

Her work with the Gordion frescoes led Lang to move to the Palace of Nestor at Pylos, where fresco fragments were also in urgent need of interpretation. She spent summers at Pylos with the University of Cincinnati Expedition from 1957 to 1964, and a full year in 1959-60 on a Fulbright Senior Fellowship. Her most important work was connected with the Pylos excavations. Every year from 1957 to 1964 she and Carl Blegen published the results of the summer's work at Pylos in the next spring's issue of the *American Journal of Archaeology*, thus displaying an efficiency that seems almost inconceivable when compared with the usual pace of archaeological publication today. These reports were divided into two parts, the first by Blegen giving a general overview of the results and the second by Lang providing transcriptions of all the new Linear B tablet fragments (sometimes over a hundred) unearthed during the season. Though these initial publications have since been superseded, they were extremely important at the time in giving the international community of Mycenaean scholars prompt and reliable access to the new material.

Lang's interpretive work on the Linear B tablets was also of great importance; though her published work in this area is small in volume, it had and continues to have a great impact on the field. Her method of analyzing the texts with a combination of linguistic and archaeological perspectives was ahead of its time when she first pioneered it but is now used regularly by Mycenologists. Lang was also noted in the field for her approachability and kindness to younger scholars, who made pilgrimages to Bryn Mawr to consult her.

Blegen's sections of the Pylos reports, which contain many admiring references to Lang's work, make it clear that the bulk of her time at Pylos was devoted not to the Linear B tablets but to the thousands of tiny fragments of fresco decoration recovered by the excavators. She cleaned, sorted, and reassembled these frescoes throughout the period of the excavation; it is said that one of her techniques for working out the original position of the scattered fragments was dropping crackers from a high ladder and observing how they broke. A few years later she published the fresco fragments as volume II of *The Palace of Nestor* (1969).

After publishing the Pylos material Lang turned more to work on the history and historiography of the classical period, though she also produced a guide to the Corinth Asklepieion in 1977. The major work of her post-archaeological period was *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse* (1984), which grew out of her Martin Classical Lectures given at Oberlin College in 1982. During this period she also published numerous articles on historical questions, chiefly in Herodotus and Thucydides.

Lang accumulated a range of academic honors, including honorary degrees from The College of the Holy Cross (1975), Colgate University (1978), and Hamilton College (1989). From 1975 to 1980, she served as Chair of the Managing Committee of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. In the fall of 1976 she was Blegen Distinguished Visiting Lecturer at Vassar College. Other honors included membership in the American Philosophical Society, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, German Archaeological Institute, Phi Beta Kappa, and Phi Kappa Phi.

## REMEMBERING MABEL LANG



**Thomas Library  
Bryn Mawr College  
3 April 2011  
3:00 p.m.**

## Program

Trio # 1 in F Major, Op.18---Saint Saens  
2nd movement: Andante

Welcome.....*Pat McPherson*

Mabel as Scholar.....*Rick Hamilton*

Trio # 1 in d Minor, Op. 49-----Mendelssohn  
2nd movement: Andante con moto tranquillo

Miss Lang as Teacher.....*Eleanor Dickey*

### Reflections

Trio in D Major, op.70, # 1, “The Ghost”----Beethoven  
1st movement: Allegro vivace e con brio

### Refreshments

Music by The Philadelphia Trio

*Barbara Sonies*.....Violin

*Deborah Reeder*..... Cello

*Elizabeth Keller*.....Piano



Contributions may be made to the Mabel L. Lang Fund in the Humanities  
with preference for Classics and Archaeology.

## Mabel Louise Lang (1917-2010)

Mabel Lang was born on November 12, 1917 in Utica, New York, and received her AB from Cornell in 1939. In the fall of 1939 she arrived as a graduate student at Bryn Mawr, where she would remain for the rest of her professional career. She completed her graduate work quickly in the midst of World War II, receiving her MA in 1940 and her PhD in 1943, and began teaching at the college immediately upon finishing. She was employed as an Instructor 1943-6, Assistant Professor 1946-50, Associate Professor 1950-9, and became a full professor in 1959. In 1971, upon the retirement of Richmond Lattimore, she received the title of Paul Shorey Professor of Greek, which she held until her official retirement in 1988. For many years after retirement she continued to teach for Bryn Mawr on an ad hoc basis, allowing more than half a century's worth of Bryn Mawr students to benefit from her extraordinary ability to bring out the best in them.

Though first and foremost a teacher, Lang also found time to present the world with twelve books and more than 50 articles; her contribution to scholarship during the 27 years in which she was chair of the Greek department and took no sabbaticals is particularly remarkable. Her writings are noted for their accuracy, clarity, and concision and received high acclaim from the scholarly community (more than 70 reviews of her books are listed in *L'Année Philologique*, many in the field's most prestigious journals). Despite being officially in the Greek rather than the Archaeology department, for most of her career Lang worked primarily on archaeological material. Most of her major publications arose from work on excavations at Pylos and at the Athenian Agora.

In 1947-8 she spent her first year in Greece as a Fellow of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, participating in excavations of the Agora. Among her memorable actions during the year was the suggestion that the Stoa of Attalus be rebuilt; this idea was received with enthusiasm, and the magnificently reconstructed building now serves as the Agora museum. Three volumes of the publication of the Agora excavations were entrusted to her: *Weights, Measures, and Tokens* (1964), *Graffiti and Dipinti* (1976), and *Ostraka* (1990).

Before the scholarly publications, however, Lang had already made a name for herself with more popular works on the Agora. Her first book, published in 1954, was a guidebook for visitors to the Agora, which became the model for many later editions by the directors of the Agora Excavations. She then began her long series of Agora picture books with *The Athenian Citizen* (1960), which was to be followed by *Waterworks* (1968), *Graffiti* (1974), *Socrates* (1978), and *Life, Death, and Litigation* (1994). These little picture books admirably fulfilled their goal of making the Agora results accessible to everyone and were widely praised.

Lang also worked on other excavations. From 1950 to 1956 she participated in excavations at Gordion in Phrygia sponsored by the Penn Museum, including a full year of study in 1953-4 courtesy of a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship. Her primary achievement there was excavating, reconstructing, and interpreting the Gordion frescoes, which she did in a manner described by a colleague as “the perfect unity of philology, field archaeology, and useful wit.”