

The history of the codex begins in the Central Highlands of Mexico. Here the predominate culture was Mixtec . The indigenous Mixtec people who mainly inhabited the region known as La Mixteca of Oaxaca were well known for their pictographic writing and documents. The Hidden Codex was created around 1550-1650, and is presumed to have been used in religious practice until the 18th century.



The codex travelled an unlikely path to get to the United States. Two individuals were involved to bring the codex into the country.

¹The person primarily responsible for importing the codex into the United States is Major Harry S. Bryan (1861-1942). Bryan was a Major in The Ohio National Guard and was a veteran of the Spanish American War.² He was reported to be with U.S.



Bryan

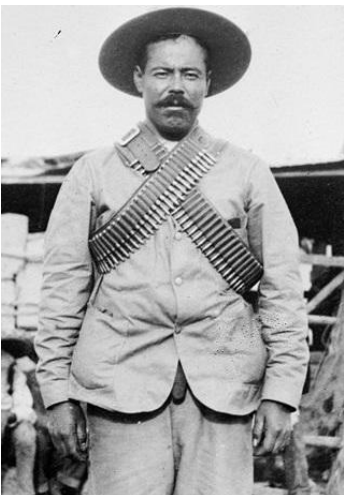
Source: Ancestry.com



Bryan's Mexico Visa 1932

Source: Ancestry.com

received gifts from Francisco "Pancho" Villa, and had recorded gifts received in 1897 from Red Cloud a year before the Spanish-American War. He also bragged in a letter about his ability to get what he wants from the U.S. Secretary of War under President Wilson.⁴



Pancho Villa



Red Cloud 1880

² Zanesville Signal September 28, 1942 p2

³ Evening Independent May 1, 1914 p3

⁴ Katherine Anne Porter and Mexico: The Illusion of Eden Thomas S. Walsh (c) 1992 the University of Texas Press

The other person is William Niven (1850-1937) who was a mineralogist by trade and archaeologist by passion. Born in Scotland, he arrived in the U.S. in 1879 and briefly worked as a mineralogist for Thomas Edison. In 1890 he began working in Mexico to locate minerals until 1894⁵ when he turned his focus to archaeology. During an expedition under the support of The American Museum of Natural History he discovered prehistoric ruins, now called Omitlan in the state of Guerrero⁶. In 1910 he discovered an ancient burial ground at Placeres del Oro identified as belonging to the Nahua people⁷. And in 1911 he discovered and documented ancient cities buried in volcanic ash on top of one another just north of Mexico City.



Niven



William Niven digging near Tampico, Tamaulipas. Mexican children were a constant presence at Niven's digs, both here and in the Valley of Mexico.

Niven was a founding member of the New York Mineralogical Club, an honorary life member of the American Museum of Natural History, a member of the Scientific Society Antonio Alzate in Mexico, and a fellow in the American Geographic Society of New York and the Royal Society of Arts in London. In 1929 he moved to Houston, where he donated a large number of Mexican artifacts to the new Houston Museum and Scientific Society and served on its board of trustees. In 1931 he moved to Austin. He died there on June 2, 1937, and was buried in Mount Calvary cemetery.⁸

On September 27, 1913 Major Bryan is quoted in a New York Times article urging that the President Wilson should recognize Huerta as president of Mexico.⁹

During the same trip to Washington in 1913, Major Bryan makes a donation and loan to The Smithsonian National Museum of hundreds of various items of historical and religious artifacts. Included in the list of accessions is an entry to a pictorial record on coconut fiber that is the direct reference of The Hidden Codex.¹⁰ The original entry lists William Niven as the donor and lists Harry S. Bryan as the agent.

⁵ *Handbook of Texas Online*, Robert S. Wicks, "Niven, William," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fni06>.

⁶ WICKS, R.S. and HARRISON, R.H. (1999) *Buried Cities, Forgotten Gods : William Niven's life of Discovery and Revolution in Mexico and the American Southwest* Texas Tech University Press,.

⁷ *American Journal of Archaeology*, Volume 2; Volume 16

⁸ *Handbook of Texas Online*, Robert S. Wicks, "Niven, William," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fni06>.

⁹ The New York Times September 27, 1913

¹⁰ The Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution 1913 Report of the U.S National Museum p150

- NEILL, AARON S. (through Dr. H. Neill, Sibley, Iowa): Pitted stone from an Indian camp site in Minnesota (54582).
- NELSON, JOHN L., Surgeon, U. S. Navy, Washington, D. C.: A pandanus hat worn by the Moros of the plateau region of Mindanao, P. I. (55506).
- NELSON, DR. AVEN, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyo.: 4 living specimens of *Pediocactus simpsonii* from Wyoming (55537).
- NELSON, CARL, Washington, D. C.: Moth from Washington (54396).
- NEVADA, UNIVERSITY OF, Reno, Nev.: 67 plants from Nevada and California (54535); 7 specimens of *Trifolium* from California (55331). Exchange.
- NEWCOMB, Mrs. SIMON, Washington, D. C.: The button of the Prussian decoration "Pour le Merite," which was conferred upon Prof. Simon Newcomb by the German Emperor in 1906, consisting of a black enamel shank and a small bow of black and silver ribbon.
- NEW YORK COMMERCIAL COMPANY, New York City: 22 samples of commercial grades of rubber (54794).
- NICHOLS, FRED. C., Balboa, Canal Zone: Larva of a moth of the family Megalopygidae (54421).
- NICHOLS, Mrs. J. R., Bedford, Va.: Beetle, *Lucanus elaphus*, from Bedford (55502).
- NICHOLS, JOHN T., American Museum of Natural History, New York City: 22 specimens of Cuban crustaceans (55208).
- NICOL, Prof. WILLIAM, School of Mining, Kingston, Ontario: A piece of garnet rock (54685: exchange).
- NIEUWLAND, Rev. J. A., Notre Dame, Ind.: 77 plants from Indiana (55241).
- NIVEN, WILLIAM, Mexico, Mexico (through Harry S. Bryan): Pictographic record on cocoanut fiber, from Manzanillo, Mexico; and a painting of St. Augustine, on canvas, inlaid with pearl shells (54644: loan).

NIVEN, WILLIAM, Mexico, Mexico (through Harry S. Bryan): Pictographic record on cocoanut fiber, from Manzanillo, Mexico; and a painting of St. Augustine, on canvas, inlaid with pearl shells (54644: loan).

It is possible that the Major and Niven were attempting to influence the decision-making in Washington at a time when they might have thought that the U.S. would enter the war to intervene on their behalf. The United States actually did assist but not in the way the Major had suggested. In fact, President Wilson did the opposite and sent arms to Pancho Villa and Zapata instead of backing Huerta as Bryan had urged in the Times article. It is a debated possibility that Major Brian was either working for both sides or may not have been entirely genuine during his interview with the NY Times.

The codex remained with the Smithsonian until 1936 when it was returned to Ohio along with the rest of the collection.

The following records were created by the Smithsonian in 1936 when the items were returned. They describe the codex and its origins in detail.¹¹

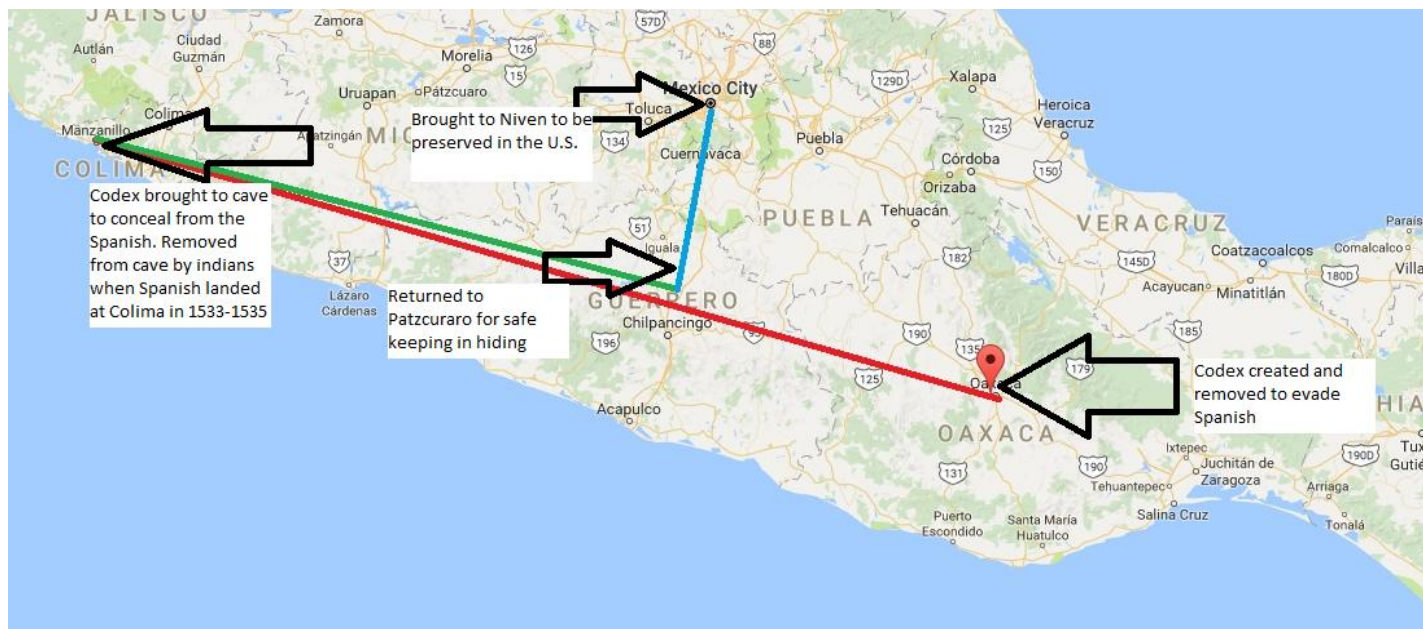
263. Mexican codex. Pictographic record on cocoanut fibre. According to Wm. Niven who collected the specimen it was brought by an Indian from Patzcuraro who said his father got it from a cave near Manzanillo, Mexico.

Major William S. Bryan Collection Inventory 1936

Analysis:

- The specimen was collected by William Niven - a widely recognized archaeologist with excellent credentials for preserving cultural heritage.
- The specimen was voluntarily brought in and donated by Indians in possession of the artifact to Mr. Niven presumably for the purpose of preservation.
- Major Bryan and Mr. Niven worked together to deliver the codex to Washington and the Smithsonian as they had likely promised the Indians that their culture would be preserved and not destroyed as with the Spanish.
- The codex was transported as the subject of many voyages across the region of Western Mexico by the Indians in an apparent effort to protect it from the Spanish.

¹¹ The Major Harry S. Bryan Collection Inventory Smithsonian Institution National Museum 1936



Voyages of The Hidden Codex as reported by William Niven

Owners Statement:

The owners and investors have developed a great respect for the immense undertaking made by the indigenous people to develop, preserve, and protect their cultural heritage.

It is a tribute in honor to this effort that this codex has been labeled “ The Hidden Codex”.

It has also been labeled this for purposes of easy recognition in the large marketplace of ideas.

We proudly acknowledge the original name of this artifact in native terms is more likely: “**Tezcatlipoca’s Smoking Mirror**”. This refers to an obsidian mirror that the deity uses to reflect the sun and to ignite the fire in human hearts in the 52-year new-fire sacrificial ritual ceremony pictured on the final page of The Hidden Codex. We gratefully acknowledge author, native scholar, and educator Loren Jeffries for providing the authoritative source for these insights.

We are committed to the principle of re-uniting artifacts with the originators of this amazing cultural heritage and are appreciative it has been preserved for all mankind to study.

Currently The Hidden Codex is not for sale.

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