

Carl and Elizabeth Blegen Remembered Ploutarchou 9, Celebrated

**A Colloquium Organized by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens
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Abstracts (in alphabetical order)

1. Blegen in Pylos: A Cultural and Cross-Cultural Phenomenon

Jack L. Davis, University of Cincinnati

Carl Blegen's excavations at the Palace of Nestor were in many ways a happy afterthought for the University of Cincinnati, their sponsor. After his excavations in the Corinthia at Korakou, the focus of his Ph.D. research, explorations at Zygouries, and test excavations at nearby sites such as Gonia, Blegen's intent was to dig representative sites in other parts of the Peloponnese in order to establish a "master stratigraphy" for the prehistory of southern Greece. His first target in this program was Arcadia, where he excavated Hagiorgitika in 1928.

Messenia was next on his radar, and already in the later 1920s word of potentially significant sites in the Pylos area had reached his ears through communications with his friend, the eminent Greek archaeologist Konstantinos Kourouniotis. Blegen and Kourouniotis may well have begun to excavate at Englianos by 1930 had time and chance not intervened. The dismissal of Bert Hodge Hill as director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens led to Blegen's leaving the School to accept a professorial position at the University of Cincinnati. Cincinnati had previously sub-contracted Blegen's services from ASCSA for excavations at Nemea (1924-27) and at Tsoungiza (1924-26), as they had Oscar Broneer's for the Odeion at Corinth (1926-27).

In 1927-28 Blegen replaced J. Penrose Harland as the sole archaeologist on the Cincinnati faculty. His work continued at prehistoric sites in Greece after his arrival in Cincinnati, both Hagiorgitika and Prosymna (1925-31). It is clear, however, that Cincinnati was looking to support a new, major excavation. One possibility mooted in 1931 was a concession at Corinth to be directed by Bert Hodge Hill, but attention was soon diverted from Greece when excavations at Troy began in 1932. (Today in Cincinnati, the name Blegen is widely known, but for his work at Troy, not for Pylos.)

It was only after the end of the Troy expedition that Blegen was able to resume work in Greece, with a first campaign of excavations on the Englianos Ridge in 1939. In the course of two decades, he revealed the remains of what is still the best preserved palace of Mycenaean times, the “Palace of Nestor.” Aside from the stunning discoveries made in thirteen field campaigns (1939, 1952-64), several aspects of Blegen’s excavations will be explored:

- 1) Blegen’s excavation operated on the margins of the institutional framework of ASCSA, not funded by it, but under its auspices. It was not the first project to have enjoyed such a liminal status, but one of the most prestigious to do so.
- 2) Blegen’s excavation staff was international in its composition, pointing toward the collaborations common today and that operate both formally with the framework of Greek law and informally. The team included prominent Greek archaeologists — not only Kourouniotis, with whom he enjoyed a formal collaboration, but, during major campaigns in the 1950s, George Mylonas, Demetrios Theocharis, and George Papathanassopoulos.
- 3) Blegen’s discoveries have had an enduring impact on self-definition of residents of the area. Perhaps as much or even more than any other area of Mainland Greece, the prehistoric past has imprinted modern society. Today’s inhabitants have lived in the Community of Nestor, celebrate the “Nestoreia,” and have incorporated images of Blegen’s finds in their official governmental self-indentification, and unofficially in their cultural iconography.

2. “The Goves of Mycenaean Archaeology: Carl W. Blegen’s and Alan J. B. Wace’s Friendship and Collaboration Through the Lens of Their Correspondence.”

Yannis Fappas, 9th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities

Carl Blegen and Alan Wace find a place among the pioneering and most distinguished figures involved in the study of Greek prehistory. These two outstanding archaeologists, managed to eclipse through their individual and common accomplishments (which included extraordinary discoveries) all earlier developments and achievements in prehistoric studies by defining the character of the prehistoric civilizations of Greece and laying foundations for understanding the Hellenic character of the Mycenaeans. Their scholarly collaboration was founded on a life-long friendship; and yielded fundamental studies that provided inspiration to following generations of archaeologists who investigated prehistoric Greece.

I describe the long and close relationship of the two “Goves”, as they called one another, based on mail exchanges between 1921 and 1957, letters that are kept in the Archives of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the University Archives of the University of Cincinnati, the Archives of the Department of Classics of the University of Cincinnati, as well as letters held privately by Elisabeth French, Alan Wace’s daughter and his successor at Mycenae. In the letters the two pioneers

comment on various archaeological matters, including great discoveries of these times, while revealing their ingenious minds and philhellenism. In this way, the letters constitute an invaluable resource for those who seek to understand how the study of the Mycenaean civilization evolved into an autonomous sub-discipline of Classical archaeology.

3. Η Οικία Blegen επί της οδού Πλουτάρχου 9 - Μια κληματαριά, πυκνή σκιά ωραίων συναντήσεων.

Vasiliki Florou, The J. F. Costopoulos Foundation

Η νεοκλασική κατοικία επί της οδού Πλουτάρχου 9 αποτέλεσε την κατοικία των αμερικανών αρχαιολόγων Carl και Elizabeth Blegen καθώς και των Bert και Ida Hill για σαράντα και πλέον συναπτά έτη, από το 1929 μέχρι το 1971, οπότε και ο τελευταίος ένοικος του οικήματος, ο Carl Blegen έφυγε από τη ζωή.

Η ιστορία της Πλουτάρχου συνυφαίνεται με την ιστορία της ζωής των ενοίκων αρχαιολόγων της. Ξεδιπλώνεται ελεύθερα μέσα από την προσωπική σφραγίδα των Blegens, και μεταμορφώνεται με το ρυθμό που εξελίσσεται η ζωή των ιδιοκτητών της. Άλλοτε ως ένα καταφύγιο ηρεμίας από τις επίπονες προϊστορικές ανασκαφές στην Ελλάδα και τις απαιτήσεις της ακαδημαϊκής ζωής στο Cincinnati, άλλοτε ως ένα φροντισμένο ‘σπιτικό’, ιδανικό για μελέτη και συγγραφή, κυρίως, όμως, ως ένας ζεστός, ανοικτός χώρος φιλοξενίας.

Σε αντίθεση με την ερμητική εσωστρέφεια άλλων ομολόγων συναδέλφων τους, οι ένοικοι του σπιτιού υποδέχονται στο λεγόμενο ‘Ελληνικό Δωμάτιο’, διακοσμημένο με παραδοσιακά σκυριανά έπιπλα, υφαντά, αρχαία ελληνικά αγγεία, Έλληνες και ξένους αρχαιολόγους, διπλωμάτες, διανοούμενους, συλλέκτες. Οι συσχετισμοί αυτοί ανοίγουν για μας ένα παράθυρο με απρόσμενη θέα στην πνευματική ζωή και αστική τάξη ιδίως του μεσοπολέμου, αλλά και της μεταχιμαϊκής πρώιμης μεταπολεμικής Αθήνας. Η Ιουλία Δραγούμη, συγγραφέας παιδικών βιβλίων από την ιστορική οικογένεια των Δραγουμήδων προσφέρει στην Elizabeth Blegen το 1932 μοσχεύματα σταφυλιών από τη φορτωμένη συνειρμούς *Βίλα Γαλήνη* του Πόρου για την κληματαριά του κήπου της οδού Πλουτάρχου. Καρπίζει τελικά αυτή η κληματαριά στην οικία Blegen; Θα εξεταστεί εδώ σε ποιο βαθμό το οίκημα αποτέλεσε τόπο συγκομιδής εντυπώσεων και αναμνήσεων, κυρίως για τους Έλληνες αλλά και τους ξένους, που αφοσίωσαν τη ζωή και το έργο τους στην Ελλάδα, καθώς και πώς λειτούργησε ευρύτερα μέσα στον κόσμο της εποχής του ως ένα τοπόσημο-σημείο αναφοράς.

4. “Εις ανώτερα”: The 1930’s

Elizabeth French, British School at Athens

With the start of the 1930's a fourth chapter in the relationship between Blegen and Wace began and by the middle of the decade both had become establishment figures: professors with students who would themselves become well-known scholars, they owned handsome houses, published, lectured and feasted at each other's institutions. Both initiated excavations in 1939 only to have them cut short – not to be resumed for over a decade. The spirit of unease with long-held assumptions remained but became focused into further fundamental scholarship, the truth of which is still acknowledged today.

5. “Islanders vs. Mainlanders”, “The Mycenae Wars”, and Other Short Stories

Yannis Galanakis, University of Cambridge

This paper uses archival material from Oxford, Cambridge, Cincinnati, and Athens in order to discuss and assess the long (and often fraught with difficulties) relationship between Carl Blegen and the “Oxford gang”: Sir Arthur Evans, Sir John Myres, Duncan Mackenzie, and David Hogarth. Covering a period of 40 years (ca. 1910 to the early 1950s), it looks at the formation and development of one of the most contentious debates in Aegean archaeology – namely the idea of Evans, and his closest allies, of a “Minoan domination” over the islands and mainland Greece, one that ran counter to the view supported by Blegen and Alan Wace of an independent development of the mainland. The debate of the 1910s and 1920s culminated with the discovery of Linear B tablets during Blegen's excavations at Pylos in mainland Greece in 1939, an event that Evans considered final proof for his theory. But that was not meant to be the end of the story. Following Evans's death in 1941, Blegen's correspondence with Oxford continued through the medium of the executor of Sir Arthur's will, John Myres, who was also responsible for publishing Linear B documents from Knossos that remained unpublished. With their publication in 1952 and Ventris's brilliant decipherment that same year, the debate took yet another form that has since shaped the course and interpretative framework of Aegean archaeology. It is through the lens of Oxford (i.e., the views of Evans and his friends) that Blegen's role in this debate is here reconstructed and discussed anew.

6. Οι ανασκαφές του Carl Blegen στην Πύλο μέσα από τον ελληνικό και ξένο τύπο

Nektarios Karadimas, Aegeus-Society for Aegean Prehistory

Ο Τύπος και εν γένει τα Μέσα Μαζικής Ενημέρωσης έχουν πολλές φορές χρησιμοποιηθεί – και χρησιμοποιούνται ακόμη – από τους αρχαιολόγους για να κάνουν ευρεία γνωστή την ανασκαφική τους έρευνα, με ανάλογα παρεπόμενα οφέλη. Ο Heinrich Schliemann συνήθιζε να στέλνει εκτενέστατες ανταποκρίσεις από την Τροία, τόσο στην *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, όσο και στην ελληνική εφημερίδα *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων*, ενώ ο ίδιος ο Arthur Evans δεν δίσταζε να στέλνει ανασκαφικές εκθέσεις της Κνωσού και του Τάφου-Ιερού στην λονδρέζικη

εφημερίδα *The Times*. Πέρα από τα πρωτότυπα άρθρα αρχαιολόγων, ο Τύπος διασώζει συχνά πολύτιμες και σε μερικές περιπτώσεις μοναδικές μαρτυρίες για ανασκαφές ή για άλλες αρχαιολογικές ανακαλύψεις. Όσο πιο σημαντικό θεωρείται ένα αρχαιολογικό εύρημα τόσο πιο έντονο γίνεται το ενδιαφέρον των ανθρώπων και συνεπώς των δημοσιογράφων.

Στο αρχείο του Carl Blegen – που ο ίδιος κληροδότησε – στην Αμερικανική Σχολή Κλασικών Σπουδών στην Αθήνα, δυστυχώς σώζονται ελάχιστα αποκόμματα εφημερίδων που αναφέρονται στις ανασκαφές του στην Πύλο. Από τα τριάντα δύο αποκόμματα μόνο έξι αναφέρονται στον ίδιο ή σε ανασκαφές του. Περισσότερα αποκόμματα σώζονται στο αρχείο του που φυλάσσεται στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Cincinnati (Archives of the Department of Classics). Με αφορμή, λοιπόν, το τιμητικό αυτό συνέδριο, γίνεται για πρώτη φορά προσπάθεια να συγκεντρωθούν όσο το δυνατόν περισσότερα άρθρα που γράφτηκαν για αυτόν και τις ανασκαφές του στο ανάκτορο του Νέστορος σε ελληνικές και ξένες εφημερίδες ή σε άλλα εκλαϊκευμένα περιοδικά. Μέσα από τα άρθρα αυτά θα παρουσιαστούν ενδιαφέρουσες πτυχές των ανασκαφών του, όπως καταγράφηκαν από δημοσιογράφους, θα αναδειχθεί ο αντίκτυπος που προκάλεσαν οι ανασκαφές στην Πύλο τόσο σε τοπική όσο και διεθνή κλίμακα, και θα παρουσιαστούν άγνωστες συνεντεύξεις του Blegen, που αποκαλύπτουν με γλαφυρό τρόπο ιδέες και απόψεις του ίδιου για την προϊστορική αρχαιολογία.

7. The Blegens and the Hills: A Family Affair

Robert Pounder, Vassar College

Carl William Blegen, a Yale graduate student, first came to Athens in 1910, the year that Elizabeth Denny Pierce, his future wife, graduated from Vassar. Elizabeth studied ancient history, Greek, and Latin in her undergraduate years under the tutelage of Ida Carleton Thallon, Vassar 1897. At some point during their student-teacher association, the two women entered into what is often called a "Boston marriage," a term derived from Henry James's "The Bostonians." Such socially acceptable alliances became relatively common among American and British women in the first quarter of the 20th century. When Elizabeth Pierce returned to Vassar to study for an M.A., she and Ida Thallon lived in adjacent rooms in a campus dormitory and cultivated deep and life-long friendships with female faculty members.

When World War I ended, Elizabeth traveled to Athens to study at the American School of Classical Studies, then headed by Bert Hodge Hill. She met Carl Blegen, who led most of the School trips. An infatuation resulted that turned into passionate love on the part of Blegen; his devotion was reciprocated by Elizabeth, although she retained her tie to Ida. The result was two marriages -- Elizabeth and Carl, on the one hand, and Ida and Bert Hill, on the other. This love story -- and the successful compromise at its heart -- is documented in hundreds of letters now

housed in the archives of the American School. As they aged, the two couples fell into more conventional roles and lived out their professional and personal lives together in the house at 9 Plutarch Street.

This paper will chart the evolution of these relationships and assess their effects on the archaeological achievements of (especially) Carl Blegen.

8. *Carl Blegen at Troy, 1932-1938, and the Question of a Trojan War*

Brian Rose, University of Pennsylvania

Between 1932 and 1938, Carl Blegen launched the second major excavation at Troy, and in the course of only seven years, he and his team managed to place the site's ceramic chronology on a firm foundation for the first time. This talk summarizes Blegen's achievements and compares them to the excavation results of Schliemann, Doerpfeld, and Korfmann, especially with reference to a "Trojan War."

Blegen regarded the issue of the war as relatively straightforward, and his reasoning was as follows. The *Iliad* concerns a fortified citadel in the Troad that was destroyed in an attack by the Greeks. The hill of Hisarlik contains the only fortified citadel of Late Bronze Age date in the Troad, which was severely damaged in an armed attack following a period of heightened security measures. The date that Blegen proposed for the attack—ca. 1240 B.C., coincided with a period of strength and prosperity of the Mycenaean palaces, which would have had the ability to mount a unified offense.

The generally accepted date of that conflict today, however, is ca. 1180 B.C. --- 60 years later than the one proposed by Blegen, which completely changes the foundations of his suggested linkage between Troy and the *Iliad*. Even in the case of the VIIa destruction, which Blegen linked to the Trojan War, we have no secure evidence that allows us to identify the city's attackers. In other words, there were battles in the Late Bronze Age in which both sides of the Aegean appear to have played a role, but we cannot say that Troy was one of the casualties of this conflict, as Blegen believed.

9. *From the Mud of Peirene to Mastering Prehistoric Stratigraphy: Carl Blegen's Formative Years in the Corinthia and Argolid.*

Ioulia Tzonou-Herbst, ASCSA Corinth Excavations

At 23 years of age having earned two BA degrees from distinguished universities, Carl Blegen came to the American School of Classical Studies. Immediately, in the summer of 1911, he was

put to excavate in a particularly muddy place, the underground tunnels of the Fountain of Peirene in Corinth. This is the time, the end of the 19th and early 20th century, when archaeology's shift away from armchair study is well-established. Archaeological fieldwork is considered essential training, dominated by machismo. At the same time travel to sites is entrenched as part of the personal masculine enhancement. Blegen lived in the village of Ancient Corinth and dug extensively at the site: in the Lechaion Road, in the Peribolos of Apollo, in the Julian Basilica. Bert Hodge Hill taught him his values in the conduct of excavation: accuracy in observation, recording, and reporting. Hill instructed Blegen on stratigraphy. Their understanding of the concept is a challenge to our perceptions. Blegen used stratification mainly as a practical tool, to organize layers as his multitude of workmen dug. He drew numerous sections of his baulks, even if he did not correlate architectural remains and the artifacts contained within the layers in order to date the construction, use, and destruction of the structures. The relationships between layers that he recorded were physical, not causal. He surprises us, however, when he thinks in terms of sequences of events represented in the strata he digs.

Blegen's interests were wide and all-encompassing. He explored the Venetian fortifications while swimming at Lechaion; preserved for study Turkish and Byzantine pottery; learned Greek; catalogued coins, inscriptions, and sculptures; and surveyed extensively in the Forum in Corinth. Subsequently, he discovered prehistory and directed his own excavation at Korakou after four years of hard tutelage in Corinth. Blegen changed his digging and recording practices for reasons we can only surmise. He introduced excavation by arbitrary spits under the powerful influence of British archaeologists, most prominent among them Alan J. B. Wace. He translated his archaeological strata into a chronological sequence as he developed and named the phases of the Bronze Age of mainland Greece, always in direct dialogue and with feedback from Wace. Blegen directed more excavations at prehistoric sites (Gonia, Yiriza, Zygouries, Nemea, Phlius, Prosymna), while he continued digging in Corinth, on Temple Hill, in the area of Glauke, and on Acrocorinth. He published extensively concerning all of his endeavors. He became Acting Director of the American School, all within a decade and a half from his arrival as an unripe student. His growth and development were rapid.

Blegen's legacy to us from his formative years is a wealth of artefacts and excavation records. Researching him we research the archaeology of the areas he dug, in Corinth and at prehistoric sites, and there are always new discoveries waiting to be made. As we use and reuse his data, it is essential that we document his thinking process, and identify and acknowledge his biases as he was collecting that data. His experimentation with the methodology that lies behind what we do is instructive. Our current excavation methodologies represent only one additional step in the evolution of excavation values, practices, and technologies. There will always be a more efficient way to dig and record. Finally, this exercise in memory is a lesson in character building; Blegen never let his ego compel him to exaggerate the significance of his finds.

10. The Life of Carl W. Blegen from a Grass Roots Perspective

Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan, *American School of Classical Studies at Athens*

In 1947, Theodore C. Blegen, the distinguished historian and brother of Carl W. Blegen, published *Grass Roots History*, a book that is not concerned about the big events of American history but explores the “everyday life of people, in their homes and at their retreats, in their work and in their play, in turbulence and in repose...” through the use of diaries and letters. Theodore Blegen, slightly younger than Carl, remained close to his brother throughout their lives. Both, avid correspondents, wrote to each other for more than 50 years. It is mostly in their correspondence and Theodore’s published reminiscences of their childhood that I have searched, in order to sketch the *Bildungsroman* of Carl Blegen.

This paper examines three periods of Carl Blegen’s life: his childhood years and his Lutheran upbringing in Minnesota; his service with the American Red Cross in 1918-1919; and finally, his OSS and post-WWII role in the Cold War cultural diplomacy.

For his childhood years, I have used Theodore Blegen’s book, *The Saga of the Saga Hill*, an autobiographical narrative of the family’s summer vacations at Lake Minnetonka in Minnesota. The son of a Norwegian-American professor of Greek at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Blegen and his siblings grew up in an intellectual and hospitable household where Lutheranism figured large.

As a result of his Lutheran upbringing, from early on in his life, Carl Blegen developed a high sense of duty to help his fellow men in distress, one that was materialized through his service with the American Red Cross in Macedonia in 1918-1919. Drawing from the work of Jack Davis who has studied extensively Blegen’s personal diaries from this period, I will highlight Blegen’s humanitarian work in Eastern Macedonia and Mt. Pangaion, where he organized relief of starving populations and the repatriation and rehabilitation of thousands of refugees who had been held as prisoners in Bulgaria during the Great War.

Later, as an accomplished academic with several decades of experience of living in Greece, Blegen offered his services with OSS during WW II, heading the Greek section of the Foreign Nationalities Branch (FNB) in Washington, DC; soon after the end of the war, he participated in the implementation of the Marshall plan and the Fulbright program in Greece; and finally, he accepted to write, a history of the Greek-American relations entitled “The U.S. and Greece,” commissioned by Washington’s policy makers, as part of their re-writing of Western history. His manuscript which would have formed part of *The American Foreign Policy Library*, a

project initiated by Sumner Welles, one of President Roosevelt's chief foreign policy advisors, was not published because Blegen withdrew his participation for lack of time. By 1949 he was deeply committed to the publication of the Troy excavations.