
The Singular Circumstance of an Errant Papyrus

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The contributors to the Egypt Exploration Fund did not expect a tangible reward, freshly scooped from desert sands, for their support of the organization's archaeological projects. It was understood that museums and university galleries throughout the British Isles, Europe, and North America would benefit materially—sometimes monumentally—from the excavations, but the most generous individual could reasonably expect was a line of grateful recognition in the yearly register. Those who lived near London might also visit, at a special rate, the Royal Archaeological Museum in Oxford Circus for the annual summer exhibit of choice pieces unearthed during the previous season of digging.

Perhaps the novelist Amelia Edwards, the founder and guiding light of the Fund, realized that this institutional approach lacked the personal touch needed to generate additional membership and—of primary importance—an increase in contributions. Thus, in 1885 she wrote to William Flinders Petrie, then an assistant at the dig in the Delta, asking him to dispatch “1,000 bricks made without straw” recovered from the “store city of Pithom.” These artifacts, obviously designed to recall the scriptural account of the forced labor imposed on the ancient Hebrews by Pharaoh (Ex. 5:10–18), were then to be distributed to faithful members in the United Kingdom. It is unclear whether the complete order of a thousand bricks (an enormous shipping project) was ever sent, but this proposed biblical memento was not the only marketing gimmick devised by the Egypt Exploration Fund.

In 1888, Edwards wrote a memorandum to the Executive Committee of the Fund in which she vigorously opposed a policy that would do away with the recovery and shipment of small objects of minor archaeological value. "Our subscribers," she wrote, "are the *General Public* and they need to be stimulated by Popular means" (her emphasis). The committee was convinced, and cartons of engraved fragments, mummy beads, and ushabtis (small funerary figurines) continued to arrive for display in provincial museums throughout the country. A large number of the ushabtis were also conveyed to the Fund's branch office in Boston for distribution to individual members and their local organizations in North America.

In fact, these miniature artifacts from pharaonic times play a major role in a bitter dispute which shook the American wing of the Egypt Exploration Fund at the end of the nineteenth century. The primary account of this brouhaha is *The Truth about the Egypt Exploration Fund* (1903), a tedious narrative with all the characters and characteristics of a stilted parody of a soap opera. It was written, then privately printed—always a sign of extreme partisanship—by one of the antagonists, William Copley Winslow. The Reverend Dr. Winslow, an Episcopal priest with far-ranging interests in matters biblical and archaeological, frequently displayed heroic dedication to his missions. Here are several snippets from his annual reports to the bishop: "[In 1889] I wrote nearly 300 editorials, articles, letters to the press and 17 lectures. . . . Sermons, addresses, remarks, lectures, for all occasions, church and secular, foot up 199." "[In 1892] I delivered or read 42 lectures, addresses, papers . . . wrote 282 articles, etc., etc."

Almost from the beginnings of the Egypt Exploration Fund's activities, Winslow undertook the function of Vice President and Honorary Secretary of its American Branch, working at full throttle to publicize its projects and cultivate contributors. For example, when Amelia Edwards visited the United States in the winter of 1889, he set up a schedule for

her to deliver "Pharaohs, Fellahs, and Explorers" at 115 venues in sixteen states. Winslow's outstanding contribution to the effort was his ability to secure financial backing for excavation in Egypt: the bottom line of the accounts shows that, between 1883 and 1902, he collected and transferred \$130,000 to support the Fund's enterprises in the field.

Employed to help Dr. Winslow with the routine operation of the branch's Boston office was Mrs. Marie Buckham, herself an avid devotee of ancient Egypt and biblical history. Mrs. Buckham demonstrated, however, that she was not content with her role as a mere assistant. The incident that detonated the tension between the talented and hyper-ambitious woman and the sanctimonious but tireless preacher-scholar was what he termed—with the flair of Sherlock Holmes—the "Singular Distribution of Ushabtis."

In early 1901, the EEF in London sent its Boston-based affiliate eight cases containing nearly five hundred boxes of at least six figures each, a total of about three thousand artifacts. These molded clay ushabtis had been recently found by Flinders Petrie, the Fund's star excavator, in tombs at Abydos in Upper Egypt. The mass of small but authentically ancient tokens were to be spread among the loyal American members as gifts. That process did not go as smoothly as Winslow would have wished; a survey indicated many subscribers complained that they did not receive a box. Moreover, a number of non-members received ushabtis, and a Boston dealer let slip that a dozen or so of the gifts were exchanged by Mrs. Buckham for an antique necklace.

There were, of course, other matters seething beneath the surface: charges of interference from EEF headquarters; power plays by factions within the local Egyptological community; hints of the charming secretary's improper influence on important officials of both the London and the Boston committees of the Fund. At any rate, in 1902 Dr. Winslow was forced out of his longstanding leadership role and Mrs. Buckham dismissed from her position. The abrupt "retirement" of the learned clergyman was permanent; Mrs. Buck-

ham was soon back at her desk briskly managing the affairs of the Fund in the United States.

The disposition of the funerary figurines was only a momentary blip on the archaeological screen. Its impact, while personally devastating to Winslow, did not seem to affect the continued acquisition of antiquities and the advance of scholarship by the trans-Atlantic benefactions of the EEF. Several of the most impressive Egyptian and Nubian exhibits in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts come from the Fund's excavations. Of equal significance was the large-scale distribution of papyri to various American museums, colleges, and seminaries. At the inauguration of this process, Dr. Winslow was a primary figure; in later distributions, Mrs. Buckham was an important behind-the-scenes participant.

The remainder of my narrative focuses on the hundreds of ancient documents—literary, scriptural, official, personal—that are found throughout the country thanks to the generosity of the EEF at the start of the twentieth century. The roster of the institutions that were rewarded for financially backing the retrieval of papyri contains several surprises. And, in one case, the recent sale of a cache of the donated documents has generated considerable controversy in the worldwide archaeological community. Among the initial batch of these gifts was a sizable fragment from the first book of Homer's *Iliad*, lines 404–47.¹ In 1900, this third-century-ad papyrus, a column of forty-three Greek hexameters, was presented as a unique display of appreciation (and perhaps of anticipated guilt) by the Fund to its most prominent American promoter, the Reverend Dr. William Copley Winslow. When he died in 1925, the Homeric papyrus disappeared. In the official list of approximately three thousand similar ancient documents collected, published, and allotted under the auspices of the EEF, a stark notation appears after this item: "Present whereabouts not ascertained." That is the singular circumstance announced in my title. More about it after a brief account of the discovery of the papyri in Egypt, followed by a survey of their subsequent distribution and the

current status of some of the documents that ended up in the United States.

As mentioned in my opening paragraphs, an important motive for launching the Fund was the hope of significant discoveries in the land of Goshen, artifacts and documents which would furnish the key to a lost period of biblical history. This hope was never fully realized—but there were some unpredicted results. The earliest excavations in the Delta generated a lot of publicity and little of monumental notice or lasting scientific value. These digs did, however, provide William Flinders Petrie, soon to be acknowledged as England's premier Egyptologist, with a thorough apprenticeship during which he learned to read the past from tiny bits of evidence: broken pottery, mud bricks, beads, flints, household items. A basic principle for modern archaeology is Petrie's dictum that "pottery is the very key to digging; to know the varieties of it, and the age of each, is the alphabet of Work."

Petrie rapidly became frustrated with the Fund's delays and slipshod administration; too much business was being conducted by too few overworked members (the "Executive") of the General Committee of the EEF. He proposed a new set of operational by-laws; when they were never circulated for discussion and action, Petrie resigned. But his pioneering work in the field had demonstrated both that his meticulous archaeological method was the way of the future and that there were other, potentially more productive excavation sites in Egypt. In the Fayum, a fertile area about forty miles southwest of Cairo, Petrie had probed several towns and temple complexes from ancient Egypt's Greco-Roman era (325 bc–614 ad). There, in the ruins of houses and in the nearby tombs of their inhabitants, he also discovered papyri. At that moment a new dimension was added to the mission of the EEF: the specific search for documents from antiquity—and this project soon produced blockbuster discoveries.

After a season of initial support by the Fund in the Fayum, Bernard P. Grenfell and his friend, Arthur S. Hunt, moved south to Bahnasa, called by the Greeks and Romans

Oxyrhynchus, the city of the “sharp-nosed” fish. Petrie had recommended this site because it seemed likely to be the repository of not only Greco-Roman secular papyri but also early Christian documents. There, in January of 1897, beneath the rubbish mounds skirting the modern village, the two young Oxford colleagues hit pay dirt. Within a few days, basketfuls of documents, some of them twenty centuries old, were being hauled by local *fellahin* workers from the dumps to the pair’s tent. At the end of three months, Grenfell and Hunt packed their discoveries for shipment, some for temporary storage in the national museum at Cairo, most (280 boxes) back to their college at Oxford. Three hundred of these papyri were literary (Homeric fragments in the vast majority); another three thousand were official documents, rental agreements, legal papers, personal letters, horoscopes, petitions, warrants, business accounts, and tax receipts. Thus the two recent graduates of The Queen’s College began a partnership, in the field and at their desks, that was—in the happy words of a later distinguished EEF papyrologist—“more lasting and at least as productive as that of Gilbert and Sullivan.”

Grenfell and Hunt spent all of 1898 in England interpreting and publishing their most important discoveries. Over the next nine years they returned to Egypt each archaeological season (usually from November to March), sometimes in the Fayum, mostly at Bahnasa/Oxyrhynchus, to search for more papyri. The EEF created a special division and account, the Greco-Roman Branch, specifically to support the enterprise. A single leaf from a papyrus codex-book, sifted out from the garbage mound on the second day of the first season, justifiably attracted the most popular attention. Its published title was *Logia Iesu*, “The Sayings of Our Lord.” The page contained a series of pithy remarks, each introduced by the formula “Jesus said”; most but not all of these verses are similar to Christ’s sayings in the four canonical gospels. (Later discoveries from Upper Egypt in the 1950s identified the source of this fragment, dated to the second

century ad, as the gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*.) The Fund urged Grenfell and Hunt to publish the *Logia* in several versions: a detailed scholarly edition of the most significant of the early finds, and two individual pamphlets, one that sold for two shillings, another for sixpence. The fascinated public purchased thirty thousand copies of the initial press run of the broadly based presentation.

The lucky find of a spectacular fragment with biblical overtones, as well as numerous segments from known and new classical authors, contributed to the excitement, and ensured support for continued campaigns to recover and publish more of the documents preserved beneath the sands of Egypt. Although the EEF terminated its expeditions for procuring papyri in 1907, its dedication to the intricate process of deciphering and publishing the collected discoveries has not slackened. In 2008, volume 72 of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* rolled off the press on schedule; the identification numbers assigned to the items in this volume reach almost five thousand.

After the first batches of papyri had been sorted and examined, those of the most apparent scholarly importance were selected for immediate publication. Other documents were edited and published in the continuing series of volumes of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* as soon as Grenfell, Hunt, and any assistants could complete the work. In 1900, after several volumes were printed, the EEF decided to send many of the documents as gifts to institutions in the United Kingdom, Europe, and North America whose contributions had helped to sustain the expeditions of the Greco-Roman Branch. The first of these distributions took place in 1900, the last in 1922. Over the years, approximately three thousand items were assigned to 103 institutions, including Oxford's Ashmolean Museum and later its Sackler Library, the home base of the publications team. The Executive Committee of the Fund, presumably with the advice of Grenfell and Hunt, made the distributions. Their decisions are recorded in the lists that are published as appendices in volumes 4 (1904), 5 (1908), 11 (1915), and 16 (1924) of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*; in the

mid-1970s this roster was updated and is available online at www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk/POxy/lists/lists.html.

Heading the parade of the published documents is—no surprise—the *Logia Iesu* (POxy 1); it is permanently deposited in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Other papyri from the early volumes were awarded to the British Museum and the Ashmolean Museum; some went back to Egypt and are now in the National Museum in Cairo; others were assigned to universities or schools in Great Britain (Cambridge, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrew's, Aberystwyth) and Ireland (Trinity, Belfast); a few went to more distant imperial outposts (Melbourne, Toronto). Three other European museums were beneficiaries (Brussels, Graz, Uppsala), but most of the universities in France, Germany, and Italy had their own resources for obtaining papyri.

In the initial distribution, a bundle of 119 papyri was also shipped to Dr. Winslow, care of the Boston office of the EEF's branch, for final dispatch to eight American institutions of higher learning. In a 1901 issue of *Biblia*, Winslow wrote a brief announcement of the gifts and a summary of each allotment from London. The conclusion to his first paragraph underscores an essential public-relations aspect of the international bequest: "Any donor of a special sum towards the explorations can accomplish a double pleasure: aid the cause of science, and add to the collections of the museum or university of his choice."

The Philadelphia consignment, intended for the University of Pennsylvania, was the largest and most impressive: twenty-nine pieces, including a fragment of the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew (at the time, the oldest known witness to the New Testament), an excerpt from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* with several noteworthy textual variants, and a papyrological double-header with Homer on one side and a significant legal document on the other. Harvard received nineteen items, including an early fourth-century portion of Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*;

among Yale's gifts were a fragment of Plato's *Republic* and a number of lines from a hitherto-unknown Greek New Comedy. In Columbia's allotment were the report of a strategic letter to the King of Macedon and three columns from Xenophon's *Hellenica*; both Johns Hopkins and Princeton received a mixture of literary and documentary texts.

These five Ivy League universities and research-oriented Hopkins, with their first-class library and museum facilities, would be at the top of anyone's list of obvious recipients for valuable ancient documents. Joining them in this first American distribution of the EEF's papyri were two unexpected grantees: Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, and Vassar College in Poughkeepsie. While both were respectable undergraduate institutions, neither was noted for its deep scholarship, collection of antiquities, or a special dedication to the culture of Greco-Roman Egypt. Yet in the initial go-round Hamilton got five papyri (all documentary) including a registration table of goats and sheep and an agreement to repay a loan by labor; Vassar's allotment was four items (also all documentary) including a *habeas corpus* demand and a birth-of-a-son announcement.

Within a dozen years of this inaugural distribution, additional packets of papyri recovered and published by Grenfell and Hunt were sent to other trans-Atlantic destinations, notably the Smithsonian Institution in Washington; the Universities of Chicago, Cornell, Michigan, Illinois, and Western Reserve; Wellesley and Mount Holyoke Colleges; General and Union Theological Seminaries in New York City, and McCormick in Chicago. The Pierpont Morgan Collection also received about a dozen items that have subsequently been deposited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (now on permanent loan to Yale) and at Columbia University.

A glance at the list of locations shows that the American recipients were mainly elite east-coast institutions—they were the ones with the interested trustees and the enlightened capital to support the mission of the EEF's Greco-Roman Branch and thus merited gift-papyri. Shortly before the

First World War that situation was startlingly altered, at least in terms of perceived measures of academic prestige. In the appendices published in volumes 11 and 16 of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, several unfamiliar American names appear on the summary distribution lists: Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, and the Toledo Museum of Art. A significant New World geographical frontier was also crossed by the later shipments of ancient documents: Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, appears a dozen lines above New England's Williams College; the notation "Berkeley" does not refer to the preeminent campus of the University of California, but to the tiny Pacific School of Religion located in that same city on San Francisco Bay.

The papyrus collection at Muhlenberg College deserves special recognition, primarily because it received special recognition from the Egypt Exploration Fund. According to campus tradition, Robert Chisholm Horn of the Classics Department sent an undisclosed contribution to further the mission of Greco-Roman Branch. (Professor Horn was himself a student of papyri: he corresponded with Hunt at Oxford and wrote a book on the uses of the subjunctive and optative moods in non-literary sources—not a best-seller, but an obvious motive for professional generosity.) The Fund's London archives indicate that on January 6, 1915, a packet of thirty-six papyri was dispatched to the Muhlenberg scholar. These items (thirty-four in Greek, two in Latin) are kept in the Special Collections of the college library where a fifth-century fragment of Matthew's Gospel is occasionally consulted by visiting students of the New Testament. It is extraordinary that one of the largest single consignments of *Oxyrhynchus papyri* ever sent to an American institution went to this tiny Lutheran liberal arts college in the Lehigh Valley—its only competition in this narrow field comes from Harvard. A contemporary Mule (the college's pseudonymous mascot) has every right to kick up partisan heels at that distinction.

Another exhibit in the roster of surprise recipients of later divisions of Oxyrhynchus material is an institution burdened with a title straight out of a novel by Dickens: Bonebrake Theological Seminary, formerly of Dayton, Ohio, but now amalgamated with nearby United Theological Seminary. Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, an alumnus-benefactor of this institution contributed a respectable sum to the EEF's work—and was rewarded. The library of the combined schools remains the home of the eight papyri sent as tokens of appreciation; another ancient document was added to the bequest by the alumnus-donor who funded the initial batch.

Absolute accuracy in compiling distributions lists of the EEF papyri is difficult to achieve for several reasons. For example, in 1922, Washington University in St. Louis negotiated with Flinders Petrie (who had long since severed his ties with the EEF) to purchase some artifacts, most likely from his one-season dig at Oxyrhynchus. The funds for this acquisition seem to have come from a member of the St. Louis chapter of the Archaeological Society of America. Some of the items received from Petrie (especially the numerous papyri) remained at the university, while other material was sent to the St. Louis Art Museum. At more or less the same time, a packet of ten papyri from the final EEF distribution arrived at the desk of a professor in the Classics Department at Washington University, also located in St. Louis. This second batch of papyri (from the same famous site in Egypt, but recovered by Grenfell and Hunt at least fifteen years before Petrie's excavation) was subsequently allotted to the Art Museum's collection. At any rate, in a site just west of the Mississippi River, more noted for its World Fair and Clydesdales than its antiquities, there is today an eminently respectable concentration of Oxyrhynchus papyri.

Potential discrepancies in the archival record can often be rectified by an intense session of "library archaeology," greatly facilitated by online catalogs and almost instant replies to e-mail queries. (The foundation for this type of re-

search was laid by Dr. Revel Coles, the former curator of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri Project at the Sackler Library at Oxford. In the 1970s, he collated and corrected the four early Appendix-lists; he then compiled a printed Location-List and Key—now also online—for all the distributed material.) A relatively small number of entries in Coles' list indicate that recipients have lost track of their papyri; in a few cases, there seems to be no primary record of the original allotment. In an attempt to determine the status of three thousand items in 103 different places, every instance of clerical error, carelessness, or perhaps even theft can be neither detected nor eliminated. Most such examples are not even noticed until the recipient is alerted by a series of outside inquiries. Frantic searches and reviews of records follow—and then, too frequently, the notation “Not found.” A fast scan of the Location-List shows that just under fifty of the distributed papyri are not accounted for. Since the initial allotment, more than a century ago, the “disappeared” items amount to less than two percent of all those papyri sent to contributors.

There are, however, two categories of lost Oxyrhynchus documents that are extraordinary and deserve special attention. In the preliminary distribution lists the notation “destroyed?” follows the identification numbers of almost twenty papyri allotted to the University of Louvain. During the First World War, the German onslaught through Belgium was especially brutal; the famous university at Louvain and its library were demolished, presumably along with the papyri deposited there. A similar fate—and archival annotation—awaited the five documents (all from Hibeh in the Fayum) at the University Library in Leipzig during the Second World War, but this time the perpetrators of the destruction were Allied heavy bombers.

Occasionally the cause of confusion—or consternation—about the current disposition of the ancient documents is not a wartime disaster but acute institutional irresponsibility. Some Oxyrhynchus gift-papyri have been sold and the identity of their present owners either deliberately or inadver-

tently lost. An example of this occurred at an undetermined time before the updated Location-List was compiled in 1974. While working on that project, Dr. Coles, the Oxford curator, learned that POxy 1713 was missing—and he discovered the reason why. Originally donated to Bradfield College, an English public school in Berkshire, during the final series of distributions, this papyrus had been purchased from the school by an unknown buyer. Inquiries to the Bradfield Headmaster and archivist have yielded no additional information about the date, circumstances, agents, and amount of this sale.

In 2003, a more blatant example of institutional shortsightedness took place in the United States. As mentioned above, Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania received a hefty allotment of twenty-nine papyri from the EEF. In 1970, the seminary merged with Colgate Rochester Divinity School in mid-state New York, but a generation later the combined institutions faced a financial crisis. A decision was made to sell a number of the school's valuable Bibles and commentaries, cuneiform tablets, and the Crozer Oxyrhynchus papyri. The means selected for the deaccession was a widely publicized auction of antiquities at Sotheby's Manhattan venue. When the final hammer fell on June 20, 2003, the results were spectacular: the papyri alone fetched over half a million dollars.

The problem with the Divinity School's ploy to avoid bankruptcy is that the buyers of only two lots (four items) have acknowledged their purchases. Macquarie University in Australia paid \$35,000 for scraps of Leviticus, a Christian homily, and a third-century tax document. The largest bid was \$350,000 (plus \$50,000 commission) for the auction's prize piece, a torn page from a third-century codex of John's Gospel. The Greek letters on both sides of the fragment are crisply formed and the dark ink contrasts well with the fibers on which the surviving sections of eight verses (John 8:14–22) are written. The piece begs for splashy public display. And that is exactly the purpose for which the buyer,

Ink & Blood (copyrighted corporate title), paid out such a handsome price.

This luridly titled, definitely for-profit enterprise advertises a traveling exhibit featuring “authentic Dead Sea Scrolls, 5,000-year-old clay tablets, Hebrew Torahs, ancient Greek texts, Medieval Latin manuscripts, pages from Gutenberg’s Bible, and rare English printed Bibles.” Ink & Blood is prepared to set up its artifacts at museums, colleges, churches, and conventions throughout the country. The company’s show-and-tell presentation features a live demonstration of a Gutenberg-type printing press in action; ticket-holders may also buy an illustrated catalog and browse the gift shop.

Grenfell and Hunt—not to mention the Reverend Dr. Winslow—are turning in their graves. But at least Ink & Blood, based in Nashville, does not attempt to keep its deal a secret or its prize purchase hidden from the public. In contrast, the other twenty-five papyri from the Crozer collection have disappeared from sight. Of course, the scholarly details of their contents can be read in the volumes of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* and clear images can be viewed at a website maintained by a consortium of libraries at several American theological schools: <www.atla.com/digitalresources>. (This [url](http://www.atla.com/digitalresources) also features the Bonebrake-United papyri mentioned above.) The original documents, however, probably now locked in the safe-deposit boxes of investor-collectors, are no longer available for inspection. This auction and its consequences represent certainly a moral and curatorial trespass—if not a legal violation—of the implicit conditions of the EEF’s distribution of its Oxyrhynchus papyri.

After this rapid survey of the history of the Oxyrhynchus allotments and the American bequests, an additional observation on the first EEF distribution to the United States in 1900. In the roster of prestigious research institutions (Pennsylvania, Harvard, Yale, etc.) were two small colleges, Hamilton and Vassar, that received modest packets of the ancient documents. Hamilton, a men’s college in upstate New York, was Dr. Winslow’s alma mater. His letter an-

nouncing the gift (dated February 7, 1900) is kept in the college's Rare Book Room with the actual papyri. Thus, no mystery about the selection by the EEF (in response to a donation by the Vice President of the American Branch) of Hamilton as an initial beneficiary. There is, however, another small problem: the catalog of the college's library lists *six* papyri, whereas both the official EEF record and Winslow's announcements set the number of gift items at five. In fact, the extra papyrus ("Correction of the official taxing lists, ca.246 ad") does not appear anywhere in the lists or indices of the thousands of published Oxyrhynchus documents. Perhaps another Hamilton alumnus was inspired by the original EEF-Winslow gift and purchased this sixth papyrus from an antiquities dealer; sometime later, he gave it to the college where it was recorded and stored with the other items. This is exactly what happened several years afterward at Bonebrake Theological Seminary, thanks to the benevolence of Bishop J. Balmer Shower.

Why Vassar, then a small women's college—of some social vogue, but modest academic distinction—was selected to get four papyri in the first American distribution is also a puzzle. There appear to be no personal or family connections between the college in Poughkeepsie and the Winslows of Boston. Neither Dr. Winslow's wife nor his only daughter attended the school; Vassar did not award the scholarly *paterfamilias* an honorary degree. Perhaps one of the college's classics professors had a special interest in papyrology and that fact was known to the English and American committees. At any rate, the EEF's initial investment paid dividends: Vassar made contributions to the American Branch's support of EEF activities in Egypt and was allotted eight more papyri, all of which are today kept in the college library.

A consistent system of distribution seems to have been used throughout the entire process: the papyri were allotted to a sub-committee in London (apparently with little input from the American Branch), then shipped to the Boston office for final delivery. A 1914 letter from Professor W. W.

Goodwin, the eminent classicist from Harvard, reveals that a bit of fine-tuning and minor shifts in priorities to acknowledge last-minute contributions were sometimes necessary. The EFF Committee in London, however, strongly resisted a suggestion by the American secretary-manager, Mrs. Buckham, Dr. Winslow's resilient nemesis, to store packets for potential donors, with \$100 and \$250 valuations, in the Branch's new office at 527 Tremont Temple (cable address: "Ushabti, Boston").

(Shortly after the First World War, several American institutions, especially Harvard University and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, began to launch their own locally-sponsored expeditions to the Two Lands along the Nile. The era of organized international financial support for archaeological ventures was fading, although a much-reduced American Branch of the Egypt Exploration Fund—later, Society—was not formally disbanded until after the Second World War.)

Now, a final return to the extremely cold case of the stray Homeric papyrus from the Fayum. Its circumstances are singular because this fragment sent to William C. Winslow was the only item, out of a pool of about three thousand, ever assigned to an individual—the rest went to universities, museums, libraries, seminaries, and schools. The gift-papyrus, 11 x 6.5 inches, containing a jagged column of verses from the *Iliad*, was not listed in Winslow's public announcement of the first distribution in the periodical *Biblia*. I assume that this exclusion is due not to conspiratorial secrecy, but to the recipient's desire to hide the EEF's extraordinary gesture of appreciation for his administrative efforts under the bushel of modest silence. Three years later, however, in Winslow's fiery rehash of the machinations of Mrs. Buckham and the details of his shabbily engineered "retirement" from leadership of the American Branch, the gift-document and the donor's motives are fully described. Thus, the initial distribution location of PFayum 5, uncovered by Grenfell and Hunt during their 1899 season of digging, was duly noted by its American owner, as well as in the officially published

Appendix-list to volume 5 of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. Dr. Revel Coles's 1974 update of the complete list of allotments, however, does not record the original recipient. Rather, printed in the entry's location slot is the singular comment, "Present whereabouts not ascertained." As a matter of fact, for the first quarter of the twentieth century, the whereabouts of the phantom document was precisely the Reverend Dr. Winslow's residence at 525 Beacon Street, Boston.

When Winslow died (at the age of eighty-five) in 1925, among his extensive bequests was the following provision:

To the *EPISCOPAL THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL* in Cambridge the papyrus of a fragment of Homer presented to me by the Egypt Exploration Fund while I was its "official representative" in the United States.

(The Episcopal Theological School, renamed the Episcopal Divinity School, shared its campus until 2008 with the Weston Jesuit School of Theology—an instance of ecumenical coziness that might have startled Dr. Winslow.)

This complex archival mystery has meandered through the early volumes of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, its online Location List, the fuming pages of Winslow's *The Truth about the Egypt Exploration Fund*, visits to the Sackler Library on St. John's Street in Oxford and the current office and archives of the EES at 2–3 Doughty Mews, London, and email inquiries to a score of American colleges and museums. The clinching piece of evidence, however, was a lucky hit in the files of Mass. Document Retrieval Services, a few miles from my home in Dedham, Massachusetts. For a small fee, this agency found and mailed a copy of the last will and testament of William Copley Winslow, late of Boston in Suffolk County.

It is a long haul from an excavation trench outside a Greco-Roman village in Egypt to the tasteful academic cloisters near the Charles River in New England. But that tidy scenario was not destined to become the alpha and omega of

the singularly circumstanced Homeric papyrus. Officials at the Episcopal Divinity School report that no such document was ever delivered to their premises—and it would most definitely have been recorded and displayed.

William C. Winslow's name is, however, remembered on the Cambridge campus; funds from his estate support modest purchases of books and periodicals that have (as specified) "reference to archaeological research in Egypt, Palestine, Assyria or Babylon." The General Theological Seminary in New York and Hamilton College also received bequests for similar purposes at approximately the same time, in 1943. Mary W. Winslow, the unmarried only child of William and his first wife, died in 1940. It seems likely that only then—fifteen years after her father's death—was the family's home vacated and the Winslow estate finally settled.

In the will, special destinations were explicitly marked for a handful of the "household goods, furniture, silverware, books, personal effects and the like." The "fragment of Homer" was to go to the Episcopal Theological School; the "portrait in oil of the Madonna and Child by Sassoferrato (1605–1685)" to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; the "brass door knocker from the 'Old Winslow House' at Marshfield, presented by Daniel Webster to my uncle, Rev. Dr. Gordon Winslow, as, by tradition, brought over in the Mayflower by Governor Edward Winslow" to the Pilgrim Society of Plymouth, Massachusetts. Tracking the second and third items in this list of exceptions to the general distribution of the household material seemed likely to provide a clue to the whereabouts of the papyrus.

The Museum of Fine Arts does indeed have a Virgin and Child by Sassoferrato in its collection, but this painting is a significantly later gift from a different collection with no connection to William C. Winslow. Almost within shouting distance of the family home is the McMullen Museum at Boston College. The spotty provenance of its Sassoferrato Madonna (with cherubs, but no Child) includes nothing that would link this painting, a common scene by a prolific artist,

to the Winslows. The Pilgrim Society in Plymouth operates a museum and keeps substantial archives (presumably including copies of Winslow's monographs on his Mayflower ancestor and his *Pilgrim Fathers in Holland*). Access to the collection and its records was not possible for several months due to a major renovation of the Society's facilities. One strike, one foul tip, one checked swing, no hits.²

When Mary W. Winslow died in 1940, the explicit provisions of her father's will—he did not omit a single jot or tittle—could finally be carried out by the administrators of his trust. In 1943, benefactions went to a number of historical societies and Episcopal seminaries, but no institution received more and more generously than Wilson's alma mater, Hamilton College: a professorship was endowed, a lecture series on classics and archaeology was established, and several student prizes were funded. Even his old fraternity, Delta Kappa Epsilon (Tau chapter), was singled out for a substantial gift.

As mentioned above, the final section of Winslow's will is a list of selected "books and personal effects and the like"; these items were earmarked for special distribution. The first clause provides: "To HAMILTON COLLEGE my books relating to Egypt and archaeological research, and also my collection of Egyptian antiques." (Another item listed a bit later in that same catalog is the Homeric papyrus slated for the Episcopal Theological School.) There is clear evidence to suggest that the trustees of the estate acted conscientiously and promptly to carry out every provision. After Mary Winslow's death, there is an item in the tally of expenses generated in settling her accounts: "June 11, 1941, D. W. Dunn, shipping egyptological coll.—\$12.82." No destination for the misspelled shipment is given, but it is likely that her father's collection was delivered to Hamilton College since it was at exactly this time that its Emerson Gallery records a gift from Winslow of a number of Greco-Roman and Egyptian artifacts. In the same expense account for the daughter's estate are two significantly larger sums paid to the Vendome Book Shop. I suggest that these payments cov-

ered the packing and dispatch of Wilson's extensive library to various institutions, including Hamilton College, as specified in his will. Finally, a bit earlier on February 21, 1941, the Bostonian Society also acknowledged the gift of an antique chair left to it in a codicil to Winslow's will. This antique, according to Winslow family tradition, once belonged to General Joseph Warren, the official who dispatched Paul Revere through every Middlesex village and farm to herald the revolution.

In 1941, then, the personal items were being dispatched from the Winslow residence to the various institutions named in the will. Although the annual accounts and inventories of the trust that administered Winslow's estate contain no mention of the disposition of the artifacts underscored in the final clauses of the will, the trustees obviously took their job very seriously. But the reams of formal legal sheets on file deal exclusively with financial matters: stocks, bonds, mortgages, gains, losses, interest, dividends, splits, and amortization in mind-numbing annual tallies, from 1925 to 1963. The clusters of stapled documents stored on a shelf in the Probate Registry of Suffolk County (Boston) neither confirm nor deny that the missing papyrus went to the Episcopal Theological School—they ignore it completely and utterly.

Thus, back to a survey of the actual institutions named as beneficiaries. Their records should certify the receipt of the gifts. Despite toll-free telephones and instant e-mail, it frequently takes considerable time and effort for various collegiate bureaucrats, museum curators, and research librarians to kick their archival gears into action. A few reply immediately; some fumble around suspecting that the caller wishes to tamper with tenure or break the confidentiality seal protecting the donation of an Old World artifact or a New World antique; a number of places have chronic communication problems. Unfortunately, the Episcopal Divinity School fell into the last category. After an initial telephone call in which I was informed that there was no trace of a papyrus in the library, silence. Finally an amiable retiree let me know that all relevant

records from the early '40s have been checked: not a clue. Since William H. P. Hatch, the renowned scholar of ancient manuscripts and early biblical texts, was on the School's faculty during this period, the arrival of an important papyrus would certainly have generated some response from the staff. It seems that only the endowment checks from the Winslow trust migrated from Boston's Back Bay to Brattle Street, Cambridge.

My last chance was the possibility that the papyrus had been mistakenly bundled up with Winslow's "Egyptological collection" and the archaeological books that were shipped to Hamilton College in 1941. But there is no trace of the document's arrival in Clinton, New York, and the acting registrar of the campus museum has explored every bin where it might have been stashed, then forgotten. On the other hand, the keeper of the college's Rare Book Room stonewalled for six weeks, despite appeals for basic information. An attempt to sabotage the mission? One must disregard twinges of *ca-coethes indagandi* ("the itch to track down"), a disorder that strikes over-the-hill classicists. The papyrus has vanished. The case is closed. Back to the shelf with the entire file—location lists, xeroxed probate papers, library catalogs, trustee receipts, PDF attachments. Forever. Done.

Finally, what about the Sassoferrato Madonna that was also slotted in the will for special distribution? Any inclination to continue a search for this artifact was forestalled by a recollection of the wise observation by a late-New Kingdom *hem*-priest, "Along that path lies insanity." Meanwhile, from his vantage point near the throne of God, I hope the Reverend Doctor, formerly of 525 Beacon Street, is raising holy hell about the currently unascertained whereabouts of his Italian picture and Winslow's Homer.

46 the singular circumstance of an errant papyrus

notes

1. The text of the lines follows (Fitzgerald trans.):

“ . . . Aigaion, whom the gods call Briareus,
the giant with a hundred arms, more powerful
than the sea-god, his father. Down he sat
by the son of Krónos, glorying in that place.
For fear of him the blissful gods forbore
to manacle Zeus.

Remind him of these things,
cling to his knees and tell him your good pleasure
if he will take the Trojan side
and roll the Akhaians back to the water's edge,
back on the ships with slaughter! All the troops
may savor what their king has won for them,
and he may know his madness, what he lost
when he dishonored me, peerless among Akhaians.”

Her eyes filled, and a tear fell as she answered:

“Alas, my child, why did I rear you, doomed
the day I bore you? Ah, could you only be
serene upon this beachhead through the siege,
your life runs out so soon.
Oh early death! Oh broken heart! No destiny
so cruel! And I bore you to this evil!

But what you wish I will propose
To Zeus, lord of the lightning, going up
myself into the snow-glare of Olympos
with hope for his consent.

Be quiet now
beside the long ships, keep your anger bright
against the army, quit the war.

Last night
Zeus made a journey to the shore of Ocean
to feast among the Sunburned, and the gods
accompanied him. In twelve days he will come
back to Olympos. Then I shall be there
to cross his bronze doorsill and take his knees.
I trust I'll move him.”

Thetis left her son
still burning for the softly belted girl

whom they had wrested from him.

Meanwhile Odysseus
with his shipload of offerings came to Khrysê.
Entering the deep harbor there
they furled the sails and stowed them, and unbent
forestays to ease the mast down quickly aft
into its rest; then rowed her to a mooring.
Bow-stones were dropped, and they tied up astern,
and all stepped out into the wash and ebb,
then disembarked their cattle for the Archer,
and Khryséis, from the deepsea ship. Odysseus,
the great tactician, led her to the altar,
putting her in her father's hands, and said:

"Khrysês, as Agamémnon's emissary
I bring your child to you, and for Apollo
a hekatomb in the Danáans' name.
We trust in this way to appease your lord,
who sent down pain and sorrow on the Argives."

So he delivered her, and the priest received her,
the child so dear to him, in joy. Then hastening
to give the god his hekatomb . . .

2. I have since learned that the pedigreed doorknocker was actually received by the Pilgrim Society in 1923, two years before Winslow's death, but a half dozen years after he drew up his will.