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HAIR-RAISING EVENT FOR PRESIDENTS DAY WEEKEND FEBRUARY 16, 17, 18

PHILADELPHIA—In this presidential election year, The Academy of Natural Sciences offers a unique way to mark Presidents Day, even if you're not patriotic or haven't decided yet for whom to vote.

From Saturday through Monday, Feb. 16, 17 and 18, the Academy will display a rare artifact from its collections: an album of hair from the first 12 U.S. presidents. The album—or scrapbook—contains locks that grew from the heads of the nation's leaders from George Washington to Martin Van Buren, plus, in many cases, letters explaining how the hair was obtained and by whom.

Because the hair album is so rare and fragile, it will be displayed under glass. Four pages that are loose from the binding will be displayed showing the hair strands, some gathered with powder blue ribbon, from Presidents George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams. Washington's hair was a mixture of brown and grey.

"Unfortunately, we can't show the hair from all 12 presidents, but it will be exciting just to see the sample from our very first president and some of his successors," said Academy Senior Fellow and resident historian Robert Peck.

Peck stumbled upon the album at the Academy in the 1960s and preserved it in a safe place in the Academy's Ewell Sale Stewart Library on the second floor of the museum. He recently dug it out again, and officials decided to put it on public display for the first time in memory.

The hair album is one of 12 volumes of hair collected and compiled by a Philadelphia lawyer named Peter Arvell Browne (1762–1860), who contributed many botanical and geological specimens to the Academy. Not much is known about Browne, but the hair albums were given to the Academy upon his death. Other albums contain collections of hair from mammals, ethnic groups and famous people, including Napoleon Bonaparte of France.

In some cases, the accompanying letters explain how the presidential locks were obtained. In most cases, it was after the president died.

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"Often the First Lady or other members of the president's immediate family had saved samples of their loved one's hair as a sentimental keep sake. This was a common practice in the 19th century," said Peck. "When Browne asked them for samples to aid him in his scientific research, they were happy to oblige. Thus, Browne was able to assemble an extraordinary collection which, as far as we know, is unmatched in any other collection of presidential ephemera."

Visitors to the Academy on Feb. 16, 17 and 18 also will be treated to a rare showing of some of the fossils President Thomas Jefferson left to the Academy, including the claw of a giant sloth. Jefferson, a corresponding member of the Academy, had reddish hair flecked with light gray when he died.

See also http://www.ansp.org/activities/presidential_hair.php

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The Academy is located at 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway and is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and weekends until 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for children ages 3–12, senior citizens and college students, and free for Members and children under 3. There is a \$2 fee for "Butterflies!"

Founded in 1812, The Academy of Natural Sciences is the oldest natural science research museum in the Americas and is a world leader in biodiversity and environmental research. The mission of the Academy is the encouragement and cultivation of the sciences.