

NEWS LETTER

NOVEMBER 1946

Mr. and Mrs. Charles House returned to this country on September 28th, after a busy and fruitful year at the School. A warm welcome awaited them at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees on September 30th. They are here for a brief visit of about two months to be with Mr. House's mother, who is past ninety-six, and to discuss with the trustees important school matters. We were all eager to hear the story of the latest happenings at the School, and a report of conditions in Greece from the viewpoint of the Director of the American Farm School.

Charles House reported that upon his arrival in Athens a year ago he was informed from various sources of the disquieting attitude of the people and of their unwillingness to work, but from his observation he found that the Greek farmer had achieved remarkable results with the most meager facilities. In the rehabilitation of the school and work relief projects men of all shades of political opinion from villages surrounding the School worked together with enthusiasm.

The summer months have been very active. In June, a tractor training course was given at the School, under the joint auspices of UNRRA, the Government Agricultural and Mechanical Services and the Near East Foundation. The older boys and about forty agriculturists attended it. Then there was the harvest, a bountiful one this year, both for the Farm and for all of Greece. Yields at the School were over 35 bushels of wheat to the acre and correspondingly good yields of barley and oats. The School's wheat crop will be largely turned over to the Greek government for seed distribution. Construction and repair have continued. The demand at the School for young pigs for breeding purposes has been increasing at an almost exasperating rate. The arrival of a ship load of Large Black and Large White hogs as a gift from Southern Rhodesia to Greece, found the School suddenly possessed of twelve more sows, including our first Large Whites. Something had to be done about housing them and this summer has seen fourteen new hog pens added to the existing twelve.

Grading and excavations for the new dairy barn are going forward. The old one, built so many years ago that its beams have rotted, would have needed extensive and costly repairs. The offspring of Borden's famous Elsie, after their air passage to Athens, were obliged to go through the rugged experience of the four hundred mile drive over war-torn roads from Athens to Salonica. They survived the adventure, apparently without ill effects. Before their departure from Athens, Mr. House accepted for the School this gift, made through the Greek War Relief Association to the Greek people, in an international broadcast. The calves have a place fenced off for them under the trees by the dairy so they can rest in the shade and out of doors. We hope that before long the new dairy barn will be ready to receive them. Our new Diesel engine for the power plant has been installed, and before the Houses left, the last preparations were being completed for the opening of school on October 3rd. A cable on that date brought word that classes had started with 100 boys enrolled in the first two classes and 40 girls.

The girls, whose training this year again is under the sponsorship and administration of the British Society of Friends, are a great asset to the school community. In May, Mrs. House wrote of the celebration of Dr. House's birthday, which has been made Founder's Day, "In the evening there was the loveliest festival that I think we have ever had here at the School. For the first time there were school girls to participate in it as well as boys. The girls came out, in aprons of their own making,



and the boys in their overalls, the school uniform, and together all sang the school song. Then in the distance we heard the boys singing the Greek agricultural song, and in a moment Old Maudie appeared, very sleek and shining, drawing the farm wagon with the boys marching behind, carrying not guns but hoes and rakes, pitch forks, scythes and sickles. They marched across the playground and away to the fields down the road. By this time it was dusk and while some of the girls sang, the others came out bearing lighted torches, dressed in the flowing white robes of ancient Greeks, and they did one of the lovely rhythmic Greek folk dances. They danced with such poise and grace. I kept thinking of the contrast between these girls now and the same girls six months ago - suspicious and scared and underfed. When they had finished their dance the boys returned with six or eight carts, and the school donkey, loaded with sheaves of wheat, and another group of girls ran to meet them and helped bring in the sheaves."

Many visitors continue to come to the School. In another letter from Mrs. House in September, she wrote, "We have again had lots of American boys at the Farm. Two American destroyers were in the Bay of Salonica and bus loads of sailor boys came to visit the Farm. Toward evening all went over to the stadium to a program of Greek choral music and Greek folk dancing; nearly 150 people took part and there were about 800 in the audience. The papers have so much to say about killings that we were glad that our American boys could see the Greeks at play. One of the boys said, 'I really feel as if I were at home again, and it's the first time I've felt that way since I went to sea'."

We take pride in the fact that Argyrios Dermendjis, a graduate of the School, who has been for some time in charge of the school dairy, is one of the twenty or thirty, out of 750 applicants, to receive an UNRRA scholarship for study in this country. He is here now on leave of absence, studying dairying and dairy industries. While in New York in the late summer we were able to help him to find his way around and to make arrangements for him to visit various dairy plants in New York and nearby, as well as the State Agricultural School at Farmingdale, Long Island. He is particularly interested in the process of making cheese, which he hopes might be introduced at the School.

We are glad to introduce our new Executive Secretary, Mrs. Lawrence H. Shepard, who came to us in September. Mrs. Shepard is a Smith graduate, and comes to us from the Welfare Council of the City of New York. Prior to that she had ten years' experience as Executive and General Secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association in New York City and Washington, D. C. She comes to the School with deep interest in the type of work which the School is doing and a realization of its importance to the welfare of Greece. We extend to her a warm welcome and ask your cooperation in her efforts to further the interests of the School.

The coming year will greatly tax the resources of the School. Encouraging though the progress has been during the past months, one year cannot make up for all that could not be done through the war years. By 1947 we hope that an increased number of boys can be enrolled. In order to do this, the plant must be improved so that there will be no breakdown in vital services, - more teachers, more equipment, more space will be needed. We are redoubling our efforts, for by helping to improve living conditions in rural Greece, through the Christian vision and unselfish service of these young people, we are striking at the root of the turmoil and unrest of that part of the world, and thus helping to build the road to peace.

Craig R. Smith

President, Board of Trustees