Meetinghouse to Museum: The Legacy of Newberry Hall

If you have passed by the Kelsey Museum in the past few months, you have probably noticed workmen busily digging, removing material, or laying fieldstone. This project, underway since last September, is a renovation to the front façade of our building in order to accommodate a new access ramp.

University planners sought to develop a design that would allow the building to conform to current access codes but also maintain the historic "feel" of the original architecture and do as little damage to the shell of the building as possible. After a number of possible designs had been considered, they opted for a functional and appropriate alternative. First, they removed the overgrown shrubbery at the front of the building, elevated and graded our front lawn, and added a new walkway. They then raised the level of the existing front porch to facilitate access and removed and rebuilt the front stairs to accommodate the new entrance. Finally two new fieldstone planters, closely matching the original stone of the building, were added flanking the stairs. This spring the front lawn will be reseeded and planted with grass, flowers, and shrubs. The result will be a beautiful new façade that blends unobtrusively with the original architecture but meets the mandates of contemporary building codes.

When we talk about such improvements or changes to the structure of the Museum, often the first reaction is, "But it's such a beautiful historic building as it is. It seems a shame to change it!"

While most of us here share that notion, at least in principle, it is also important to recognize that, in order to accommodate the changing needs of our curators, staff, and students, we must be continually on the alert for ways to improve our physical plant.

Students' Christian Association

In fact, this process of continual change and upgrade has been going on almost since the building was completed. Newberry Hall, which was built to house the Students' Christian Association, had originally been conceived as a modest, one-story structure. Construction began in 1888 but suffered numerous delays as the design expanded. The building in its present form was completed in 1891, for the then-considerable sum of $40,000.

A meeting place for students, the building had several small rooms on the first floor (the current Museum galleries), while a large auditorium occupied the entire upper level, complete with sloped floor, a semicircular lecture stage at the west end of the building, and a small choir loft at the east end. The focal point of the auditorium was the lovely Tiffany stained-glass window on the north wall (currently the Kelsey Library).

The need for the building as a meeting space eventually declined, partially due to the later construction of the Michigan Union, and after a few years Newberry Hall was rented to the University as classroom space. The

At left a workman prepares to face the new planters with fieldstone. At right, the newly renovated façade awaits landscaping.

continued
Notes from the Director

As this issue of the Newsletter illustrates, the Kelsey is full of surprises—from hidden fireplaces to misplaced corpses. "Excavating" within our own building is one of the things that makes the director's job so pleasurable. This and the people—staff, students, and volunteers—with whom I share the fun of exploring and displaying the Museum's treasures.

This has been a good year at the Kelsey. We put up two shows. The first, *Expedition!*, brought the Museum's long and ongoing fieldwork to public attention. The second, *Music in Roman Egypt*, shows off our collection of ancient musical instruments and explores the intricacies of ancient music.

The Kelsey Associates' activities ranged from a fall tour of Israel and Jordan to the very successful Kelsey Cabaret, which celebrated the opening of the Music show. With the Associates' help, and under the capable supervision of Laurie Talalay and Todd Gerring, we have re instituted the popular family days with a Mummy Day on April 24 and another planned for May 15.

Personally this has been a particularly rewarding year for me. I enjoyed leading the fall tour to the Mideast and the chance to get to know better a number of our friends and associates. The news, received just this past month, that my new field project at Kedesh in Israel has received three years of funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities considerably brightened my spring. I look forward to reporting to you on this and the other myriad activities of the Kelsey in newsletters to come.

Sharon C. Herbert, Director

newly amassed museum collections, obtained by Francis Kelsey and others, were moved there in 1928, and the building was ultimately sold to the University in 1937. It remained Newberry Hall until 1953, when the name was officially changed to the Francis W. Kelsey Museum of Archaeology.

Transformation into a Museum

In the evolution of Newberry Hall from a meeting house to a museum, many changes have been made to the interior to accommodate the changing needs of its occupants. Originally coal-heated, the building had several chimneys, a dumbwaiter to haul coal from the basement to the upper floors, and a coal chute into the basement. All these were boarded up when the building was converted to steam heating. The upper floor, where the bulk of the Museum's collections were stored until the third floor was added in 1993, was particularly unsuited for its new purpose. Although part of the stage and the pew seating had been removed, the slope of the floor required that artifact storage cabinets, shelving, and even desks and tables had to be drastically shimmed in order to make them level. Over time the cavernous space was carved into small offices, a library, a conservation laboratory, and a collections study area. The old choir loft, which could only be reached by ascending a beautiful solid cherry circular staircase in the northeast turret, became the Museum's archival storage. For security reasons the set of stairs originally at the northwest corner of the building was removed and replaced with an outside fire escape. In the 1950s the pounded-earth floor of the basement was poured with cement, a basement fire escape was added, and more workspaces and artifact storage rooms were created there. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s it became increasingly clear that the Museum had filled and outgrown its space. Staff members began to think about ways to ameliorate the problem. Suggestions included constructing an addition, relocating to a different building, or splitting the Museum's function and personnel into multiple locations.

Renovation in the 1990s

In the early 1990s newly hired Conservator Geoff Brown devised the SAFE project. Motivated by a desire to provide a controlled environment for sensitive artifacts in the Museum's collections, such as paper, wood, textiles, and glass, the original plan called for the construction of a large enclosed and air-conditioned storage area in the existing second floor collections storage space—in effect, a "safe box." To recoup some of the workspace lost to the new storage area, a set of stairs leading to the roof of the "box" was incorporated into the design. But it was soon apparent that, since there was enough room to add a workspace to the top of the new construction, it was more sensible to add an entirely new floor to the building. This plan would provide an opportunity to add better fire suppression, air conditioning, an elevator, and many other changes that would improve the safety, security, and comfort of the artifacts and occupants in the building.

Consequently, the steel and cement third floor was added, which involved coring through the walls and installing new structural beams into the foundations of the building. Along with the collections storage, the registry and the conservation lab were relocated to the new level, leaving the second floor free for curatorial and administrative offices, student areas, and the library. Parts of both the first and second floors were removed, and an elevator shaft was constructed. The sloping second floor was leveled. Two massive air handlers were installed— one to control temperature and humidity in the new artifact storage area, the other to cool the new offices and halls. The old choir loft was removed and the cherry stairs replaced by code-approved metal fire stairs. Sprinkler pipes were added to all three upper levels, and a new computer-controlled electronic security system was installed.

It has taken several years for us to determine how best to live in our "new"

*continued bottom of page 3*
Undergraduates Contribute to Life at the Kelsey

If there was a fire drill at the Kelsey Museum, a mixed collection of people would be found standing chatting outside the building: visitors, curators, docents, staff members, graduates in the Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology—and undergraduates. An important element in the life of the Kelsey are the undergraduate students who either work or volunteer their time in various aspects of the Museum's activities.

Some of these students help in the administration office; some work with Geoff Brown in the Conservation Laboratory; some do computer entry of data on the Kelsey's holdings; some assist with parties and public functions; some work with Robin Meadow-Woodruff in the SAFE collections; some help prepare objects for display; some work in the Education Office; some build and help to install exhibits; some change the hydrothermograph charts; some assist with the Kelsey "civilizations-in-a-crate"; some stand guard at the entry desk. Undergraduates have been known to move ancient storage amphorae about in the basement; to hold up traffic on State Street while objects are delivered to the Museum; to patch up and repaint a (modern) mosaic dropped in the course of building renovation; to finish the food from Kelsey receptions. In one way or another, undergraduates are involved in almost all the Kelsey's doings. This involvement can be beneficial to the students, as well as to the Kelsey. Will Pestle (who wrote the story on pages 4-5) developed his senior honors thesis (on burials from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, an early Kelsey Museum excavation) while volunteering; his dissection of the contents of Punic cremation urns from the Kelsey also fanned his interest in mortuary archaeology, a subject he will pursue through a masters degree in Human Osteology / Forensic Archaeology. In the conservation laboratory people have enjoyed the opportunity of working on a range of objects; some assist with objects in the gallery space; some build and found yet another boared-up fireplace on the north wall!

Undergraduates in the Kelsey Museum
Sabrina Adelman, Amy Bennett, Jennifer Biohm, Christina Coger, Lacea Curtis, Renee Galli, Eric Hooper, David Huppert, Adam Hyatt, Fumie Iizuka, Ilana Johnson, Nicholas Katopol, Kathleen Lindsay, Brittany Mullins, Chris Newth, Will Pestle, Stephanie Pulaski, Jason Sprague, Mary Stock, Beth Tyszkwicz, Shamelle Watkins, Wendy Wong, Sera Young, Erik Zempel

Undergraduates Contribute to Life at the Kelsey

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Like our predecessors, we strive to improve the facility in each new permutation in order to protect our priceless collections, as well as to expand and enhance the opportunity for scholarly research and interpretation. Such changes are always carefully considered so that we might maintain, to the greatest extent possible, the wonderful legacy that has been passed down to us: the historic architectural beauty and unique character of the original Newberry Hall.

Sue Alcock

Dana Buck
A Slipper Coffin "Excavated" from the Kelsey Basement

According to an old Arabic proverb, "Were it not for the living, the dead would have died long ago," a sentiment that is doubly applicable in the case of a Parthian slipper coffin (KM 4768) housed in the Kelsey Museum collections. The story of this piece is a prime example of the ongoing "excavation" of the Kelsey.

Context and Acquisition
The Parthian slipper coffin was unearthed on December 27, 1927, early in the first season of the University of Michigan's excavations at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, a grand Hellenistic city situated some 20 miles south of modern Baghdad. Soon after its excavation, the contents of the coffin were examined by someone affiliated with the excavations at Seleucia, Samuel Yeivin being the most likely candidate. The result of this examination was a one-line mention in the grave records Yeivin compiled, stating that the coffin contained the remains of two infants.

While this coffin was just one of several hundred funerary containers excavated during the six seasons of Michigan's involvement in the Seleucia expedition, it is unique in that it was the only coffin to be brought back to the Kelsey. Following its incorporation into the Kelsey collection, however, the coffin mysteriously disappeared, swallowed up by the sheer size of the Museum's holdings.

For more than 70 years thereafter, the very fact that such a unique and intriguing piece even existed was forgotten, and the coffin sat unnoticed in the Kelsey's basement ranges.

Rediscovery
In the summer of 1998, as part of a research assistantship to Kelsey Museum Registrar Robin Meador-Woodruff, I was given the task of organizing the archives of the University's Seleucia expedition. Among the stacks of handwritten field notes and diaries of the excavators of Seleucia, I stumbled upon a brief mention of a small coffin containing the remains of two infants held somewhere in the Kelsey's collection. Given my interest in funerary archaeology and the study of human remains, the very hint that such a piece existed was enough to set me on the trail of this elusive piece. Working with Robin Meador-Woodruff, I examined various field registers and accession books. These led to a cabinet in the Kelsey's basement ranges, which we hoped would contain the coffin.

When we came upon the actual coffin, we understood immediately why anyone who was not expressly looking for it could easily have missed it. As its name implies, the coffin's shape is reminiscent of a ballet slipper, narrower at one end than the other, with a hole in the wide end to accommodate the lid; it looks nothing like what we would term a coffin.

The next surprise occurred when the small circular lid was removed, revealing, much to the glee of all present, a jumble of bones piled inside. The possibility that the contents of this coffin would be intact and *in situ* was something we had never considered. (I would later find that the coffin contained peanut shells, cotton, and straw packing material, as well as pieces of paper bearing both English and Arabic script—evidence that its contents had been disturbed.)

After obtaining permission to examine the coffin and its contents from the Kelsey's curatorial committee, we moved it into the climate-controlled comfort of the SAFE facility to perform an osteological examination of its human remains. The results of that examination appear as an appendix to my honors thesis, "The Graves of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris," and are summarized below. Before beginning such an examination, however, I scoured the Kelsey archives for any further information about the coffin or details of any previous study of its contents. Unfortunately, the only reference to this piece was Yeivin's description of its contents as consisting of two infants, a hypothesis that would turn out to be incorrect.

The Coffin
The coffin itself is made of a drab brown/red clay broken by plaster patches. It measures 93.5 cm long; at the lid it is 31 cm high and 32 cm wide, but only 30 cm wide at the toe. According to Yeivin's classification, it was found underneath a building.

From above, the coffin seems to form an oval pinched at one end to a narrow point. From the side it looks like a slipper with a hole for the lid in the location where the ankle would leave the shoe. The lid is made of the same material as the body of the coffin and sits in a lipped hole in the larger end. It appears to have been fastened to the body of the coffin by means of U-shaped pegs inserted into four sets of holes that bridged the gap between the coffin and its lid. Small fragments of these pegs were found in two of the holes.

In marked contrast to coffins found at other Parthian sites, such as Uruk, this coffin lacks any obvious decoration. But under raking light certain incised lines on both the lid and the top of the coffin would probably assign it to Level III (143 BCE-43 CE) of the excavation. And second, of the six coffins of this exact type, four of them have been assigned to this level.

The Human Skeletal Remains
The coffin contained a mixture of unburnt human skeletal remains, soil, and other assorted ancient and modern materials. I removed this material from
The Kelsey Model Boat

One kind of excavating performed at the Kelsey is the unearthing of information that sheds light on objects already in the Museum’s collection. An ancient Egyptian model boat (KM 88804) offers a good example of how radically such information can alter our interpretation of Kelsey holdings.

The Museum acquired this boat from the well-known Cairo dealer Tano in 1952, along with five seated figures, one standing figure, and one “drum-shaped” object. Over the years these artifacts have been displayed as a group, with the six human figures as “crew” for the boat. But research by students, former Curator of Conservation Amy Rosenberg, and most recently visiting doctoral candidate Ann Merriman, has established that not only do the figures not belong with the type of boat represented in the Kelsey example, but in fact most were parts of other types of models.

Wooden models replicating “daily life” scenes were placed in elite Egyptian graves of the late First Intermediate Period into the 12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom (2075-1784 BCE). These models represented the activities of a great estate, travel on the Nile, and journeys in the Afterlife. Ancient Egyptians clearly considered boats to be the single most important component of such an assemblage – not surprising given the primacy of this mode of transportation in the Nile Valley. Burials of the Middle Kingdom made use of different kinds of boats for different purposes, including traveling boats and ceremonial funerary boats.

The Kelsey boat is a Type IV papyrus form funerary boat, originally painted yellow. On either side of the hull at the prow were painted wedjat eyes, a powerful symbol of wholeness and revitalization; traces of these eyes are still visible. Such a boat would have included a baldachin, or canopy, protecting a bier on which a mummy figure might have lain. Parallels for this type of boat can be seen in Cairo, Berlin, and Turin.

Although the Kelsey figures have been fitted into the deck, it is clear that they do not belong to this particular boat. The standing figure and one of the seated figures are from a Type II traveling boat, where they represented pilot and rower respectively, and the other four “seated” figures, who are actually kneeling, probably formed part of a butchering scene. The “drum-shaped object” is most likely a basket, perhaps from a butchery or weaving shop.

Such mismatched assortments of ancient Egyptian artifacts were and are not uncommon. Antiquities dealers frequently sold model components separately to enhance their profits and just as frequently pieced together “whole” sets from disparate acquisitions. The Kelsey’s popular bound ox and butcher figures (KM 88759 and 88740) are additional examples of this practice.

Examples such as the Kelsey boat raise the question of truth-in-exhibition: should the boat be displayed with the figures as a cultural artifact of Egyptomania in this century with an accompanying explanation? Or should it be more authentically displayed with no figures and an accompanying representation of how it might originally have looked? The former principle has been applied for its current display, but future exhibitions may present this group along more anciently "correct" lines.

Janet Richards

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The Kelsey Museum Associates sponsor the Museum's outreach and development activities and provide program support. The public is encouraged to join the Associates and participate in Museum activities. For more information call (734) 763-3559.
Staff Update

On leave this year, Research Scientist Sue Alcock has been working on a book entitled Archaeologies of Memory: Landscapes, Monuments and the Greek Past. She has also spoken in symposia at Dumbarton Oaks, the Society for American Archaeology, and the University of Pennsylvania (in a colloquium organized by Archaeology magazine), as well as organizing a session at the Roman Archaeology Conference in Durham, UK. She will deliver the Ian Sanders Memorial Lecture in Sheffield, UK, in May 1999. She was awarded the 1998 Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award by the Archaeological Institute of America.

The plans of Research Scientist John Cherry to commence archaeological fieldwork in Albania have been canceled, at least for the present, due to the current crisis in Kosovo. He will be on sabbatical leave throughout the coming academic year, with partial support from a Michigan Humanities Award. He plans to write a major, commissioned article (for the American Journal of Archaeology) on the impact of regional surveys in Aegean Prehistory and to complete a book for Cambridge University Press (coauthored with Sue Alcock) entitled Regional Landscapes of Classical Greece.

Helleneis and Roman Curator Elaine Gazda served as interim director of undergraduate studies in the Department of the History of Art during Winter Term 1999. She also won a generous grant from the University’s Institute for Research on Women and Gender for an exhibition tentatively titled Women and the Cult of Bacchus in Italy: The Villa of the Mysteries Revisited, scheduled for 2000 at two venues—the Kelsey and the Museum of Art. In June she will travel to Pompeii and Rome to do research in connection with this show.

Curator of Dynastic Egypt Janet Richards has a chapter entitled “Conceptual Landscapes in the Egyptian Nile Valley” in Archaeologies of Landscapes: Contemporary Perspectives (Blackwell, forthcoming). She gave a paper at the April meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt and will lecture at the Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University in May. In late May she plans a short trip to Cairo to do museum research leading into a major field season next fall at Abydos. This summer, in collaboration with Terry Wilfong, she will research the University’s hieratic papyri.

Greece and Near East Curator Margaret Root finishes her five-year term as chair of the Department of the History of Art this August and will resume active faculty curatorship at the Kelsey after a leave in 1999-2000. She has won a Humanities Award to revise her book Persia and the Parthenon: Comparative Studies on the Art of Empire. The first volume of the three-volume catalogue of seal impressions on the administrative tablets from Persepolis, heartland capital of the Persian empire, will appear in 1999 (coauthored by Mark Garrison, IPCAA Ph.D. 1988). Publications appearing this year include several articles relating to this important corpus of seal impressions as well as an article coauthored with Ann Gunter entitled “Replicating, Inscribing, Giving: Ernst Herzfeld and Artaxerxes’ Silver Phiale in the Freer Gallery of Art” in Ars Orientalis. After twenty years’ lack of access to Iran, she will lead a Smithsonian tour to Iran this May.

Curator of Educational Outreach Lauren Talalay’s article “Archaeological Ms.conceptions: The Iconography of Power in Mediterranean Prehistory” will appear in Gender and Material Culture: Representations of Gender from Prehistory to Present (Macmillan); “Visual Metaphors: Half-body Images from Neolithic Greece” in The Human Body in the Ancient Near East (Styx); and, with Alison Rautman, “Introduction: Diverse Approaches to the Study of Gender in Archaeology” in Interpreting the Body: Insights from Anthropological and Classical Archaeology (University of Pennsylvania Press). She also has two electronic publications: “Reflections on Identity and Ethnicity in the Ancient World” (www.brynmawr.edu/Acadcs/Arch/guesswho/talalay.html) and “Prehistoric Figurines from Franchthi Cave, Greece” (www.indiana. edu/~archaeo/franchthi/essays/ talalay.html).

In summer 1998 Post-classical Curator Thelma Thomas worked with two undergraduate assistants: Adam Hyatt on a Virtual Gallery of Historic Textiles for the Kelsey web site and Kelly Goodknecht on archival information for the upcoming exhibition on textiles from Karanis (Winter 2001). She guest-edited Topoi: Investigations into Some Social and Spiritual Geographies of Post-Pharaonic Egypt, a special issue of the Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists. During Fall Term 1998 she taught the Kelsey’s first undergraduate course on archaeological museum practices and concluded her year as president of the Byzantine Studies Conference. In January she became associate dean for the humanities and humanistic social sciences at the Rackham School of Graduate Studies. She is also consulting for major new Byzantine installations at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore.

In Fall Term 1998 Curator of Graeco-Roman Egypt Terry Wilfong taught Coptic and Advanced Middle Egyptian, while in Winter 1999 he offered “Ancient Egypt: Religion and Society.” He continued editing Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists, coauthored Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt, and has articles in Cambridge History of Egypt, Encyclopaedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt, and Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend. His public lectures include “Music in Roman Egypt” for the opening of the Kelsey exhibition of the same title, which he curated, and “Hieratic and Hieroglyphic Papyri at the University of Michigan” for the April meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt.
Upcoming Events

Members Event
Friday, May 7, Kelsey Museum
6:30: Member's business meeting
7:00: View newly unrolled papyrus

Family Day
Saturday, May 15, 10:00–12:00
Registration required; call 734-647-4167

The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology

Director
Sharon Herbert

Associate Director
Lauren Talalay

Curators
Geoffrey Brown, Conservation
Elaine Gazda, Hellenistic and Roman
Robin Meadow-Woodruff,
Slides and Photographs
Janet Richards, Dynastic Egypt
Margaret Cool Root (on leave),
Greece and Near East
Lauren Talalay, Educational Outreach
Thelma Thomas, Post-classical
Terry Wilfong, Graeco-Roman Egypt

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Museum Hours
Tuesday–Friday 9:00–4:00
Saturday–Sunday 1:00–4:00
Admission is free
and open to the public.

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The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology

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Photo: N. Garcia

Guests enjoy the March 19 opening reception for the ongoing exhibition Music in Roman Egypt.