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Results of the 1971 Expedition

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NORTHERN IRELAND is beautiful, from the Glens of Antrim to the fantastic Giant's Causeway, from history's heroes to the city of Belfast, from lovely Belfast Bay to the rolling hills of the Mountains of Mourne. Down to the sea, it was to Derrypatrick on the coast that the only a few miles from these same mountains Patrick sailed in A.D. 432. He is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland, but he seems to have organized a church already existing. His first church is reputed to have been a barn at Derrypatrick. Many great names come to Ulster, and given to the world a variety of famous men in proportion to her size and population. Many presidents of the U.S.A. were at Ulster, and distinguished soldiers include Field Marshal Montgomery and Field Marshal Montgomery and Field Marshal Montgomery...
Excavating Biblical Heshbon in 1971—1

RESULTS

By SIEGFRIED H. HORN

of the 1971 Expedition

[In the preceding three articles, the history of Heshbon and that of the Andrews University Heshbon expedition have been presented, as well as the organization of this past summer’s expedition and the archaeological methods employed.]

Arab Remains. Since Heshbon was an important city in certain periods after the seventh-century A.D. Arab conquest, it is not surprising that we find extensive remains of those periods in the top layers of the mound. We discovered that in Arab times the summit of the mound had been transformed into a square surrounded on three sides with buildings containing vaulted rooms, one of which we excavated. Only the eastern side of the plaza was left open. In this way the morning sun could warm up the square while the buildings protected it from the disagreeable and frequently chilly strong west winds.

Water channels were laid into the stone pavement of the square to direct the water of the winter rains into cisterns, of which so far six have been excavated in Areas A and D. Some of these cisterns may have been in existence before the Arab period and subsequently put to use. One of them is a huge structure, one of the largest cisterns found in any excavation—more than 30 feet deep, 25 feet long, and 13 feet wide, giving it a capacity of more than 70,000 gallons.

The nature of the vaulted structures is not known. They may have been shops or rooms belonging to an administrative complex. The fact that in the excavated vaulted building 19 small unbaked clay weights, all of identical size, were found, may suggest that the building was a government office from which official weights were issued, or it could have been a weight factory.

In Area C we uncovered part of an Arab building that had a stone bench along the south side, a part of it covered with plaster. A column drum from an earlier building had been used in the construction of the bench. In this room a series of slingstones was found, some loom weights, many badly oxidized iron objects, and a little clay lamp con-

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A contour map of the acropolis of Heshbon shows the positions of Areas A to D. The squares worked in the 1971 excavations are shown in black.
An Arab building in Area C yielded a small clay lamp, hoarding 66 Mamluk coins.

Underneath the floor of this building what was probably a still-born baby had been buried. The body had been wrapped in a cloth—now completely disintegrated—of which the fiber had left impressions in the dirt. A metal buckle-like object lay in the shoulder area while tiny glass beads, which had probably been sewn to the cloth, were found in the pelvic region. A large flat shard coming from a huge storage jar covered up the little burial. Archeology is in part a discovery of human tragedy; in this case a little child laid to rest in the basement of the grieving mother's house.

End of Arab City

The reasons for the end of the Arab city of Heshbon are unknown. Arab historical sources mention the city until the fourteenth century A.D. but not later. This agrees with the archeological evidence that has not produced any occupational remains of a later period. Perhaps a devastating earthquake destroyed the city and drove its surviving population away, or an epidemic of the plague may have wiped out the city. The mound lay completely unoccupied until members of four Bedouin tribes were settled on its south-eastern slopes several decades ago by the Nabulsi family. These settled Bedouins live in the present village of Heshbon, and many served as our workmen.

The Byzantine Period. The most impressive remains of the Byzantine period, which preceded the Arab invasion, are the ruins of a Christian church in Areas A and D and a lime kiln in Area B. Already in the 1968 season we had excavated the apse at the eastern end of the church, three of its northern column bases, the foundation courses of the northern outside wall, and fragments of multi-colored mosaic floors in the apse and in the central aisle.

During this summer's work one more base was uncovered of the northern row of columns, and two bases in situ belonging to the southern row. At the same time parts of the southern outside wall were found. It has become evident from this season's work that the Heshbon church, probably the seat of the bishop of that city, was a typical basilica-type structure with three aisles, with the central aisle separated from the side aisles by rows of columns. Since we have not yet excavated the western end of the church, we do not know how long the building was. However, it is certain that it had at least five columns, six on each side, because we have so far found six column bases in situ and five dislocated in various places within the church ruin.

The evidence shows three building or reconstruction phases, the last one in the second half of the sixth century A.D., as attested by the mosaic floor in the apse. The sixth-century dating of that mosaic had earlier been suggested on stylistic grounds by Dr. Ute Lux, one of the foremost experts on mosaics. This date was confirmed in 1970 when, at another site, a mosaic was uncovered by Dr. Bastiaan Van Elderen, one of Heshbon's 1968 Area Supervisors, that shows the same type of fruit tree as the Heshbon mosaic and carries a datable inscription.

The church was destroyed soon after its last reconstruction, probably in the seventh century. During that century Palestine experienced two major invasions: in 614 occurred an invasion by the Persians, who destroyed many of the Christian churches, and in 654 one by the Arabs, who generally did not harm churches. It is therefore assumed that Heshbon's church was destroyed by the Persians. In that case the Arabs found it in ruins, and, after leveling off the debris, transformed the place into a plaza, surrounding it with vaulted structures on three sides, as has already been described.

In Area B we excavated a large lime kiln from Byzantine times. It is a round stone structure that had the base cut into earlier strata. Part of that structure protruding into Square I of Area B had already been removed in the 1968 season. During the last three years, owing to the heavy winter rains, much of the loose rubble that had filled the kiln to the brim had slipped into the deeper and excavated part of the square. It took us about two weeks to remove the tons of waste material from the square, as well as from the kiln. But now, in its excavated and cleaned state, it is an impressive monument of Byzantine workmanship.

Walls of domestic houses from the Byzantine period came to light also in Area C, where we made a rather unusual find. When a huge stone was removed a small unbroken late-Roman glass vessel was found underneath it. That such a delicate vessel escaped injury under such a heavy stone, as well as under a three-yard-thick layer of debris, is almost miraculous—one of the occasional impossible situations that archeologists encounter.

The Roman City

Roman Times. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus mentions in his writings that Heshbon was an important garrison city during the time of Christ and the apostles. The importance of the city in Roman times has been confirmed by the discovery of rich first-century tombs (to be described in the next article), as well as by evidence of Roman building activities and occupation on the mound itself. Two of the church walls belonged originally to structures built in Roman times and were incorporated into the church building.

Even building stones of earlier Roman structures were taken over as is attested by a carved Corinthian capital used as one of the foundation stones of the semicircular apsidal wall of the church. Why this capital was not reused in the church as a capital for a column is difficult to understand, but its discovery in the church foundations clearly shows how the Christian builders cannibalized Roman public buildings, perhaps temples, to obtain building material for their own constructions.

A large cave with a well-built gate at the entrance outside the church reached underneath it as far as the apse. The cave contained several walls supporting the roof. An anvil-like stone and a fireplace were found in it to suggest that it might have been an artisan's workshop, perhaps that of a cobbler or a shoemaker. In Byzantine times it was abandoned, its entrance filled in, and its existence forgotten. Remains of other Roman structures were discovered also in the other areas on the mound together with a
great amount of early- and late-Roman pottery.

Hellenistic and Persian Periods. Both Hellenistic and Persian periods, reaching from the first century B.C. back to the sixth century, have so far been poorly represented by remains discovered at Heshbon. Some Hellenistic pottery has been discovered in Areas B and D and, in 1968, a few Persian-period sherds were found in Area A together with an inscribed potsherds, an ostracon, dated on palaeographical grounds to c. 500 B.C. This ostracon contains a list of names, perhaps made up for tax purposes. The ostracon is of interest in showing the national mixture of Heshbon's population in the Persian period. Of the five names listed, one is Babylonian, one Egyptian, and two Semitic, while the nature of the first-mentioned name is uncertain because of its poor preservation. The situation illustrated by this ostracon is similar to that of the Jews in the same period who had just returned to Palestine from the Babylonian exile. As attested by the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, many among them had foreign names.

The Period of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Area B produced a deep fill more than 15 feet deep, which contained a great amount of Ammonite pottery from the seventh-sixth century B.C. The debris containing this pottery must have come from the summit of the mound, from where it was removed to make room for new buildings. This removal may have been done in Persian, Hellenistic, or Roman times. A strong wall, already discovered in Area B in 1968, that is more than 15 feet deep, was set into this seventh-sixth-century fill. So far we have not been able to date the origins of this wall, a problem whose solution will be sought during the next season.

Also in other areas, notably in C and D, sherds from seventh-sixth-century levels were uncovered, but so far no architectural remains of the Moabite and Ammonite Heshbon, as mentioned in the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah, have been discovered.

The discovery of large amounts of fine seventh-sixth-century Ammonite pottery is in itself a cause for genuine satisfaction. Prior to the excavations of Heshbon this type of pottery was known only from several tombs discovered in Amman and its vicinity. Heshbon is the first site where it has come to light in a stratigraphically controlled dig. It is a fine ceramic ware, indicating the existence of wealth among the Ammonites in a time when Judea in western Palestine had become an impoverished nation, and was on the verge of being swallowed up by the Babylonians. A study of this pottery found during the 1968 season was made by Edward Lugebehal, of the University of Wisconsin, and James Sauer, of Harvard University, and is to appear in the January, 1972, number of the Andrews University Seminary Studies (Vol. X, No. 1). The pottery discovered during the 1971 season will be studied by Sauer and published as a separate monograph, probably in 1974.

The Remains of the Earliest Heshbon. Where are the remains of Solomon's Heshbon when the city was an administrative center of one of the great king's provinces? And where are the remains of King Solomon's Heshbon, conquered and occupied by the Israelites under the leadership of that great man Moses?

Aside from a few Early Iron Age shards (twelfth-ninth century B.C.) and one certain Late Bronze Age sherd (sixteenth-twelfth century B.C.) found in 1968, nothing has so far been unearthed at Tell Heshbon earlier than the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Whether that part of the mound containing the earlier Heshbon has by accident not yet been touched by our picks and hoes or whether the Heshbon of Moses' and Solomon's time was situated at another site is not yet known. Some archeological surveying was begun in the surrounding area. So far no promising candidate for an earlier Heshbon has been found. The solution to the problem will be a major task at the next season of excavations.

[Next Week: Results of the 1971 Expedition—2.]

FOR THE YOUNGER SET

Melissa and Two Prayers

By MARYE TRIM

THE guard waved his flag. The whistle blew. Then the train chuff-chuffed away from Masterton station, in New Zealand. On the platform a waving good-bye, stood four-year-old Melissa, clutching a shiny black doll in a green gingham dress.

"Your mother will come back another day," said the thin lady who stood beside Melissa. "Stop your sniffling at once!"

Melissa hugged her doll tighter and followed the thin lady, who never smiled, to a house called an orphanage. "This is where you sleep," said the thin lady. He gave her two pieces of sweets and was so kind that Melissa stayed, in bed for many days, that she did not get well. She cried under her white bed cover because she felt sick and sad and because she did not have her mummy anymore since he became ill. And she especially cried for mummy. Under the white cover she asked Jesus whether He would help her to see her mummy soon.

A few mornings later a doctor examined Melissa. He gave her two pieces of sweets and was so kind that Melissa whispered to him all about her heartaches and her prayer.

The doctor told the thin lady, "Melissa needs a holiday."

So Melissa and the shiny doll pressed noses into Punishment Corner. But still Melissa could not eat properly, or sleep properly.

One day the thin lady stared at Melissa. "You look sickly. You must stay in bed until you are well."

So Melissa stayed, in bed for many days, but she did not get well. She cried under her white bed cover because she felt sick and sad and because she did not have her mummy anymore since he became ill. And she especially cried for mummy.

One day the thin lady stared at Melissa. "You look sickly. You must stay in bed until you are well."

So Melissa stayed, in bed for many days, but she did not get well. She cried under her white bed cover because she felt sick and sad and because she did not have her mummy anymore since he became ill. And she especially cried for mummy. Under the white cover she asked Jesus whether He would help her to see her mummy soon.

A few mornings later a doctor examined Melissa. He gave her two pieces of sweets and was so kind that Melissa whispered to him all about her heartaches and her prayer.

The doctor told the thin lady, "Melissa needs a holiday."

So next time the guard waved his flag, and the passenger train chuffed away, Melissa and her shiny doll were aboard. The doll's carriage and the tricycle remained at the orphanage for the children who had neither parents nor toys of their own.

When Melissa saw her mother her heart and eyes and voice all said to her, "My mummy!"

"Mummy gasped at her pale, thin daughter. "Please, God," she prayed, "help me, so we can stay together always."

Melissa knew her own prayer was answered. And soon God gave Melissa and mummy a home together. That made two prayers answered! So Melissa ate and skipped and smiled again.