

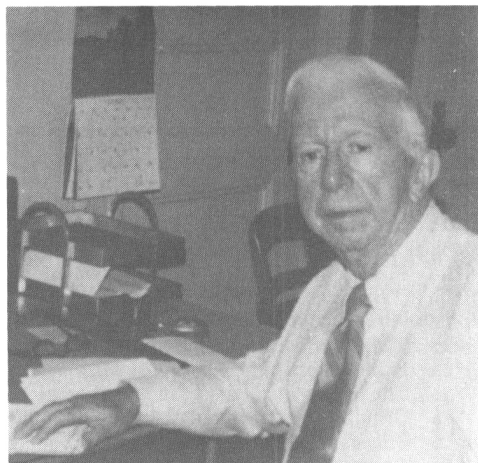
## NOEL MORSS, 1904–1981

Noel Morss died on April 24, 1981, at the age of 77. An attorney, he was a practitioner of that uniquely Bostonian profession of "Trustee," which means he managed his own and other people's money in effective and profitable ways. Because of the skill of these "trustees," Bostonians, and New Englanders in general, have been able to accomplish so much during the last hundred years or so.

To archaeologists, however, he is the scholar who defined the Fremont Culture of eastern Utah. He began archaeological fieldwork in the mid-1920s in northern Arizona, on the Kaibito and Rainbow plateaus and in the Chinle Valley, under the inspiration of Samuel J. Guernsey and A. V. Kidder. While most of the young students of that time devoted themselves to the traditional "Southwest" of the San Juan River drainage and southward into northern Arizona and New Mexico, Morss's curiosity led him northward into the canyons of the Colorado, Green, and Grand rivers and the mesas overlooking them. He was more and more impressed by the progressive variations on the Pueblo theme that were found as one moved northward in Utah and the continued underlying presence of the Basketmaker Culture. Barrier Canyon, the Fremont River, the Kaiparowitz Plateau, and, in northeastern Utah, Hill and Willow creeks on the East Tavaputs and the western tributaries of the Green; Range Creek, Nine Mile Canyon, and Minnie Maude—all these provided him with the materials from which the Fremont Culture was woven. He presented us with the first thorough and useful reports on the area which we in the "Southwest" call, egocentrically, the "Northern Periphery."

Among the distinctive artifacts connected with the Fremont Culture were exquisite painted figurines. After Morss retired from archaeological fieldwork he continued the study of clay figurines, not only from the West, but from other parts of the United States. His last trip to the West, in September 1980, to lecture at the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum in Price, was motivated in part by a desire to see again the extraordinary Pilling figurines, discovered in 1950, which had been briefly on display in the Peabody Museum at Cambridge and then returned to the CEU Museum in Price.

Noel Morss was an example of a long line of Boston businessmen, among them William H. Claflin and Raymond Emerson, who were also involved in the prehistory of eastern Utah, to whom we owe so much in the development of American archaeology.



JOHN OTIS BREW

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