

APPENDIX II

Centennial Address: “Why We Are in Greece” (1981)

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After one hundred years of almost continuous operation (the School was closed only during the two world wars) it is appropriate to look back at what has been accomplished, but even more important is an assessment of the value of the School's traditions for today and for its continued prosperity in the future. Is our past the model for our future?

When the School opened in 1882, one year after its founding, it showed at once certain characteristics which ever since have made it unique among the foreign schools in Athens. While chartered by the Greek state as the American archaeological school, it aimed from the beginning at a broader group of American scholars and students—all those, in fact, who needed an acquaintance with Greece in the pursuit of the study of classical antiquity. From the beginning, therefore, the School was envisaged as a channel through which the rich offerings of Greece were conducted to America—particularly its students who intended to become teachers of Greek and Latin, ancient history, ancient art, and ancient civilization in general. The influence of the School on American education has been profound. There are not many colleges in the United States and Canada that do not have, or have not at some time had, a member of the faculty who could speak about Greece from direct experience through the School.

Given American conditions of learning it was at once necessary to develop a program of instruction suitable to persons who had little acquaintance with the monuments of Greece and for whom the year's stay might be the only chance in a lifetime. Soon after its founding the School began its famous series of School trips through Central Greece and the Peloponnesus, which have continued, with additions, to the present day. Another feature were regular meetings of students, director, and other academics present in Athens, once a week or more often, at which problems of research were discussed and from which

many of the early School publications resulted. The School has thrived on personal contact and communication ever since.

Another aspect of the early School was the mixing of study and research. From the beginning, members of the School were expected to write a “thesis,” a practice which survives in the present requirement of a School paper by all Regular student members. Publication was eagerly sought, in the series of *Papers of the American School* and the *American Journal of Archaeology*. The enormous volume of School publications, vastly increased after the founding of the School's journal *Hesperia* in 1931 and the publications of the great excavations in Corinth and the Agora, are the direct outgrowth of the wishes of the founders. For the School was from the start envisaged also as a research institution whose mission was excavation. We should perhaps pass over the numerous sites the School excavated in its early days, when methods were haphazard and primitive, although some excavations stand out even today: the theater at Eretria, Kavousi and Mochlos in Crete, the Argive Heraeum, and Corinth, all before the First World War. The School was and is the official agency, in the view of the Greek government, for field-work done by Americans in Greece.

The history of the School is a gradual unfolding of these three original purposes: instruction, research, and excavation. Let us recall some of the milestones. During his long directorship (1906–1926) B. H. Hill taught the School the methods of scientific excavation and scholarship, as developed by the German Archaeological Institute. But the modern era of the School begins with the activity of Edward Capps, for many years Chairman of the Managing Committee (1918–1939), whose contributions were principally organizational and financial. It was through his efforts that two great enterprises were added to the long-standing excavation at Corinth: the Gennadius Library and the excavation of the ancient Agora. The collection of rare books relating to Hellenic culture (classical, medieval, and modern) was the gift of Joannes Gennadius to the School in 1922 on the School's undertaking to operate it as a library for “scholars of all the world,” i.e., as a public library. The full significance of this gift, which enlarged the School's horizon from Classical to overall Hellenic Studies, has perhaps not yet been fully understood.

The American School was authorized by the Greek government to excavate the ancient Agora in 1928; excavations were begun in 1931 and have continued with some interruptions to the present day. This enterprise too was over and above the regular activities of the School, and it served to raise the academic standing of the School to the first rank among archaeological

research institutions. Taken together with a vast increase in endowment, the erection of living quarters for students and faculty, the enlarged publication program, the Gennadeion and Agora Excavations seemed to establish the School in its final form for years to come.

Thus in the pre-war and post-war periods, the School mainly became larger, but did not change its essential character. The number of cooperating institutions was greatly increased until today that group is truly representative of the United States (and of English-speaking Canada) as a whole. Students and professors now come from all parts of North America. In the 1950s the School excavated Lerna in the Argolid. The academic program was more fully developed in the 1960s. A determined effort to raise the longstanding excavations at Corinth also to the first rank and to further their publication has been implemented in the last fifteen years. The Gennadius Library has expanded not only by the addition of two new wings and the further acquisition of books, but also by many gifts of works of art and papers of important contemporary figures, among whom the Nobel laureates Seferis and Elytis are the best known. Most important of all are the many excavations conducted by American universities under the auspices of the School in the last thirty years, among them Kea (Cincinnati), Isthmia (Chicago, UCLA, Chicago Circle), Franchthi (Indiana), Samothrace (Institute of Fine Arts, NYU), Halieis (Pennsylvania, Indiana), Nemea (Berkeley), and Kommos in southern Crete (Toronto).

It is pleasant to reminisce on the occasion of the School's Centennial about the achievements of the past, but a slight feeling of unease arises during such contemplation. Is the School so right about its goals that it need do no more than continue to fulfill the mission set for it by its founders? Shall we continue to excavate more and more sites and expose more and more students to our traditional teaching program, which has served so well in the past? There are certain facts of the present situation that stand in the way, first and foremost, money. The rising cost of maintaining our facilities, not to mention supporting our research efforts, and the shrinking value of the dollar make it very unlikely that our traditional way of life in Greece can be maintained. Greece is now a modern country with all the advantages and problems that accompany rapid development. The Greek Archaeological Service has developed to a point where many services we used to render and still render will be performed by its own personnel. Expropriation has reached astronomical costs. This does not mean that we will not continue to excavate, but expansion of excavation is hardly to be expected. In addition, the field of archaeology is in the process of change, with

new methods and new interests coming to the fore, so that the nature of excavation itself is changing. The thrust of much current archaeological research is anthropological and sociological—in the view of some, archaeology is no longer a study of monuments. There are some negative aspects to this change, but the School nevertheless has to come to terms with it, for it is the function of the School to be the umbrella under which all kinds of archaeological research can function. A practical aspect of this is that the School should have a scientific laboratory such as has recently been founded by the British School of Archaeology. Another need is support of the increasing amount of survey work that is now being done by Americans with the permission of the Greek authorities. An institution that does not have plans for development is bound to regress. Such plans must take into account the present situation without sacrificing what has been achieved in the past. What can we do in the future in fields other than archaeology?

It has been of concern to me that the School, in this age of colloquia and conferences, has made little effort in this direction, partly because we do not have an auditorium and partly because we are so busy with what we are already doing. The symposium on Greek Towns and Cities, which is part of the Centennial celebration, a short symposium on the uses of the Gennadeion that took place two years ago, and a colloquium on surface surveys which is to follow immediately upon the Centennial, are the first modest attempts at such enterprises which one hopes would eventually concern themselves with all areas in which the School has a legitimate interest. Another, more technical project would be the establishment of an epigraphical seminar—a room for study and lectures where the relevant books would be collected in one place. The study of inscriptions has been the particular pride of American classical scholarship in the past. It needs to be strengthened in the future.

More fundamental than such special projects is the need to address the question of what the Greek heritage means to present-day America. The days are gone when we could be satisfied with only four periods in the history of Hellenism: the Mycenaean empire, the free city states, the Hellenistic monarchies, and the Roman adaptation of Greek ideas. One of the main (though perhaps unspoken) benefits our members have received from their stay at the School has been a perception that Hellenism is a continuous phenomenon that has appeared in many, and sometimes disparate, forms in this area from the dawn of history to the present day. The study of medieval Greece (which I sometimes think is of greater interest to the Greek public than is Classical antiquity) has recently been strengthened in the

School's teaching program through the addition of the Hellenic professorship and should be further developed by increased activity of the Gennadeion itself. Modern Greece has been treated more informally, though never neglected, in our teaching program, and the time has come to treat it more formally. Here again I am thinking principally of developing the resources of the Gennadeion in several ways. The first need is for the funding of a fellowship for American students in modern Greek studies, be it history, art, or literature. Another need is for the funding of an increased purchasing program for research materials in modern Greek studies, especially for the support of the rich archives of contemporary Greek poets. Modern Greek studies are devel-

oping in the United States as well: it is no more than the completion of the mission we undertook when we accepted Gennadius's collection, when we put more emphasis on the potential of that library.

It may seem impractical in time of financial restrictions to urge on the School further expansion. But we are in an impractical business and without some conception of what the future may hold, the pride in our past has a somewhat hollow ring.

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Editor's note: All of the recommendations made by Immerwahr in 1981 were accomplished by 2021. The ASCSA supports survey archaeology, maintains a laboratory for archaeological science and an auditorium that hosts conferences and colloquia, the Blegen Library houses an epigraphical study room, and there are fellowships for modern Greek studies.