

Carl Whiting Bishop

1881–1942

Archaeologist, Anthropologist, and Curator of East Asian Art



Carl Whiting Bishop was born in Tokyo, Japan, the son of the Reverend Charles Bishop, a Methodist missionary. He spent his early years in Japan until 1898, when the teenager moved to the United States to attend Northwestern Academy in Evanston, Illinois. Bishop then studied at Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia and in 1912 received an A.B. degree from DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. He went on to study anthropology with Franz Boas (1858–1942) at Columbia University in New York City and earned his master's degree in 1913. That same year he received his first scientific appointment as a member of the Peabody Museum's expedition to Central America.

Bishop served as an assistant curator of Oriental art at the University of Pennsylvania Museum from 1914 to 1918.

During that time he undertook a series of archaeological surveys in China, Korea, and Japan. He enlisted in the Navy when the United States entered World War I. Made an assistant naval attaché, Bishop served as a lieutenant in China from 1918 to 1920. He briefly taught at Columbia University in 1921 before he became the associate curator at the Freer Gallery of Art.

In 1923 Bishop headed up a four-year expedition to China that was jointly sponsored by the Freer Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He led another Freer expedition (1929–34) until conditions in China made further efforts impractical. Bishop returned to Washington and remained at the Freer Gallery as an associate in archaeology until he died in 1942.

Literature

C. Martin Wilbur, "Carl Whiting Bishop," *Journal of Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (February 1942), pp. 204–207.

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A. G. Wenley, "Carl Whiting Bishop (1881–1942)," *Notes on Far Eastern Studies in America* 12 (Spring 1943), pp. 27–32.

David Shavit, *The United States in Asia: A Historical Dictionary* (New York, 1990), p. 48.

C. W. Bishop Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives; see <https://www.asia.si.edu/research/finding-aids/bishop.pdf>