



Breasted: Commander of an Empire



Dominating one end of the Oriental Institute Museum is colossal bull from Khorsabad, equipped with wings and human head, some 16 feet high and weighing 40 tons.

The commemorative year of the sixtieth anniversary of the Oriental Institute has been one of gala events, special lectures, symposia, and exhibits. The theme of October's *News and Notes* was "An institution is the lengthened shadow of a man", and dwelt on the highlights in the exciting life of James Henry Breasted, the enthusiastic and undaunted founder of the Institute. The theme was chosen because Breasted and the Institute cannot be separated. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the benefactor who made much of Breasted's vision of far-flung outreach become reality, once said "I am really supporting an institution only because I believe in a man".

It seems fitting, therefore, that this last anniversary issue of *News and Notes* deal once more with Breasted, this time as the "commander of an empire" (coined by the late John A. Wilson). He was the founder not only of the Institute here on the University campus, but also the builder of an empire, circling 3500 miles around the Cradle Lands, with the Institute's well chosen expeditions and its strategically located headquarters throughout the field. Breasted was indeed unswerving in his "task to salvage the original evidence for the compilation of a new and fuller History of Civilization".

When Mr. Rockefeller's generosity made action possible by the Trustees of the University of Chicago to create the Oriental Institute in the spring of 1919, the "empire building" began in earnest in August 1919, when Breasted and three of his graduate students embarked on a ten-month preliminary survey, which involved a hazardous journey of 20,000 miles

through the Near East, much of it still in war zones. The survey covered Egypt, and extended through western Asia particularly Mesopotamia. The time was right for this first expedition because of the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the conditions resulting from the Great War. For the first time in many centuries, the earliest homes of civilization were under "enlightened" governments. Breasted explained the rationale for the journey thus:

"While the Institute was not primarily planned to carry on excavations, it was designed from the first to furnish its members with occasional opportunities to make rapid exploring expeditions in the Near East and in Europe. It was planned that these expeditions should acquire by purchase new bodies of original documents for the expansion of the collections in the museum and thus make the museum a more adequate magazine of materials for research, as well as a fuller expression in the life of ancient man for the sake of the student body of the University."

Upon his return, Breasted reported: "The members of the expedition have all returned more deeply impressed than ever before with the fact that the Near East is a vast treasury of perishing human records, the recovery and study of which demand a comprehensive plan of attack as well organized and



developed as the investigation of the skies by our impressive group of observatories, or of disease by our numerous laboratories of biology and medicine."

So Breasted went to work to make his dream come true. He decided that to accomplish what he had spelled out, there should be in the Near East headquarters as an administrative center, whose main object would be the general administrative oversight and management of a group of local expeditions; that eventually, the expeditions should be expanded into inner Asia; and that a home staff could at the same time receive,

classify, correlate, study, and publish the facts and sources discovered in the field.

By 1931, Breasted was in charge of a tremendous domain: The University's Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures had been transformed into "an investigative body"; there were thirteen expeditions dispatched to the ancient Near East, with permanent headquarters in Chicago House, Luxor, Egypt, and with three headquarters in Asia—one for Palestine and Syria, one for Iraq (Babylonia and Assyria), and one for Anatolia (the Hittite region). Administrative headquarters, where the control of all field projects was centralized, were in



New "Chicago House" in Egypt on the east bank of the Nile in Luxor near Karnak Temple, with residence for staff, library, drafting room, offices, and photographic laboratory.

the new Oriental Institute building in Chicago, where original monuments and documents from the field were studied and displayed, and home research projects carried on.

Although Breasted's empire building commenced in 1919, the very first archaeological field operations in the ancient Near East had really begun in 1902, when Breasted had submitted to the university's President Harper, his first plan for field researches in the oriental lands, funded by Mr. Rockefeller with a contribution of \$50,000. Excavations of the ancient Babylonian city of Adab, called by the modern natives Bismayah, 20 miles east of Nippur, was conducted for two seasons, then discontinued due to an unfortunate misunderstanding with the Turkish authorities. Nevertheless, valuable inscriptions from original monuments were published as a result of the work in Adab; and, when the expedition house in Nippur was being built in 1964, McGuire Gibson, now associate professor of archaeology, took a snapshot of the ruins of the very first Institute headquarters in the field.



Workers at headquarters of the Palestine expedition in Megiddo.

To get back to the expansion of the Institute's outreach in chronological order:

Work began first in Egypt. It is true that Breasted was an Egyptologist who had spent much time copying inscriptions in Egypt—even on his honeymoon—but he claimed that he began work in Egypt first only because the physical situation of Egypt and Babylonia made it easier to begin in Egypt. The Nile is much more accessible than the Tigris and the Euphrates. Egypt is a clearly circumscribed country, whereas Babylonia in its geographic situation interpenetrates all western Asia. It was clear to him, at least, that the new Institute should first establish itself in Egypt as a base and then gradually expand into western Asia. Nevertheless, it was important that Babylonian civilization should be represented in the researches of the Institute from the beginning, even though operations could not be begun on Babylonian soil, so the Assyrian dictionary project was inaugurated in 1921.

In Egypt, according to Breasted, three genetic stages were to be investigated by the Institute: The pre-historic survey, which showed the emergence of man as an implement-maker and his advancing conquest of the material world; the Sakkarah expedition, which found in the Memphite cemetery tombs, records showing the realm of human conduct transcending the material work, and, after 3000 B.C., the creation of great works of art; finally, the Coffin Texts copying project, which showed the rise of social responsibility, ideals of conduct, and ideas of a judgement hereafter, expressed in more definite form toward 2000 B.C. However, the epigraphic and architectural survey in ancient Thebes, now known as Luxor, became the Institute's largest undertaking not only in Egypt but in the entire Near East.

The Luxor 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 in 1928, permanent headquarters were established on the east side of the Nile at Luxor. On 3½ acres facing the Nile and almost under the shadow of the great Karnak temple, the Institute erected a group of buildings, collectively called Chicago House, looking across the Nile toward the stately panorama of the western cliffs behind which lies the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings. Eventually, the first headquarters, a short distance from the Colossi, were sold and today, we are told, they serve as a local hotel, where occasionally Egyptologists working in the area seek lodging rather than to take time to cross the Nile to the present Chicago House. Chicago House in Luxor, which of course has had needed repairs from time to time, today still provides housing for the staff, a laboratory for their work, and most outstanding, has an internationally known library of approximately 15,000 publications.

In the northern part of western Asia is the highland zone which extends from the Aegean eastward and southeastward to Persia. South of this zone lies the great Semitic world; between are smaller groups of adjacent cultures. Within this area, south of the highland zone, lies a great desert bay, the cultivable shores or fringes of which form a fertile crescent, where all these cultures commingled (see map). The Oriental Institute undertook a program of excavation in Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia.

In Babylonia and Assyria, the oldest centers of early civilization in western Asia (now Iraq), the Institute excavated a group of ancient city mounds, some 50 miles north-northeast of Baghdad. At Tell Asmar, ancient Eshnunna, extensive headquarters were erected for all the Institute's operations in Iraq (today the main house still stands minus a roof). The expedition house built in Khafaje at this time was restored

following World War II in 1956 or 1957, says Robert McC. Adams, Harold H. Swift Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology, who lived there while conducting a survey. Later it was used as a public school by the Iraqi government, but finally was torn down and its roof beams used in the Nippur house built in 1964.

The cities and palaces of the Assyrian emperors on the upper Tigris contributed priceless evidence bearing on the rise of man, so excavations were begun at Khorsabad, about 15 miles north of modern Mosul and ancient Nineveh. Here, the expedition took over and rebuilt a large native house to serve as its headquarters. It was from Khorsabad that the colossal figure of the bull, which once adorned an entrance to the palace, equipped with wings and human head, some 16 feet high and weighing 40 tons, travelled to the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago.

At the east end of the highland zone were the Persians, who were very late intruders into Elam, which had been of great importance to the Babylonians. High on a plateau among the Persian mountains, some 40 miles from Shiraz, stands Persepolis, the magnificent capital of the Persian emperors. Its chief founders were Darius and Xerxes, whom the Greeks fought at Marathon and Salamis in the early fifth century B.C. An anonymous source, new to the Institute, provided funds for the excavation and restoration of Persepolis after



General view of harem palace of Darius and Xerxes in Persepolis. End (to the left) was restored for museum and expedition headquarters. the Persian cabinet granted the Institute a concession in 1930. The harem portion of Darius' palace was rehabilitated to serve as the expedition's headquarters during the period of the excavation and subsequently as a museum for the finer sculptures unearthed.

The most important of the highland people were the Hittites, whose chief states and leading cities were in Antolia, so the Anatolian expedition selected for excavation what it considered an exceptionally important site, a great mound near the village of Alishar, 128 miles east-southeast of Ankara. The decipherment of Hittite cuneiform made it possible to read that people's clay-tablet records, up to then found only in two places in Asia Minor—at the ancient Hittite capital of Hattushash and at a commercial settlement known as Kültepe. In 1929, the Institute undertook to record an almost extinct language of villagers who spoke a language quite different from that of the surrounding inhabitants, in an effort to reconstruct the phonetics of ancient Hittite.

The ancient Hittite empire also extended southward into Syria, and in 1931, the Institute began excavating a mound about halfway between Aleppo and Alexandretta, known as Chatal Hüyük, and the neighboring mound of Tell Jedeideh. At the beginning, the staff of this expedition was partially identical with that of the Anatolian expedition.

Perennially involved in the colorful history of the East during the Imperial Age was the famous battlefield of Armageddon or Megiddo of Palestine, which commanded the pass through the Carmel Ridge leading from Egypt into Asia,

especially to the Tigris and the Euphrates. The Institute acquired control of the entire site of the historic city, an area of over 13 acres, and its expedition stripped systematically stratum after stratum of the debris which mark the successive cities built one above another on this ancient site. Obligated to live in tents until their expedition house could be erected and made habitable, staff members were stricken with malarial fever, and the problem of making the Megiddo mound a healthful place in which to live and work was a long and slow task.

At this point, we might consider what the late Charles Breasted has said of his father's difficulties in fund-raising despite Mr. Rockefeller's generosity. It concerns Megiddo. Mr. Rockefeller had pledged \$60,000 for the excavation in Megiddo, provided that others subscribe a like amount. When Breasted approached Mr. F.T. Gates at the University for a list of possible donors, Mr. Gates said:

"With the museums of Europe stuffed for years with material that is not even unpacked, much of which can be utilized only by you and your personal staff—with this and other things you already have on hand, enough to keep you overwhelmed with work of the highest importance as long as you live—I cannot find it in my heart to approve anything that can divert you at all. . . . What yet lies under Eastern soil if fully disclosed



Headquarters of the Iraq expedition at Tell Asmar, some 12 miles east from the Diyala River, and 25 miles from Baghdad as the crow flies.

cannot throw any valuable light on the problems that confront the civilization of today. No important changes will ever be made in your great book, Ancient Times. . . . Megiddo and all its neighbors are curious, but no longer vital. Civilization can save them up like other choice dainties of its luxurious table, for times of leisure."

Breasted's answer was typical: "I like your forthrightness. It is obvious that we do not agree, but I am sure that in half an hour's personal conversation I could present a brief in my case which would prove convincing." As we know, the work in Megiddo was undertaken and extensive headquarters constructed, which today serve as a museum.

Breasted continued to be "commander of an empire" until his death in 1935. He did not have to know that the Rockefeller boards would need to cancel their annual support of the Institute due to the Great Depression. Later, World War II caused many changes of governmental control and attitudes through the Middle East, but the Institute today continues its outreach in the area—to make the founder proud were he here!

—Elda Maynard

FLASH

The Assyrian Dictionary Project of the Oriental Institute has received a two-year outright grant of \$250,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Another \$125,000 will be available if private contributions are matched dollar-for-dollar.

Illustrated Summer Lectures

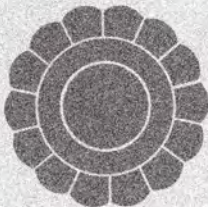
- | | | |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| Thursday, July 10 | THE CARTHAGE <u>GANYMEDE AND THE EAGLE</u> | By Elaine Gazda |
| Thursday, July 17 | THE CISTERNS OF CARTHAGE | By John Humphrey |
| Thursday, July 24 | GEOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY AT CARTHAGE | By Reuben Bullard |

All lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. in Breasted Hall,
The Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL

The Exhibition The Excavation of Carthage (of recent Oriental Institute expeditions in ancient Carthage) continues until July 27, 1980.

The Suq Shop of the Museum will be open before and after the Lectures.

Membership Office Hours:
10:00 A.M.-12 Noon - 1:00 P.M.-4:00 P.M.
Monday - Friday
753-2389



The Oriental Institute
The University of Chicago
1155 East 58th Street · Chicago, Illinois · 60637

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BULK RATE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
PERMIT NO. 1504

Dated Material

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
 ORIENTAL INSTITUTE
 1155 EAST 58TH STREET
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

Returned Postage Guaranteed