

FINCH COLLECTION COMES HOME TO EXETER

For 36 years, English instructor Eugene Finch made his home on the Exeter campus, together with his wife, Helena, their children, Davis '55 and Jean. At various times, the family lived in Hoyt Hall, Wentworth Hall and Moulton House. As the family moved, so did Finch's burgeoning collection of artifacts—some 5,000 stone tools and pottery shards and more than 20,000 flakes of stone that Finch, an amateur archaeologist, had found on digs in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine and Vermont.

When Finch died in 1986, his children donated their father's collection to the

N.H. Archaeological Society, where it remained largely in storage. Now, Finch's extensive collection has come back to Exeter, where it has been catalogued and put on display at the P. Phillips Foundation Anthropology Museum, a small but handsome exhibition space located on the ground floor of the Academy Building. It's a homecoming that pleases both Finch children. "We always knew our father wanted his collection to be seen by the public," says Jean Finch Topping, herself a teacher.

Topping says her father inherited his interest in ancient artifacts from his mother, herself an amateur archaeologist. Once he began

teaching at Exeter, weekends would find Finch and fellow instructors Richard Brinckerhoff and Michael Crosbie combing sites all over Rockingham County, along with members of the Academy's Archaeology Club, to which Finch was a perennial adviser. The collection's catalogue shows finds in several nearby towns, including Newfields and Hampton Falls. "My father had a great allegiance to this area and this state," says Topping.

Finch's vast collection of projectile points, pieces of pottery and flakes of stone dates from 5000 BP (Before Present) up to the 1800s, and fills three display cases and 24 drawers

of the museum, which is also home to artifacts from a number of other countries and cultures. "The points are arranged by type," explains Donald Foster, the museum's director as well as the Academy's Dr. P. Phillips Professor of Anthropology, "and the type is determined by the shape of the base. The base is the best diagnostic part of a projectile point, because that is what changes over time." He plans to use the artifacts in this archaeological collection in his Introduction to Archaeology and Native Peoples of North America courses.

According to Foster, the collection is notable not only for its size, but also for the meticulous manner in which Finch recorded his finds. "You could go back today and find the exact place at the site where any piece was found," Foster observes. "You could practically put it back in its hole. In terms of excavation, recording, analysis and publication, Finch set a standard for future archaeological investigation in New Hampshire."



English instructor Eugene Finch (1902–1986) was an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist who amassed a vast collection of artifacts from sites around New England. Now that collection is on display at the Academy's Phillips Foundation Anthropology Museum, a homecoming that pleases Finch's children, Jean Topping Finch (left) and Davis Finch '55 (right), as well as anthropology instructor and museum director Donald Foster (center).