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Obituary of Frank Spencer

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GLEANINGS FROM ACADEMIC GATHERINGS

The program of the annual Cheiron meeting at Carleton University in Ottawa, June 10-13, 1999, includes a panel on "Anthropologies of American Life and American Anthropologies" with papers by Sarah Igo (History, Princeton U.) on the Lynd's Middletown, J.K. Gilkeson (Arizona State U.) on Clyde Kluckhohn and psychoanalysis, and Hilary Lapsley (University of Waikato) on Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. A session on "The Psychology of Race and Prejudice" includes papers by Kathy Cooke and Dave Valone (History, Quinnipiac College) on demography and eugenics in the Progressive era and one by John Jackson (Ethnic Studies, University of Colorado) on the reception of Carleton Coon's Origin of Races.

OBITUARY OF FRANK SPENCER

Frank Spencer, a leading historian of physical anthropology, died of cancer on May 30, 1999 at the age of 58. Originally trained as a medical microbiologist, Spencer worked at hospitals in Britain and Canada before undertaking doctoral work in anthropology at the University of Michigan. His dissertation research on the career of Ales Hrdlicka was first noted in HAN III:1 (Winter 1976) under "Dissertations in Progress"; its completion as "Ales Hrdlicka, MD (1869-1943): A chronicle of the life and work of an American physical anthropologist" was noted in HAN VII:2 (Winter, 1980). In 1981, Spencer co-edited the jubilee issue of the American Journal of Physical Anthropology, co-authoring the introduction and an article on Hrdlicka's "Neanderthal Phase of Man," and contributing also an "historical overview" of academic physical anthropology in the United States (HAN VIII:2, Winter, 1981). Early the following year he contributed an essay on "Four Important Sources for the Early Twentieth century History of Physical Anthropology" (HAN IX:1), and began editing PAN (Physical Anthropological News), which included historical notes. During 1982, he also edited A History of American Physical Anthropology, 1930-1980, a collection of essays by a number of physical anthropologists dealing with different themes within the field. The year 1986 saw the publication of his Ecce Homo: An Annotated Bibliographic History of Physical Anthropology, a very useful 500 page compilation which seems to have gone unnoted in HAN. In June of 1987, we did note that Spencer was at work on British paleontology and the Piltdown affair, early fruits of which were included the following year in the fifth volume of the History of Anthropology series (Bones, Bodies, Behavior: Essays on Biological Anthropology) as "Prologue to a Scientific Forgery: The British Eolithic Movement from Abbeville to Piltdown." In 1990, he published a study of Piltdown: A Scientific Forgery, in which, pursuing a line independently suggested by Ian Langham, whose research became available to Spencer after Langham's death in 1984, he made a strong case that the primary culprit was Sir Arthur Keith, perhaps the leading physical anthropologist in Britain during the first half of the 20th century; supporting material was included in a separate volume, The Piltdown Papers, 1908-1955: The Correspondence and other Documents Relating to the Piltdown Forgery (both by the Oxford University Press). Spencer also served as professor and chair of the Department of Anthropology at Queens College, where he taught from 1979. For a longer obituary, see the New York Times of June 3, 1999.