

After 45 years, souvenirs from Apollo 11 come to light (Update)

February 9 2015, by Malcolm Ritter



This undated photo provided by National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution shows a movie camera. More than four decades after the Apollo 11 moon landing, a cloth bag full of souvenirs brought back by astronaut Neil Armstrong has come to light. Among the trove: the camera from inside the lunar module that filmed its descent to the moon and Armstrong's first steps on the lunar surface in 1969. The discovery was announced Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, by the museum, which is already displaying the camera in a temporary exhibit. (AP Photo/National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution)

More than four decades after the Apollo 11 moon landing, a cloth bag full of souvenirs brought back by astronaut Neil Armstrong has come to light.

Among the trove: a 16 mm movie camera from inside the lunar module that filmed its descent to the moon and Armstrong's first steps on the lunar surface in 1969.

That camera "took one of the most significant sets of images in the 20th century," said Allan Needell, a curator in space history at the National Air and Space Museum.

In an interview Monday, Needell said the museum had been told about the bag in June 2013 by Armstrong's widow, who had found it while cleaning out a closet in their suburban Cincinnati home. Armstrong died in 2012.

The long process of documenting the find concluded only recently, and that's when the museum decided to go public, he said.

The discovery was revealed Friday by the museum, which is already displaying the camera in a temporary exhibit.

Needell noted that the images taken by the camera are far more detailed and clear than the grainy ones shown on TV at the time of the landing. The film cartridges had been removed during the mission and so the device itself was no longer needed.

The camera would have stayed on the lunar module, which crashed on the lunar surface after delivering the astronauts back to the orbiter, Needell said, but Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins "decided to take some souvenirs home with them."



This undated photo provided by the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution shows a cloth bag. More than four decades after the Apollo 11 moon landing, the bag full of souvenirs brought back by astronaut Neil Armstrong has come to light. Among the trove: a 16-mm movie camera from inside the lunar module that filmed its descent to the moon and Armstrong's first steps on the lunar surface in 1969. The discovery was announced Friday, Feb. 6, 2015, by the museum, which is already displaying the camera in a temporary exhibit. (AP Photo/National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Dane Penland)

It had long been common knowledge that astronauts sometimes took pieces of unneeded equipment as souvenirs, Needell said. Congress recently passed a law approving the practice.

The cloth bag also included other small pieces of equipment, including a waist tether that Armstrong had used to suspend his feet during a rest period while the module was on the moon.

Needell called the bag's discovery "extraordinarily exciting."

The Armstrong family has loaned the material to the museum and pledged to donate it, he said.

More information: Museum blog post: bit.ly/1Acdqwe

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