


## M U S E U M



The Museum  
*John Carswell*

The financial base for operating the Museum during the past year was greatly increased by a successful application to the Institute for Museum Services for a grant towards general operating costs, which resulted in an award of \$35,000. This is the highest level of award that any museum in the United States can receive and is the fourth grant we have had from this source during the past five years. In the course of applying for the grant, an analysis of expenditure in all areas of the museum operation was made, which produced some convincing statistics concerning the minimum sums necessary to maintain existing museum services. While the situation has been alleviated in the past few years by special grants such as those from the IMS, and the Women's Board of the University of Chicago, the problem of balancing the Museum budget still remains to be solved each year, on an *ad hoc* basis.

On the positive side, the introduction of a new accounting system has meant that we now have a much more accurate method of keeping track of day-to-day expenses.

The major activity during the year was the preparation of a special exhibition, *The Quest for Prehistory*, which opened in November. Again supported by a special grant from the Women's Board, this exhibit recounted the history of the Oriental Institute's involvement with the study of ancient Near Eastern prehistory, back to the days of Sandford and Arkell's surveys in the Nile Valley in the nineteen-twenties. More specifically, the exhibition focussed on the contribution to the field made by Robert and Linda Braidwood, from the days when they joined in Henri Frankfort's seminars, to their own pioneer excavations at Jarmo in northern Iraq, and to their present work at Çayönü in eastern Turkey.

The exhibition was constructed around a full-scale reproduction of a prehistoric house, based on an actual house excavated at Jarmo, which gave a vivid insight into the life of our early farming ancestors.



*The Quest for Prehistory. Stairway to the raised platform, including introductory texts to the exhibit.*

A succinct commentary was provided by Professor Braidwood, available at the press of a button. The exhibition also dealt with the Carbon<sup>14</sup> dating process, itself another Chicago contribution to science; some of the first Carbon<sup>14</sup> dates were actually obtained from Jarmo charcoal samples. Many of the artifacts from Jarmo — clay figurines, stone objects and tools — were on exhibit for the first time, and the preparation of the exhibition in close collaboration with the Braidwoods was a stimulating experience for all of the museum staff.

Later in the year, a second, smaller exhibition of photographs and other material was mounted in the entrance hall, titled *The House on the*



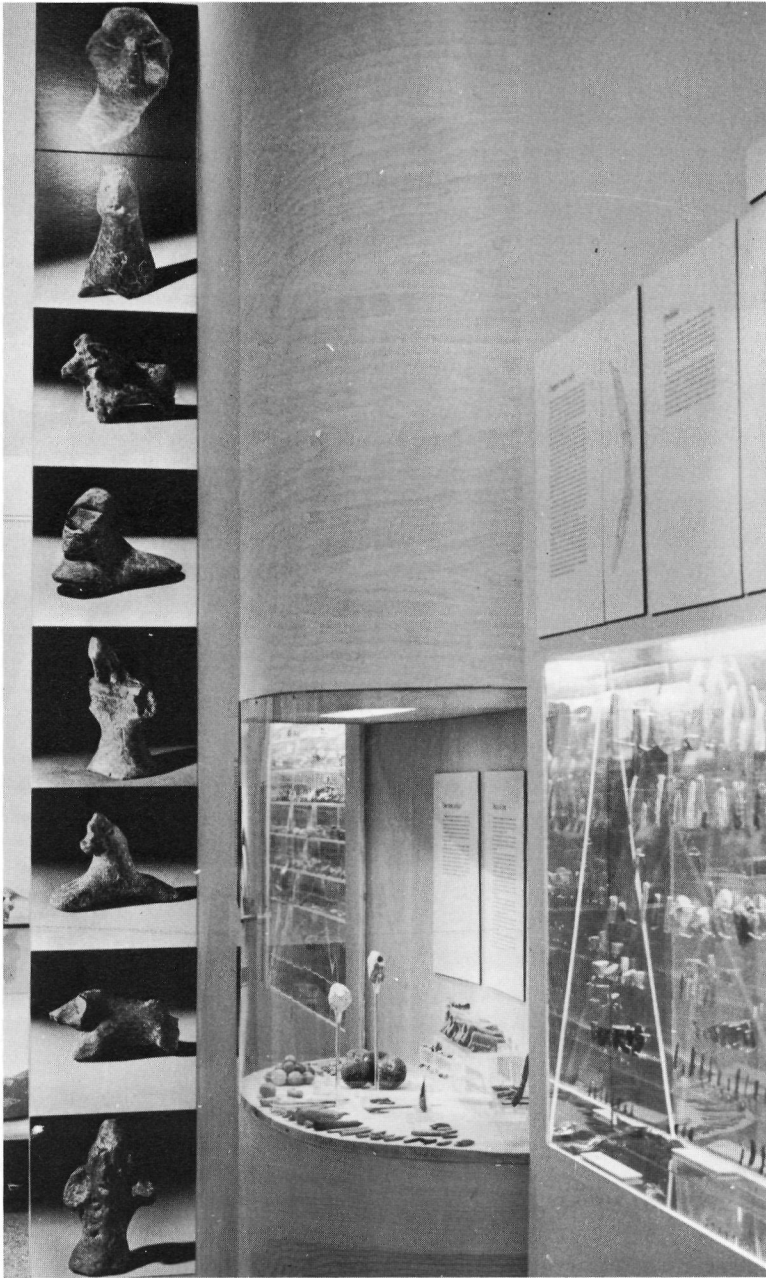
*The Quest for Prehistory. View from the raised platform of the courtyard of the reconstructed prehistoric house from Jarmo.*



*The Quest for Prehistory. Replicas of prehistoric implements in the courtyard of the house, (l-r) reed basket with snail shells, grinding stone, handaxe.*

*Nile.* This documented more than fifty years work by the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt, centered on Chicago House at Luxor, and included material from the photographic archives both in Luxor and in Chicago. Texts were supplied by Lanny Bell and William Murnane, and a special attraction was a number of hand-tinted glass slides, lit from below, of many of the activities of the Institute in Egypt in the 'thirties and later. During the course of the year, the Curator was involved with a third exhibition, for which he acted as advisor, at the David and Alfred Smart Gallery on campus; this was devoted to the arts and crafts of Ottoman Turkey, and culminated in a one-day symposium on Ottoman decorative arts, with Breasted Hall filled to capacity.

Among the many distinguished visitors to the Museum during the year was Dr. Adnan Bouni, Director of Excavations in Syria. There was also a tour of White House Fellows and a group of twenty officials from museums abroad, under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution. In June, a special reception and tour was arranged for the members of the Union League Club of Chicago, just fifty years after James Henry Breasted had lectured to the same club on his recent



*The Quest for Prehistory. Display of clay figurines and stone tools from Jarmo.*



*The Morton Tent: Unrolling a decorated side panel of the tent  
(John Carswell, curator).*

excavations in the Near East. The Museum was also the setting for the 1983 Alumni Awards lecture and reception, and Breasted Hall was used for President Hannah Gray's annual State of the University address.

The museum continued to receive individual visitors from throughout the United States and from all over the world. Of the visitors, about 50% were from elementary schools, 28% were adult groups, 13% were college students and 11% were from high schools. Altogether, a total of 54,833 visitors came during the course of the year.

In the summer, the Museum continued its special summer lecture series, with lectures by Douglas Esse, Donald Whitcomb and Lanny Bell, at two-week intervals. These proved to be very popular, and also provided the occasion to display one of the Museum's latest



*The Morton Tent: Sides in position and roof up, ready for the party!*





acquisitions — an Egyptian quilted tent. This magnificent tent, about fifty years old, was commissioned by the Morton family in Egypt and donated by the Morton Arboretum to the Oriental Institute. In almost perfect condition, it is a splendid example of its genre. We are most indebted to Frank Zopolis and Linn Buss for their generous donations towards the cost of the receptions at these lectures.

Behind the scenes, much of the work of the museum staff was devoted to activities of which the general public is little aware, but which are essential to its effective operation. Material was chosen and prepared for exhibits in other museums, notably for a travelling exhibition on the history of writing, opening in Milwaukee in late summer. Vessels were also prepared for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and inscribed tablets from Nuzi prepared for return to Iraq. Many objects from our own collections and excavations were also treated in





*The House on the Nile: Fifty Years of Chicago House at Luxor. A summer exhibit of photographs marking the 50th year of the Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute.*

the Conservation Laboratory. Numerous academic visitors have been accommodated, wishing to work on material or records from our collections. These include, for instance, major studies by Jack Foster on the literary ostraca, and by Margaret Root on the sealings on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. An essential and urgent project has been the copying of old glass colour transparencies, notably of the Egyptian Theban Tomb series, which are in danger of deterioration. Work continues on the reorganization, inventory and cleaning of storage areas throughout the basement. Once again, the museum depended heavily on volunteer assistance, not only for guided tours, but also for essential work in registration, photography and other areas.

A major decision was taken in 1983, to apply for accreditation by the American Association of Museums. This means a careful scrutiny

of every area of museum activity, and completing a lengthy questionnaire on all aspects of our work, including the hierarchical structure of the museum and its relationship to the Institute and the University; the technical competence and training of our staff; the public programs and volunteer services; security, and even such mundane but essential matters as whether or not all staff know how to operate fire extinguishers! The questionnaire is supplemented some months later by a visit of several days by a specially appointed committee of museum experts. If successful, the museum will join the ranks of those other museums throughout the country who are considered to operate to a high professional standard. All the staff who have participated so far would agree that the process provides an excellent opportunity for self-examination and criticism, often in areas easily overlooked.

Finally, our thanks are due to those who have specially signalled out the museum for their generosity. High on the list is Mr. Arnold Flegenheimer of New York, who generously contributed towards the cost of reprinting the 1933 Oriental Institute poster, used at the Chicago World's Fair, *A Century of Progress*. He was so pleased with the result, that he promptly doubled his original gift; the poster, incidentally, has proved to be a best-seller.

It is also with great regret that we record the passing of another donor, who gave a wooden Egyptian statuette to the museum just over a year ago. This was James Henry Breasted Jr., the son of our founder, and himself an Egyptologist, art historian, and noted calligrapher. A lasting testimony of his skill as a calligrapher is the series of exquisitely hand-written letters we received during the course of making his gift.