

AMERICAN FARM SCHOOL THESSALONICA, GREECE

Founded by REV. JOHN HENRY HOUSE, D. D.

CHARLES L. HOUSE, Director

MRS. ETHEL H. BLISS, Executive Secretary

17 EAST 42nd STREET,

NEW YORK CITY

NEWS LETTER

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The last News Letter about the American Farm School closed with a picture of the Farm looking its very best in all the full glory of Spring.

Exhibition Day came on the 11th of June with the fields ready for harvest and a year's work in shops and fields ready for the annual exhibition. The new threshing machine was assembled just in time, adding much to the interest of the occasion. There was a record crowd of 800 people to see the exhibition and to listen to the address by Mr. M. L. Wilson, Under-Secretary of Agriculture, from Washington, D.C. Mr. Wilson happened to be in Greece and consented to visit the School and give the talk. He was accompanied by Dr. Charles E. Kellogg, a soils expert. Dr. Kellogg took time in their short visit to go around with Dr. Doolas of the Science Department. They were able to do some testing on the School farm as well as on those of the neighboring communities.

The grain harvest itself, for which the senior class remained after graduation, was a time of great rejoicing because with the help of the new threshing machine it was accomplished so much more quickly and smoothly. Mr. House estimated that it saved some six weeks of time and labor, and several hundred dollars in actual money.

On July 4th Mr. House gave a talk before the Greek American Association in Athens. This trip to Athens made it possible for him to go over to the Island of Chios to see the progress made on the buildings of the agricultural school there. This school, patterned after the American Farm School, opened its doors for the first time this Fall and those in charge have been very grateful for the help and advice which Mr. House has given to them in planning the buildings and equipment as well as the program.

On July 17th, 600 people attended the dedication of the Boys Scout Camp on Mount Hortiach just behind the city of Thessalonica. A medal was presented to Mr. House for his help in the planning and construction of the Camp buildings.

The Odyssey Cruise stopped at Thessalonica for the first time on July 30th. Although the ship remained in the harbor only part of a day, it was possible for Mr. and Mrs. House to take quite a delegation out to the School. Among these was Mrs. Louise Benedict Harmon of New York.

On July 31st, Mr. Demeter Hadjis, Superintendent of the Agricultural Department, was married to Miss Efthemia Economou. The wedding was held at the School, with the Assistant Director of the Thessalonica University Farm as best man. The priest who married them is the father of one of the 1935 graduates; and the ice cream was made in the new ice cream freezer which arrived as a gift from America just in time.

Mr. and Mrs. Hadjis are still living in temporary quarters awaiting the completion of their little cottage. We are looking for friends who would like to help by sending the price of a few shingles. The cottage has been built with special gifts which as yet have not quite covered the cost of the building.

August brought five more guests from the United States. Although there is little activity at the School and the fields and gardens are parched and dry, Mr. and Mrs. House were able to take some of these guests out into the villages with them to visit some of the graduates and to select scholarship students. In spite of the physical difficulties of roads and stopping places, one of these visitors came back deeply impressed with the need in the villages for just such leaders as are being prepared at the American Farm School. The thing that impressed her most, however, was that the boys who had spent even as much as one year at the School showed in face and attitude the influence and training received there.

It was not until the first of September that Mr. and Mrs. House could get away for a much needed vacation, which they spent in a quiet place in Jugoslavia.

The school began its new year on the 19th of September with an enrollment of 128 boys. The world crisis in September and October brought its share of anxiety to those in charge but the school life and routine moved on smoothly and without interruption.

October brought a very interesting visitor to the School in the person of Mr. Igor Sikorsky, the designer and manufacturer of the Sikorsky planes. He was on his way to Mount Athos from the Lilienthall Congress in Berlin where he was entertained by Marshall Goering at dinner with Charles Lindbergh and others soon after the conference at Munich.

Mr. House notes that "during 1938 the School entertained at meals 1,129 people, over-night 307, and served refreshments to 1,176 callers. They represented all classes from peasants to King, from day laborers to manufacturing magnates, from students to great scientists, and from ordinary citizens to prominent statesmen".

November was a month full of interesting events - beginning with Arbor Day, a time when Government officials help in the tree planting program. This is the month in which the senior class makes its annual trip to the demonstration farm at Verria and to the farms of graduates settled in the neighboring towns. Dr. Doolas, who was in charge of the

trip, gave a very interesting report of the itinerary and program which was carried out and a digest of the seven interesting talks that were given by leaders and farmers at the various places.

Thanksgiving Day is one of the red letter days of the year - a time when the whole School and visiting friends, often as many as 300 persons, sit down together for the Thanksgiving dinner. The play prepared by the boys was not only given at that time but was later given in neighboring villages as well.

St. Nicholas Day, one of the big national holidays, comes early in December and was given over to appropriate celebrations, which included the national dances in costumes as well as other sports.

The gift from the Alden Fund of a much needed new pump arrived in December and gives promise of a much better supply of water as well as a decrease in the cost of pumping.

The Nativity play, supervised by Mr. George Gardner, which was such a success last year, was repeated with even greater success this year. It was given just before the boys left for their homes for the Christmas holidays.

The delay in sending out this News Letter early in January gives us an opportunity to tell about the trip which Mr. and Mrs. House took into Thrace the beginning of the year. They visited the homes of fifteen graduates and six students in six different towns. They were only able to stop at those towns on the main roads because of the heavy rains which had made the dirt roads going off to the villages from the main arteries impassable. They were very much pleased with the work which the boys are doing.

This delay also gives us the pleasure of announcing the birth on January 16th of a ten-pound daughter, Lucy Ann, to Mr. and Mrs. George Gardner of the School staff.

We are very glad to make the announcement in this News Letter that Mr. and Mrs. House are returning to the United States in the late Spring. We hope there will be many opportunities for them to meet the many friends of the School. They can be reached at any time through the New York office.

Ethel H. Bliss