



# THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE NEWS & NOTES

NO. 203 FALL 2009

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## EXCAVATIONS AT TELL ZEIDAN, SYRIA



MISTY AND LEWIS GRUBER  
BRING ANCIENT EGYPT  
TO THE WORLD:  
THE ELECTRONIC  
PUBLICATIONS  
INITIATIVE

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## NEWS & NOTES

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### COVER ILLUSTRATIONS:

top left: Amon-Re, the King of the Gods. Medinet Habu VI, *The Temple Proper, Part 2: The Re Chapel, the Royal Mortuary Complex, and Adjacent Rooms, with Miscellaneous Material from the Pylons, the Forecourts, and the First Hypostyle Hall*, by the Epigraphic Survey. Oriental Institute Publications 84 (Chicago, 1963), plate 363

right: Abbas Alizadeh (right) excavating the Operation 1 step trench at Tell Zeidan, Syria. Photo by Gil Stein

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S STUDY

The upcoming special exhibit, *Pioneers to the Past*, to be held in the Marshall and Doris Holleb Family Special Exhibits Gallery, is scheduled to open January 12, 2010. It is true that much of the ongoing work of the researchers at the Oriental Institute derives from the early reconnaissance of James Henry Breasted and his colleagues in the Near East. Where Breasted led, many followed. New surveys and excavations continue today. In this issue of *News & Notes* I offer a report on the Oriental Institute's 2008 first season of fieldwork at Tell Zeidan, Syria, by a joint Syrian-American team. The site of Zeidan provides a complete stratigraphic sequence spanning the Halaf to Late Chalcolithic 2 periods (6000–4000 BC), which offers great potential for research focused on Ubaid society and economy.

If we broaden the meaning of pioneer, others are noted in this issue of *News & Notes*. Mary J. Grishaw's contributions to the Oriental Institute are many, and her call to pioneer lies in her family's gift toward the naming of the re-installed Joseph and Mary J. Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery. This gift would encourage others to follow, and today all the galleries have been named. We sadly announce Mary's passing. Mary was a longtime member, volunteer, and Visiting Committee member, and she will be deeply missed.

Most recently, the generous support of Misty and Lewis Gruber has made it possible to scan all 125 of the older Egyptological titles published by the Oriental Institute between the 1920s and the year 2000. The books are being uploaded to the Internet as Adobe Acrobat PDF files and distributed at no cost to everyone with access to the Internet, fulfilling a large part of the Institute's Electronic Publications Initiative. As Tom Urban, Managing Editor of Publications, explains, in October 2004 the faculty instructed that all titles be published as electronic files on the Internet, which is promptly done for new titles but only as time and funding permit for 351 of our older titles. The support of the Grubers for electronic publication has allowed the Institute to accomplish a large and important part of the initiative, to share the research of the Oriental Institute with the world and, we hope, to inspire many more generations of pioneers to the past.



Misty and Lewis Gruber at the foot of the Sphinx

## IN MEMORIAM

MARY J. GRIMSHAW  
1918–2009  
by Emily Teeter

IT IS WITH GREAT SADNESS that we announce the death of Mary J. Grimshaw in June 2009. Mary was a very good friend of the Oriental Institute. She served as a Life Member on our Visiting Committee for twelve years and, in 2000, she made a pioneering gift to name the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery, an act that encouraged the naming of other galleries. She loved Egypt, and she spent several seasons on the staff of the Epigraphic Survey. For twenty years she was a volunteer, for much of that time assisting Registrar Ray Tindel. We will miss her keen intellect, friendship, and her wonderful sense of humor.



Mary and Joseph Grimshaw, early to mid-1980s

# ORIENTAL INSTITUTE MUSEUM COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

## MAGICAL BRICKS FROM ANCIENT EGYPT

BY FOY SCALF, HEAD OF RESEARCH ARCHIVES

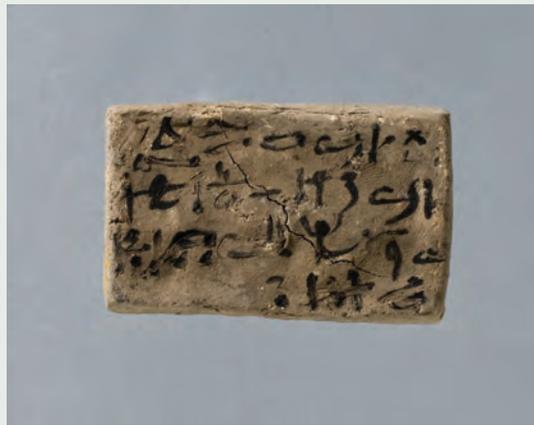
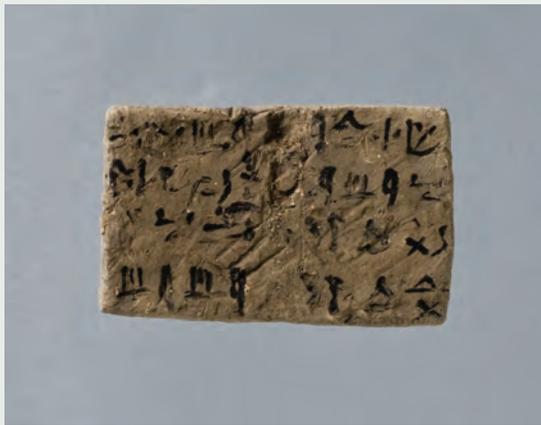
On display in the Oriental Institute Museum are two “magical bricks” from an ancient Egyptian tomb.<sup>1</sup> They are made from a finely sifted Nile clay and left unbaked, rather unlike your typical architectural sun-baked mudbrick. Magical bricks were inscribed with selections from Spell 151 of the Book of the Dead. According to the rubric, which provides the manufacturing and placement instructions, four bricks and four amulets set in the bricks were produced for each tomb. Placed into niches in the wall or on the floor of the burial chamber, magical bricks protected the deceased at the cardinal directions by warding off potentially dangerous entities. The designation “magical brick” derives from their rectangular shape, their designation as *db.t* “brick” in ancient Egyptian texts, and their apotropaic function within the tomb. There is nothing particularly “magical” in a Western sense about magical bricks, for the properties which we would consider “magical” were notions that existed within the logical cosmology of ancient Egyptian religious traditions.

OIM 6776 and OIM 6777 are two rather small magical bricks measuring  $6.5 \times 4.0 \times 1.5$  cm — quite easy to miss

with all the other beautiful objects displayed in the Joseph and Mary Grimshaw Egyptian Gallery. Members of the Egyptian Exploration Society excavated them in tomb D13 at Abydos and gave them to the Oriental Institute as part of the distribution of finds to excavation supporters. Buried in Abydos tomb D13 was the Twenty-fifth Dynasty vizier Nespaqashuty C, father of the vizier Nespamedu (Abydos tomb D57) and grandfather of the vizier Nespaqashuty D. Portions of Nespaqashuty D’s tomb (Theban Tomb 312) are also on display in the Egyptian Gallery. If Nespaqashuty C had a complete assemblage of magical bricks, the other two bricks have been lost or destroyed in antiquity. Damage to both bricks occurred at some point since the amuletic figure of OIM 6776 and the amuletic wick of OIM 6777, which left indentations and a hole respectfully, have never been discovered.

### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> A short description and published facsimiles appear in D. Randall-Maclver and A. C. Mace, *Abydos and El Amrah, 1899-1901* (London, 1902), page 96, plate 40.



### Text of OIM 6776

O’ you who comes to entangle, I will not allow you to entangle me. O’ you who comes to assault me, I will not allow you to assault me. May I entangle you. I will dispel you. I am the protection of the Osiris, vizier, Nespaqashuty. On the north, facing to the south.

OIM 6776 front and back

### Text of OIM 6777

I am the one who drags things to block the hidden ones and who repels the activities of the one who displaces those who are in torch of the necropolis. I have lit up the desert. I have confused their path. I am the protection of the Osiris, vizier, Nespakashuty. On the south, facing to the north.

OIM 6777 front and back



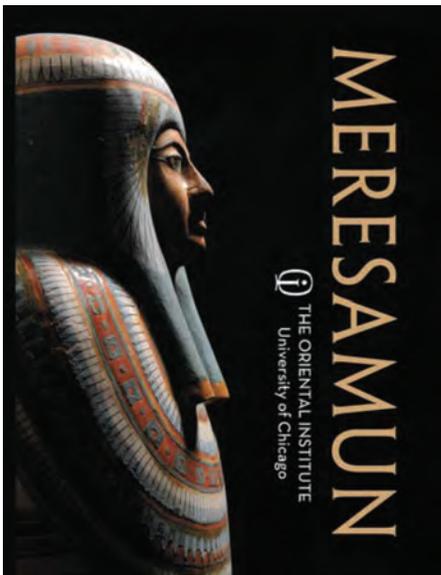
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A Nile Boat with Its Crew. Thebes, tomb of Pere (no. 139). *Ancient Egyptian Paintings 2*, by Nina Davies (Chicago, 1936), plate 56

## THE SUQ CORNER



### MAGNET

Photo: Dan Dry  
Design: Diane Hanau-Strain  
Size: approx. 2.5" × 3.0"  
Member's price: \$2.65