

SPECIAL EVENTS

Meghan A. Winston

The 2009–2010 event schedule was an exciting one for the Oriental Institute! We welcomed over 700 guests to the Oriental Institute during the course of the year and held events including the *Pioneers to the Past* Members' preview, *Voices from the New Past*, a Breasted Society event, and many others. In addition, we've begun the busy planning process for next year's gala, which will be held on May 2, 2011. We also said good-bye to Kaye Oberhausen, who moved on to a position at the Victory Gardens Theater, and hired a new special events coordinator, Meghan Winston, who jumped in head first and handled much of the planning for this year's events. A special thank-you goes out to the Oriental Institute Visiting Committee, Events Committee, and all others who work tirelessly to make Oriental Institute events successful.

Rita Picken Memorial

On December 10, 2009, the Oriental Institute community gathered to remember the life of Rita Tallent Picken, a true friend and generous supporter of the Oriental Institute.

Rita showed her love for the Oriental Institute not only through her involvement with the Docent program for thirty years but also through her sponsorship of the Robert F. Picken Family Nubia Gallery and the 2009 special exhibit, *Meresamun: A Temple Singer in Ancient Egypt*.

This past spring at the Oriental Institute 90th anniversary gala, the Institute honored Rita with the James Henry Breasted Medallion — the highest honor we give our Members and supporters to recognize their service and commitment to the Oriental Institute.

Rita and her daughter, Kitty Picken, have been part of the fabric of the Oriental Institute for decades; Rita saw the people in the Oriental Institute community as a second family. She will be greatly missed.

Members' Preview — *Pioneers to the Past*

On January 11, over 150 Oriental Institute Members enjoyed an exclusive preview of *Pioneers to the Past: American Archaeologists in the Middle East, 1919–1920*, a special exhibit showcasing antiquities that James Henry Breasted bought on his first trip to the Middle East in the early 1900s.

After Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute, welcomed all guests, Breasted's journey was brought to life through an address by Geoff Emberling, chief curator of the Oriental Institute Museum. During his talk, Geoff helped Members re-live this trip through many never-before-seen photographs, artifacts, and archival documents.



Figure 1. A group of women looks at a bulletin board in the Henrietta Herbolsheimer Syro-Anatolian Gallery

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Following Geoff's lecture, guests were invited to tour the exhibit and enjoy a reception with food from Amazing Edibles in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery. Members enjoyed delectable hors d'oeuvres in addition to a special expansion of the Suq, which featured specially ordered merchandise and autographed copies of catalogs chronicling Breasted's excursion.

Breasted Society Event – Voices from the New Past

On February 10, forty-five Breasted Society Members enjoyed an evening of storytelling and recollection of Breasted's letters to friends and family during the Oriental Institute's first expedition to the Middle East, in 1919–1920. Breasted's letters were brought to life by Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute, and Geoff Emberling, chief curator of the Oriental Institute Museum, while Oriental Institute faculty members shared experiences of their own.

The night opened with a cocktail reception in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery, where guests sipped on various time-appropriate beverages made with gin and dined on food artfully presented by Jewell Events Catering. Following the cocktail reception, guests took their seats in the Yelda Khorsabad Court to hear Breasted's letters read aloud as well as other stories.

Dr. Stein opened the storytelling program by reading an excerpt from *Dead Towns and Living Men* by Sir Leonard Woolley, which tells the story of Woolley's struggle with a Turkish director



Figure 2. John Breasted, grandson of James Henry Breasted, reads a letter from his grandfather during the Voices of the New Past Breasted Society event



Figure 3. The Breasted family poses for a photo in the lobby of the Oriental Institute. From left to right: James Henry Breasted III, Barbara Breasted Whitesides, and John Breasted, grandchildren of James Henry Breasted; Dr. Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute; John Larson, Oriental Institute archivist; Dr. Geoff Emberling, chief curator of the Oriental Institute Museum

of antiquities to get permission to dig at a certain site in the 1920s. Following the excerpt, Dr. Emberling recounted two letters that chronicle Breasted's experience as he purchased antiquities and took aerial photos in Egypt. Afterward, Dr. Nadine Moeller shared a story about her own experience as director of excavations at Tell Edfu about how astonished Egyptian workers are to see women working in excavation sites alongside men. Dr. McGuire Gibson, Professor of Mesopotamian Archaeology, and Dr. Matthew Stolper, Director of the Persepolis Fortification Project, shared wildly entertaining stories of their mentors in the field, which included stories of getting lost in sand storms, hosting Queen Victoria's granddaughter, and a visit from the Nazis at Persepolis.

We were also honored to have several members of the Breasted family with us at the event. Members were fortunate to hear from Barbara Breasted Whitesides, granddaughter of James Henry Breasted, Sr., who noted that she "was so proud as a granddaughter" to be in attendance. To finish off the program, we heard from John Breasted, Breasted's grandson, who shared a private letter from his grandfather to his son and John's father, James Henry Breasted, Jr., about marriage, which gave us greater insight into Breasted's everyday family life.

After the storytelling concluded, guests sampled desserts from an exclusive dessert bar that featured miniature lemon meringue tarts and chocolate chip cookies, truffle lollipops and cheese-cake bites.

Post-doctoral Conference – Slavery and Households in the Near East

From March 4 to 6, the Oriental Institute welcomed twelve scholars from various universities spanning North America and Europe for its annual post-doctoral conference. Participants who arrived on Thursday night were treated to a dinner at the University's Quadrangle Club.

On Friday evening, various Oriental Institute professors, in addition to conference participants, attended a small reception for our guests in the Edgar and Deborah Jannotta Mesopotamian Gallery followed by a trip to Chicago's Chinatown, where attendees dined on dumplings, wonton soup, Mongolian chicken, and other delicious dishes.

To round out the weekend, we enjoyed one last session of papers as well as a pizza lunch. A special thanks goes out to Mariana Perlinac and Laura Culbertson for all they did to ensure the weekend's success.

Research Endowment Campaign Completion Celebration

On March 27, the Oriental Institute celebrated the completion of its Research Endowment Campaign (REC). The REC, started in 2006 and expected to end in 2011, achieved its goal of reaching \$3 million in just three years. All of the money raised contributed to building the endowment in the five main areas within the Oriental Institute: ancient languages, archaeological fieldwork, Research Archives, technology, and museum holdings/special exhibits.

The evening commenced with a champagne reception in the director's office for donors who had given over \$10,000 to the campaign. In addition to champagne there were hors d'oeuvres, including various tartlets, bacon-wrapped scallops, and other drinks.

Following the private reception, guests heard from representatives of each of the five endowments: Dr. Geoff Emberling, chief curator of the Oriental Institute Museum; Theo van den Hout, director of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary; Foy Scalf, head of the Research Archives; John Sanders, head of technology; and Dr. Nadine Moeller, director of excavations at Tell Edfu. All

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five participants gave an in-depth account detailing how REC contributions have benefitted their respective projects.

Following the program, attendees enjoyed a selection of appetizers, including miniature crab cakes, three kinds of ceviche, and white-wine sangria, which were provided by Beyond Events Chicago Catering.

Annual Members' Event — Passport to the Middle East: Check Out Our Digs!

April was the highlight of the Oriental Institute event season, ending with our annual Members'



Figure 4. Dr. Geoff Emberling, chief curator of the Oriental Institute Museum, talks to patrons at the Galilee Prehistory Project booth

event, Passport to the Middle East: Check Out Our Digs! This year our event gave guests an in-depth look at each of the seven Oriental Institute digs: the Galilee Prehistory Project, Tell Edfu, Tell Zeidan, Jericho, Zincirli, Hamoukar, and Kerkenes Dağ. Check Out Our Digs! also served as the kick-off for our new Adopt-a-Dig program, which focuses on creating a partnership of discovery between donors and field researchers.

The setup for this event was unique in that each of the Oriental Institute excavations had its own booth, situated at a specific place among the galleries. During the event, guests were invited to visit each of the booths and

speak with the dig directors about their excavation seasons and findings. Each dig director prepared a booth with different props that helped event goers learn more about each dig.

Middle Eastern cuisine, provided by Occasions Chicago Catering, was presented in the Robert and Deborah Aliber Persian Gallery. Fare included chicken and lamb kabobs, falafel, hummus, and dolmades.

Dr. Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute, raffled off six custom-made pieces of artwork, commissioned from our very own artist, Angela Altenhofen. One drawing was specifically designed for each dig according to its landscape and native botanicals.

Breasted Society Event — A Sunday Garden Party at 11 Rockgate

On May 23, the Oriental Institute partnered with the Chicago Botanic Garden to present an exclusive Breasted Society and President's Circle event. About sixty-five guests attended a lecture by Judith Tankard, author of *Beatrix Farrand: Private Gardens, Public Landscapes*, which traces the life and work of one of the foremost landscape architects of the early 1900s.



Figure 5. Visiting Committee member Nicole Williams (left) with author Judith Tankard

Beatrix Farrand embarked on her career when she was in her early twenties and today is recognized as the first woman to rise above the invisible line between garden design and landscape architecture, a field that was dominated by men. She is renowned for her work on estate gardens as well as her designs for academic campuses, including the Oriental Institute courtyard.

Following the lecture, Oriental Institute Visiting Committee member Nicole Williams and her husband, Larry Becker, graciously welcomed Breasted Society and President's Circle members, as well as Oriental Institute faculty and staff, into their home and garden for a Sunday afternoon garden party.



Figure 6. Dr. Nadine Moeller (left), director of excavations at Tell Edfu, along with Lynn Abrahamson (center), director of individual giving and board relations, and James Boudreau (right), vice president of marketing and development, at the Chicago Botanic Garden

Guests were allowed to peruse the garden as they enjoyed passed hors d'oeuvres, including cucumber cups filled with chicken salad, strawberries filled with mascarpone cheese, and guava-flavored pectins, all of which were provided by Calihan Catering.