

Lord Amherst's Demotic Papyri and Lady Amherst's Mummy

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Few maledictions have been more carefully investigated than the “mummy’s curse” associated with Howard Carter’s discovery of Tutankhamun’s tomb in 1922. One might have thought that nothing more remained to be learned about this matter, but that is not the case. Not long ago, it was suggested that the person most responsible for Carter’s becoming an Egyptologist was struck by his own mummy’s curse in the early years of the twentieth century.

Carter’s first encounter with a mummy was, it now appears, in the home of William Tyssen-Amherst, better known as Lord Amherst of Hackney. The Amherst estate was located not far from where Carter grew up, and the Amhersts took him under their wing when he was a teenager.² Amherst owned a wrapped human mummy of a Twenty-First Dynasty woman, probably a priestess of Amun.³ Such a woman may well have known a thing or two about magical spells!

¹ I am deeply indebted to the archivists, curators, etc. who contributed so generously to this research: William Voelke and David Wright of The Morgan Library and Museum; John A. Larson and Anne S. Flannery of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago; Jaromir Malek and Elizabeth Fleming of the Griffith Institute, Oxford University; Colin Harris of the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University; Marsha Hill of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Friedrich Becker-Bestau, Robin Meador-Woodruff and Mary Catherine Moeller of the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Karla M. Vandersypen of the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan. The documents that they supplied, some of them almost three decades ago and some of them recently, are cited below with their kind permission. I completed this article on 19 Elul, the *yortsayt* of my mother, Pearl Steiner פֿרײַד. She and my father, Fred Steiner פֿרײַד, did everything in their power to help me become a scholar.

² See at n. 44 below.

³ http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=157985&partId=1.

Upon Amherst's death in 1909, his eldest daughter, Mary Rothes Margaret Cecil (who had succeeded as Baroness Amherst after her father's death) donated the mummy to the British Museum (no. EA48971), where it remains on display (G63/dc8).⁴ An account published online a decade ago by a great-great-granddaughter of Lord Amherst seems to connect this mummy, which came to be known as "Lady Amherst's mummy," to the troubles that afflicted her family at the beginning of the 20th century:

I also knew that there had been a connection with Howard Carter, of Tutankhamun fame, and that somehow Egypt and our own personal 'the Curse of the Mummy' had featured in the family's dramatic fall from wealth in the early years of the twentieth century. The only other fact I was aware of was that a mummy referred to as Lady Amherst's mummy was once part of the Egyptian collection at Didlington Hall, but now lay in the British Museum. One of my earliest memories is being taken to see it. My mother and I walked along miles of echoing corridors, past endless wooden display cases. I was filled with a tingling curiosity as I half-believed I was being taken to see my grandmother.[⁵] After all, my mother was Lady Amherst....⁶

In this article, I shall endeavor to "flesh out" some of the things mentioned in this amusing reminiscence—not Lady Amherst's dessicated mummy itself but the misfortunes that some might be inclined to attribute to it. As we shall see, these misfortunes are not insignificant for students of one of Lord Amherst's Demotic papyri, viz., the Aramaic text in Demotic script.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The American reader should keep in mind that the term *mummy* in British English is the equivalent of American *mommy* as well as *mummy*. Thus, the grandmother of Lady Amherst's daughter could legitimately be called "Lady Amherst's mummy" in the sense of "Lady Amherst's mommy."

⁶ Angela Reid, "The Amhersts of Didlington Hall," 2008 (<http://www.amhersts-of-didlington.com/taodh2.html>).

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The Amherst Demotic papyri are part of the collection of Greek and Egyptian papyri acquired by William Tyssen-Amherst from the 1860's (when he purchased the collections of the Revd. R. T. Lieder and Dr. John Lee) until his death in 1909. The papyri were housed, with his other collections, in Didlington Hall, Amherst's stately Norfolk mansion, where two of the entertaining rooms occupying the south front were called the "Old Museum" and the "New Museum."⁷ Amherst selected pieces from his collections and put them on display there for tourists during part of the year.⁸ A photograph of Amherst's mummy, displayed in the "Old Museum," is available on the Internet.⁹

A number of scholars assisted Amherst with his collection of papyri and other antiquities. The first of them was Percy E. Newberry, a friend who was later to become Professor of Egyptology at the University of Liverpool. The relationship between the two men goes back at least as far as Oct. 10, 1890, when Amherst sent Newberry a telegram inviting him to Didlington followed by a second telegram providing further details.¹⁰ Amherst had plans for Newberry, plans that may have been discussed already at that meeting. The nature of the plans can be deduced from the later correspondence between the two men. Amherst wanted Newberry to (a) help him acquire additional papyri (and other antiquities) in Egypt for his collection, and (b) publish a catalogue of the Egyptian papyri in his collection.

⁷ Extracts from the Particulars of Sale, Didlington Estate, 1910 (<http://freeservers.com/Didlington/DidlingtonEstate.htm>).

⁸ William Tyssen-Amherst to Percy E. Newberry, Nov. 29, 1900, Griffith Institute, Oxford University."

⁹ See Reid, "The Amhersts."

¹⁰ William Tyssen-Amherst to Percy E. Newberry, Oct. 10, 1890, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

A letter from Newberry to Amherst dated Oct. 30, 1894 shows Newberry hard at work in both of these areas.¹¹ From it, we learn that Newberry had purchased 18 papyri for Amherst's collection in September and that he had left them with Walter E. Crum and "a man in the MS. department," who had promised to provide notes on them. We learn further that Newberry had prepared a list of 28 plates (21 Autotype and 7 Photolithograph) for a catalogue of the Egyptian papyri, that 6 of them had already been printed off by the Autotype Company in London, and that 4 more were being processed there. Attached to the letter were the list of plates plus a tentative list of papyri in the collection, comprising 41 hieroglyphic and hieratic, 2 Greek, 8 Coptic, 8 Arabic, and 2 Demotic papyri.¹²

Already at this stage, Newberry noted a problem—a problem that has continued to plague us for 120 years. He writes that the 2 Demotic papyri "will have to be catalogued merely, as I know of no English scholar who can read them."¹³ In other words, Newberry's plan was to give no information about them beyond a catalogue number and a brief physical description. That is, in fact, precisely what we find for the first two Demotic papyri encountered in Newberry's printed catalogue, viz., nos. 43 and 44.¹⁴

¹¹ Percy E. Newberry to William Tyssen-Amherst, Oct. 30, 1894, MS. Eng. misc. c. 740, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Percy E. Newberry, *The Amherst Papyri, Being an Account of the Egyptian Papyri in the Collection of the Right Hon. Lord Amherst of Hackney, F.S.A., at Didlington Hall, Norfolk* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1899), 54. There is a third Demotic papyrus on the same page, no. 45, which was presumably acquired too late to be included in Newberry's tentative list of papyri. It may have been one of the 18 papyri that were purchased in Sept. 1894. Alternatively, it may have been one of the papyri that Amherst was shown in the market at Akhmim in January of 1895: "Another man had a box full of papyri nearly all in pieces apparently legal documents in greek or coptic and some ? demotic...."; William Tyssen-Amherst to Percy E. Newberry, January 20, 1895, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

On August 27, 1896, after the first proofs of the catalogue had appeared, Amherst wrote to Newberry, asking him to come to Didlington with the papyrologist Bernard P. Grenfell any day after September 7 “so as to unroll the New Papyri.”¹⁵ These “New Papyri” had presumably been acquired recently, in 1896. Their identity is reasonably clear from the continuation of the letter:

I quite agree with you that it would be a pity to delay publishing the account you have written of those I already possessed till the others are unrolled and decyphered, and I hope you will be able to bring the proofs with you to Didlington as I should like to see them before the sheets are finally printed off.

We could always state in a note that an account of the Demotic Papyri will follow, and this could be made uniform so as to be bound up with the other as a continuation.¹⁶

Further evidence for the identity of the “New Papyri” comes from Spiegelberg’s *Nachlass*, which includes “four photocopies of Greek transcriptions and commentary notes, initialed B. P. G. (probably Bernard P. Grenfell) and dated Sept. 12th 1896.”¹⁷ Comparison of this date with the one given by Amherst in inviting Newberry and Grenfell (any day after September 7, 1896) gives the impression that the latter did more with the “New Papyri” at Didlington than just unroll them. This impression is confirmed by comparison of the Greek transcriptions and English translations in the four photocopied pages with Grenfell’s later publication of the Greek texts borne by the “New Papyri.” It turns out that the pages contain

¹⁵ William Tyssen-Amherst to Percy E. Newberry, August 27, 1896, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ John A. Larson, “Papers of Wilhelm Spiegelberg [Collected by William F. Edgerton],” [July 1989], Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

preliminary drafts of the transcriptions and translations of Grenfell & Hunt Cat. nos. 31 and 52.¹⁸

Newberry did add a page to his catalogue containing a brief description of the “New Papyri” with a reference to Grenfell’s aforementioned translations, which were still unpublished at the time:

The following twenty papyri (Nos. XLVI-LXVI) were found together in an earthen jar near Thebes. One of them is written in Greek uncials and three others in Demotic with Greek docketts: the remaining sixteen are written in Demotic only. The Demotic texts have not yet been examined, but they will form the subject of another volume. The Greek texts have been translated by Mr. B. P. Grenfell, from which translations the general character of the documents may be gathered. They were no doubt preserved as the title deeds of the property to which they refer.¹⁹

Two of the “New Papyri” described briefly on this added page, Newberry Cat. nos. 46 and 49, are the same as Grenfell & Hunt Cat. nos. 52 and 31.

It is possible that, even at this stage, many of the papyri were not yet unrolled, for, after describing nos. 46-52 individually, Newberry lumps all of the remainder together under the following rubric:

Papyri Nos. LIII-LXV. Fourteen papyri of various sizes written in demotic, found together with Papyri Nos. XLVI-LII, and probably relating to the same subject. Ptolemaic.²⁰

¹⁸ Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, *The Amherst Papyri, Being an Account of the Greek Papyri in the Collection of the Right Hon. Lord Amherst of Hackney, F.S.A., at Didlington Hall, Norfolk* (2 vols.; London: Bernard Quaritch, 1900-1901), 2:34-36, 62-63.

¹⁹ Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, 55.

²⁰ Ibid. Another possibility is that the word “papyri” here refers to nondescript fragments; see at n. 185 below.

It is evident that this page was not prepared with much care, for it is full of contradictions. At the beginning of the page, we are told that the “New Papyri,” found in the jar near Thebes, were numbered 46-66 at Didlington, but according to the rest of the page, the numbering was 46-65. The phrase “twenty papyri (Nos. XLVI-LXVI)”²¹ exhibits a second contradiction. If the papyri were really numbered 46-66, there would be twenty-one of them, not twenty. The phrase “Papyri Nos. LIII-LXV. Fourteen papyri”²² exhibits a third contradiction. If the papyri in that group were really numbered 53-65, there would be thirteen of them, not fourteen. We are left wondering whether there were twenty-one “New Papyri” numbered 46-66 or twenty “New Papyri” numbered 46-65.

Fortunately, we have another, more reliable account. It is written by Grenfell, the scholar who actually unrolled the “New Papyri.” In describing the only monolingual Greek text (Grenfell & Hunt Cat. no. 31 = Newberry Cat. no. 49) among the “New Papyri,” he writes: “The papyrus, which is in an excellent state of preservation, was found in a pot together with twenty demotic texts (cf. p. 55 of Mr. Newberry’s edition of Lord Amherst’s Egyptian papyri; 31 = his xlix.”²³ According to this statement, the pot/jar found at Thebes contained twenty-one “New Papyri” in all, twenty Demotic (three of them with Greek dockets) plus one (entirely in) Greek. The twenty Demotic papyri were in addition to the three Demotic papyri acquired previously by Amherst.²⁴

At first glance, the Aramaic text in Demotic script, which has the label “LXIII” pasted on it today, might seem to have been among this group; however, despite its unusual length, it is virtually invisible in this catalogue. Indeed, as we shall see in the sequel to this article, Herbert Thompson would later come to the conclusion that the Aramaic text in Demotic script (though

²¹ See at n. 19 above.

²² See n. 20 above.

²³ Grenfell and Hunt, *Amherst Papyri*, 2:35.

²⁴ As noted above, the first three Demotic papyri to be acquired appear on p. 54 of Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, while the ones acquired later appear on p. 55.

photographed already in 1901) never had a Newberry Catalogue number! As for the number 63, it will become clear below that it was simply an educated guess made by Theodore C. Petersen in 1947, when the papyri finally reached the Morgan Library.

The chaotic state of this section of the Newberry Catalogue cannot be viewed in isolation. Newberry's letter of Oct. 30, 1894 informs Amherst that from the attached list of his papyri "you will see that there are no less than 71 documents in your collection";²⁵ however, the list itself includes only 61 documents.²⁶ The state of the collection itself appears to have been no less chaotic, if we may judge from a description written 28 years later:

Many of the pieces have no distinguishing number, while those with a number cannot be relied upon. For instance, there are three with 36, and a mass of small frags. marked 35 (which has been returned)^[27] evidently belong to 34....²⁸

One reason for this chaos is probably the remarkable rate at which the collection grew. One gets the impression that Amherst acquired papyri faster than he could keep track of them. On Oct. 15, 1899, he wrote to Newberry:

I do not think that we need to mention the exact dates of the very recent purchases and of course since the date when you first began the book the total number of Papyri is much increased although I have no more Egyptian in Hieroglyphic, Hieratic or Demotic. With

²⁵ Percy E. Newberry to William Tyssen-Amherst, Oct. 30, 1894, MS. Eng. misc. c. 740, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University.

²⁶ See at n. 12 above.

²⁷ This parenthetical remark presumably refers to the shipping of Newberry Cat. no. 35 to the Morgan in 1913; see at nn. 102-104 below and Percy E. Newberry to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 8, 1913, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

²⁸ Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, December 5, 1929, The Morgan Library and Museum.

the classical and Biblical fragments I must have 200 different papyri now.²⁹

In other words, during the five years since Newberry's preparation of a tentative list of papyri in the collection, the number of papyri had increased from 61 to 200, but none of the 139 newly acquired papyri was "Egyptian in Hieroglyphic, Hieratic or Demotic." This statement itself would seem to show that Amherst had lost track of his collection, since the "New Papyri," acquired around the time that the first proofs of the catalogue appeared, did include Demotic papyri.³⁰

It is important to keep in mind that the descriptions of the Demotic papyri in Newberry's catalogue were never meant to be anything but provisional. As we have seen, it contains the following notice: "The Demotic texts have not yet been examined, but they will form the subject of another volume."³¹ Newberry's preface hints that the editor of that additional volume had already been selected: "The proofs have been read through by my friend Wilhelm Spiegelberg, Professor of Egyptology in the University of Strassburg."³² Grenfell and Hunt write that "for the elucidation of the difficulties [in the Greek docket to Newberry Cat. No. 46] we must await Prof. Spiegelberg's edition of the demotic text."³³ Already in November of 1899, Spiegelberg had written to Newberry: "I think to come over to London in August 1900, and will do the papyrus publication of Lord Amherst with the greatest pleasure."³⁴

²⁹ William Tyssen-Amherst to Percy E. Newberry, Oct. 15, 1899, Griffith Institute, Oxford University. Cf. Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, [7]: "now there are some two hundred different papyri in the Didlington Hall museum."

³⁰ See at nn. 16 and 19 above.

³¹ Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, 55.

³² *Ibid.*, [5].

³³ Grenfell and Hunt, *Amherst Papyri*, 2:62 No. 52.

³⁴ Wilhelm Spiegelberg to Percy E. Newberry, November 5, 1899, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

After the visit, Amherst arranged for photographs to be prepared by the Autotype Co. in London, the company that Newberry had used seven years earlier to produce the plates of his catalogue. Amherst did not like to let any of his papyri leave Didlington,³⁵ but once again he had no choice. This time he appointed Charles Cheston of the Tyssen Amherst Estate Office in London as his emissary. On March 25, 1901, acting “by the request of Lord Amherst of Hackney,” Cheston sent to Spiegelberg, registered and insured, photographs of the Amherst Demotic papyri produced by the Autotype Co.³⁶

The photographs that Spiegelberg received were numbered from 1 to 62,³⁷ and it seems clear, on paleographic grounds, that it was Cheston that did the numbering.³⁸ The numbering preserves very little of what must have been the original order of the photographs, and for decades it served only to mislead scholars who had no access to the original papyri. Twenty-three of the lot are the photographs of the Aramaic text in Demotic script. They are numbered 5-15, 21-22, 27-32, and 43-46. George R. Hughes and Charles F. Nims, whose study of this papyrus was originally based solely on these photographs, initially assumed (a) that these numbers reflected, for the most part, the order of the columns in the text (see below), and (b) that the gaps in

³⁵ See at n. 42 below.

³⁶ Charles Cheston to Wilhelm Spiegelberg, March 25, 1901, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; cf. Herbert Thompson to Percy E. Newberry, February 17, 1921, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

³⁷ Larson, “Papers of Wilhelm Spiegelberg.” It appears from the inventory that some numbers were assigned to more than one photograph; however, I cannot be certain of this, since the only photographs I have seen myself are those of the Aramaic text in Demotic script.

³⁸ Cheston often wrote the numeral 2 with a small diagonal stroke tangent to the left side of the curved roof; for three examples, see the date and address of the handwritten note, apparently accompanying the photographs, from Charles Cheston to Wilhelm Spiegelberg, March 25, 1901, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. The same distinctive 2 can be seen in at least four photographs of the Aramaic text in Demotic script—the ones numbered 12, 22 (crossed out but still visible), 28 (ditto), and 29. Cheston’s 3 has a similar diagonal tangent stroke in the photographs numbered 13, 30, and 31.

the numbering reflected gaps in the papyrus.³⁹ Both assumptions later proved to be incorrect. Their true order, discovered by Nims in 1940, is: 22-21-15-14-32-31-30-6-5-45-46-11-10 (front), 9-44-43-7-8-29-28-27-13-12 (back).⁴⁰ There are no missing numbers once one takes into account the other Spiegelberg photographs. Thus, the numbers 18-19, 33-34 are to be found on photographs of a Demotic document dated to year 3 of Ptolemy Philometor/Soter II; the numbers 36-37, 50-52 are on photographs of a Demotic contract (with Greek docket) from year 3 of Ptolemy Soter II (Newberry Cat. no. 47, Grenfell & Hunt Cat. 53); the numbers 23-25, 49, 54-56, 58 are on photographs of a Demotic contract (with Greek docket) from year 31 of Ptolemy Euergetes II (Newberry Cat. no. 46, Grenfell & Hunt Cat. 52); and so on.

It is remarkable that these photographs do not bear Newberry Catalogue numbers, and there is no indication elsewhere in Spiegelberg's *Nachlass* that he had received any of those numbers. Thus, one of Spiegelberg's paper folders is devoted to the Amherst Demotic papyrus numbered 46 in Newberry's catalogue, and it even contains an inquiry from Grenfell about that papyrus identifying it by its Newberry Catalogue number.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the label on the folder—"Amherst [23, 24, 25, 49] + [56, 55, 54, 58]. 4 Mekhir Jahr XXXI des Philometor"—refers only to the photograph numbers.

Cheston's failure to supply the Newberry Catalogue numbers to Spiegelberg together with his scrambling of the photograph numbers is the first of many indications that Lord Amherst's Demotic papyri were not

³⁹ Charles F. Nims to Raymond A. Bowman, February 5, 1942 [sic, for 1943], Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

⁴⁰ Charles F. Nims' memo, on an orange index card, recording the true order of Spiegelberg's photographs, November 10, 1940, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; Charles F. Nims to Raymond A. Bowman, May 7, 1943, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; cf. the 5 x 8 inch text/vocabulary cards prepared by Nims in the spring and summer of 1940.

⁴¹ Bernard P. Grenfell to Wilhelm Spiegelberg, May 26, 1901, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

immune to the curse of Lady Amherst's mummy. We shall return to this matter later.

In the following year, we find Spiegelberg making plans to visit England again to work on the Amherst Demotic papyri. In a letter dated Aug. 3, 1902, Grenfell writes:

I am very glad to hear that you are coming to England. As for the Amherst demotic papyri, it is hardly possible to lend them away from Didlington and Lord Amherst will, I am sure, be delighted to make arrangements for you to stay there, even if he is not there himself when you come over.⁴²

* * *

Amherst was remarkably successful as a collector. Four of his treasures sold at auction for more than four times the amount he had paid for them two decades earlier.⁴³ Amherst's eye for talent was even more impressive. He and his wife took a liking to a sickly boy from a nearby town whose father had been hired to paint Amherst's portrait. The boy would accompany his father to Didlington, exploring the museum while his father worked. Amherst and his wife encouraged the boy's interest in Egypt, and they even agreed to finance an archaeological expedition of the great Flinders Petrie on condition that the boy, who was only seventeen at the time, be allowed to join it.⁴⁴ The boy was Howard Carter, who went on to discover Tutankhamun's tomb, one of the most sensational finds in the history of archaeology.

⁴² Bernard P. Grenfell to Wilhelm Spiegelberg, August 3, 1902, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

⁴³ "The Late Lord Amherst," *Taranaki Herald*, Jan. 21, 1909, page 3.

⁴⁴ William Tyssen-Amherst to Percy E. Newberry, Dec. 23, 1891, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

Amherst, reputed to be “a gentle, trusting man,”⁴⁵ was not as good at recognizing dishonesty. As a result, he made a mistake that had profound consequences for him, his family, and his collection of Demotic papyri. Amherst’s only mistake was having complete faith in Charles Cheston. Cheston was the Amherst family solicitor, who also served as the steward of their entire estate. He was also an expert embezzler, adept at covering his tracks.⁴⁶ Amherst was not the only one who was fooled by Cheston: “Charles Cheston stood for all that was most solid in his profession; he was a director of many companies and a member of the Council of the Incorporated Law Society, a man above suspicion.... No one suspected Cheston, who himself sat in judgment on defaulting solicitors....”⁴⁷

Amherst, known as a generous employer,⁴⁸ treated Cheston well, if we may judge from a letter sent by Amherst to Newberry in Egypt on Dec. 7, 1900:

You may have a visit from Mr. Cheston. I think you have met him at Didlington. He is my Family Solicitor and manager of all my Hackney Estate. He is a good scholar himself as far as University Education goes and a very pleasant companion. I am sure you will do all you can to give him an insight into the Wonders of Upper Egypt.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ “Pathos of a Peer’s Death,” *New Zealand Herald*, March 6, 1909, Supplement, page 2.

⁴⁶ See at n. 200 below.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ “England’s Lost Country Houses, Didlington Hall,” (http://www.lostheritage.org.uk/houses/lh_norfolk_didlingtonhall.html): “The 7,000 acre estate employed over 300 workers whom William looked after by building 160 cottages, supporting four local schools and paying for the restoration of churches in Didlington, Bodney, Langford and Cranwich.”

⁴⁹ William Tyssen-Amherst to Percy E. Newberry, Dec. 7, 1900, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

Cheston's crimes did not come to light until after his death on May 8, 1906. It was then learned that he had embezzled £250,000 directly from Amherst plus another £31,000 from a trust fund for which Amherst was responsible. On Aug. 17, the beneficiaries of the trust fund commenced an action against Amherst.⁵⁰ The trial, which began on Oct. 10, 1908,⁵¹ resulted in a judgment against him. He was ordered to repay the £31,000 to the trust fund.⁵² Amherst must have anticipated this result, because already in April, 1908, an auction catalogue of his rare books and manuscripts was printed up.⁵³ The first half of the sale, held in London on Dec. 3-5, 1908,⁵⁴ yielded £18,072.⁵⁵ In monetary terms, it was a success, but it was widely viewed as a tragedy. One solicitor wrote: "He is selling his very heart's blood."⁵⁶ It is, perhaps, not surprising, then, that Amherst did not live to see the second half of the auction (March 24-27, 1909)⁵⁷ and the appeal of the judge's decision (June 24, 1909).⁵⁸ After his passing, on Jan. 16, 1909,⁵⁹ one newspaper wrote: "It is understood that anxiety over the heavy losses which he sustained lately, ending in the sale of his famous library, impaired his health and hastened the end."⁶⁰

⁵⁰ *British Ruling Cases from Courts of Great Britain, Canada, Ireland, Australia and Other Divisions of the British Empire* (Rochester, N.Y.: Lawyers Co-operative Publishing Co., 1912), 2:656.

⁵¹ *The Weekly Notes: Containing Rules and Orders of the Supreme Court of Judicature ... for the Year 1908* (London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co., 1908), 2:278 col. c.

⁵² *British Ruling Cases*, 2:654-55.

⁵³ *Catalogue of the Magnificent Library of Choice and Valuable Books & Manuscripts, the Property of the Rt. Hon. Lord Amherst of Hackney which will be Sold by Auction by Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge* (London: Dryden Press, April, 1908).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ "The Late Lord Amherst," *Taranaki Herald*, Jan. 21, 1909, page 3.

⁵⁶ "Pathos of a Peer's Death," *New Zealand Herald*, March 6, 1909, Supplement, page 2.

⁵⁷ *Catalogue of the Magnificent Library*.

⁵⁸ *British Ruling Cases*, 2:655-58.

⁵⁹ Warren R. Dawson and Eric P. Uphill, *Who was who in Egyptology* (London:

The family was forced to sell Didlington Hall, as well. They did so on Nov. 29, 1910,⁶¹ moving two miles away to Foulden Hall in Stoke Ferry,⁶² where they had lived until the 1850's.⁶³ Even then they could not bring themselves to sell Amherst's most prized possession. They put his Egyptian collection, including the papyri, in storage in Norfolk. Conspicuous by its absence was Lady Amherst's mummy. The family, now headed by Mary Rothes Margaret Cecil (Lady Amherst), had donated it to the British Museum on June 3, 1909.⁶⁴ If this donation was meant as an exorcism, it was not successful. The curse of the mummy soon struck again—this time in the form of a historic disaster. On Aug. 26, 1912, Norwich was pounded by a tremendous storm, resulting in the Great Flood of 1912, a devastating inundation of the city. A month later, on Sept. 21, Cecil wrote to Newberry from Lou Castéu in St. Raphaël on the French Riviera:

The things from Didlington that were stored in Norwich were unfortunately in the awful floods, and though a great deal mercifully was untouched a great many books & treasures were terribly wet, among them many objects from the museum though luckily mostly stones, which are beginning to dry. There was of course a good deal of moving and shifting of things, & I am anxious to know if *all* the papyri are safe. We can identify those published, but of the unpublished ones we can find at present no exact tally, which is complete, though it may be among the “drowned” papers. I would be most grateful if you could tell me what you know about these, the

Egypt Exploration Society, 1972), 8.

⁶⁰ “Lord Amherst Dead,” *Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.), January 19, 1909, page 5.

⁶¹ Extracts from the Particulars of Sale, Didlington Estate, 1910 (<http://freeservers.com/Didlington/DidlingtonEstate.htm>).

⁶² Margaret Amherst to Percy E. Newberry, undated (“after 1909” added in pencil), Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

⁶³ “England’s Lost Country Houses, Didlington Hall,” (http://www.lostheritage.org.uk/houses/lh_norfolk_didlingtonhall.html).

⁶⁴ I am indebted to John H. Taylor for this date, which comes from the *Book of Donations* in the British Museum’s Central Archives. See at also n. 3 above.

number, size & subject of the unpublished MSS.... Please forgive me for worrying you about these papyri, but I felt sure you would know more about it than anyone.⁶⁵

Newberry was not the only scholar to receive such a letter from Cecil. Crum, whose edition of a group of Coptic papyri from the Amherst collection⁶⁶ was still in press, was asked to prepare an inventory of those papyri.⁶⁷ There was more to these requests than met the eye. The Great Flood had apparently convinced Cecil that her father's beloved papyrus collection needed a safer home. Once she had Crum's inventory safely in hand, she let it be known that the collection was for sale.

As luck would have it, Herbert E. Winlock and C. L. Ransom, two assistants of Albert M. Lythgoe, Curator of Egyptian Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, happened to be in London at the time. They immediately thought of J. P. Morgan as someone who might eventually donate the collection to their museum. Morgan was a major patron of the MMA; indeed, he was its president from 1904 until his death in 1913. Moreover, Morgan needed no introduction to what many considered the most important private collection in the world. He had already snapped up some of the Amherst library's most valuable books in the sale of 1908. Morgan's librarian, Belle da Costa Greene, had firsthand experience in dealing with the Amherst family. On Dec. 2, 1908, only three years after being hired by Morgan, she had purchased Amherst's Caxtons for him in private negotiations, reputedly for \$500,000, on the night before the opening of the auction in London.

⁶⁵ Mary Rothes Margaret Cecil to Percy E. Newberry, September 21, 1912, Griffith Institute, Oxford University. For the unpublished Coptic papyri, see n. 69 below.

⁶⁶ W. E. Crum, *Theological Texts from Coptic Papyri* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913). According to the preface (p. v), this work covers only those papyri acquired by Amherst in the winter of 1905-1906. It does not cover the papyri included in Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, 56, 59-61. Crum thanks Cecil "for her kindness in leaving the papyri at [his] disposal" (p. vi).

⁶⁷ W. E. Crum to Herbert E. Winlock, December 18, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

On Nov. 29, 1912, Winlock wired the following message to Morgan, and Ransom sent a very similar one to Lythgoe:

Have been informed by Lord Carnarvon can buy at private sale famous Amherst papyri. Probably opening price eight thousand pounds. There are 42 very important hieroglyphic and hieratic papyri,^[68] 84 Coptic which have been arranged by Crum,^[69] and 236 Demotic and Greek.^[70] Collection cannot be broken. Advise buying. They would favor America. Answer by telegram as we await your reply before trying other parties.⁷¹

The Morgan Library's transcript of the cablegram bears a note written by Greene: "Mr. Morgan replied – 'Yes – buy.'"⁷² Morgan, who was known for instant decisions and aversion to haggling in his collecting,⁷³ probably devoted no more than a few seconds to the whole matter.

⁶⁸ Newberry Cat. Nos. 1-42.

⁶⁹ This number is not easy to justify. According to published sources, there were only 37 (8+29); cf. *A Check List of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (New York: Privately Printed, 1919), x-xi; Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, 56; and Crum, *Theological Texts*. Lamacraft's unpublished reports help us to get closer to 84. See Charles T. Lamacraft to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 15, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art: "40 packets of sorted and unsorted fragments and scraps which have not been published or properly worked over." See also Charles T. Lamacraft to Francis W. Kelsey, March 5, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum: "some 40 wrappers of fragments – some large and good pieces, others of fair size, some very decayed, powdery and worthless."

⁷⁰ If this refers to Newberry Cat. Nos. 43-78 + Grenfell-Hunt Cat. Nos. 1-201, the real number is 237. Winlock and Ransom forgot to add 1 after subtracting 43 from 78.

⁷¹ Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, November 29, 1912, The Morgan Library and Museum; cf. C. L. Ransom to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 29, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁷² Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, November 29, 1912, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁷³ Cass Canfield, *The Incredible Pierpont Morgan* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 107.

On Dec. 2, Lythgoe wired Winlock that “Morgan authorizes purchase of the papyri at price not to exceed eight thousand pounds,”⁷⁴ and on Dec. 11, Winlock sent word that they had a deal.⁷⁵ After a flurry of additional telegrams between the two on Dec. 11-13,⁷⁶ Winlock decided to consummate the deal in two stages⁷⁷ “because only about 1/2 the collection was properly mounted and in condition for shipment to New York at that time.”⁷⁸ Morgan’s London office gave Winlock £4000, which he delivered to Cecil on Dec. 13.⁷⁹ Five days later, Winlock shipped “two cases containing two hundred of the Greek papyri”⁸⁰—papyri catalogued by Grenfell and Hunt which had been mounted at the British Museum under Grenfell’s supervision just after the turn of the century.⁸¹ On that day, Winlock wrote Morgan:

It has been a great pleasure to me to see this collection, which is undoubtedly the best private collection in existence, going to your library and it is amusing to imagine the expressions of

⁷⁴ Albert M. Lythgoe to Herbert E. Winlock, December 2, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁷⁵ Herbert E. Winlock to Albert M. Lythgoe, December 11, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁷⁶ Albert M. Lythgoe to Herbert E. Winlock, December 11, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Herbert E. Winlock to Albert M. Lythgoe, December 12, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Albert M. Lythgoe to Herbert E. Winlock, December 12, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Herbert E. Winlock to Albert M. Lythgoe, December 13, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁷⁷ Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, December 18, 1912, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁷⁸ Albert M. Lythgoe to Herbert L. Satterlee, May 29, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁷⁹ Herbert E. Winlock to Albert M. Lythgoe, December 13, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁸⁰ Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, December 18, 1912, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁸¹ Herbert E. Winlock to Albert M. Lythgoe, December 12, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, January 22, 1930, The Morgan Library and Museum.

disappointment the people in the Berlin Museum will have when they hear of it for they had made attempts to get it.⁸²

Crum's reaction to the news was somewhat different. It is preserved in a letter that he wrote to Winlock on December 18, 1912:

So the Amherst papyri are now Morgan's! Well, Lady A. is, I must say, a humbug. I've heard from her more than once of late, as to what she termed the 'inventory' needed for the forthcoming 'insurance' of her papyri. Her last letter told how they were all nicely 'insured' now & thanked me for the list of contents I'd supplied.⁸³

To be fair, it appears that Cecil really did insure the papyri around this time. As part of her deal with Morgan, she accepted "all responsibility for ... insurance and storage" of the second half of the collection.⁸⁴ And it is possible that she started thinking about insurance a month or two earlier, after the collection was nearly destroyed in the Great Flood.⁸⁵

In any event, there is no reason to doubt that Cecil was deeply attached to her father's legacy. Under his influence, she had learned enough about Egyptian archaeology to be able to lead an excavation of tombs near Aswan. Her feelings for his papyri are expressed in a telegram she sent to Morgan after the sale:

I am sending you ... a copy of each of the volumes of the "Amherst Papyri," which I hope you will accept from me. I feel sure

⁸² Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, December 18, 1912, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁸³ W. E. Crum to Herbert E. Winlock, December 18, 1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁸⁴ Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, December 18, 1912, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁸⁵ It is unclear whether the 29 Coptic papyri published by Crum were in Norfolk at the time of the flood, because Cecil may have allowed Crum to borrow them; see n. 66 above.

that you will be pleased with the originals which you have purchased through Mr. Winlock – they are very interesting, and, to me, and to my late father, who collected them, have always been a great joy, and greatly treasured. It is always a grief to have to part with possessions one deeply values, and what [= which] are associated with so many memories, but it is a great alleviation to know that their new owner also values and appreciates them, and that they will still be kept all together and form part of a great collection.

My husband and I will be passing through New York, the last week in May, or first week in June, and it would give us very great pleasure if we might call upon you one day, and have a few minutes chat about the Papyri....⁸⁶

Morgan died on March 31, 1913, before the Cecils could chat with him and before the second stage of the sale could be consummated. Once again, the curse of Lady Amherst's mummy had struck. Lord Amherst's Demotic papyri were now orphaned, no longer "greatly treasured." Newberry, who had been so careless in cataloguing them, had little interest in them. After 1913, he regularly ignored letters from the man hired to preserve them for posterity, despite being retained to supervise his work and pay his bills. Greene, Morgan's librarian, had even less interest in them. She delayed taking receipt of them as long as she could, waiting so many decades that, in the end, it took an investigation to find where they had been stored. And yet, she ignored offers from two leading American universities to have the papyri mounted at no cost to the Morgan if she would lend them for some years of study.

The problem was not immediately apparent, because things went smoothly at first. On May 17, Lythgoe wrote from Egypt to Herbert L. Satterlee, Morgan's son-in-law and one of his executors, reminding him of

⁸⁶ Mary Rothes Margaret Cecil to J. P. Morgan, January 17, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

the final payment of £4000 due in June.⁸⁷ He estimated that no more than £500 would be needed for the proper arranging and mounting of the remaining papyri “to insure them from damage in shipment,” and he proposed Newberry as the one best qualified to oversee the project.⁸⁸ Winlock had already spoken to Newberry during the previous year about the problem, and Newberry had offered to help with the mounting of the papyri that he had catalogued.⁸⁹

Lythgoe was so confident of the reply that, on June 13, 1913, after his arrival in England, he allowed Winlock to write to Newberry asking him to come to London to finalize the arrangements.⁹⁰ On June 25, the executors authorized payment of £4000,⁹¹ and on June 26 Winlock paid Cecil and took the second half of the collection,⁹² at least some of which was still in storage in Norwich.⁹³ The executors also opened a £500 expense account for Winlock,⁹⁴ against which he promptly wrote a check to Newberry for £100 “to meet current expenses in the purchase of glass etc.”⁹⁵ and to pay

⁸⁷ Albert M. Lythgoe to Herbert L. Satterlee, May 29, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Herbert E. Winlock to Percy E. Newberry, June 13, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ J. P. Morgan’s executors to Messrs. Morgan, Grenfell & Co., London, June 25, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁹² Second receipt from Mary Rothes Margaret Cecil for £4000, dated June 26, 1913 and sent by Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, Jr., on July 14, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁹³ Herbert E. Winlock to Percy E. Newberry, June 13, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University; see also at n. 65 above. Some of the papyri were in London, according to the first receipt from Cecil for £4000, dated Dec. 14, 1912 and sent by Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, Jr., on July 14, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁹⁴ J. P. Morgan’s executors to Messrs. Morgan, Grenfell & Co., London, June 26, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁹⁵ Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, Jr., July 1, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

Newberry's £50 fee for supervising the work.⁹⁶ Winlock promised J. P. Morgan Jr. that he would keep an account of all these expenditures, including those of Newberry.⁹⁷ Winlock himself would receive no fee from Morgan for his work; he and Lythgoe were angling for something far more valuable. Their objective is clear from a letter that Winlock sent to Newberry from Cairo later in the year: "Thank you very much for your letter ... and thank you even more for the trouble you took with the papyri. I hope Lythgoe came up to scratch and got them for the Museum."⁹⁸ Newberry would later tell a colleague that "it was thought that these might go to the Metropolitan Museum, and Lythgoe encouraged the purchase."⁹⁹

By July 1, 1913, Winlock and Newberry had brought the papyri to Charles T. Lamacraft, "restorer and mounter" in the British Museum's Department of Manuscripts, who agreed to mount the papyri in the same magnificent style (patent plate glass bound with Morocco leather edging) employed by his predecessor at the BM for the Greek papyri a decade earlier.¹⁰⁰ He also agreed to label ("identify") each papyrus with its Newberry Catalogue number and a brief title, stamped in gold on its leather frame. The text of the label was to be supplied by Newberry.

⁹⁶ Handwritten memo explaining expenses incurred in mounting and shipping Amherst papyri, undated, The Morgan Library and Museum. That the handwriting is Belle da Costa Greene's can be seen by comparing her handwriting in Belle da Costa Greene to Albert M. Lythgoe, March 2, 1922, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Although there is some evolution, the words *this* and *was* and the shape of initial *e* are still virtually identical.

⁹⁷ Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, Jr., July 1, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

⁹⁸ Herbert E. Winlock to Percy E. Newberry, December 5, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

⁹⁹ Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, June 5, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁰⁰ Herbert E. Winlock to J. P. Morgan, Jr., July 1, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum; Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, January 22, 1930, The Morgan Library and Museum.

At first, the work progressed at a brisk pace. By Aug. 25, the plate glass had arrived and been cleaned, and Lamacraft was “commencing to mount the early numbers” of the Newberry Catalogue.¹⁰¹ On Nov. 6, Lamacraft brought the first consignment (Newberry Cat. nos. 1-15, 22.1-8, and 35.1-6) to an expert packer and then to Thos. Cook & Son.¹⁰² The bill for packing (in two tin-lined cases), shipping, and insurance, over £44, was paid by Newberry on Nov. 7.¹⁰³ On Nov. 8, they were shipped on the SS St. Louis, arriving safely in New York on Nov. 21, 1913.¹⁰⁴

The financial arrangements for Lamacraft’s labor and materials (glass, leather, etc.) also worked reasonably well at the beginning. Two glass bills for £35 were paid on Oct. 4, 1913.¹⁰⁵ Lamacraft’s bill for £55, mailed out to Newberry on Nov. 6, was paid already on Nov. 10.¹⁰⁶ All of these bills were paid from Winlock’s £100 check, which Newberry cashed on Oct. 17.¹⁰⁷ There was an outstanding bill from the first consignment, £2.12 for the glass to mount Newberry Cat. no. 35,¹⁰⁸ but it seemed insignificant at the time.

¹⁰¹ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, August 25, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹⁰² Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, November 6, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University; Percy E. Newberry to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 8, 1913, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹⁰³ Thos. Cook & Son to Percy E. Newberry, November 7, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹⁰⁴ Thos. Cook & Son to Percy E. Newberry, November 5, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University; Percy E. Newberry to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 8, 1913, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Thos. Cook & Son to J. P. Morgan, Jr., July 1, 1913, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁰⁵ Elliott E. Brooks to Charles T. Lamacraft, September 8, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University; Elliott E. Brooks to Charles T. Lamacraft, September 19, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹⁰⁶ Charles T. Lamacraft to J. P. Morgan, Jr., November 10, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹⁰⁷ Typed copy of memo dated October 29, 1913 listing expenses incurred in mounting and shipping Amherst papyri, March 9, 1922, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁰⁸ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, November 6, 1913, Griffith

This bill, dated Oct. 17, had been forwarded to Newberry by Lamacraft, together with the latter's own bill, on Nov. 6, but Newberry had forgotten to include it in his check to Lamacraft.¹⁰⁹

After sending out the first batch of papyri, Lamacraft shifted gears. By Nov. 6, 1913, he had already purchased "enough leather to finish the Demotic section."¹¹⁰ His intention was "to get some of the Demotic pieces ready for Sir Herbert Thompson."¹¹¹ It is not known who invited Thompson at this stage, but Thompson's later involvement came at the request of Crum,¹¹² not Newberry. Thompson would later become involved in the first attempt at deciphering the Aramaic text in Demotic script.¹¹³

Lamacraft no doubt hoped that Thompson would be able to identify the Demotic papyri for him, but there was no way for Thompson to figure out the Newberry number of all the Demotic papyri in Amherst's collection. For that, Newberry was still needed, but he was not available. There was one part of the collection for which Newberry's involvement was thought to be unnecessary: the Coptic papyri, many of which had been published by Crum. It was therefore decided that Lamacraft "should commence mounting the Coptic papyri until Prof. N. was free to devote the necessary time to identifying and arranging the other items as catalogued in the Amherst Cat. by him."¹¹⁴ But here, too, Newberry was eventually needed. After spending 120 hours in 1914-15, "identifying and mounting under plate glass a portion

Institute, Oxford University; Elliott E. Brooks to Charles T. Lamacraft, June 1, 1914, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁰⁹ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, November 10, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹¹⁰ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, November 6, 1913, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Charles T. Lamacraft to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 15, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹¹³ See the sequel to this article.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

of the Coptic Papyri,”¹¹⁵ Lamacraft ran out of glass. On Sept. 25, 1915, he wrote to Newberry:

May I remind you of the Morgan Papyri. I have got the Coptic series under glass so far as the glass went but about 260 more squares are necessary to finish this series.... If you would, when in London, come & give the lettering for these that are done they could be edged up and finished. I can find no trace of the “Demotic” having been printed by Prof. Spiegelberg & so I should be glad to refresh my memory as to how they should go before continuing again on them....

Shall I order the glass, to continue the “Coptic”, at the enhanced prices or let it go until after the War?¹¹⁶

Lamacraft enclosed a bill for his labor (£30) and the old glass account (£2.12), which he had been forced to pay out of his own pocket on Jan. 21.¹¹⁷

Newberry did not reply.¹¹⁸ Nor did he reply to a letter from Lamacraft asking to be instructed “without delay” “as to what steps should be taken for the safety of the Morgan Papyri,” when the British government announced that, as of Jan. 1, 1918, it would be taking over the British Museum (including, of course, Lamacraft’s workroom on the first floor) to be used as offices for the Air Board.¹¹⁹ In the end, the papyri were taken from the

¹¹⁵ Charles T. Lamacraft’s bill sent to Percy E. Newberry, September 25, 1915, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹¹⁶ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, September 25, 1915, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹¹⁷ Elliott E. Brooks to Charles T. Lamacraft, June 1, 1914, The Morgan Library and Museum; Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, September 25, 1915, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹¹⁸ Charles T. Lamacraft to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 15, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹¹⁹ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, end of 1917, Griffith Institute, Oxford University; the letter is undated, but the Air Board’s takeover of the

cupboards in the room and “packed away with the official collections in the Museum basement behind sand bags and slag wool in a hastily arranged strong room.”¹²⁰

Ostensibly, the mounting of the second half of the Amherst collection of papyri had been interrupted by the war. That was the explanation Newberry gave to a colleague in 1925.¹²¹ Winlock gave the same explanation when he wrote to Newberry in 1919:

Did the job of mounting them ever get completed and did the account get settled? The last time I was in England there were some of the hieroglyphic papyri still in the British Museum and a balance due from Mr. Morgan for work on them. I never wrote to you during the first years of the war about them, and now I myself have been away from archaeology for two years in the army and such things have been as far from my mind as yours.”¹²²

I suspect that there were other factors, as well, if only because Newberry’s neglect of Lamacraft and the papyri did not end when the war was over. Gentle reminders in 1919 from Winlock¹²³ and Lamacraft (“P.S. I hope you have been able to find my account...”)¹²⁴ were to no avail.

British Museum is reported in the New York Times for Jan. 2, 1918, page 4. See also Charles T. Lamacraft to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 15, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, June 5, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan: “The war came on, & hence the matter was not closed.”

¹²² Herbert E. Winlock to Percy E. Newberry, February 18, 1919, Griffith Institute, Oxford University; carbon copy of the preceding, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹²³ See immediately above.

¹²⁴ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, June 23, 1919, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

Lamacraft finally came to the realization that the likelihood of Newberry answering him was virtually nil. In desperation, he tried going around him. On June 14, 1920, having learned that Winlock was soon to visit London, he wrote to him asking to have a meeting about the situation.¹²⁵ Unfortunately, Winlock did not reach London until July, when Lamacraft was on vacation.¹²⁶

On Oct. 9, after his return to New York, Winlock took up the matter in a telephone conversation with Greene. Two days later, Winlock sent letters to Newberry and Lamacraft reporting on his conversation with Greene. To Newberry he wrote:

I have just been talking over the telephone to Miss Belle Green – Mr. Morgan’s librarian – about the Morgan Papyri. She is a most unsatisfactory person to deal with. All that I could get out of her was that Mr. Morgan is now away in Europe and that she could take no responsibility in regard to ordering the finishing of the job until he comes back some time in December. At that time she says she will take the matter up with him. Personally I think that there is a chance we may get them when he comes home for the Museum – but of that I can’t say anything definite.¹²⁷

In his letter to Lamacraft, he asked that he send Lythgoe “the fullest possible information” about the situation, promising that the latter would “do ... all that is possible when Mr. Morgan returns, to have the matter settled once and for all.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Charles T. Lamacraft to Herbert E. Winlock, June 14, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹²⁶ Herbert E. Winlock to Charles T. Lamacraft, October 11, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹²⁷ Herbert E. Winlock to Percy E. Newberry, October 11, 1920, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹²⁸ Herbert E. Winlock to Charles T. Lamacraft, October 11, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

On Nov. 15, 1920, Lamacraft sent Lythgoe a detailed report, noting Newberry's failure to reply to his letters and ending with a veiled complaint about him:

An answer to your letter has been delayed owing to a certain well known Egyptologist having failed, up to the present, in fulfilling a promise to call at the Museum & go over the collection with me preparatory to reporting to you on the matter.¹²⁹

Lamacraft's report arrived on Nov. 30, but his complaints fell on deaf ears. Lythgoe would later recall that he and Greene "discussed the question ... in [his] office soon afterward, and in view of what [she] then told [him] as to Mr. Morgan's intention to dispose of the collection, it was agreed between [them] that any reply should be held in abeyance."¹³⁰ Lythgoe did not even bother to acknowledge receipt of the report.

So the matter stood in the summer of 1921 when Francis W. Kelsey, chairman of the Classics Department at the University of Michigan, came to Lamacraft's workroom to pick up a batch of papyri that Lamacraft had mounted for a consortium of American universities. Lamacraft took the opportunity to show Kelsey the Amherst papyri, and to complain about the unfinished work and the unpaid bills. Lamacraft could not have found a more energetic and persistent intercessor. Arriving in New York on his way home from London, he sent Lythgoe a copy of Lamacraft's report together with a note, dated Sept. 23, 1921, suggesting that the original had been lost in the mail.¹³¹ On Oct. 12, he sent Lythgoe a follow-up letter from Ann Arbor about Lamacraft's bills and the poor quality of the mail.¹³² Kelsey, who was

¹²⁹ Charles T. Lamacraft to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 15, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹³⁰ Albert M. Lythgoe to Belle da Costa Greene, March 4, 1922, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹³¹ Francis W. Kelsey to Albert M. Lythgoe, September 23, 1921, handwritten copy, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹³² Francis W. Kelsey to Albert M. Lythgoe, October 12, 1921, Metropolitan

capable of writing more than thirty letters on a good day, all of them preserved in carbon copies and meticulously recorded in his diaries, was not a man to be ignored.

Lythgoe was cornered. The last person he wanted to know of his ongoing negotiations to acquire the Amherst collection was Kelsey, a rival collector of papyri who had been in close contact with Greene (as well as Morgan Sr. and Jr.) since 1911,¹³³ but there was a limit to the abuse one could heap on the postal service. He decided to try to double-talk his way out of the situation:

Regarding Mr. Lamacraft's services in mounting the papyri for Mr. Morgan, there were definite reasons last winter and spring why the matter could not be carried forward, though I talked it over with Miss Greene and she has known the circumstances. Now, however, the particular reasons for the earlier delay have ceased to exist, and Miss Greene and I are taking action. Mr. Lamacraft certainly has cause for complaint, but the situation was a complicated one and could not be explained to him. Thank you very much for your interest in the matter.¹³⁴

Not long afterwards, Newberry visited New York. At the end of December, just before sailing back to England, he and Lythgoe met with Greene at the Morgan Library.¹³⁵ Greene informed them "that it was Mr.

Museum of Art (carbon copy), Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹³³ See John G. Pedley, *The Life and Work of Francis Willey Kelsey: Archaeology, Antiquity and the Arts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 176-78; and Morgan Jr.'s acknowledgment of Kelsey's help in *Check List of Coptic Manuscripts*, [v]. See also at n. 164 below.

¹³⁴ Albert M. Lythgoe to Francis W. Kelsey, October 24, 1921, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹³⁵ Albert M. Lythgoe to Belle da Costa Greene, March 4, 1922, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Albert M. Lythgoe to Percy E. Newberry, March 27, 1922 (carbon copy), Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Morgan's wish not to proceed further at present with the work of mounting the remaining sections of the Amherst papyri still in London."¹³⁶ During the visit, Newberry, who still had Lamacraft's unpaid bills, allowed Greene to search through her files for them.¹³⁷ In the end, Newberry "agreed that on his return to England he would obtain a statement from Lamacraft for the balance due him on previous work, and would send the account ... for payment."¹³⁸

Newberry was still in no hurry to pay the bills that Lamacraft had submitted to him in 1913 and 1915, but Lamacraft was no longer totally dependent on him. On Jan. 30, 1922, Lamacraft sent Kelsey a note asking whether he had found out anything from Lythgoe and Greene about the reason for the "unseemly delay."¹³⁹ This time Kelsey decided to deal directly with Greene. On Feb. 18, he dictated a letter to Greene telling her of Lamacraft's plea for help, Lythgoe's response, and Lamacraft's latest letter.¹⁴⁰ A handwritten postscript shows that Lythgoe's clumsy attempt at obfuscation had served only to arouse Kelsey's suspicions: "Would Mr. Morgan be disposed to sell the unpublished papyri of which he has not taken possession?"¹⁴¹ Kelsey and Lythgoe clearly understood each other very well.

Kelsey's letter set off an exchange of angry recriminations between Greene and Lythgoe, both of whom were still unaware of Newberry's role in this sorry affair. Greene, who frequently failed to answer Kelsey's letters and was forever apologizing for it, answered this one immediately. In her reply, dated Feb. 27, she placed the blame squarely on Lythgoe:

¹³⁶ Albert M. Lythgoe to Belle da Costa Greene, March 4, 1922, Metropolitan Museum of Art; cf. Albert M. Lythgoe to Percy E. Newberry, March 27, 1922 (carbon copy), Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹³⁷ Albert M. Lythgoe to Belle da Costa Greene, March 4, 1922, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Charles T. Lamacraft to Francis W. Kelsey, January 30, 1922, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁴⁰ Francis W. Kelsey to Belle da Costa Greene, February 18, 1922, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

I have seen Mr. Lythgoe a number of times on this matter and assured him of our desire to settle all accounts. He has thought wise to await a definite statement of what has been paid and what is still due. He assures me (repeatedly) that he has the matter in hand and to await word from him which I am still doing....

Perhaps it would be advisable for Mr. Lamacraft to write to Mr. Lythgoe?¹⁴²

Greene instructed Kelsey not to divulge to Lamacraft the contents of her letter. Lamacraft was not to receive any explanation, let alone an apology. Kelsey was simply to tell Lamacraft in her name that “Mr. Lythgoe has *full* power to arrange matters at any moment.” The only concrete step she was willing to take on Lamacraft’s behalf was to “send [Kelsey’s] letter on to Mr. Lythgoe as a ‘gentle reminder.’” There was also a response to Kelsey’s postscript: “*Confidentially*, I may say that there is a possibility that Mr. Morgan may sell the entire collection of papyrus as we are not in a position to properly guard or display it.”¹⁴³

Greene’s letter to Lythgoe, dated Mar. 2, was not especially “gentle”:

I do dislike having various *outside* people appealed to, to induce us to pay our debts! ...

I’m sorry to bother you again – but this sort of outside cross-correspondence, places us in a rather humiliating position.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Belle da Costa Greene to Francis W. Kelsey, February 27, 1922, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Belle da Costa Greene to Albert M. Lythgoe, March 2, 1922, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Greene, who once remarked that “if a person is a worm, you step on him,”¹⁴⁵ did not hesitate to tell Lythgoe that she had blamed the entire affair on him:

I wrote Kelsey that the matter was actually in your hands and that I was anxious to clear this matter up, but was awaiting word from you, as to the exact amount to be paid and to whom.

From a strictly legal point of view, Greene’s position was not without merit. Lythgoe’s assistant, Winlock, had promised J. P. Morgan Jr. that he would keep an account of all the expenditures incurred in mounting the papyri, including those of Newberry.¹⁴⁶ However, since Newberry never disclosed that he had been sitting on Lamacraft’s bills for years, there is nothing that Lythgoe could have done.

Lythgoe received Greene’s letter on Mar. 4, and fired off a reply the same day¹⁴⁷ together with a copy of Lamacraft’s report. Lythgoe denied responsibility for the affair, and reminded Greene of her promise to search for Lamacraft’s bill(s) “in Mr. Morgan’s office-files down town.”¹⁴⁸ Five days later, a secretary prepared a “copy of all correspondence found in Estate files, relating to the AMHERST PAPYRI,” but Lamacraft’s bills were, of course, not to be found.

On March 27, Lythgoe wrote to Newberry asking whether he had been able to determine the amount owed to Lamacraft and enlisting his help in trying “to persuade Miss Greene to recommend to Mr. Morgan” to change his mind about finishing the work.¹⁴⁹ Newberry did not reply. The matter of the unmounted papyri was still unresolved, and Greene was perfectly content to

¹⁴⁵ This remark is attributed to her in a number of biographical works, e.g., Canfield, *The Incredible Pierpont Morgan*, 152.

¹⁴⁶ See at n. 97 above.

¹⁴⁷ Albert M. Lythgoe to Belle da Costa Greene, March 4, 1922, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Albert M. Lythgoe to Percy E. Newberry, March 27, 1922 (carbon copy), Metropolitan Museum of Art.

leave it that way. She would later tell Kelsey that the Morgan Library had “no room for this material, for display or for study.”¹⁵⁰ Indeed, even the papyri that Winlock and Newberry had shipped to the Morgan Library in 1912 and 1913 were in the basement, still in their original cases. As long as Lamacraft was willing to continue providing free storage and care in a safe environment, Greene had no incentive to clutter up the basement even more. It does not seem to have occurred to her that if the Morgan Library had “no room for this material,” Lamacraft’s workroom must have been bursting at the seams.

On Oct. 1, 1924, Newberry finally wrote to Greene, as Lythgoe had requested, asking her to “attend without further delay to [the] matter” of the unfinished work.¹⁵¹ By this time, however, Lythgoe was out of the picture, supplanted by Kelsey. Kelsey’s motives for helping with this matter were similar to Lythgoe’s, and Greene was careful not to disillusion him. On Jan. 15, 1925, Kelsey met Greene in New York on his way to London. He promised to find out how many papyri were still in Lamacraft’s care (suggesting that they all be shipped to Michigan for inventorying!), and he agreed to find out how much was owing to Newberry and to lay out the money to reimburse him.¹⁵²

Kelsey visited the British Museum on Feb. 26, and discussed with Lamacraft the mounting of the remaining papyri,¹⁵³ telling him that Greene “was much distressed about the Collection & placed the blame on the M. M. A.,” i.e., Lythgoe.¹⁵⁴ Lamacraft agreed to provide Kelsey with a copy of the

¹⁵⁰ Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, Jan. 15, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁵¹ Percy E. Newberry to Belle da Costa Greene, October 1, 1924, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁵² Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, Jan. 15, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁵³ Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, Feb. 26, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁵⁴ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, March 6, 1925, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

old report about the state of the collection¹⁵⁵ and to prepare a new one.¹⁵⁶ Kelsey was unable to keep the second half of his promise to Greene, because Newberry was on vacation when Kelsey arrived.¹⁵⁷

On March 14, 1925, Kelsey sent the two reports to Greene from Carthage, with a covering letter warning her that “the condition of the papyri ... is unsatisfactory” and urging her to take action.¹⁵⁸ Kelsey returned to London two and a half months later, on his way back to New York. On June 5, he met Newberry in Lamacraft’s workroom at the British Museum.¹⁵⁹

During the meeting, Newberry produced the long-lost copy of Lamacraft’s bill for around £33 pounds,¹⁶⁰ and added a “statement of account” to the bottom of it. The statement—especially the fuller typed copy of it that Kelsey retained for his files—reveals that the Morgan Library had a “credit on account” of £15, and that the “balance due to Prof. Newberry” was £18.¹⁶¹ It would seem from this that, by June, 1925, Newberry had paid Lamacraft £33, partly out of the Morgan’s credit (£15) and partly out of his

¹⁵⁵ The old report of Charles T. Lamacraft to Albert M. Lythgoe, from November 15, 1920, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The new typed copy, dated March 5, 1925, is in The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁵⁶ Charles T. Lamacraft to Francis W. Kelsey, March 5, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁵⁷ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, March 6, 1925, Griffith Institute, Oxford University; Francis W. Kelsey to Belle da Costa Greene, March 14, 1925, only page 1, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁵⁸ Francis W. Kelsey to Belle da Costa Greene, March 14, 1925, only page 1, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁵⁹ Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, June 5, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁶⁰ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry for Belle da Costa Greene, September 25, 1915, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁶¹ Typed copy of Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, September 25, 1915, attached to Francis W. Kelsey to Belle da Costa Greene, June 19, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

own pocket (£18). This inference is corroborated by a letter sent by Lamacraft to Greene later in the month:

I have just received a message from Dr. Hall respecting the outstanding account for work done some 10 years ago. This money is due to Professor Newberry who kindly settled my account for glass and work on behalf of your library.¹⁶²

Newberry's behavior in this affair makes one wonder if he had come under the influence of Lady Amherst's mummy during his many visits to Didlington. How else can one explain his forcing a humble craftsman to give one of the richest men in the world an interest-free loan—not to mention free storage and care of a major collection of fragile papyri—for a decade? Kelsey deserves much credit for bringing this glaring injustice to an end.

During the meeting in Lamacraft's workroom on June 5, Newberry confirmed Kelsey's suspicion that Lythgoe had intended to acquire the Amherst papyri for the MMA. Kelsey decided to speak to Greene again about bringing the collection to Michigan.¹⁶³ This request was not as audacious as it might sound. Ten years earlier, Kelsey had managed to persuade Greene to send a Morgan manuscript (the *Beatus Commentary to the Apocalypse*) to the University of Michigan:

It is, as you probably know, the most unusual thing for us to place our manuscripts at someone else's disposal and, please believe me when I say that this was done mainly because of the great esteem and admiration which the late Mr. Morgan had for you, and which

¹⁶² Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, June 23, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum. Cf. Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, November 26, 1924, The Morgan Library and Museum. The latter is an official receipt for "the sum of Thirty Three pounds on account of work done on the Morgan Papyri previous to August 1914." Unfortunately, the 4 in the date "26/11/24" is uncertain.

¹⁶³ Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, June 5, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

his son and I still have – and because of the excellent scholarship which we have noted in the Humanistic Series of which you are one of the editors.¹⁶⁴

Kelsey telephoned Greene at the Morgan Library as soon as his ship reached New York on June 19, only to find that their ships had “crossed in the night”; she had sailed for London the week before. When Kelsey’s ship returned to England that night, it was carrying a special delivery letter to Greene:

As regards the general situation with reference to the Amherst Papyri, I lately wrote you, after talking with Prof. Newberry, that it seemed to me the collection does not fit in well with the Morgan Library, and will hardly in the future have a place in its routine unless the collection of Papyri is extended and a specialist or specialists are engaged to work in this field. I offer the suggestion for what it is worth; but we are extending our work in Papyri at the University of Michigan, and this has already become a center for that kind of work in the United States. I am sure that if the Morgan Library would be disposed to loan the whole collection of Amherst Papyri to the University of Michigan for a term of years for purposes of research and publication, in consideration of the value of the material to scholarship and the importance of completing the editorial work as soon as possible, we should be pleased to defray any additional costs not yet arranged for by the Morgan Library, including the completion of the mounting of the Papyri still in the British Museum....¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Belle da Costa Greene to Francis W. Kelsey, June 25, 1915, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁶⁵ Francis W. Kelsey to Belle da Costa Greene, June 19, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum; cf. Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, June 19, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

It was too late. On June 23, 1925, Lamacraft received word that Greene was in town, and immediately wrote to her and Newberry to arrange a meeting.¹⁶⁶ Two days later, Lamacraft wrote breathlessly to Kelsey:

It is with great pleasure I report that Miss B. Green [sic] has just left the Department, and has left instructions that the Amherst-Morgan Papyri are to be proceeded with & finished off.

Fortunately Prof. Newberry came to Town today & was able to be present when we went over the Collection.¹⁶⁷

We are both much indebted to you for the kind offices you have undertaken to settle the matter up; and rejoice that at last we have received instructions to deal with the Collection.¹⁶⁸

Despite Newberry's track record, he was again asked to supervise Lamacraft's work. On Nov. 16, 1925, Kelsey paid a visit to Greene at the Morgan Library and learned that she had met with Newberry at the British Museum on June 25 "about publication of [the] Amherst papyri."¹⁶⁹ Greene and Newberry may have discussed the possibility of publishing the informal catalogue prepared by Thompson, who during this period was developing ties to the Morgan Library.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, June 23, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum; Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, June 23, 1925, Griffith Institute, Oxford University.

¹⁶⁷ Charles T. Lamacraft to Francis W. Kelsey, June 25, 1925, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁶⁸ Charles T. Lamacraft to Francis W. Kelsey, June 25, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁶⁹ Francis W. Kelsey Diaries, November 16, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁷⁰ Charles T. Lamacraft to Francis W. Kelsey, March 5, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum; Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, October 7, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum; Herbert Thompson [to Belle da Costa Greene], March 7, 1926, The Morgan Library and Museum.

Work on the Coptic papyri published by Crum progressed rapidly,¹⁷¹ and, on Oct. 7, Lamacraft wrote to Greene asking her to arrange for a responsible person to pick them up at the beginning of 1926.¹⁷² Greene replied promptly, telling him that she would be in England in 1926 and asking him to hold the papyri until her arrival.¹⁷³ On Apr. 28, she wrote again, informing him that her assistant would arrange for shipment in June, when she arrived in London.¹⁷⁴ This was not to be. The Morgan Library was still short of space, and Greene was still not averse to “a large amount of this material ... through the kindness of the authorities being housed by the British Museum.”¹⁷⁵

* * *

The Morgan Library’s space problem was finally solved in 1928, when the Annex was built on the site of Morgan’s home. Greene decided that it was finally time to bring the rest of the Amherst papyri to New York, but first she needed an inventory. The scholar selected for the job of preparing one was Nathaniel J. Reich, Assoc. Prof. of Egyptology, Papyrology and Ancient Oriental Studies at Dropsie College, with whom Greene had corresponded already in 1927.¹⁷⁶ On April 13, 1929, Reich submitted his handwritten

¹⁷¹ Charles T. Lamacraft to Percy E. Newberry, July 18, 1925, Griffith Institute, Oxford University; Charles T. Lamacraft to Francis W. Kelsey, September 8, 1925, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

¹⁷² Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, October 7, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁷³ Belle da Costa Greene to Charles T. Lamacraft, October 20, 1925, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁷⁴ Belle da Costa Greene to Charles T. Lamacraft, April 28, 1926, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁷⁵ Belle da Costa Greene to Charles T. Lamacraft, April 29, 1929 (carbon copy), The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁷⁶ Robert A. Kraft, “The Amherst Papyri Revisited: Fragments of LXX/OG MSS,” in Hamlet on a Hill: *Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Prof. T. Muraoka on*

“Report to Miss Greene, Director, with regard to the papyri, missing in the Pierpont Morgan Library collection.”¹⁷⁷ Two weeks later, Greene wrote to Lamacraft:

As the Annex Building to this Library which Mr. Morgan has recently had erected, is now completed and offers us additional room for housing and exhibiting the material in this Library, we are now enabled to take care of the collection of Papyrus which you so splendidly mounted for us....¹⁷⁸

Greene asked Lamacraft to pack up all of the remaining papyri and ship them to New York. Greene included in her letter a rather inaccurate summary of Reich’s report.

In his reply of June 28, 1929, Lamacraft pointed out that only the Coptic papyri were ready to be sent, and he promised to arrange for their shipping after his vacation.¹⁷⁹ At the end of September, 160 pieces were shipped to New York.¹⁸⁰ On Nov. 13, Greene wrote to Lamacraft that the Coptic papyri had arrived, and she asked him to proceed with the mounting of the rest of the collection.¹⁸¹ Lamacraft did so immediately, with the help and counsel of Stephen R. K. Glanville, Curator in the Dept. of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum from 1924 to 1933. Lamacraft took

the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday (ed., M. F. J. Baasten and W. Th. Van Peursen), 609-610 with n. 3. I have not seen the correspondence mentioned there.

¹⁷⁷ Nathaniel J. Reich to Belle da Costa Greene, April 13, 1929, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁷⁸ Belle da Costa Greene to Charles T. Lamacraft, April 29, 1929 (carbon copy), The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁷⁹ Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, June 28, 1929, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁸⁰ Bernard Quaritch Ltd. to Belle da Costa Greene, April 19, 1929, The Morgan Library and Museum; Bernard Quaritch Ltd. to Belle da Costa Greene, September 23, 1929, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁸¹ Belle da Costa Greene to Charles T. Lamacraft, November 13, 1929, carbon copy, The Morgan Library and Museum.

advantage of the opportunity to request that Newberry's supervisory role be formally terminated:

Mr Glanville of the Egyptian Dept. spent some time with me in trying to check Newberry's Book with the material, as my knowledge of Egyptian is a very elementary accomplishment and it was suggested that the best method would be for me to relax and mount as far as practicable when he would come down again and identify the pieces which I cannot place. As all the Books of the Dead are very fragmentary, I am of opinion that it would more satisfactory if you would write and ask Mr Glanville to undertake the supervision of the Mounting as it is not likely Professor Newberry will be available for the purpose, and a great deal of time will be entailed on the work.¹⁸²

Fortunately, both Greene and Glanville were amenable to Lamacraft's proposal.¹⁸³

With her letter of Nov. 13, Greene sent a typed copy of Reich's report, adding "I trust that all of these are safely in your care."¹⁸⁴ On Dec. 5, Lamacraft replied:

I ... have endeavoured to check the list you sent with the Papyri.

Many of the pieces have no distinguishing number, while those with a number cannot be relied upon. For instance, there are three with 36, and a mass of small frags. marked 35 (which has been returned) evidently belong to 34....

¹⁸² Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, December 5, 1929, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁸³ Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, January 22, 1930, The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁸⁴ Belle da Costa Greene to Charles T. Lamacraft, November 13, 1929, carbon copy, The Morgan Library and Museum.

Sir Herbert Thompson worked over all the Demotic “G & H” and identified Nos 43, 45-48, 50-52, also 6 sheets which he queries as Magical and nine others which being in fragments probably represent Nos 53-65 but as these are lumped together in the Catalogue it is impossible to distinguish them.

Sections “I,J,K,” with the exception of the published Coptic Will, never came to the Museum.¹⁸⁵

Greene’s reaction to the bombshell in the last sentence was mild. In a letter to Lamacraft dated Jan. 3, 1930, she wrote:

Do you think that Professor Newberry could inform us either directly or through you, where sections I, J and K are, as all of this collection was supposed to have been shipped direct to the British Museum and mounted etc.¹⁸⁶

Lamacraft replied on Jan. 22:

I have written to Prof. Newberry at Cairo to see if he can throw any light on the missing pieces. My impression was that they had been mounted at the same time the Greek ones were mounted by my predecessor at the B. M. ...

Mr. Winlock brought the Collection to the B. M. but where he collected it, I have never learnt. He may be able to throw some light on the matter.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, December 5, 1929, The Morgan Library and Museum. Cf. n. 27 above.

¹⁸⁶ Belle da Costa Greene to Charles T. Lamacraft, January 3, 1930 (carbon copy), The Morgan Library and Museum.

¹⁸⁷ Charles T. Lamacraft to Belle da Costa Greene, January 22, 1930, The Morgan Library and Museum.

There is no record of any reply from Newberry. Newberry might have answered Greene had she written to him, but she did not do so. Nor is there any written record of her having followed up on the matter with Winlock.

Petersen would later recall, in a letter to Greene, that Reich refused to give up so easily. Knowing that Spiegelberg had been asked to prepare a catalogue of Amherst's Demotic papyri, Reich suspected that the missing ones had been lent to Spiegelberg and never returned. He wondered whether they had been left behind at the Papyrus Institute of the University of Strassburg, when Spiegelberg was banished from there after World War I. Petersen's letter seems to imply that Reich wrote to Spiegelberg and received an answer disclaiming any knowledge of the whereabouts of the missing papyri.¹⁸⁸

It appears that Reich never wrote to Thompson to inquire about the "6 sheets which he queries as Magical." Lamacraft's description was, no doubt, too brief to arouse Reich's interest. The 6 sheets bore a text written in Demotic script that Thompson and Francis Ll. Griffith suspected was either magical gibberish or "in some African form of speech,"¹⁸⁹ a text that later proved to be Aramaic. Reich was uniquely qualified to determine the language of such a text. As a child, Reich had studied Bible and Talmud as well as Hebrew, Aramaic (including Syriac), and Arabic.¹⁹⁰ Later, he studied "languages of North Africa, including Libyan, Berber, Shilhish, and Tuareg, as well as Somali, Nubian, and Ethiopian."¹⁹¹ As a doctoral student, his major areas of study were Semitics, paleography, papyrology, Oriental History, and Egyptology. He especially loved the challenge of deciphering Demotic texts, feeling rewarded by "the satisfaction of knowing that you have mastered an age old mystery."¹⁹² Reich's failure to write to Thompson is one of the two

¹⁸⁸ Theodore C. Petersen to Belle da Costa Greene, February 19, 1943, typed copy, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

¹⁸⁹ F. Ll. Griffith to Wilhelm Spiegelberg, February 8, 1921, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

¹⁹⁰ "ARC MS20 – Nathaniel Julius Reich Collection: Biography," <http://www.library.upenn.edu/cajs/njrbio.html>.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

greatest missed opportunities in the history of research on the Aramaic text in Demotic script.¹⁹³ One can easily imagine Lady Amherst's mummy engineering this sad twist of fate.

In 1934, H. I. Bell, the head of the Dept. of Manuscripts at the British Museum, visited the Morgan Library, and Greene took the opportunity to further pursue the matter of the missing papyri. By then, she had apparently heard that some of them were at the University of Michigan. Kelsey had died in 1927, and Greene apparently did not know his successor, Herbert C. Youtie. Since Bell was planning to visit the University of Michigan, she asked him to look into the matter for her. On July 17, after Bell's return to England, he wrote:

I also made some discreet enquiry at Michigan. I am ashamed to say that, amid the multiplicity of new experiences & new impressions ... some of the information I obtained has become rather dim and muddled; but I *think* I was told at Michigan that some Amherst papyri were there, but that they had been there a long time & nobody knew exactly how or in what circumstances they arrived. There is probably some reasonable explanation ... it might be worthwhile to make further enquiries.¹⁹⁴

Bell's recollection was accurate. The Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library at the University of Michigan still has papyri from the Amherst collection. When I visited in 1989, most of them were in 7 wooden trays (resembling picture frames) measuring 20 x 13 inches. Two of the trays were labeled P.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ For the other one, involving Noel Aimé-Giron, see the sequel to this article.

¹⁹⁴ H. I. Bell to Belle da Costa Greene, July 17, 1934, The Morgan Library and Museum.

Amh. XLIIIb¹⁹⁵ (one containing a Demotic papyrus, the other empty except for strands of papyrus). Another three were labeled LXVI-VII, LXVIII, LXIX (containing mostly Greek papyri—seemingly Newberry Cat. nos. LXVI-LXIX, the entire section I, which never came to the Morgan). The last two trays were labeled LXXVIII (containing an Arabic papyrus—from Newberry Cat. section K, which never came to the Morgan) and LXXXI (containing a Coptic papyrus—perhaps really Newberry Cat. no. LXXI, from section J, which never came to the Morgan). No longer in trays by the time of my visit were fragments of the Aramaic text in Demotic script (also labeled XLIIIb) that do not appear in Spiegelberg’s photographs (1901) or in Thompson’s handwritten catalogue (1921). These are loose fragments of cols. IVA and IVB, which apparently became detached around the time that the outermost columns of the rolled-up papyrus, cols. I-IVA, broke off from the rest of the roll.

There is no doubt that all or most of the Michigan-Amherst fragments were included in the sale to the Morgan Library, since the cablegram to Morgan, dated Nov. 29, 1912, informing him of the sale speaks, *inter alia*, of “236 Demotic and Greek,” i.e., Grenfell-Hunt 1-201 + Newberry 43-78. It is likely that by 1934, the authorities at the University of Michigan did not know what these papyri were doing there. Kelsey may well have been the only one familiar with the matter, and Youtie did not come to Michigan until 1929, two years after Kelsey’s death. A memo written by the Rare Book Librarian at the University of Michigan in 1968 reports: “Mr. Youtie *thinks* these Amherst papyri are our property. Given to us?”¹⁹⁶ Youtie’s wife, who served as her husband’s assistant throughout his career, told one of the younger papyrologists at the University of Michigan on June 29, 1989, during my visit there, that she knew nothing of the matter. Youtie’s

¹⁹⁵ As Harriet Jameson, the Rare Book Librarian, noted in a letter to P. W. Pestman dated Oct. 24, 1968, there was no tray labeled P. Amh. XLIIIa. However, there was also a handwritten record, perhaps written by Youtie or his wife: “PAmh. XLIII a+b 2 trays of horrible looking fragments of Demotic” (Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan).

¹⁹⁶ This is one of several notes added to the record cited in the previous footnote, in response to inquiries by Pestman in 1968.

uncertainty about the ownership of the Amherst papyri was no doubt based on the observation that they are the only ones in the Michigan collection that were never assigned a Michigan inventory number.

How did these papyri come to the University of Michigan? My current hypothesis is that the papyri were stolen from Amherst by Charles Cheston, his family solicitor and steward. Cheston had the opportunity to steal some of them when Amherst asked him in 1901 to take his Demotic papyri from Didlington to be photographed in London for Spiegelberg. It is telling that the photographs sent by Cheston to Spiegelberg covered the six large sheets of the Aramaic text in Demotic script that are now in the possession of the Morgan Library but not the detached “horrible looking fragments of Demotic”¹⁹⁷ that wound up at the University of Michigan. Cheston apparently assumed, correctly as it turned out, that such fragments would not be missed. We may conjecture that Cheston kept them hidden for a while to see if the theft would be noticed and then sold them to a dealer, who, in turn, sold them to Kelsey. Cheston’s sale of the Demotic fragments is presumably to be dated during the period from March 25, 1901 (when Cheston sent photographs of most of the Demotic papyri to Spiegelberg) to May 8, 1906 (when Cheston died).¹⁹⁸ The Michigan-Amherst Greek, Coptic, and Arabic fragments are

¹⁹⁷ See n. 195 above.

¹⁹⁸ It seems likely that the story of the Michigan-Amherst papyri lies buried in Kelsey’s meticulous diaries and voluminous papers. It is difficult to imagine a man as compulsively thorough as Kelsey—a man who strove to preserve even the most trivial details of his life—resisting the temptation to record such important information. The labeling of the papyri ensured that the truth would come out after Kelsey’s death, and he therefore had no motive to suppress the facts from his diary. Beginning in 1989, I have made unsystematic attempts to solve this riddle, testing various conjectures with the generous help of the staff of the Bentley Historical Library. The results have been uniformly negative. For example, I learned from the diaries that Kelsey was not in England in June, 1921, when the remainder of the Didlington museum collection was sold at Sotheby’s; cf. Dawson and Uphill, *Who was who in Egyptology*, 8. And a quick search of the diaries for 1912 and 1913 (the period before and after the sale of the papyri to J. P. Morgan) by Mary Catherine Moeller turned up no occurrences of *Amherst* or *Newberry*. It

beyond the scope of this article, but it is reasonable to assume that they got there in a similar manner.¹⁹⁹

As we have seen, Cheston omitted the Newberry Catalogue numbers of the photographs that he sent to Spiegelberg, and he numbered them in a totally misleading order. I suggest that these acts were designed to cover up his theft. Cheston devised similar cover-ups for his other thefts from Amherst: “to evade detection he had produced dividends on stocks which he had already made away with; he had paid rent on properties that he in his trustees’ name heavily mortgaged.”²⁰⁰

Greene was still wondering about the missing papyri two months after receiving Bell’s letter. Strangely, however, instead of following up Bell’s mission to Ann Arbor, she tried again in London. Ignoring the detailed letter sent to her by Lamacraft 5 years earlier, she asked:

Are there any Papyri other than the Hieratic still in your care at the British Museum? I ask because we do not seem to be able to locate a few which are in the Catalogue as belonging to us.²⁰¹

should be noted, however, that I have not checked Kelsey’s earliest diaries, which begin in 1901. According to my current hypothesis, presented here, that would be the most promising place to search for the purchase of the Michigan-Amherst Demotic papyri.

¹⁹⁹ One might investigate the possibility that, when Newberry was preparing his catalogue, Amherst asked Cheston to have the Coptic and Arabic papyri he owned at the time photographed for Crum. Crum published one of those papyri, the Will of Tsibl , as an appendix in Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, 59-61. The others in that group may have been stolen by Cheston around that time. Here again, Kelsey’s diaries and papers may hold answers. Crum’s *Nachlass* in Oxford’s Griffith Institute could also prove helpful, if it includes documents dealing with the papyri catalogued by Newberry.

²⁰⁰ “Pathos of a Peer’s Death,” *New Zealand Herald*, March 6, 1909, Supplement, page 2.

²⁰¹ Belle da Costa Greene to Charles T. Lamacraft, September 14, 1934, carbon copy, The Morgan Library and Museum.

The Morgan archives do not contain a reply to this letter. Lamacraft, always eager to please when he was younger, may have finally run out of patience.

In 1939, at the age of 60, Lamacraft retired, leaving the Amherst Demotic papyri in the BM. When C. F. Nims came to the museum in 1945, shortly after Lamacraft's death, the papyri were still there, in the basement, some of them still unmounted. The embarrassed BM officials, after investigating the matter, concluded that Lamacraft had had the papyri since about 1919, and they gave Nims to understand that Lamacraft "was not very well, and probably only worked on them in his spare time."²⁰² After all Lamacraft had been through, his employers felt the need to apologize on his behalf for what they presumed was *his* negligence. This was a final indignity worthy of a malevolent mummy.

* * *

Spiegelberg's photographs of the Amherst Demotic papyri were inherited, on his death, by his chief pupil, William F. Edgerton. One of Edgerton's graduate students, George R. Hughes, came across some of them one day in Edgerton's office at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute. A reminiscence composed for me by Hughes in 1989 was sent to me by Janet H. Johnson:

In about 1935, as a Research Assistant to W. F. Edgerton to work on Spiegelberg's Demotic Dictionary, I found one day in Edgerton's office among Spiegelberg's collection of many photographs those of a long text of which I could make nothing. I asked Edgerton what the text was and he told me that nobody knew. Then he showed me correspondence Spiegelberg had had with various Demoticists. I remember only a note from F. Ll. Griffith in which Griffith wrote that he did not know what the language was but

²⁰² Charles F. Nims to Raymond A. Bowman, July 4, 1945, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

that it might be some African language. My curiosity was thus aroused....²⁰³

This discovery led ultimately to a fruitful collaboration between Hughes, Nims, and Raymond A. Bowman, which will be discussed in the sequel to this article. For the purposes of the present article, it suffices to note that, at the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943, Nims launched a campaign to locate the papyrus known today as “Amherst 63.” He began with an inquiry to Herbert Thompson, whose work on that papyrus was known to him from an inquiry that Griffith had sent to Spiegelberg in 1921.²⁰⁴ According to the letter that Nims wrote to Bowman on Feb. 5, 1943, Thompson was “certain that this papyrus was among those delivered to the Morgan Library.”²⁰⁵ Oddly enough, Thompson said nothing in his letter about Giron’s pioneering work on the papyrus (also to be discussed in the sequel to this article), an omission that Nims was later to attribute to Thompson’s infirmity.

In the same letter to Bowman, Nims urged Bowman to ask Harold E. Nelson, Acting Director of the Oriental Institute, to write to the Morgan Library requesting permission to publish the document. On Feb. 10, Nelson wrote to Belle Greene about the matter, enclosing photostats of the Spiegelberg photographs.²⁰⁶

Once again, Greene began to wonder about the whereabouts of part of the Amherst collection, and once again she ignored the detailed letter sent to her by Lamacraft in 1929. In her letter granting permission to the Oriental Institute to publish the text, Greene informed Nelson that, as she had failed to

²⁰³ Janet H. Johnson and George R. Hughes to Richard C. Steiner, April 14, 1989.

²⁰⁴ F. Ll. Griffith to Wilhelm Spiegelberg, February 8, 1921, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. This is the “note from F. Ll. Griffith” mentioned in Hughes’ reminiscence.

²⁰⁵ Charles F. Nims to Raymond A. Bowman, February 5, 1942 [sic, for 1943], Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²⁰⁶ Harold E. Nelson to Belle da Costa Greene, February 10, 1943 (carbon copy), Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. See at nn. 222 and 228 below.

find anything in the Library matching the photostats, she had forwarded them to Theodore C. Petersen of St. Paul's College in Washington D.C. to see if he could shed any light on the matter.²⁰⁷

Petersen had been interested in the Amherst collection for some time, and he vividly remembered Reich's search for the missing Demotic papyri. Indeed, he too had participated in that search, as shown by a handwritten note added to the carbon copy of Reich's report in the Morgan Library: "No. 52 is still in London acc. to letter of Mr Lamacraft [sic] (dated Dec. 5, 1929) to Miss Greene. T. P. Dec. 8, 1930."²⁰⁸

Fortunately, Petersen still had detailed notes on Lamacraft's letter. Based on those notes, he correctly conjectured that "the 'six sheets (possibly of magical texts)' ... may be the papyri represented by Dr. Nelson's photographs."²⁰⁹ Already on February 25, 1943, Nelson had Petersen's letter, forwarded by Greene. It had taken only two weeks to establish, in a three-cornered exchange of letters (Chicago-New York-Washington-New York-Chicago), that Thompson was mistaken: "It has not yet come to this country and remains in the British Museum."²¹⁰

In April, 1945, a year after Thompson's death, Nims sent a letter to the demotist Stephen R. K. Glanville in London, calling his attention to Bowman's article. In his reply, Glanville told him about the Thompson-Giron correspondence, which he had in his possession. In the following month, Nims received permission to leave his unit in Rouen, France, for a brief visit

²⁰⁷ Belle da Costa Greene to Harold E. Nelson, February 17, 1943, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²⁰⁸ Nathaniel J. Reich to Belle da Costa Greene (carbon copy of typed copy), undated, The Morgan Library and Museum. The handwritten original is dated April 13, 1929.

²⁰⁹ Theodore C. Petersen to Belle da Costa Greene, February 19, 1943, typed copy, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²¹⁰ Raymond A. Bowman, "An Aramaic Religious Text in Demotic Script," *JNES* 3 (1944): 219 n. 2.

to England. He arrived there on June 15 and saw Glanville four days later.²¹¹ In addition to showing him Thompson's transliteration and Giron's letter, Glanville arranged for him to visit the still-closed British Museum to find his papyrus:

Glanville told me that I ought to try to locate the papyrus itself and made an appointment for me with Dr. Eric Millar, keeper of Mss at the BM. (The BM is not yet open to the public or scholars.) Glanville was very anxious about this—I discovered why when I got to the BM the next day.

When your article reached England, Sidney Smith saw it and particularly noted the fact that the papyrus was at the BM. Everyone became highly excited about it, as no one knew a thing about it!^[212] There was no record that the BM ever had custody of these papyri. Eventually an investigation showed that they had been left unofficially in care of Lamacraft.... When the war came, he put the papyri in boxes and put them in the basement for safe keeping. Evidently his death was recent, for the BM had correspondence with him concerning the Morgan papyri subsequent to the publication of your article. When I arrived they had one pile of papyri between heavy bristol boards, and one box, unopened. We went through the pile and found other of the Amherst papyri, but not ours. Then we opened the box, and found the whole lot, mounted between glass, but not finally prepared. All the pieces had been straightened out, and are in as good condition as when the photo was taken, I think. However,

²¹¹ Charles F. Nims to Raymond A. Bowman, July 2, 1945, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; Charles F. Nims to Raymond A. Bowman, July 4, 1945, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²¹² The British Museum employees who knew most about the Amherst papyri were no longer working there when Bowman's article reached England. Lamacraft had retired in 1939. Glanville, who had supervised Lamacraft's mounting of fragmentary copies of the Book of the Dead from the Amherst collection while working as a curator in the BM (see at nn. 182-83 above), had left in 1933. There is no indication in Nims' letter that Glanville told him anything about that history.

examination shows that not all the mounting—the joining of the pieces and fragments—is correct, and it will all have to be re-examined....²¹³

According to Nims, the BM officials were at a loss to know how to proceed:

Dr. Millar wanted to know what to do with the papyri. He would have been willing to have me take it, and if I had been going to the US I would have done so. I told him to write to the Morgan Library. I wish that you would write to them and ask them to request the papyri be sent to the US as soon as possible. They will place it between bristol board—it cannot be sent in the glass.²¹⁴

On Aug. 11, 1945, Bowman wrote to Belle Greene at the Morgan Library, conveying the essence of Nims' letter but with a bold new twist: the Amherst Demotic papyri should be “shipped home at once,” and sent to the Oriental Institute in Chicago where a corps of specialists would prepare them properly for mounting.²¹⁵ Greene was not overly impressed by this proposal; she had received a very similar one from Kelsey twenty years earlier.²¹⁶ On Sept. 7, she answered Bowman's letter with a brief note, totally ignoring his proposal:

It is seemingly not possible to have these shipped here at this time, and as a letter just received from Dr. Millar tells me that he is just off on his holiday, I will await the time of his return and ask if he knows when they can be shipped.²¹⁷

²¹³ Charles F. Nims to Raymond A. Bowman, July 4, 1945, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Raymond A. Bowman to Belle da Costa Greene, August 11, 1945 (carbon copy), Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²¹⁶ See at n. 165 above.

²¹⁷ Belle da Costa Greene to Raymond A. Bowman, September 7, 1945, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

In October 1945, Greene wrote to the British Museum, requesting that the remaining papyri be shipped to the Morgan Library,²¹⁸ but it was not until mid-September 1947 that the papyri finally arrived in New York,²¹⁹ after another visit to the British Museum by Nims in the spring of 1947.²²⁰ Shortly after their arrival, they were unpacked by Petersen.²²¹ Nims, too, visited the Morgan Library around this time. A few months later, he reported on his visit in a letter to Edgerton from Chicago House in Luxor:

The Amherst enigmatic papyrus arrived at the Morgan Library in September. I looked at it and it seems to have come through in fair shape—photostats of the first sheet indicate some small loss on that badly damaged section since the time the photos were made in 1901.[²²²] There is some erroneous joining, and I ought to work on it this next summer. Whether I can personally afford to spend time in New York I do not know.²²³

While at the Morgan, Nims “enquired about the publication of the demotic papyri and learned that, to the best of the knowledge of Miss Belle de Costa Greene and her associates, no one had requested the rights of publication.”²²⁴

²¹⁸ Theodore C. Petersen’s notes on p. 55 of his personal copy of Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, Mullen Library, The Catholic University of America.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*; Charles F. Nims to William F. Edgerton, January 9, 1947 [sic, for 1948], Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; Charles F. Nims to Frederick B. Adams, Jr., August 15, 1958 (original unsent letter), Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago..

²²⁰ Charles F. Nims, “The Demotic-Aramaic Papyrus,” research proposal submitted to Thorkild Jacobsen [August 15, 1949] (original and carbon copy), Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²²¹ Theodore C. Petersen’s notes on p. 55 of his personal copy of Newberry, *Amherst Papyri*, Mullen Library, The Catholic University of America.

²²² These are, no doubt, the photostats of Spiegelberg photographs that had been sent to the Morgan by the Acting Director of the Oriental Institute in 1943; see at n. 206 above and at n. 228 below.

²²³ Charles F. Nims to William F. Edgerton, January 9, 1947 [sic, for 1948],

By this time, there was no longer any question of the papyri being prepared for mounting in Chicago, since the Morgan Library had already asked Petersen to help with that task. Petersen got to work on the papyri soon after they arrived. Not surprisingly, they were shipped “without identification.”²²⁵ Petersen’s inventory, dated Nov. 3, 1947, shows that he made a valiant attempt to match them with their Newberry Catalogue numbers.²²⁶ His entry for the “Aramaic-Demotic” papyrus originally read “63-65 (= one roll) in 2 folders each = 6 folders.” Later that day, Petersen found another Demotic papyrus, a “long strip – Demotic,” to which he was unable to assign the number 66, since the Demotic section of the Newberry Catalogue ends with 65. He then crossed out “63-65” and wrote “no. LXIII” by its side, assigning the number “LXIV” to the long strip. It appears that Petersen also prepared the small labels that are pasted on the papyrus today. These labels, which were not on the papyrus in Thompson’s time, identify the papyrus as “LXIII” and number the columns.²²⁷

That it did not take very long to change the designation of the papyrus from “63-65” to “63” is evident from a second note, also dated Nov. 3, which

Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²²⁴ Charles F. Nims to Frederick B. Adams, Jr., August 53, 1958, original unsent letter, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²²⁵ Frederick B. Adams, Jr. to John A. Wilson, January 27, 1950, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²²⁶ Theodore C. Petersen, “Egyptian Papyri Amherst (Newberry Catalogue) (for Mr. M. Brewer),” November 3, 1947, The Morgan Library and Museum.

²²⁷ In numbering the columns, Petersen fell into a trap that Thompson had fallen into earlier. In the sequel to this article, we shall see that, when Nims finally got to see the papyrus in 1945, he was able to confirm an earlier hunch that the “column” that is split between the first two sheets of the papyrus and is labeled 4 on the papyrus today actually consists of parts of two different columns. In 1945, before the labels were pasted on the papyrus, Nims’ plan was to number these 4 and 5. That plan was abandoned decades later after Nims became aware of the labels. Instead, he began to use the numbers 4A and 4B.

states: “no 63 lies in the black trunk (with photostats).”²²⁸ A third note in the same handwriting, apparently pasted on or in the “black trunk,” points out that of the six sheets of LXIII, “sheet no. 1 (very fragmentary) has no writing on the rear and can be mounted on cardboard” while “sheets no. 2 to 6 have writing also on the rear and must be mounted between 2 plates of glass.”²²⁹

By 1949, it had become clear that Greene had made a mistake in not pursuing Bowman’s proposal. On Oct. 13 of that year, the new director of the Morgan Library, Frederick B. Adams Jr., wrote to the reference secretary of the Oriental Institute about the Amherst Egyptian papyri:

Our problem for the past year or so has been to get the help of a scholar in preparing the sheets for reframing between glass plates. Unfortunately, the scholar we selected, the Rev. T. C. Petersen, a Paulist father, has been on several active missions for the Church and has found no time yet to devote to this project, although he hopes to get to work on it soon.²³⁰

A few months later, on Jan. 27, 1950, Adams turned to John A. Wilson of the Oriental Institute for help:

Dr. T. C. Petersen has been very helpful to us in preparing these papyri for framing, but unfortunately he had time to complete only a part of the job before he was called to church work in Boston.

We would like very much to find somebody who could help us to complete the job of arranging and identification and I wonder if

²²⁸ Theodore C. Petersen’s note giving the location of Amherst Egyptian papyri in the Morgan Library and Museum, November 3, 1947, The Morgan Library and Museum. For the identity of these photostats, see n. 222 above. I would conjecture that the “black trunk” had been used to ship the papyrus to New York.

²²⁹ Theodore C. Petersen’s note on Papyrus LXIII, [November 3, 1947], The Morgan Library and Museum.

²³⁰ Frederick B. Adams, Jr. to Jessie Abbott, October 13, 1949, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

you could suggest anybody in the New York area for this work. If not, is it possible that somebody from your department in Chicago might be available for work in the East during a vacation period? I imagine that the job would not take more than a week or two at the most.²³¹

It was too late. By this time, Nims was busy with a new post in Egypt, and there was no one else with both the interest and the expertise to do the work.

Once again, the Amherst Demotic papyri found themselves forsaken. After spending two-and-a-half years in storage in Norfolk and three-and-a-half decades in storage at the British Museum, they would spend an additional three-and-a-half decades in storage at the Morgan Library. At the Morgan they were even less accessible to scholars than they had been at the BM, and at least one of them, the Aramaic text in Demotic script, was more vulnerable to damage. In the BM, that text was mounted between glass plates, probably from 1920/1921 to 1945/1947.²³² In the Morgan, by contrast, it was stored in green blotting paper folders until 1981. In that year, it was finally mounted again between glass plates, protecting it from damage and making it

²³¹ Frederick B. Adams, Jr. to John A. Wilson, January 27, 1950, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

²³² For the terminus post quem, see Charles T. Lamacraft to Albert M. Lythgoe, November 15, 1920, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Lamacraft had already purchased the glass for all of the Demotic papyri, and Thompson had called to offer to help with them); and F.L.I. Griffith to Wilhelm Spiegelberg, February 8, 1921, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (Griffith and Thompson had become intrigued by the Aramaic text in Demotic script, and Thompson had begun to study it seriously; see the sequel to this article). For the terminus ante quem, see Charles F. Nims to Raymond A. Bowman, July 4, 1945, Archives, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (at n. 213 above); and see at n. 219 above. It is not clear from Nims' letter whether the other Demotic papyri were also in the box mounted between glass plates or among the "pile of papyri between heavy bristol boards."

possible for scholars to study it in the original.²³³ During the years that it was left unmounted, the text suffered losses. The photographs taken for Spiegelberg are good enough to show that the amount of text lost since 1901 is by no means negligible, but they are not always good enough to restore the lost text with confidence.

In short, the history of the Amherst Demotic papyri can be viewed as a series of misfortunes and missed opportunities. Not a few of these involved lapses as simple as failing to write a letter. In the sequel to this article, I shall show that the first promising attempt to decipher the Aramaic text in Demotic script, made in 1931-32 by an eminent Aramaist, was nipped in the bud by just such a failure. There is more than enough grist here for the mill of those who choose to believe in the curse of Lady Amherst's mummy.

²³³ Prior to that time, scholars were able to purchase a microfilm prepared by the Morgan in 1976.