

AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN EGYPT

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FOGG ART MUSEUM
CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

November 1, 1951

Notice of Annual Meeting

and

Newsletter Number Three

Dear Member:

The Annual Meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, Inc., will be held in the Trustees Room at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts, on Tuesday, November 20, at 4 P. M. Sherry will be served after the meeting.

In accordance with our By-laws the terms of five Trustees of the Center expire this month. They are not immediately eligible for re-election and to fill their places the Executive Committee of the Trustees propose the following:

1. Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, of the Freer Gallery
2. Mr. Albert Gallatin, Trustee of the Brooklyn Museum
3. Mr. William C. Hayes, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
4. Dr. George R. Hughes, of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
5. Miss Amelia Peabody, of Boston

It is intended that the re-election for one year of the Center's executive officers be proposed.

If you are not planning to attend the meeting, will you kindly sign and return in the enclosed stamped envelope the proxy which accompanies this letter?

Your Director in Egypt sends us the following account of his activities:

"Since I last reported in May, the summer heat settled in and it is still continuing to be uncomfortably warm for October as I write at present. Wellington Sloane, the Administrative Officer, remained in Cairo throughout the summer and has recently been joined here by his wife. During July he was active in helping to plan and execute a series of recorded music programs at the U. S. Library. He has also been assisting Bishop Allen at All Saints' Cathedral where the Sloanes now have an apartment.

"The summer was enlivened by the visit of Ray Garner who was working with the support of the Harmon Foundation of New York. He stopped with us here at Mena House twice, first while planning a trip through Upper Egypt and then again on his return. With the cordial cooperation of the Egyptian Government and in spite of the extreme heat, he was able to go as far as Abu Simbel, visiting various sites of historical interest on his way back down the Nile. He also toured the Delta, photographing various aspects of modern Egyptian life to round out a documentary film in color of the Nile Valley. We last saw him as he was planning to fly to Uganda to photograph the sources of the great river and he should now be back in New York beginning his autumn lecture program. While in Cairo, he showed at the U. S. Library his fascinating film "The Mountain" recording the ascent of the Grand Teton in Wyoming. The Center was able to advise concerning the ancient monuments and sites which would best serve to illustrate his record of early life in Egypt and to give him some personal assistance with the material at Giza and Saqqara and in the Cairo Museum. One looks forward with anticipation to what should be a colored movie of Egypt of a unique sort and we shall remember pleasantly the cheerful enthusiasm and energy with which he tackled a hot and difficult task at a time of year when most people would shrink from the undertaking.

"I, myself, have kept busy during June, July and August with work at Giza and Saqqara and with frequent visits to the fabulous store of material housed in the Cairo Museum. Ahmed Youssef Moustafa Effendi of the Conservation Section of the Department of Antiquities, who before the war restored the curtain-box of Queen Hetep-heres, came down from Luxor for a week in July. Together we examined the trays of thin gold sheets and fragile inlay pieces of faience which once composed a wonderfully decorated arm chair and chest of Hetep-heres, the mother of Cheops who built the Great Pyramid at Giza. It is proposed that Ahmed Youssef should soon begin the reconstitution of these last two remaining pieces of the Queen's furniture to complete the unique collection of this material from a royal household of the Pyramid Age which forms one of the treasures of the Cairo Museum. These pieces have been patiently assembled over the years from the decayed contents of the Queen's tomb which was discovered by the Harvard-Boston Expedition in the Giza Cemetery in 1925. It was with a sigh of relief that, examining the fragments again after a lapse of four years, it became evident to me that only a few minor changes would have to be made in the descriptions of the reconstructed drawings which I had prepared from our records and left with the Harvard Press last winter as part of the final publication of the Hetep-heres tomb.

"There was also an opportunity to visit a prehistoric village site which Fernand Debono is excavating behind the modern town of Helwan, a little south of Cairo. The advantages of jeep travel in the desert were also made clear during a pleasant morning in which Cmdr. Walter Scott took me to see the Abusir Pyramids and the nearby Sun Temple at Abu Gurob. In a surprisingly short time we were able to see comfortably what would have taken several hours of toilsome walking or donkey riding in the hot sun. Another day I was able to check an inscription for Sir Alan Gardiner at the Pepy II temple at South Saqqara through the loan of the Antiquities Department truck which the Chief Inspector, Zakaria Goneim, kindly put at my disposal. Although my own Austin has proved a great boon in helping me get about the town and country easily and economically there are some places in the desert where I do not dare risk it.

"I have succeeded in completing tracings of a large series of fragmentary blocks which once decorated the temple of King Weserkaf, the first king of Dynasty V in the Old Kingdom. Although terribly smashed, these constitute the earliest body of royal reliefs of any size and it has been possible to reconstruct an amusing scene of men energetically paddling a large boat. Each group of men works in rhythm, some raising their paddles high in the air and others leaning far down over the side of the boat in an unusual example of arrested movement. There is also a charming example of a rare scene of bird snaring in an orchard which can be put together from various fragments. One block turned out not to belong to Weserkaf at all and provides us with the name of a Queen Khent-kaw-s. She may prove to be a second lady of this name and not the much-discussed builder of the so-called 'Fourth Pyramid' at Giza as I had at first thought. Even more curious are two other blocks which one would have taken to be typically Old Kingdom in style but which show the famous son of Ramesses II, Prince Kha-m-waset. He is known to have taken a particular interest in the Saqqara Cemetery and we seem to have here a most intriguing example of alterations made to a temple built some twelve hundred years earlier than the time in which the prince lived. Such an early example of 'archaeological' interest is in keeping with stories about Kha-m-waset. Jean-Phillipe Lauer, the Government Architect at Saqqara, is completing the study of the Weserkaf Temple which was begun long ago by Cecil Firth in 1928. It is hoped that the drawings of the reliefs can be employed in a publication by the Antiquities Department of this valuable material.

"Finally, in addition to my work in checking the reliefs and inscriptions at Giza for the final publication of George Andrew Reisner's 'History of the Giza Necropolis', I have undertaken the editorship of the 'Near East Archaeological News' for the American Journal of Archaeology. After considerable correspondence, I succeeded in getting the text off for an October first deadline. In taking this work over from Miss Ann Perkins late last spring it was felt that it was within the province of the Director of the Center to interest himself in work which was going on in other parts of the Near East. The growing importance of Egypt's relations with other parts of the ancient world has become more and more evident as excavation in recent years has provided us with a clearer insight into the nature of these contacts abroad.

"It was therefore with great pleasure that I found it would be possible to attend the XXIIInd International Congress of Orientalists in Istanbul from the 15th to the 22nd of September, as a representative of the Center, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the U. S. Educational Foundation for Egypt. I travelled by the Turkish ship Istanbul, both going and returning, leaving the 24th of August and arriving back in Cairo on the night of October 3rd. This allowed me a day in Athens and short stays in Izmir where the International Fair was in progress and a new archaeological museum has been arranged in the exhibition grounds. In Athens I was able to see the extraordinarily effective new exhibition of the material in the National Museum. There one receives a vivid impression of the vitality and beauty of Greek creative genius, especially evident in the rooms devoted to the Geometric, Orientalizing and Archaic Periods.

"There were two weeks before the Congress and a few days afterwards in which to see again most of my Turkish friends and to enjoy at leisure the many fascinating things to be seen in Istanbul. I should particularly like to acknowledge the courtesy of Bay Aziz Ogan, the Director of the Archaeological Museum, who showed me the alterations which he is making in that building. The old wooden roof is being replaced by fire-proof materials and the small objects on the vast upper floor must now all be put back in place. Structural repairs are also being undertaken in the Çinili Kiosk which is to be made into a museum devoted to the time of its builder, Mohammed the Conqueror. The other small building across the courtyard contains the collections of the Ancient Orient brought here from sites the mere names of which cast a certain spell from the romantic days of early archaeology: Carchemish, Boğazköy, Assur, Babylon, Nippur, Telloh. Surely it would be hard to find such a picturesque cluster of museum buildings laid as they are about a courtyard terrace above the old trees of the palace gardens which fall away to the Golden Horn. Ancient stones have been casually arranged amongst trees and shrubbery. The sunlight flashes back from the bright tiles of the Çinili Kiosk contrasting with the sombre masses of porphyry imperial sarcophagi, while dark basalt Hittite lions stare stonily at the fantastic tree forms of Byzantine columns. It is this courtyard which really prepares the visitor for the strangely impelling beauty of the justly famous 'Alexander Sarcophagus'.

"Much impressive reconstruction work has been undertaken since 1940 in the old palace of Topkapi Saray under the direction of its curator, Bay Tahsin Öz. This work has been described and illustrated by a series of remarkable photographs and colored plates in the sixth (1949) issue of Güzel Sanatlar. Amongst the wonderful collections in this museum which has long been known to Europeans as the Seraglio, one is particularly struck by the staggering array of precious objects in the treasury and by the costumes, textiles and illuminated manuscripts. These are supplemented by the rugs and illustrated texts in the Museum of Turkish and Moslem Art near the Süleymaniye Mosque. A special exhibition of old books, drawn from libraries throughout the city, had been arranged for the Congress at the University. The whole of this vast treasure produced an overwhelming impression.

"Again it was a delight to see the freshly glowing colors of the mosaics which Paul Underwood and his assistants are engaged in cleaning in the Church of Chora (Kariye Djami). In the side chapel of this church paintings are also miraculously appearing from under the dingy coating of whitewash. Mr. Underwood reported to the Congress on discoveries of mosaics which he is also making in Haghia Sophia. In Haghia Sophia it was a pleasure to talk again to Robert Van Nice about the splendid architectural record that he is making of the great building of Justinian. It is with considerable pride in American effort that one thinks of the amazing things that have been accomplished in this building and in the Kariye Djami since I first saw these two churches in 1932, when Thomas Whittemore was just beginning his work.

"The Egyptological section of the Congress was rather small but was distinguished by the presence of the great English scholar, Sir Alan Gardiner, and M. Pierre Lacau, former Director of the Antiquities Department in Egypt. There were four sessions in this section, at one of which I was asked to preside. I was also able to attend a good many of the meetings in the sections devoted to the Ancient East and Anatolia, in which Albrecht Goetze of Yale and Samuel Kramer of the University of Pennsylvania took an important part. Amongst those from the United States and Canada particularly interested in the Ancient Near East were Miss Theresa Goell, whose name has long been associated with Tarsus, Father Roger O'Gallaghan of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Douglas Tushingham, Annual Professor at the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, and our former Secretary, Richard Frye, who had travelled down by car through Yugoslavia and Greece and was on his way to Teheran. Others with varied interests in the Near East and with whom I found an opportunity to talk were Maurice Dimand of the Metropolitan Museum, Richard Ettinghausen of the Freer Gallery, J. V. McMullan of New York, Wilfred Cantwell Smith of Montreal, Lewis Thomas of Princeton, and Frederick Cox of the University of Alabama. We were most hospitably entertained by the Organizing Committee at Istanbul University and by the Turkish authorities. It was a delightful opportunity to meet such a wide range of scholars with mutual interests from all over the world.

"On my return to Cairo, I found that the two Research Scholars attached to the Center on Fullbright Grants had arrived and had received a provisional course of indoctrination by the U. S. Educational Foundation for Egypt. Mr. Anis Fuleihan, Professor of Music at the University of Indiana, is proposing to undertake a study of Egyptian music in conjunction with original composition. Mr. Mark Sponenburgh, Head of the Department of Sculpture at the University of Oregon, has planned to carry out a program of creative work in sculpture investigating the use of forms, materials and techniques as these have been employed in Egypt. We are at present discussing plans by which the Center can assist them in carrying out their projects most expediently.

"I was fortunate in being able to see George Hughes and Charles Nims who came out for dinner with their wives the day after my return. They were on their way up to Luxor to begin again the autumn activities of the Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. I hope to be able to stay with them at Chicago House in November when I am planning to make a survey trip to sites with Middle Kingdom paintings and reliefs in Upper Egypt."

Simultaneously with this letter a booklet, Radiocarbon Dating, has been mailed to you. This device for dating ancient material is of revolutionary interest to archaeologists, and it is with great pleasure that we make authoritative information on the subject available to our membership.

The fiscal year of the Center runs from October 1st to September 30th. Should your membership require renewal at this time, you will find enclosed a form giving your name and present class. It is unnecessary to sign it when you return it with your dues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Schroeder". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Eric Schroeder
Executive Secretary