Preservation of Cultural Heritage in Jerusalem:
The Tiles of the Dome of the Rock

Beatrice St. Laurent

Between 1545 and 1585, Sultan Suleyman Kanuni replaced the exterior mosaic decoration of the Dome of the Rock with a new skin of tiles made on site at the Haram al-Sharif. Persian tile-makers were sent by the Sultan to Jerusalem to produce the tiles. Suleyman saw himself as the great cultural patron of his era, and the new skin of tiles proclaimed visually the Ottoman hegemony over Jerusalem, the spiritual capital of the Ottoman province of Bilad al-Sham.

The tiles required restoration and replacement throughout the following four centuries. Multiple restorations of the 18th and 19th centuries are recorded in the notebooks known as the qadi sijillat of Jerusalem and kadi sicilleri of Istanbul. During the 20th century, tiles were replaced as needed, although not always with the requisite concern for maintaining the programmatic integrity of the tile revetment. These additions were a response to the physical necessity for repair, rather than a studied approach to restoring the tiles.
During the British Mandate Period (1918–1948), a major attempt to restore the tiles was proposed. Ernest Tatham Richmond directed a study of the condition of the Dome of the Rock in 1918, which was published in 1924 as *THE DOME OF THE ROCK: A Description of its Structure and Decoration*. Most of the volume is dedicated to an analysis of the tile decoration and a proposed restoration program for the tiles. In addition, the British brought Armenian tile makers from Damascus and Kutahya, Turkey to Jerusalem—the Ohanessian, Balian, and Karakashian families. They set up a tile workshop on the Haram al-Sharif and made test tiles. The earthquake of 1927 put an end to that British restoration plan.

In the mid-1940s, British authorities and the Supreme Muslim Council commissioned a report on the condition of the Dome of the Rock. A. H. S. (Peter) Megaw came to Jerusalem in 1946 to survey the building and produced a report entitled *QUBBAT AS SAKHRA (THE DOME OF THE ROCK): An account of the building and its condition with recommendations for its conservation, submitted to the Supreme Moslem Council*. He emphasized the need to repair the dome and to restore the tiles—employing the extant old tiles and utilizing replacement tiles where necessary. The report included an extensive analysis of the tiles, their types, and a revision of Richmond’s original analysis. He also requested tile samples from the Armenian ceramists of Jerusalem—at that time, the Karakashians and the Brians. The samples were submitted to strenuous testing and proved to be adequate for the task. The test results are recorded in Megaw’s personal archive in the United Kingdom. Once again a British restoration project was stopped, this time due to the events of 1948.

In the early 1950s under Jordanian rule, the restoration project was revived. Megaw updated his original report in 1952. The Scientific Committee appointed by the Jordanians initially emphasized Megaw’s recommendations. This is documented in the report by Abdul Fattah Bey Hilmi (who was part of the appointed Scientific Committee) and in the lengthy discussion by the then mayor of Jerusalem (and member of the Scientific Committee) Aref al Aref in his book, *A History of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque* (Jerusalem, 1955). Megaw also proposed the manufacture of new tiles in Jerusalem by the two existing Armenian factories.

In 1955, there was a change of plan and this will be explored in detail in my forthcoming book on the history of the 20th century restorations of the Dome of the Rock. The new plan—implemented by an Egyptian Scientific Committee—removed all the old tiles and replaced them with new ones manufactured in Istanbul in 1960–1961. This approach to restoration was not the soundest in terms of conservation and, unfortunately, effectively destroyed the historic context of the building.

John Carswell indicated in the 1966 book *Ottoman Jerusalem* that the “entire tile work… was lying in heaps around the Haram.” Some tiles ended up in collections in Jerusalem, for example, in the École Biblique, and a substantial group was in the American Colony Hotel but subsequently stolen from there. Other tiles also appeared for sale at major auction houses in Europe. Some are in museum collections—such as the Sackler Museum of Harvard University, the new Jordan Museum, and the American University of Beirut.

In the late 1960s or early 1970s, the tiles that remained on site were moved to the Islamic Museum at the Haram al-Sharif. By 2007, all the old tiles had been moved to the outside courtyards (among other places) of the Museum and were stored in poor conditions, exposed to the elements, with pigeons nesting on them, and many were broken. It seems that the tiles were moved when the museum building was under restoration.
I have been involved in studying this material for some time and two fellowships funded through ACOR (2008–2009 CAORC and 2009–2010 NEH) allowed me to return to Jerusalem to research the 20th century restorations and to initiate a project to document and preserve the tiles. I worked with the Director of the Museum for several months in the cold and dimly lit museum which houses the tiles of the Surat Ya Sin. I photographed them as an exemplar for a future, larger project dealing with all the tiles. All pieces have since been returned to crates, and the project cannot continue until an adequate space is designated for the storage and conservation of the 10,000 or so tiles. In May 2009, I was shown another storage area for ceramics in the north perimeter riwaq (arcade). In this same space were also found a large tractor, tires, and many different tools and barrels. The ceramics and tiles were in plastic bags and very poorly stored. These objects all need to be removed from this space to stop the process of their further deterioration.

I was excited to discover the location of the kilns on a plan of the Najara vaults—the old Crusader building demolished in 1943—in the British Mandate Archives of the Rockefeller/ Palestine Museum of Antiquities. I also received permission to examine the material which was removed from the Haram during the construction of the Marwani Masjid. In the sifted material, tile wasters (failed tiles) dating from the 16th through the 19th century were found and they prove definitively that the tiles were made on site during those centuries.

Many concerned individuals are currently working on a proposal to establish a conservation center for the tiles in the Golden Gate so as to ensure the survival of part of the early Islamic cultural heritage of Jerusalem.

Beatrice St. Laurent sorting tile wasters and fragments recovered from sifting the Marwani Masjid construction dump, June 2009

Hisban Visitor Center Charrette 2009

Recently an important step was taken toward the goal of establishing a Cultural Heritage Education and Visitor Center in the village of Hisban. During June 2009, an on-site charrette (design workshop) was undertaken by Professor Martin Smith of the Division of Architecture at Andrews University with his architecture students. The charrette allowed them to learn about current plans for the development of tourism facilities in the greater Amman and Madaba regions and to visit some centers. They also became well acquainted with the Hisban building site, and their work produced a preliminary design to serve as the basis for input from stakeholders and potential donors. Øystein LaBianca, Senior Director of the Hisban Archaeological Project, instigated the workshop and many individuals in Jordan participated.

We are very pleased that approval was received in fall 2009 from the Jordanian government to establish the Hisban Cultural Association as a non-governmental organization and it will coordinate local input for the Visitor Center. Members include representatives of various large families in Hisban, including the Nabulsi family, which has committed a portion of family lands in the old village for the center; employees of the local municipality; a Department of Antiquities representative; several Jordanian academics with ties to Hisban; and a senator who represents the people of Hisban. Andrews University, the excavators of Tall Hisban, has been asked to take the lead in working with the association.

The initial phase includes basic tourist services, facilities for community education, and activities to generate revenue. There will be a main gateway to the site, a welcome section with public services, areas for visualization technology and cultural displays, and a clear path to the archaeological site. For community education, there will be classrooms for learning English and training in information technology. There will also be a small café and some market kiosks. The workshop defined steps to ensure that new development will respect and conserve existing structures and historical patterns of use.

Jospeh S. LaBianca and Martin Smith; Andrews University
Maria Elena Ronza, Andrews University Agent in Jordan
Summer Intensive Arabic Language Institutes at ACOR (2006–2009)

In the summer of 2009, ACOR hosted for the fourth time an intensive Arabic language program in affiliation with the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) and the Critical Languages Scholarship (CLS) Program. ACOR has organized this Arabic program annually since 2006. Christopher Tuttle, ACOR Associate Director, has administered the Arabic program in Jordan since its inception. He has often remarked that every year the students’ feedback is used to make improvements to fine tune the program. The CLS Arabic language program in Jordan has been strengthened each year. CLS Jordan alumna Candace Lukasik conveys the enthusiasm and appreciation of the students in the following quote:

The 2009 Jordan CLS program was an amazing experience. My Arabic proficiency went from a Beginner’s level 2 to an Intermediate level 6! The program, for me, was a definite success! I know I’ll continue my Arabic language acquisition and other Middle Eastern studies to the fullest. But above all, I want to thank you for being so amazing to me and the rest of our group. It honestly was one of the best summers and Jordan is, in my opinion, one of the best countries in the Middle East. I fell in love with Jordan. I hope one day to visit Jordan again, hopefully not too far in the future.

The Critical Languages Scholarship program is funded by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by CAORC, which is responsible for the selection of students. Every year hundreds of American university students study critical languages abroad, taking part in fully-funded summer intensive language institutes with extensive cultural enrichment activities. In 2009, the CLS program offered eleven critical foreign languages: Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla/Bengali, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, and Urdu. In addition to Jordan, Arabic was also offered through CAORC-affiliated institutions in Egypt and Tunisia in 2009.

ACOR hosted the first CLS Intensive Arabic program in 2006 for 30 beginning and intermediate students. In 2006 and 2007, the Arabic instruction was provided by the Language Centre of the University of Jordan. Since 2008, ACOR has been affiliated with the Qasid Institute in Amman to deliver language instruction in their facilities. The students have 20 hours of classroom instruction each week, with the goal of teaching them one year’s worth of Arabic in eight weeks. It is an intensive program for serious students.

Beginning and intermediate students are taught with the *Al Kitab* book series. The advanced students divide their day between studies of media, in order to give them awareness of current events and mastery of Modern Standard Arabic, and studies of literature, which challenge them to read and appreciate poetry, the Holy Qur’an, and other classical Arabic texts.

ACOR supplements the advanced student program with “directed activities” intended to be in parallel with the media portion of their class work. These students are divided into small groups that take part in Arabic language meetings or interviews with community leaders in Jordan. For example, one week in Media class they read and discussed economic issues and then the students met outside of class with microfinance institutions in Jordan, with government authorities concerned with industry, and with business leaders. Another week the topic was religion and the students called upon scholars of Islamic law, members of the Greek Orthodox clergy, and organizers of inter-faith dialogue. Following such directed activities, each student wrote a short essay which was evaluated by the Media instructor at Qasid.

Each summer ACOR has engaged a team of professional tutors who have been available to all students for one-on-one instruction in the afternoons and evenings after class. Students were able to have two hours of tutoring a day. Since their class time was devoted to modern standard Arabic (MSA), many students used their tutoring time to learn the local dialect (‘ammiya). While not all students took full advantage of the additional instruction, those who did made phenomenal progress in the language.

Intensive study of Arabic has been complemented by a well-conceived program of cultural enrichment intended to give the students a sense of the cultural, historical, and socio-political environment of Jordan and its place in the Middle East. Over the course of each summer, the students take part in organized tours with bilingual guides around Jordan. Besides touring the major sites in Amman, they visit Madaba, the Dead Sea, and the ruins of Jerash and Umm Qais. They also go on an extended five-day trip to southern Jordan, which includes Wadi Dana, Shawbak Castle, Petra, and Wadi Rum. Trips to the south are enhanced for everyone by the presence of Chris Tuttle, who has worked in Petra for many years. Likewise the students are fortunate to be led by the very knowledgeable guide Nasser Abu Al Khair, who has accompanied the students on all excursions from the outset. These trips have provided a taste of what is available in Jordan and a hint of the historical complexity that gave rise to the modern kingdom of Jordan.

The students have also independently undertaken trips in small groups to explore Amman and other nearby destinations, such as the Early Islamic ‘desert castles,’ the ruins at Iraq al Amir, the Ottoman city of Salt, and Wadi Mujib. Thus, while the CLS Arabic program in Jordan is rigorous and demanding, it has many fun aspects too. It is not surprising that the end of program student assessments rate very highly the cultural programs, the guide Nasser, and especially, the time in Petra with Chris Tuttle.

A great deal of the credit for the success of the CLS Arabic program in Jordan is due to the work of the Program Coordinators. They have been young people who are involved full time in managing the infinite program details as well as the students’ concerns. Elena Corbett, who is now an Assistant
2008 Participants (beginning & intermediate): Daniel Balson, David Berger, Oriana Bleecher, Rachel Brandenberg, Sarah Chandlee, Paul Charlton, Emily Dawes, Ranya Elzein, Samuel Gentle, Emily Hägemeister, Courtney Hanna, Ashley Harris, Ann Hawley, Jared Hopkins, Zachary Jones, Farida Khatchadourian, Stephanie Kim, Stacey Knepp, Stephen Lassiter, Michelle Mays, Valarie Montes, Paul Mumm, Kelly Ohlde Pfundheller, Meghan Olson, Jeremy Packard, James Steppenbacker, Deborah Swerdlow, Judith van Raalten, Daniel Zoughbie. Program Coordinator Anne Peters. Above and below, visiting Wadi Rum

2008 Participants (advanced): Elizabeth Baer, Christopher Blauvelt, Brittany Burns, Doris Carrion, Maryah Converse, Marissa Cramer, Yvonne Elosiebo, Galaal Elsamadicy, Amanda Guidry, Reema Hijazi, Rebecca Hopkins, Amy Kapit, Emma LeBlanc, Tyler Logan, Kerith Miller, Molly Moran, Hannah Pritchett, Christopher Shad, Aamir Sheikh, Samuel Shepson, Megan Sobel, Anne Willborn. Program Coordinator Eshrak Al Soub
Professor of History at Penn State University Behrend, was the first person to be the Program Coordinator at ACOR. The job was complex for the first year of the program in 2006 and she set the gold standard for the position. Anne Peters, now an Assistant Professor of Government at Wesleyan University, followed as Program Coordinator and fulfilled that role in both 2007 and 2008. In 2008, fifteen advanced level students joined the program and were housed in hotel apartments near ACOR. Eshrak Al Soub, an ‘ammiya teacher for the CLS program in 2006 and 2007, joined the team as Program Coordinator for the Advanced Students for 2008 and 2009. Stephen Lassiter, an alumnus of the CLS program, was recruited in 2009 to be Program Coordinator for the beginning and intermediate students.

At present the CLS Arabic program in Jordan has funding to continue through 2012. We are especially pleased to note the number of young people who first came to Jordan as beginning or intermediate level students with this program and who are now returning as recipients of either ACOR-CAORC Fellowships or Fulbright awards, or with other programs, as well as on their own. Truly this is a measure of the success of this initiative which has sparked a love of Arabic and love of Arab culture in so many young Americans.

Sarah Harpending
ACOR Project Consultant
In Memoriam

John H. Marks (1923–2009)

ACOR learned in April that John Marks, one of its founding fathers, died in Princeton, long the home for him and his wife Aminta (m. 1951). He was a faculty member at Princeton University from 1954 until his retirement in 1993 and taught in the fields of Near Eastern studies. Two sabbatical years (1959-60 and 1966-67) were spent at ASOR’s American School in East Jerusalem. During the second period, he was the Annual Director and when the June War broke out, the Marks family evacuated to Amman.

In May 1968, the ASOR Board appointed him the head of the Amman Committee to establish ACOR. He was one of the three initial incorporators who signed the May 18, 1970 Certificate of Incorporation in the State of Delaware for ACOR. His fellow signers were George M. Landes (Union Theological Seminary, New York) and Roger S. Boraas (Upsala College, East Orange, New Jersey). All of Professor Marks’ achievements and endeavors for ACOR, including his role as the first ACOR Board President (1970-78), we honor here. He also served as a trustee of ASOR from 1971 to 1986.

John Marks was from Denver and returned there after serving in the European theater during World War II to complete his undergraduate degree in classics at the University of Denver in 1946. His graduate work was in theology and included studies at the Princeton Theological Seminary (B.D. 1949) and the University of Basel (Th.D. in Old Testament 1953). His academic career at Princeton concentrated on ancient Near Eastern history, and he also taught West Semitic languages, focusing in his later years on Syriac. He served as departmental chairman of Near Eastern Studies from 1977/78-1979/80 and 1983/84. He is remembered as a dedicated teacher to both undergraduates and graduate students, and his courses “The Stone Age to Alexander” and “Alexander to Muhammad” were appreciated by legions of students. One of his scholarly publications is associated with those courses, namely Visions of One World: Legacy of Alexander (1985).

He is survived by his wife, Aminta, his sons Peter and John (“Pom”), and daughter Fleur, and six grandchildren. He and his widow are recalled with great fondness by Mohammed Adawi, ACOR’s chef since 1968, who remembers their generosity and kindness. He worked for them in Jerusalem and they helped him and his wife at a time of great need when their twin sons, Ahmed and Mahmoud, were born in spring 1967. ACOR is just one of the many legacies left by John Marks.

Prescott H. Williams, Jr. (1924–2009)

Prescott Williams was a dedicated ACOR board member and long time supporter of the center. He was professor of Old Testament Languages and Archaeology at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and we are sad to report his death in June in Austin. He was on the seminary faculty from 1959 until his retirement in 1991 and served as dean and acting president, as well as the seminary president (1972-76). At the American School in Jerusalem in 1964-65, he was the acting annual professor and at that time advised the Jordanian Department of Antiquities. He was also involved in the excavations at Shechem in 1962, 1964, and 1966. He was a member of ASOR’s Jerusalem Committee from 1966-1973 and chaired it through 1969.

Pres Williams became a trustee of ACOR in 1977 and served until 1984. During his 1983-84 sabbatical, he was the annual professor at ACOR for six months and also chaired an ACOR Alumni Fundraising effort to furnish hostel spaces in anticipation of the new building under construction near the University of Jordan.

His academic degrees were from Wheaton College (B.A.), Princeton Theological Seminary (M. Div), and Johns Hopkins University where he completed his Ph.D. in ancient Near Eastern languages, history, and archaeology. His scholarship included studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls. The testimonials of his students show that he was a guiding presence in their lives and a caring pastor. He is survived by his wife Jane and sons Scott and Andy and daughter Peggie, as well as seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild. ACOR Trustee emerita Nancy Lapp writes that “Pres will be remembered by many ACOR friends for his wisdom, continual willingness to help, and especially for his ‘dry’ sense of humor.”

Barbara A. Porter
Standing, from left: Megan Perry, Nerina Rustomji, Cari Jo Clark, Robert Darby, Stephanie Brown, Jill Goldenziel
Seated, from left: Bethany Walker and Beatrice St. Laurent

Standing, from left: Denise Schmandt-Besserat, Isaiah Moose (Groot Fellow), Øystein LaBianca, Robert Darby, Stephanie Brown.
Seated: Nerina Rustomji, Jill Goldenziel, Gail Buttorff

June 2009 visit by Øystein LaBianca, Chair of ACOR Fellowship Committee.
From left standing: Denise Schmandt-Besserat, Isaiah Moose (Groot Fellow), Øystein LaBianca, Robert Darby, Stephanie Brown.
Seated: Nerina Rustomji, Jill Goldenziel, Gail Buttorff
National Endowment for the Humanities Fellows:

Bethany Walker, Missouri State University; Jordan in the Late Middle Ages: Transformation of the Mamluk Frontier (2008–2009)

Beatrice St. Laurent, Bridgewater State College; The Dome of the Rock: Restoration, Historic Tiles, their Documentation and Ties with the Jordan Museum (2009–2010)

ACOR-CAORC Post-Doctoral Fellows:

Aaron Brody, Pacific School of Religion; Transjordanian Commerce with Northern Judah in the Iron II Period: Archaeological Indicators from Tell en-Nasbeh

Cari Jo Clark, University of Minnesota; Trauma in Jordan: A Project to Examine Services for Victims of Violence and to Collaboratively Design Research to Explore Its Effects on Health

Nerina Rustomji, St. John’s University; The Politics of Female Companions (Houris) of Islamic Paradise in Contemporary American, European, and Arab Discourse

Denise Schmandt-Besserat, University of Texas; Anthropomorphic Clay Figurines at ‘Ain Ghazal: The Symbolic Significance

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation East-Central European Research Fellow:

Zdravko Dimitrov, Bulgarian Academy of Science; Analysis of the Development of the Architectural Decoration in the Eastern Province of the Roman Empire—A Comparison between Roman Thrace and Jordan

The Samuel H. Kress Foundation Fellow in the Art and Archaeology of Jordan:

Robert Darby, University of Missouri, Columbia; Bathing on the Edge of Empire: A Regional Study of the Late Roman Military Baths in Provincia Arabia

ACOR-CAORC Fellows:

Alivia Allison, University of Missouri, Kansas City; Archaeological and Geological Evidence of Earthquakes in the Islamic Periods (Umayyad to Ottoman) in Southern Jordan

Stephanie Brown, North Carolina State University; Reevaluation of Iron Age Fortified Sites of the Eastern Kerak Plateau

Gail Jeanne Buttorff, University of Iowa; Legitimacy and Participation: Election Boycotts in Jordan

Jill Goldenziel, Harvard University; Refugees, Security, and the Politics of International Law

Sarah Tobin, Boston University; Islamic Economics in Jordan: An Examination of Islamic Consumption

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General Donations to the Annual Fund were made by: Donna H. Antoon; Laird H. Barber; Elizabeth Bartman and Andrew P. Solomon; Julia R. Bradford; Thomas R. Crane, Jr. and Anne Goheen Crane in honor of Barbara A. Porter’s Birthday; Laurel and Ralph Doermann; Peter and Kathy Dormian; Susan B. Downey; Mary Emerson in honor of Barbara A. Porter; Jerry G. Fischer; Paul Fitzpatrick; Elizabeth Gajary-Coots; Philip Gould; John Hale; Gemma and Lewis Morris Hall; Timothy P. Harrison; Dale K. Haworth and Karen E. Beall; Ray Anita and Walter L. Hemphill; Joseph A. Greene; Bernard J. Grisez; The Joukowsky Family Foundation; Nancy S. and Omar Kader; Dale and Gene Kenney; Eleanor R. Kitto; Herbert Krosney; Joachim Laes; Peter and Anna Levin; Guy McClure; David W. McCready; George and Eathel Mendenhall; Eugene H. and Janet L. Merril; Robert Mittelstaedt; Constance Murray-Goble; Alice Stover Pickering and Thomas R. Pickering; Margaret and Lewis Reade; Jared Renaud; Leila Sharaf, Cynthia Shartzer; Landry T. Slade and Gretchen Van Meter; John and Dorothy Sprague; Jean M. Stewart; Sally B. Strazdins; Nancy K. Webster; Theresa and Thomas Whestine

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Publication Fund for Petra Papyri and other Publications: Donna Antoon; George Justice in memory of Gladys Voci Justice; Rochelle Snee

ACOR Annual Appeal Results

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The 2008 figures reflect a $20,000 donation to the Annual Fund from the The Joukowsky Family Foundation (JFF) as well as a $50,000 JFF challenge grant which was matched 2:1 by members of the ACOR Board of Trustees. In 2008, there was also another individual major gift of $50,000, which was applied to the Publication Fund. When comparing the two years, it is remarkable that outside of the major gifts noted for 2008, the level of giving in 2009 was even stronger for the cumulative individual donations. Given last year’s economic downturn, we feel that friends of ACOR have remained loyal and generous, and we are very grateful because these gifts help us fulfill our mission in Jordan.
Arabic for Archaeologists is a pocket-sized booklet for work in the field. It contains essential words and phrases, each presented in English, Arabic transliteration, and Arabic. Prepared by Robert Schick as a revised version of Paul Lapp’s 1963 original, Arabic for the Beginner in Archaeology; ACOR hopes that a new generation of students will enjoy using it, as has been the case for many in the past. Paperback, 36 pages. Price 2JD/$3 when purchased at ACOR in Amman; $5 for one copy to be mailed worldwide.

For the list of all ACOR publications and to purchase books see the ACOR Amman website www.acorjordan.org

For fellowship information see the ACOR Boston website www.bu.edu/acor

ACOR e-mail address in Boston: acor@bu.edu

ACOR e-mail addresses in Amman: acor@acorjordan.org reservations@acorjordan.org library@acorjordan.org

April 2009 Board Meeting

The ACOR Board of Trustees held their annual spring meeting in Providence, Rhode Island on 18 April 2009 at the Nightingale-Brown House. Three new board members were elected to the Class of 2012: Susan E. Alcock (Brown University), Megan A. Perry (East Carolina University), and Bethany J. Walker (Missouri State University). The Class of 2009 board members were re-elected for three-year-terms except for Nancy Coimman who has chosen to step down but will still assist the Fellowship Committee for one year. Board members were introduced to faculty of the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World and listened to presentations about their archaeological projects.

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