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To Trustees

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American School of
Classical Studies
Agora Museum

Grants from the Foundation:

\$267,225 to the American School of
Classical Studies at Athens

THE AGORA DIGGING SEASON BEGINS

Washington's Birthday is no holiday in Greece. This year a full program of work was planned for the day on the sixteen-acre site of the Athenian Agora, where the ninth season of excavation began the preceding Monday under the direction of T. Leslie Shear. With the schedule calling for completion of the project in 1940, Professor Shear and his associates have outlined an intensive campaign for the few months of digging which remain. Two hundred workers are now on the job, and will be until the onset of unbearably hot weather in late May. Thereafter operations will be suspended until February.

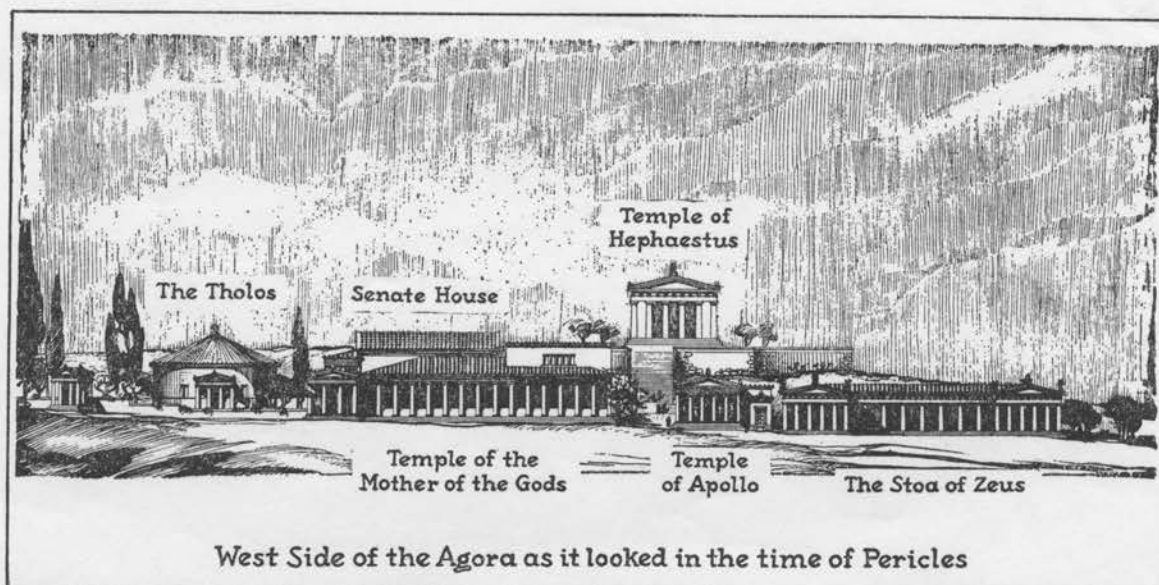
Professor Shear, as is his custom, spent last summer, autumn, and early winter at Princeton, writing reports of the year's work and planning for the new season. He sailed for Athens in early February, and on a visit to Foundation headquarters shortly before leaving gave a graphic resume of results to date.

Perhaps the most striking outcome is the discovery of the real antiquity of this site. The Agora was not only the market place of classical Athens; it was a center of human settlement for at least 3,000 years before Christ, as is shown by the testimony of pottery, tools, and other objects reaching back into late neolithic times. Classical temples and other buildings of the Age of Pericles have survived for the most part only in their foundations; but, underneath these, successive layers of earlier and yet earlier foundations have made it

possible to trace the history of the site to contemporaries of the earliest Egyptian pyramid builders.

Strewn about certain foundations were fragments of columns, broken cornices, and other stones which provided the architectural key to the ruins and made it possible to reconstruct some of the buildings on paper. Such ventures have been aided also by the travel notes and other descriptive records of early writers.

A reconstruction of the classical edifices which fronted the Agora on the West is indicated below. The only one now standing is the Temple of Hephaestus, popularly known as the Theseum; it still crowns its hilltop, the best preserved of all Greek temples. The circular Tholos, on the left, was a state banquet hall; here members of the council boarded and distinguished visitors from abroad were entertained. The Temple of the Mother of the Gods contained the city archives, and in its court the cask of Diogenes lay. The amusing colloquy on feminine beauty between Socrates and Ischomachos is said to have occurred in the portico of Zeus, on the extreme right.



Many ancient wells were found filled with stones, broken sculpture, and other debris, the accumulations of thousands of years. Some were buried under floors and pavements. These wells were treasure troves to the archaeologist, for he was able to date the successive layers of material by the coins, lamps, and pottery found associated with them. In this way several discoveries of sculpture were assigned to early Greek periods, items which if found alone would be subjects of unending controversy. Some of the wells have been sealed for 4,000 years. From the entire area the recovered items include 8,000 coins, 3,600 Greek and Roman lamps, 6,000 Greek inscriptions on marble stelae, 25 complete sculptured busts, and hundreds of pieces of broken statuary - some 38,000 catalogued objects in all.

The Agora Museum, for which the Foundation gave \$150,000 in 1937, will provide a fireproof repository for the housing and display of these priceless objects. Construction begins this spring, to be completed before the end of 1940. A small grant in 1936 supported publication of a book of studies in classical archaeology as a testimonial to Professor Edward C. Capps. The expenditures for fellowships total \$112,000: there have been at least six fellows working under Professor Shear each year; last year there were eight; this year there are seven. Apart from these Foundation appropriations, for the museum and the fellowships, the Agora project has been supported since its beginning in 1931 by the personal gifts of Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.