip to the afterlife was made. The sarcophagus (coffin) lid has an extensive inscription that describes the burial eulogy for Nefer-ii-ne. There are, also, next to the Museum's Mummy, several stunning pieces of furniture (one of only three sets produced to replicate those which were found in the tomb of the Pharaoh Tutankhamen). When the great Tutankhamen exhibition toured the U .S. several decades back, the public had an opportunity to see all of the objects, from furniture, food, games, jewelry, etc., that were placed into the tomb with the mummy. The Tutankhamen tomb was discovered by the British archaeologist, Howard Carter in 1923.

In 1893 the University of Pennsylvania acquired four coffin-mummy sets, and one of these sets was loaned to the RPM by the University in 1930, thanks to the efforts and reputation of the Founding Director, Dr. Levi Mengel. The Museum purchased Nefer-ii-ne and her sarcophagus in 1949. The University of Pennsylvania retains the lovely mummy-mask which accompanied Nefer-ii-ne, covering her head.



Website: http://www.readingpublicmuseum.org/galleries/first/treasure_first/tr_1_ancient.html.

Date Retrieved: July 25, 2008

Image of facial reconstruction is from:
<http://www.fascinioegito.sh06.com/nefer-ii-ne.htm>

Date Retrieved: February 2, 2014