



The Center for Hellenic Studies and its Library

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The Center for Hellenic Studies and its Library

Bernard M. W. Knox

Two inscriptions, displayed on the inside wall of the Center's main building, commemorate the genesis of the Center for Hellenic Studies. One of them, which records the gift of the land, runs as follows:

The land upon which
the center stands
was devised to the
Old Dominion Foundation
by
Marie Beale
In Memory of
Walker Blaine Beale
Harvard College * Class of 1918
killed in action * St. Mihiel, France
18 * Sept * 1918

The other records the establishment of the Center and its official opening:

The Center
for
Hellenic Studies
was established
and endowed in 1961
by a grant from the
Old Dominion Foundation
to
The Trustees for
Harvard University
and was dedicated
14 * May * 1963

THE land on which the Center stands, the gift of Marie Beale, is a roughly triangular area, rising high above Massachusetts Avenue, and bounded by the Naval Observatory, the Danish Embassy, Dumbarton Oaks Park, and Whitehaven Street. In the winter, when the leaves have fallen, the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library is visible across a deep draw — classical

and Byzantine Greece face each other. The buildings of the Center and its endowment are the gift of the Old Dominion Foundation; its trustees, after much preliminary discussion of the best way to implement Mrs. Beale's wish to revive and perpetuate the ideas and ideals of ancient Greece, asked President Pusey to appoint a committee of Greek scholars to consider the question. This committee, which began work in 1959 under the chairmanship of President Pusey, consisted of Dean Elder, Professors John Finley (Harvard), Bernard M. W. Knox (Yale), Richmond Lattimore (Bryn Mawr), Whitney J. Oates (Princeton), and James H. Oliver (Johns Hopkins), with Michael Putnam (Brown) acting as recording secretary. Developing guidelines suggested by the officers of Old Dominion Foundation, the committee eventually suggested the establishment of a residential research center in ancient Greek literature, history, and philosophy, the Fellows to be chosen from the ranks of younger scholars, both from the United States and abroad. The ideal candidate envisaged was a scholar already fully qualified and engaged in teaching, with some publications to prove his capacity, who needed a year free to begin or complete a major research project.

The most difficult decision before the committee was the appointment of a director. Many names were suggested and discussed and in the end the post was offered to the writer of the present article (to his great surprise, since he had assumed that committee members worked under a self-denying ordinance) and he accepted in February 1961, with the proviso that he be allowed to take his sabbatical leave, already planned for 1961-62 in order to prepare for the Sather Lectures which he had been invited to deliver at Berkeley in the spring of 1963. The committee generously accepted this arrangement and, since President Pusey was anxious to see the Center in operation in the year 1961-62, Professor Michael Putnam, the recording secretary, was persuaded to assume the role of Acting Director for the first year.

The administrative structure worked out for the Center was simple. The Director was to present a budget each year to the Administrative Committee which, under the chairmanship of President Pusey, was to consist of representatives of the Trustees for Harvard University and the Old Dominion Foundation. The Director was to be assisted in the scholarly direction of the Center by the Senior Fellows¹ who

¹ These originally consisted of the members of the committee named by President Pusey to decide on the Center's function; the Director was replaced by Pro-

were to form a committee to decide on applications and also to advise the Director on manuscripts submitted by the Junior Fellows for publication in the Center's series of monographs.²

In 1961 the buildings were planned but not yet built; a temporary home for the Center was provided by Mr. Paul Mellon in the shape of a large house on Whitehaven Street just opposite the site. The Fellows (there were only six that first year) were boarded in nearby apartments but given studies in the Whitehaven Street house, where they also ate lunch together throughout the week. The library consisted of whatever Professor Putnam was able to acquire from book-sellers at home and abroad. The Fellows of that year still remember the excitement with which they greeted every fresh parcel of books, each one hoping it would contain the volume he needed.

Meanwhile the buildings were going up; seven Fellows were selected for the next year, and the Director took over from Professor Putnam in the fall of 1962. What he took over was a flourishing institution, financially in first class condition, already endowed with traditions (which he has managed to preserve) and equipped with an executive secretary in the person of Miss Helen Wadman, who, until her retirement last year, was from an administrative point of view the real director of the enterprise. Professor Putnam had also, in his last months of office, successfully bid for the library of Werner Jaeger (Mrs. Jaeger's concern that her husband's collection should not be dispersed was a factor in her kind decision to favor the Center over other eager buyers) and the Jaeger books, which arrived in the fall of 1962, transformed the Center's library overnight from a nucleus of bare essentials to a real working library, adequate in most areas and in some (Aristotle, for example) extraordinarily rich. By the second half of the year the Fellows' residences were ready for occupancy. They consist of five houses for families and a bachelor building with

fessor Eric A. Havelock (Yale). Professor Lattimore, resigning because of other obligations, was replaced by Gerald E. Else (Michigan) who eventually resigned in his turn for similar reasons and was replaced by Professor Henry R. Immerwahr (Chapel Hill). Professor Michael Putnam as the former Acting Director continues to function as a member of the Senior Fellowship *honoris et officii causa*.

² These monographs are produced by the Harvard University Press for the Center. Three have so far appeared (*Theocritus' Coan Pastorals*, Gilbert Lawall, 1967; *Theopompus and Fifth Century Athens*, W. Robert Connor, 1968; *Formula, Character and Conflict*, William Whallon, 1969) and two more are in the process of publication.

three small apartments and two guest rooms. The number eight for the Fellows had been dictated by the size of the income from endowment (the stipend was \$6,000)² but the proportion of married to unmarried Fellows (a decision which had to be made before building could begin) was a rough guess, which seems however to have justified itself over the years.

By the spring of 1963 the Center's main building was ready for occupancy and it was officially opened on May the fourteenth; the Board of Overseers lunched in the library (the stacks were not yet assembled) and heard addresses by Mr. Paul Mellon, Mr. Archibald MacLeish, and the Director. By the beginning of summer the Director's residence was ready for occupancy and the Center began the next year (1963-64) completely installed in its new buildings. These consist of the residential units (including a house for a superintendent-engineer) and the main building, which, taking advantage of the slope of the land, has two floors at one end, thus providing two levels for the library. It is built around a central court so that the rooms are remarkably well lit even on the duller days. At the front are the administrative offices and a seminar room in which visiting scholars address the Fellows and the Fellows themselves make their reports on their work in progress. Along one side the Fellows' studies, along the other the Director's study and the Fellows' lounge lead to the main floor of the library, which has windows on both sides along its entire length. On this floor are kept the Greek authors and commentaries, works on Greek literature, linguistics, history, philosophy, and archaeology, as well as reference works, collections, anthologies and *Festschriften*, etc.; at one end of the room current periodicals are placed on display shelves. The lower floor, exactly the same size, but with windows on the outer side only, houses the periodicals and the collection of Roman authors, as well as the small collection of Byzantine material. Both floors have tables and chairs in convenient positions, used mainly by outside scholars who come to consult the library during office hours; the Fellows of course are free to use the library at any time of day or night. The catalogue cards show full information and shelf location so far only for the Greek authors up to Plato; the rest of the books are represented by makeshift cards compiled at the time of acquisition. The collection is small enough,

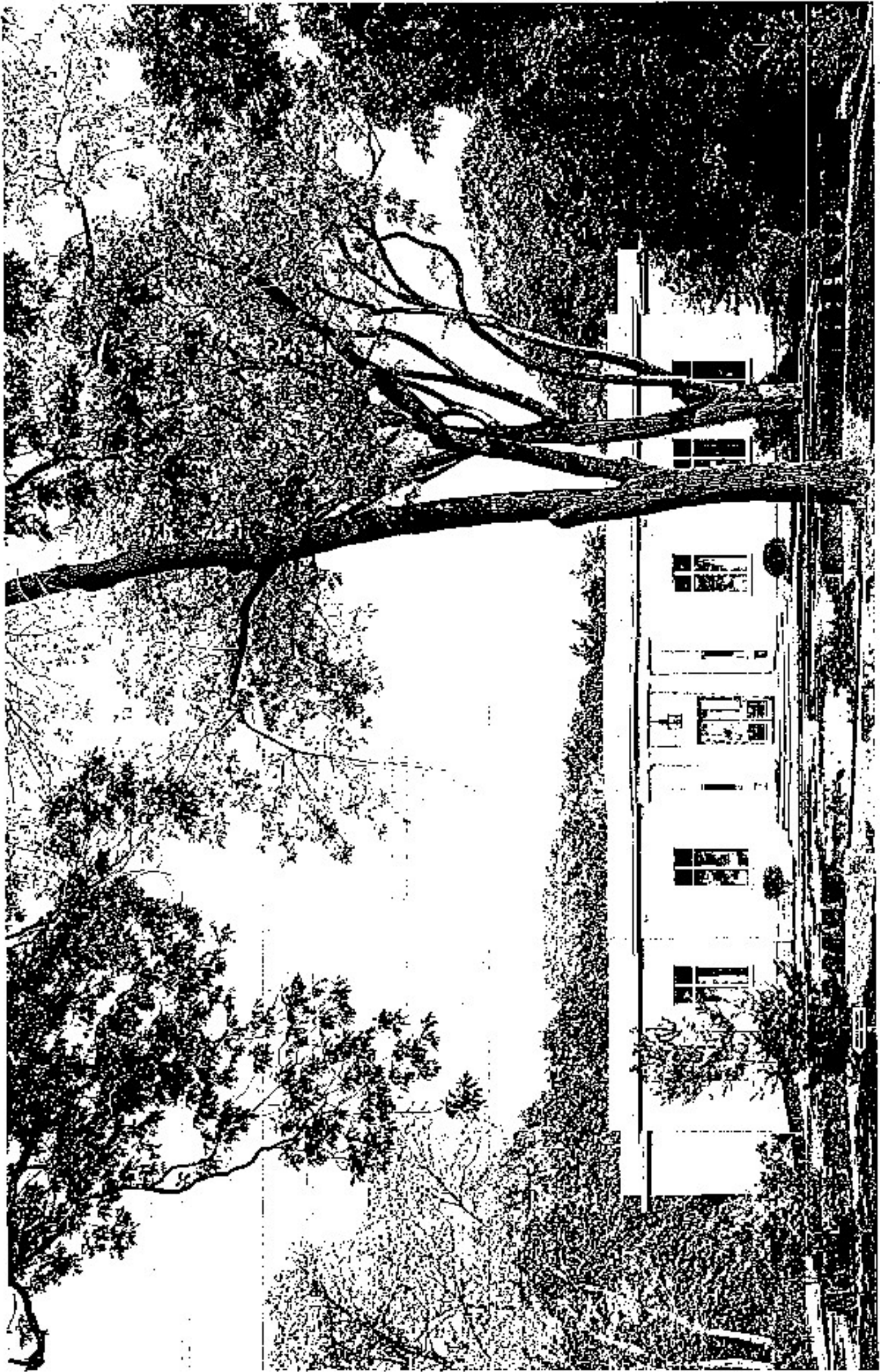
² A generous addition to the Center's endowment by the Andrew Mellon Foundation in 1969 made it possible to raise the stipend to \$7,000 for the current year.

however, so that the Fellows can usually find what they need by looking at the shelves. Books are not taken out of the building; if they are taken to a Fellow's study they may be easily located by a card which must be left in an open file in the library. The system (such as it is) works well only because the number of users is so small and such a compact and friendly group; losses are insignificant, in fact, in the course of the library's nine years of existence only two volumes, unimportant and easily replaced, have disappeared.

Over the years since 1961 the eight annual Fellowships have been held by a distinguished roster of American and foreign scholars, seventy-seven in all, including the present year (1970-71). Nine of the Fellows were women. The nationalities represented were: U.S. 33, Germany 12, United Kingdom 11, France, Greece and Italy 4 each, Austria 3, and Argentina, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Japan, Poland and Switzerland one each.

Obviously the library is the core of this type of operation and in 1962 the Director was fortunate enough to attract from the Widener Library to Washington a librarian in the person of Dr. Jenő Platthy who has been here ever since. Besides being a librarian he is also a Greek scholar with a firm grasp of several European languages; his assistance in building the library has been invaluable. The work was of course too much for one man and in 1966 we obtained the services of an expert cataloguer — Mrs. Inge Hynes, who had previously worked at Dumbarton Oaks. Her task is Sisyphean, for new acquisitions roll in steadily to increase what was already a large collection; but she manages to make progress on the main body of the books while dealing with the new arrivals, and the Greek authors as far as Plato are now represented by fully informative catalogue cards. The classification system was expressly designed for the Center's special needs by Mr. Bartol Brinkler of the Widener Library.

In 1961 the library started from zero to reach at the time of the last annual report (1970) the figure of over 30,000 books and pamphlets. It subscribes to over 150 periodicals and we have managed to acquire full sets of most of the main journals in the field (though there are still some gaps). The main emphasis in acquisitions is of course on material dealing with all aspects (including archaeology) of ancient Greece (we draw a vague line somewhere after Constantine); but the Romans too have to be represented, though not with the same richness. At the present moment it seems safe to say that any



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scholar working in the field will find most of what he needs available on the shelves; what he cannot find he will probably be able to consult at Dumbarton Oaks (which has generously made its superb collection available to our Fellows) or at the Library of Congress.

So far we have not had to face the modern librarian's chief nightmare — lack of space. The two floors of the library still have shelf room to spare. However at the present rate of acquisitions (especially in view of the enormous volume of new publications in the field) the problem will undoubtedly arise within the next few years, and plans for utilizing other parts of the building are being worked on. Meanwhile, at the threshold of its tenth year of existence the Center can take pride in the building of a library which in spite of its late beginning is adequate in most of the many branches of the discipline it represents and more than adequate in some. As many scholars have testified, the library, with its setting of lawn and trees, is also a most pleasant place in which to work.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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EDWARD F. J. TUCKER, who teaches at Southern Methodist University, contributed "The Harvard Manuscript of Parkhurst's *Ignoramus*" to the January 1971 issue of the HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN; his Harvard dissertation (1970) was a critical edition of *Ignoramus*.