

The sum of \$150,000 to the American School of Classical Studies, Athens, for use during the period January 1, 1938, to December 30, 1940, toward the cost of erecting a Museum to house the objects recovered in the excavations of the Agora.

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American School of Classical
Studies, Athens
Agora Museum
Hale

AMERICAN SCHOOL
OF CLASSICAL
STUDIES, ATHENS -
MUSEUM PROJECT

CONSIDERATIONS

Relation to Program: Humanities: The proposal to assist in the erection of a Museum for housing the finds from the Agora excavations of the American School of Classical Studies is not within present program but is an outcome of a definite interest of the Foundation under the program in effect until April, 1935.

Previous Interest: Since 1929 the Foundation has supported a fellowship program of the School to bring younger American scholars to the Agora excavation on assigned duties that advance the work and give them excellent field experience. A total of \$87,800 has been appropriated for such use. This includes one-half of a \$50,000 fund approved by the Trustees at the December, 1935, meeting for liquidating this item in the former Humanities program.

General Description: The Greek Government's purpose of having the region in the center of the City of Athens, in which the ancient marketplace was situated, laid bare by excavation was formulated soon after the Greek War of Independence and it was assumed that the Government itself would be able to make the excavation, but funds were lacking and other interests were more pressing. But about fifty years ago the Government created what they called "an Archaeological Area" including the tract in question, and by Act of Parliament prohibited any further building in that region or any important improvements on existing buildings without specific consent of the Ministry of Education. This situation, which was oppressive to the owners of properties in that region, was radically changed after the expulsion of the Greeks from Turkey and the influx of a large population of permanent refugees. In order to combat the pressure which was brought to bear upon it by owners, the Government in 1924 called together the directors of the foreign archaeological schools and explained that if ever this region were to be excavated it would have to be

done immediately, and that since the Government had no funds for the purpose any foreign school that could finance and scientifically conduct the excavation would receive the concession to do so.

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The American School of Classical Studies at Athens was by general agreement considered the only foreign School which might be expected to secure the necessary funds for so large an undertaking. As Chairman of the Managing Committee of the School Professor E. C. Capps realized the remarkable opportunity offered to American classical historians and archaeologists to exploit the scientific results of the materials which undoubtedly underlay the site of the ancient marketplace. For the ancient writers had made it perfectly clear that in addition to being the central market it was also the center of the political life of the people, the place where the courts were situated and all the administrative buildings of the government as well as important shrines. Therefore an approach was made in America to various foundations including the General Education Board. Dr. Abraham Flexner, however, brought the matter to the attention of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and in 1926 the sum of \$250,000 was made available for the preliminary work of securing the concession and making a trial excavation.

The next three years were spent in reaching an agreement concerning the expropriation of an area sixteen to eighteen acres in extent and occupied by approximately 450 private and public properties including a number of churches. The concession was finally granted, and the Act of Parliament based upon the agreements was passed. Work began in 1930. It has now progressed for six years and the seventh campaign of excavation is in progress. All the legal and political difficulties have been successively overcome through the co-operation of a series of Ministers of Education and of the Archaeological Bureau of the Ministry. Various grants have been made from time to time by Mr. Rockefeller, and in December, 1936, a final grant, estimated to be sufficient for the completion of what remained of the excavation and the clearing of the whole region with the purpose of ultimately turning it into a national archaeological park. These gifts of Mr. Rockefeller altogether approximate \$1,200,000.

The objects discovered in the excavation have from the beginning been housed in a group of expropriated residence buildings, which have been equipped for the storage and temporary exhibition and recording of the finds. Although the season of excavation lasts only five to six months of the year, the majority of the staff are at work for eleven months preparing the finds, making preliminary publication in the School's journal Hesperia, and preparing for the work of the next campaign. The five buildings constituting the "museum" group are already crowded to the limit and, as the excavation continues, have become almost entirely shut off from access to the city, there being only one road of approach left which stands some fifteen feet above the ancient level. The necessity therefore

of having a museum presses upon the School with ever-increasing urgency. The Greek National Museum contains no more room for additions, and the Agora finds in any event ought to be kept segregated for scientific research. The road cannot be kept open beyond the limits of 1938 without gravely handicapping the engineering of the balance of the excavation.

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(Continued)

The government of the City of Athens has been keenly alive to the importance of an Agora Museum and also of making into an archaeological park the whole excavated area. After many conferences the City's Park Commission with the Mayor and the Minister of Education and his archaeological chief in consultation with Professor Shear, the director of the excavation, have decided upon a site for such a museum which is admirably situated from every point of view. It lies on the lower slope of the northwest end of the ridge which constitutes the Areopagus, facing northwestward the large boulevard that circles round the Acropolis and runs north past the Theseum. The City of Athens is building a new drive connecting with this boulevard along the southern edge of the Agora concession and around the Acropolis. The intersection of this drive with the boulevard constitutes the selected site for a museum that will command the entrance to the excavation and provide a panoramic view of the entire area.

Finances: The site in question belongs in the "Archaeological Area" and is subject to expropriation, but the City has never had the funds with which to purchase it. The City of Athens proposes, however, to assume final responsibility for the purchase of the property up to a maximum of \$50,000 if the School will erect the museum. Lacking immediate funds, the City asks the Commission representing the School to advance the \$50,000 so that the property may be acquired immediately, offering to enter into an agreement to repay this sum to the Commission at the rate of \$5,000 a year for ten years. The Commission on its part has available for this loan to the City a fund to be used for any purpose connected with the excavation. As recovered from the City, this fund will be needed for publications and unexpected contingencies.

This situation leaves the single problem of finding the money necessary for the construction of a suitable museum. The problem of expense is simplified by the fact that all the building stone necessary for the construction is available from demolished buildings without cost, and also by the fact that among the 200 workmen are a considerable number of skilled artisans who could be employed at approximately their present rate of pay of less than \$.75 a day. The cost of a suitable structure built under these conditions is estimated at not more than \$150,000. It will be planned in harmony with the neighboring Temple of Theseus and with the Areopagus and the Acropolis in the background, and will provide adequate working quarters for the small staff engaged in appraising the artistic, historical, and other scientific results of the excavation.

It will be necessary, after the acquisition of the land, to excavate it before any building is begun, in order to make sure that

there are no valuable remains beneath the site. This work can AMERICAN SCHOOL be finished by the beginning of May, 1938. In the meantime the OF CLASSICAL plans of the building can be prepared and passed upon, estimates STUDIES, ATHENS - secured, and the work of construction initiated during 1938. No MUSEUM PROJECT beginning can be made looking toward the actual possession of the (Continued property on the basis of the City's proposal until it is clear that the proposed museum can be financed. For that purpose it is estimated that \$50,000 will be needed in 1938 and the same amount during each of the two following years, the total being the maximum that will be required for the building and its equipment.

Future Implications: None.