

# AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN EGYPT

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FOGG ART MUSEUM  
CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

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## Newsletter Number Five

Dear Member:

You will be glad to hear that our first Director in Egypt, Dr. William Stevenson Smith, is better after the illness which led to his hospitalization on return. He sends us the following retrospect upon his work:

"Six weeks in the hospital and a long period of recuperation from an operation have prevented me from reporting until now on the period between my last letter on October 12th, 1951 and my departure from Egypt on January 2nd, 1952. On November 12th I delivered a lecture on 'The Giza Site: Its Historical and Archaeological Significance' for the School of Oriental Studies at the American University at Cairo. This was well attended by students and friends of the University who showed a lively interest in the subject.

"During the month after my return from the Orientalist Congress in Istanbul I was able to complete the text for the drawings of the Weserkaf temple reliefs and at the end of December all this material was turned over to M. J. P. Lauer, the architect of the Antiquities Department at Saqqara for a projected publication. On November 15th I left Cairo for a trip to Upper Egypt, stopping first for several days

as the guest of Dr. and Mrs. Walter J. Skellie at Assiut College. Accompanied by the Chief Guards of the Mellawi and Assiut districts I visited the various antiquities in the neighborhood. It was possible in an automobile to cover a great deal of ground in a short time and to see the rock-cut tombs on both sides of the river. One day we went to the Old Kingdom sites of Deir el Gebrawi and Hemanieh and the magnificent but badly damaged Middle Kingdom tombs at Qaw el Kebir. Another day was spent at Meir which, although out of the way and seldom visited, is perhaps the most rewarding place in Middle Egypt for the study of Middle Kingdom paintings and reliefs. It was possible also to make a drawing of the orchard scene on one of the much blackened walls of the chapel of Hepzefa at Assiut.

"Working southwards, I spent the night at Sohag and drove the next morning in company with the Antiquities Inspector to Naga-ed-Der where Dr. Reisner undertook important excavations at the beginning of this century. Naga-ed-Der is now within fairly easy reach of Sohag by a new road along the east bank, although it lies opposite the modern town of Girga, some 22 miles south of Sohag, from which one used to cross the river and visit it by donkey. The road passes through the narrow streets of the very old town of Akhmim. Returning from Naga-ed-Der through Akhmim to Sohag, we drove in the late afternoon along the western side of the valley to Abydos where I had been asked to stay for a few days by the Government Architect Abdel Honeim Akif. One gained a most interesting impression of both sides of this stretch of the valley which once formed part of the ancient province of Thinis, the early capital city of Egypt. I had never been in this part of the country during the autumn when large areas still lie under the waters of the inundation and the villages rise like islands from the midst of these

irrigated basins.

"From Abydos I went to Luxor where I spent some ten days in the Theban Necropolis and in examining the thousands of re-used blocks from a shrine of Akhenaten which are now stacked up in the Karnak and Luxor temples. Staying at Chicago House, I was again able to use the library which is one of the rewarding pleasures of a visit to Luxor. Finally, I spent several days at Aswan in the Government Rest House on the Island of Elephantine as one of the guests of Labib Habachi, the Chief Inspector of Antiquities. On the way we stopped to see the rock shrines and impressive sandstone quarry at Gebel Silsileh, where there is a first hint of the Nubian landscape of the granite cataract region, although here the Nile breaks a passage through the cliffs of sandstone. At Aswan we saw the newly cleared tombs of the late Old Kingdom, the remarkable Middle Kingdom statues in the shrine of Heqa-ib, and the rock inscriptions on the Island of Sehel.

"I returned to Cairo on December 7th and spent the last few weeks completing some work in the Museum and visiting new excavations at Saqqara and Dahshur. At Saqqara, Zakaria Goneim is uncovering an important Early Dynastic monument of huge size in the desert behind the Unas Pyramid. At Dahshur, Ahmed Fakhry is finding the earliest great series of royal reliefs known to us, in the valley temple of the Southern Pyramid of Sneferu.

"During my absence in Luxor, Mr. Sloane had given up his work with the Center and departed for Jerusalem. As for the activities of the two Fulbright Scholars attached to the Center, Mr. Sponenburgh had completed a number of impressive pieces of sculpture and was planning to make a trip to Upper Egypt in January. Mr. Fuleihan had revised the score of his First Symphony, since, after new contact with Egypt, he

was not satisfied with the first and last movements. He was also working on a symphonic composition inspired by the Giza Pyramids and continuing to study the music performed by people in the streets and cafés and amongst working groups in Cairo.

"On January 1st we drove to Alexandria by the desert road and sailed for Naples on the 2nd. It was very satisfactory to be able to meet Professor Arthur E. R. Boak at the beginning of a three weeks' stay at the American Academy in Rome. We could thus talk over the problems of the Center before he departed for Cairo, via Athens and Istanbul, to take up the Directorship. Finally, it was possible to visit the Egyptian Collections in Rome, Florence, Bologna, and Turin before sailing for America from Genoa on February 9th."

From Professor Arthur E. R. Boak, who succeeded Dr. Smith as Director in Egypt, we have received the following:

"In the second week of January 1952, I had the good fortune to be able to have several lengthy conversations with my predecessor, Dr. W. S. Smith, in Rome where he made a stop on his return journey from Egypt. As a result of his briefing I was brought up to date on the general situation in Egypt and on the position of the Center in Cairo. I decided also that, in spite of discouraging advice from several quarters, even from Egypt, that it would be worth while to go to Cairo in spite of the unfavorable political situation. So we (that is, Mrs. Boak and myself) set off expecting to go via Athens and Istanbul. Upon reaching Athens, however, I found that the steamship line upon which I had counted for the trip from Istanbul to Alexandria had just abandoned that run. As a result we had to make a round trip from Istanbul to Athens before sailing to Egypt. This of itself involved some delay, which was lengthened by the Cairo riots of January 26th.

These occurred just before we reached Istanbul, and upon our return to Athens we waited to be sure that order had been reestablished before we irrevocably committed ourselves to the Egyptian venture. Eventually we sailed from Athens on the S. S. Corinthia and reached Alexandria on February 9, proceeding to Cairo by the desert bus route the next day.

"In Cairo, we remained until March 18, and left with a feeling that, from my point of view at least, the stay was eminently worthwhile. Following Dr. Smith's suggestion, I at once got into touch with Mrs. J. Wesley Adams, Director of the U. S. Educational Foundation for Egypt, who was kind enough to arrange opportunities for me to meet many Egyptian scholars and students representing various fields of intellectual interest. Thanks to her cordiality and that of her staff, our sojourn in Cairo and later in Alexandria was made much pleasanter and more profitable than would otherwise have been possible. At the foundation, I gave an afternoon talk on 'The Significance of the Hellenistic-Roman-Byzantine-Period in Egyptian History', and under its auspices led one group on a visit to the site of Karanis, scene of the former University of Michigan excavations in the Fayun, and another to the Wadi Natrun where we visited the monastery of Deir Amba Bishôî.

"A good deal of my time was spent in meeting members of the faculties of the Fuad I and Ibrahim Universities, particularly those belonging to the departments of classics, Ptolemaic and Roman history, and Coptic and Arabic civilizations. In this I was greatly aided by the kindness of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of Ibrahim University, Dr. Ibrahim Noshy Bey. I also enjoyed a most interesting discussion of the unsatisfactory standards set by American graduate schools for Egyptian doctoral candidates with Dr. Zaki M. Hassan, Dean of the Arts College at Fuad I. Thanks to Professor Adolf Grohmann, Head of the

Department of Arabic Studies, and my former student, Dr. Abdellatif Aly, now on the staff of Fuad I, I was able to see the general and special libraries, the various collections, and the teaching facilities available in the fields which I have mentioned above. In addition, Professor Grohmann was kind enough to guide me through the Museum of Islamic Arts pointing out the more recent acquisitions and discussing some of the more important exhibits.

"In this connection, I should mention a most illuminating visit to the Coptic Museum which has been doubled in size and greatly enriched by accessions of various sorts since my last visit. The kindness of the Director and his staff was most gratifying and I feel that they deserve to be complimented highly on their methods of arranging materials for exhibition and their scholarly work of interpretation.

"At the Educational Foundation I got into touch with the two Fulbright Fellows accredited to the Center--Professors Mark Sponenburgh and Anis Fuleihan. Subsequently, I had several interesting meetings with the former discussing his program of work and seeing some of his designs and sculpture. When I left Egypt it was my understanding that Professor Sponenburgh was scheduled to give an exhibition of his sculptures and Professor Fuleihan to give a concert. Both were to be sponsored by the Foundation, and I arranged with Mrs. Adams that the Center should be given publicity as a co-sponsor.

"The only foreign organization with which I came into contact was the Institut Français d'Archeologie Orientale. As is well known, their archaeological activities had been suspended abruptly as a result of the Franco-Egyptian friction over the Algerian independence movement. I had the good fortune to be able to hold long conversations with the

Secretary of the Institut, M. Octave Guéraud, over the current and future problems of excavation by foreigners in Egypt.

"At the Antiquities Department, I had a cordial reception from the Director, M. Drioton, likewise at the Egyptian Museum where the Chief Keeper, Abbas Bey, and Dr. Maurice Raphael kindly made accessible the materials in which I was interested. Consequently, I was able to work on the texts of certain papyri of the Byzantine period and to obtain some very good infra-red photographs of others which were practically illegible in ordinary photographs. Unfortunately, my other project which involved the surveying of certain Byzantine village sites and the acquisition of detailed maps proved impossible of execution owing to the prevailing political atmosphere and military restrictions. For this reason, and because I felt that I had done all that I could in the interest of the Center in Cairo, we left there on March 18 and went down to Alexandria.

"At this point, I should refer to my relations with the Cairo Committee of Research Center constituted by Dr. Smith. Very shortly after reaching Cairo I called on Judge J. Y. Brinton, legal advisor to the American Embassy and one of the Committee members who, with his wife, did everything possible to make our stay in Cairo most enjoyable. Judge Brinton offered me the facilities of his office for a meeting of the Committee, which was held on February 16. Present were Judge Brinton, Dr. Wier of the Rockefeller Foundation, Commander Philips USN of the Naval Medical Research Unit in Egypt, Mr. Henry of Socony-Vacuum, and myself. The meeting was devoted to a critical discussion of the organization and work of the Center in Egypt, which resulted in some concrete suggestions for the future. These I plan to submit reasonably soon in a special report. Since Commander Philips was on the point of

being transferred from Egypt, the Committee voted to invite Dr. John Badeau, President of the American University in Cairo, to replace him. Upon receiving the invitation, Dr. Badeau graciously agreed to serve. I am confident that he will be able to give the Center some very useful advice and help. Incidentally, Dr. Badeau is something of a specialist in Islamic architecture, and I profited greatly from visits to the Ibn Tulun and Sultan Hassan mosques under his expert guidance.

"Another most fascinating experience in Cairo was a day spent with Dr. Ahmed Fakhry, Director of the Pyramids excavations, at his house and workrooms near the Giza Pyramids. There I had a chance to look over at leisure the newer sculptural fragments from Saqqara as well as new Greek and Coptic ostraka from the Kharga oasis.

"While in Cairo, I made the acquaintance of Dr. Aziz Atiya, Professor of Medieval History, and Dr. Zaki Aly, Professor of Greek and Roman History, in the Farouk University at Alexandria. Through them, I was invited to address the Royal Archaeological Society of Alexandria and to give two lectures at Farouk University. Before the Archaeological Society I spoke on the place of Alexandria in the Hellenistic-Roman worlds. At the University, I lectured to mixed student and faculty groups on aspects of Ptolemaic and Roman administration in Egypt. I also was received most kindly by the administrative staff of the University, in particular the Rector, Dr. Mustafa Amer, the Secretary, Neguib Bey Hashem, and the Dean of the Arts College, Falakala Bey. Through them, I was able to gain an insight into many of their educational problems as well as to the University's equipment. Likewise, Professors Atiya and Zaki Aly, and some of their graduate students very generously escorted me to all places which I wished to visit. These included the Museum and most of the excavations which had been carried on since 1932. A particularly



pleasant experience was provided by Mr. Lukas Benaki who invited us to inspect his very extensive collection of Hellenistic-Roman figurines and other objects.

"We sailed from Alexandria for Naples on March 28 on the Italian liner Esperia carrying with us very pleasant impressions of the cordiality and generosity of Egyptian scholars and educators. I was fully aware that this was due chiefly to my position as temporary Director of the Research Center, and I was and still am beset with considerable doubts about how long such an indefinite post can continue to command respect. Hence I propose to submit certain suggestions with respect to the reorganizing the work of the Center in a special report."

Mr. John D. Cooney, Curator of Egyptian Art at the Brooklyn Museum, the Center's recently appointed Director in Egypt, hopes to start for Cairo about October 1st of this year. Plans for his own work are primarily dictated by his participation in a Corpus of Ancient Glass Vessels, most of the material for which is in the Cairo Museum. Further, he hopes not only to acquaint himself at first hand with the results of excavation done since his last visit to Egypt, but to make a detailed study of Royal Sculpture during the Eighteenth Dynasty.

On the evening of May 12th your Assistant Treasurer, Mr. Bothmer of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, lectured at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, on "Tombs and Temples from Aswan to Gizeh," to an audience of about 135. Many of the illustrative slides were taken by Mr. Bothmer himself during his stay in Egypt two years ago. Dr. Ludlow Bull, who introduced the lecturer and sends an account of the occasion, mentions Mr. Bothmer's references to the Center's work and aims, and describes him as distributing "a number of our leaflets to people who asked for them." It is to be hoped that this zeal in our Assistant

Treasurer will shortly redound to the overflowing of our Treasury.

Mr. Ray Garner of the Harmon Foundation showed his film, of which some account was given in our last Newsletter, to a group of friends of the Center at the American Alpine Club, New York, on the afternoon of May 12th. Dr. Bull, who was present, is most enthusiastic about the film, which includes, as he writes, "some of the finest color shots he has seen. No human figure or modern structure appears in the film from start to finish."

Several requests for attachment to the Center have already been received from Fulbright applicants.

We have great pleasure in enclosing an article on Egyptian Cats by Mrs. Riefstahl of the Brooklyn Museum.

Our Membership Secretary, Professor Richard A. Parker, of Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, has several copies of a list of corrections to the Carbon Fourteen article which was enclosed in a previous Newsletter. If any member wishes to keep accurately posted on the subject of Radiocarbon Dating, he may write to Professor Parker for a copy.

At a recent meeting of your Executive Committee, Mr. Cooney was able to meet Dr. Smith and discuss plans for his Directorship. It was voted at this meeting to make a payment of \$300.00 to our late Administrative Officer, Mr. Mark Wellington Sloane, in recognition of his services to the Center. Mr. Sloane is now in Jerusalem, where he has in hand a book dealing with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Yours very sincerely,

EDWARD W. FORBES

President