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Expert Probes For...

## Mummy's Clues

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**WHAT CAN A MUMMY REVEAL?** To the untrained, not much. In the soft light of the Iredell Museum of Art and Heritage in Statesville, the mummy just lays, as she did in Egypt, starting around 1064 B.C.

Museum officials say, "she." A local doctor examined the recent X-ray. His opinion? By the shape of the pelvis, a good bet is the remains are that of a young woman.

To shed some light on the mystery, the museum called in Mimi Levesque of Archaea Technica Art Conservation in Waltham, Ma. She's a mummy expert who has been poking around in old bones for years.

In ancient Egypt, she said, if the deceased had any class at all, burial consisted of removal of the organs and wrapping the body with layers of linen.

The first coffin, made of a papier-mache material, was made on a form. A slit cut in the back allowed it to be pried open wide enough to slip the body inside. This is the one, with the ancient drawings on the outside, most people associate with a mummy.

The second coffin, of wood, follows the general body contours and was made large enough for the first to fit inside. The third was a box made of rough lumber.

But, Mrs. Leveque saw more. A part of the Egyptian figure on the outside of the first, or inner, coffin had been repainted. She said the original artists painted the human eye as round black circle, without detail in the pupil. One eye had been painted in but the modern artist had included the eye detail.

On the side, some damage had been repaired. The black paint did not match the original hue.

A small section in the foot area had been repaired but replacement failed to follow the original contour. All these clues were obvious, looking over an expert's shoulder.

All her measuring, sighting, prodding and poking turned up things like dead beetles and bugs that may help her unlock a secret or two.



Bob Plyler/CITIZEN

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THROUGH THE TRAINED EYE OF AN EXPERT, some clues of the mummy's past can be revealed.