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The Oriental Institute

# News & Notes

NOV 25 1980

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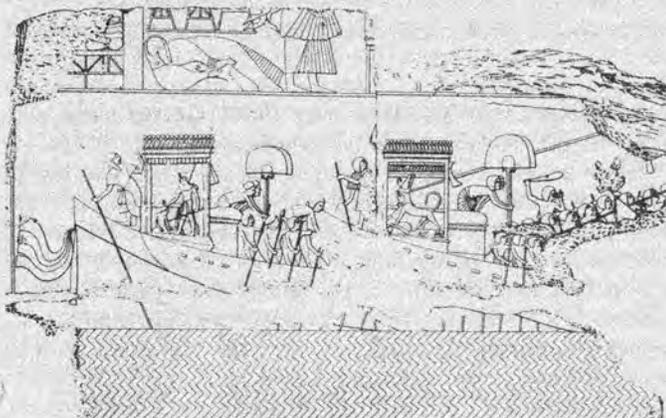
No. 65: November 1980

## "A Jubilee Shall That Fiftieth Year Be Unto You"\*

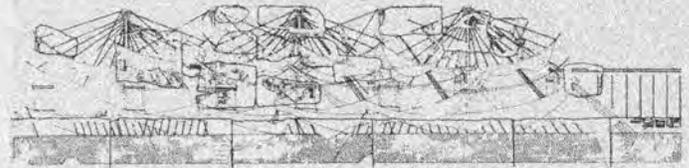
The Oriental Institute, with James H. Breasted at the helm and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. at the exchequer, completed fifty years ago in 1931, on the east bank of the Nile in Luxor, a group of buildings collectively called Chicago House to serve as expedition headquarters for the Institute's Epigraphic Survey. Today, Chicago House is the only American Egyptological mission with a permanent base of operations in Egypt; its location is convenient; its facilities are extensive; and, consequently, it is not only headquarters for the Institute's staff, but also a focal point for the activities of international Egyptology. Its library, with holdings of some 15,000 items, is one of the most important Egyptology libraries in the world; within Egypt, its completeness is rivalled

curate copying of carved relief and painted scenes and their accompanying inscriptions by the production of facsimile drawings. Dr. Breasted's foresight has been proven by the present urgency of "salvage epigraphy", due to rising ground water and increased rainfall (both attributable to the effects of the Aswan High Dam); industrialization; the extension of agriculture; deliberate vandalism to obtain saleable fragments for the illicit antiquities trade; and even, the boom in tourism. All pose an unprecedented threat to the monuments.

Lanny Bell, director of Chicago House, explains that in addition to translations of the texts, commentary on the scenes, and other critical apparatus, each volume which the Oriental Institute produces provides raw material for future Egyptological research, now and well into the future. When



Final Drawing of a portion of the boat procession on the east side of the Luxor temple, showing the present condition of the wall.  
Drawing by Frank Howard



Provisional reconstruction of a scene from the West wall of the Luxor temple, showing a boat procession. The existing wall is preserved up to the lowest course of blocks, while the fragments which fit the scene have been floated in at the top.  
Drawing by Ray Johnson

only by the library of the Cairo Museum.

From 1924 to 1931, the Epigraphic Survey staff had been housed in a sun-baked brick structure on the west side of the Nile, but the salvaging of historical records developed so rapidly that permanent headquarters became a stark necessity. So Chicago House was built on three-and-a-half acres, facing the Nile almost under the shadow of the great Karnak Temple, and looking across the Nile toward the stately panorama of the western cliffs, behind which lies the Valley of the Tombs of Kings. The palm trees, planted a half century ago on either side of the avenue within the compound, have stretched upward and upward, so that the garden today is a real oasis always available to friends and weary travellers.

Dr. Breasted established the Epigraphic Survey because he had a vision of recording all the endangered monuments of ancient Egypt. "Epigraphy", as he used it, refers to the ac-

the original is destroyed or becomes illegible, the Institute's copy will remain to preserve its content. The Oriental Institute epigraphers have a unique method, based on committee consensus, to assure the extreme degree of accuracy strived for. Every finished drawing has been approved by five specialists: a photographer, an artist, two epigraphers, and finally the field director. Successful staff members, comments Mr. Bell, learn to resolve their professional differences without allowing personal feelings to interfere with their objectivity. Satisfactory results cannot be achieved by a simple mechanical process. Says Mr. Bell: "They depend rather on skill, judgment, and experience. We are representing an art, and our drawings are not lifeless, but an art form in their own light, reflecting the individuality of the persons who work on them."

Results of the many years of epigraphic labor have appeared in eight volumes on the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu, three volumes of Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak, and a volume on the temple of Ramesses II at Beit el-Wali (as part of the Nubian rescue campaign). This past season opened with the long-awaited publication of The Temple of Khonsu I, and ended with the appearance of The Tomb of Kheruef, The Battle Reliefs of Sety I at Karnak is at the publisher, and Khonsu II (The Architecture) is well advanced. Also pending is William Murnane's edition of Harold H. Nelson's drawings of the reliefs and inscriptions inside the Hypostyle Hall, as well as his United With Eternity,

\* (Lev. 25:11). This was the title of the address delivered by John A. Wilson at the celebration, May 7, 1969, of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Oriental Institute.

*"A Jubilee Shall That Fiftieth Year Be Unto You" (Cont. from pg 1.)* a scholarly guide to the Temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu.

The 1979-80 season has been a busy one challenged by the approaching jubilee. Nearly all of the work remaining to be done in the colonnade of the Luxor Temple was completed this past season. The three colossal indurated limestone statues inside the north gateway were studied to try to determine from whom Ramesses II usurped them. The recording of the graffiti left on the columns by the 19th century visitors was undertaken; the dates found so far range from 1804 to 1845. These graffiti will help fill the gaps in knowledge of the modern history of the temple, including the levels of the occupation debris before clearance and the itineraries of the early travellers.

A final study must yet be made in Luxor of the numerous fragments which have been recovered during modern excavation, particularly along the avenue of the Sphinxes. These scattered blocks were once part of the now denuded walls flanking the colonnade. They and thousands of others had been dismantled and re-used in post-pharaonic times, and have been retrieved and stacked by up to four generations of modern archaeologists. Fragments have been joined into larger units. The largest group of some twenty



*One of the many retrieved block fragments which once formed part of the now denuded portions of the walls of the Luxor colonnade.*  
Photo by Karen Krause

pieces constitutes a scene on the west wall of the colonnade, depicting a number of tugs drawing the divine barques in the festival of Opet. Other reconstructed scenes show processions of priests, representations of buildings, and texts of offering lists. In all cases, the lengthy burial of the fragments has resulted in the preservation of considerably more painted detail on them than survives on the standing temple walls, which were subjected to a greater degree of erosion. Thus, the Chicago House staff has not only restored scenes which have been lost for two thousand years, but has gained a greater understanding of the original decorative program employed by the colonnade.

Research in Luxor is drawing to a close, so the epigraphic team has once again crossed the Nile to the west to begin recording the largely unpublished Eighteenth Dynasty temple at Medinet Habu. The resumption of efforts there marks the beginning of the final stage in the publication of the entire temple complex, which began with the founding of the Epigraphic Survey in 1924. The challenge is the problem of the erasure of the names of Hatshepsut and their replacement by those of other Thutmose rulers, the erasure and restoration of the figures of Amun and the texts relating to him, and the Ptolemaic renewal of much of the decoration. Many of the walls are intricately painted, giving the reliefs an added



*View of the colonnade of the Luxor temple from the west, looking east, showing the temple as it appears today. The denuded remains of the west wall of the colonnade can be clearly seen.*  
Photo by Eric Krause

dimension. The artists will work at this site from the beginning of this season, with the Egyptologists joining them as soon as the final checking is completed at Luxor.

During the past fifty years, there has been much wear and tear on the expedition headquarters, and nothing has been done in the way of renovation or much in maintenance. The golden jubilee as symbolic of renewal has come none too soon, and thanks to several generous grants, Chicago House is today in hopefully sound repair. Plumbing and electric wire systems have been reconstituted, the heating system for the library building overhauled, and most of the magazines and storehouses which are scattered over the three-and-a-half acre estate have been cleaned and brought back into use.

Many of the older, rarer, larger, and more valuable books have been deteriorating dangerously, which means deacidifying their paper and rebinding them on a book-by-book basis. A program has been inaugurated of permanently monitoring the temperature and humidity in the library rooms; and shielding material has been purchased to apply to the windows to reduce the damage to books from ultra-violet light. Salvage work also continues in the invaluable photographic archives. The breakdown of the naturally unstable materials of which the old negatives were made has necessitated the copying of these negatives while they still exist.

Chicago House has served well the past fifty years as an extension of the Oriental Institute in Egypt in its "organized endeavor to recover the lost story of the rise of man" as Dr. Breasted envisaged it. The future should produce further fulfilling results.

—Elda Maynard



*An Epigrapher at work in the small temple at Medinet Habu, where the Epigraphic Survey is working this season.*  
Photo by Karen Krause

## Off the Press Soon

William J. Murnane, member of the Epigraphic Survey staff at Chicago House in Luxor, has written United with Eternity, a Concise Guide to the Monuments of Medinet Habu, which is being published by The Oriental Institute and the American University in Cairo Press.

In answer to a request for a brief description of the forthcoming volume, Mr. Murnane wrote:

"The Oriental Institute's permanent expedition to Egypt began work in 1924 at Medinet Habu, site of Ramesses III's mortuary temple in West Thebes. While the Epigraphic Survey worked on recording the reliefs and inscriptions carved on the buildings, the Architectural and Archaeological Survey initiated the first truly scientific excavation of the entire complex, as well as of the area to the north on which the funerary temples of kings Eye and Horemheb had been built.

"Archaeological field work ceased at Medinet Habu in the early 1930's, but the Epigraphic Survey's copying continues. By 1970, five volumes of excavation reports had been joined by eight others, comprising a complete record of the great mortuary temple and of the high gate in front of it. Volumes have also been published of Coptic and Demotic graffiti found on the site. The Epigraphic Survey is now returning to Medinet Habu in order to complete recording the so-called small temple (built by Hatshepsut in the Eighteenth Dynasty and progressively enlarged through sixteen centuries of paganism), the tomb chapels of the Saite princesses, and other small, late monuments on the site.

"The Oriental Institute has thus invested a great deal of scientific work on Medinet Habu, with more to come. Although it has worked on other sites, the Epigraphic Survey is characteristically identified through its work at Medinet Habu in the eyes of scholars and of laymen who have been interested in the Oriental Institute's work. Until now, however, students and members of the general public have not had a thorough modern account of Medinet Habu and what is to be found there.

"This need is addressed by this slender volume, less than 100 pages in length, that not only gives a history of Medinet Habu from ancient into modern times as seen through the monuments, but also reproduces a good number of drawings, reconstructions and plans published in the large scientific volumes issued by the Survey. The result, we hope, will not only provide a sound introduction to the ancient monuments of Medinet Habu itself, but convey something of the way in which a sacred building functioned at the time of the Pharaohs."

Many Institute members await with keen anticipation the arrival of these books from Cairo. It is hoped that this will happen before the end of the year.

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Readers will be interested to know that William J. Murnane's The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt is now at Harmondsworth ready for publication in 1981. Mr. Murnane comments: "The title says it all, nearly: this will be a visitors' guide to sites along the Nile Valley, those often seen and off the beaten track, keyed in to a preliminary discussion of the principal strands of society and daily life in ancient Egypt."

## From the Membership Office

I would like to thank all the members who attended Members' Day here at the Institute on November 2. That and the opening lecture and reception were very well attended.

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Please note that the members' lecture for December will be held at the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center (Michigan and Randolph) on December 3. The reception will begin at 5:00 P.M. in the GAR room on the second floor. The lecture will follow at 6:00 P.M. in the theater also on the second floor. Prof. Lawrence Stager will speak on "Carthage: Port of the Mediterranean". Please note the time and location on your calendar.

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The Suq Manager, Chris DerDerian, announces that the recent renovation of the Suq has been completed. As set up by Mr. Torres there are now increased display and storage areas. The Suq gift catalogue is currently in production and will be mailed soon to all members. The Institute's 1980 Christmas card, a reproduction of Nina Davies' painting THREE VIGNETTES is featured on the cover of the catalogue. A 20% discount card good toward any regularly priced gift item will be included. Members should note that they receive a 10% discount in the Suq on all purchases over \$1.

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Mr. and Mrs. George Eden of Peoria recently donated \$50 to the Institute to help defray costs for the receptions following the members' lectures. We would like to thank them for their generosity.

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Some confusion exists on what telephone number to use when calling the Institute. You may wish to clip the following section for handy reference:

For scheduling tours of the Museum . . . . .	753-2475
For ordering Oriental Institute Publications . . .	753-3875
For inspection of your antiquities call for appointment (a service for members only) . . . . .	753-2475
For information on membership, lectures, receptions, OI tours, and members' courses . . . . .	753-2389
For information on becoming a Docent Volunteer	753-2573
For questions about gifts from the Suq . . . . .	753-2484
For information on courses offered by the Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations . . . . .	753-2476
If none of the above numbers are what you need, try	753-2471.

The members' courses for the winter quarter will be An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew and An Introduction to Ancient Egyptian Art. Detailed information and registration form will be part of the December News & Notes.

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The Oriental Institute tour group to the People's Republic of China has just returned, and the first reports indicate that the tour was a smashing success. More details and other news to follow later.

Eugene Cruz-Urbe  
Membership Secretary

The Director, John A. Brinkman, is pleased to announce to the membership that the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary Project has recently received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for \$373,557.00. This part of the grant has been given outright for a three-year period beginning July 1, 1980, and is the largest NEH grant allocated this year.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has designated an additional \$186,779.00 for the project as matching funds. All monies raised by the Institute specifically for the Assyrian Dictionary will be matched dollar for dollar up to that amount. The Institute has a two-year period in which to raise the matching funds.

The Assyrian Dictionary was begun in 1921, and Erica Reiner, the John A. Wilson Professor of Oriental Studies, is currently the Editor-in-Charge.

The Loop Christmas Shopping Lecture  
"Carthage: Port of the Mediterranean"  
Lawrence Stager, The Oriental Institute  
Wednesday, December 3, 6:00 P.M.  
Chicago Public Library Cultural Center,  
Theater (2nd Floor)  
Michigan and Randolph

Special arrangements have been made with the Chicago Public Library Cultural Center to hold the December membership lecture in the main library building (Michigan and Randolph) in the Loop. Why not come downtown to do your Christmas shopping and afterwards explore the wonders of ancient Carthage with Prof. Stager?

Refreshments will be served at 5:00 P.M. preceding the lecture in the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) Room (2nd floor adjacent to the theater). The lecture will start at 6:00 P.M.

Please note the time and location on your calendar.



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