

FROM CHICAGO TO JERUSALEM (AND BACK AGAIN)

THE UNTOLD STORY OF E. F. BEAUMONT

by Jack Green



ERNEST F. BEAUMONT AND HULDA LARSSON BEAUMONT, 1920S
AMERICAN COLONY ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS. THE AMERICAN COLONY HOTEL,
JERUSALEM.

The recent Oriental Institute Museum acquisition of the Lillian E. Beaumont Collection of Artworks by E. F. Beaumont provides new insights into the history of the American Colony, Jerusalem, the reception of images of the Holy Land — and some connections to the Oriental Institute.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, a young man named Ernest Forrest Beaumont (1871–1952) journeyed to Chicago from his native Kentucky in search of his future. He was soon to make an adventurous step into the unknown by joining the American Colony in Jerusalem, a Millennialist Christian community founded in 1881 by Chicago lawyer Horatio G. Spafford and his wife Anna. An American and Swedish-American group of new colonists that included Beaumont departed from Chicago in 1896 and joined this burgeoning utopian movement, followed shortly after by colonists from Sweden. Theirs was one of the multiple waves of immigration and missionary activity to the Holy Land in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following Anna Spafford's death in 1923, her daughter, Bertha Spafford Vester, assumed leadership of the American Colony. She became a major figure of Jerusalem life. Her account of the American Colony, *Our Jerusalem* (1950), stands as a unique record of tumultuous and transformative times in the city during the first half of the twentieth century. The Colony was engaged in a range of religious, charitable, political, and financial ventures — including stores and its hotel — but underwent significant changes and encountered a significant breakup of its members in 1929–1930. It continues today as the American Colony Hotel on Louis Vincent Street, East Jerusalem. Famous guests of the American Colony in its heyday included Lawrence of Arabia and Winston Churchill. John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Oriental Institute founder James Henry Breasted were among its visitors.



A STREET IN JERUSALEM

E Beaumont

"A STREET IN JERUSALEM," UNDATED (PROBABLY 1930S). ORIGINAL PEN AND INK ON PAPER. 19 X 28 CM.

E. F. Beaumont's role, as listed in the American Colony archives, was as the Colony's dentist (D.D.S., 1911). As a self-taught man, Beaumont also gained skills and experience as an artist, draftsman, surveyor, city engineer, and archaeologist, all desirable roles in the closing years of the Ottoman empire and in the British Mandate following the First World War. He made topographical models of Jerusalem and was also responsible for the "Plan of Jerusalem and Environs," which accompanied the *American Colony Palestine Guide* (1930). It is likely that he served as one of the American Colony's many

tour guides. Beaumont and his wife Hulda Larsson Beaumont were also involved in running the Christian Herald Orphanage as part of the American Colony's efforts to provide aid to Jerusalem's war orphans. Beaumont may have played a role in the early development of the American Colony's photographic department, which included among its famed photographers Elijah Meyers, Lewis Larsson, and Eric Matson. Illustration was among Beaumont's strengths, resulting in a number of sketches, pen and ink drawings, and lithographs. His prints may have been offered for sale on behalf of the American Colony and



"OLD MOSQUE ON JAFFA - RAMLEH ROAD," ON BOARD. 19.3 X 27.0 CM.



UNDATED (PROBABLY 1920S OR 1930S). OIL



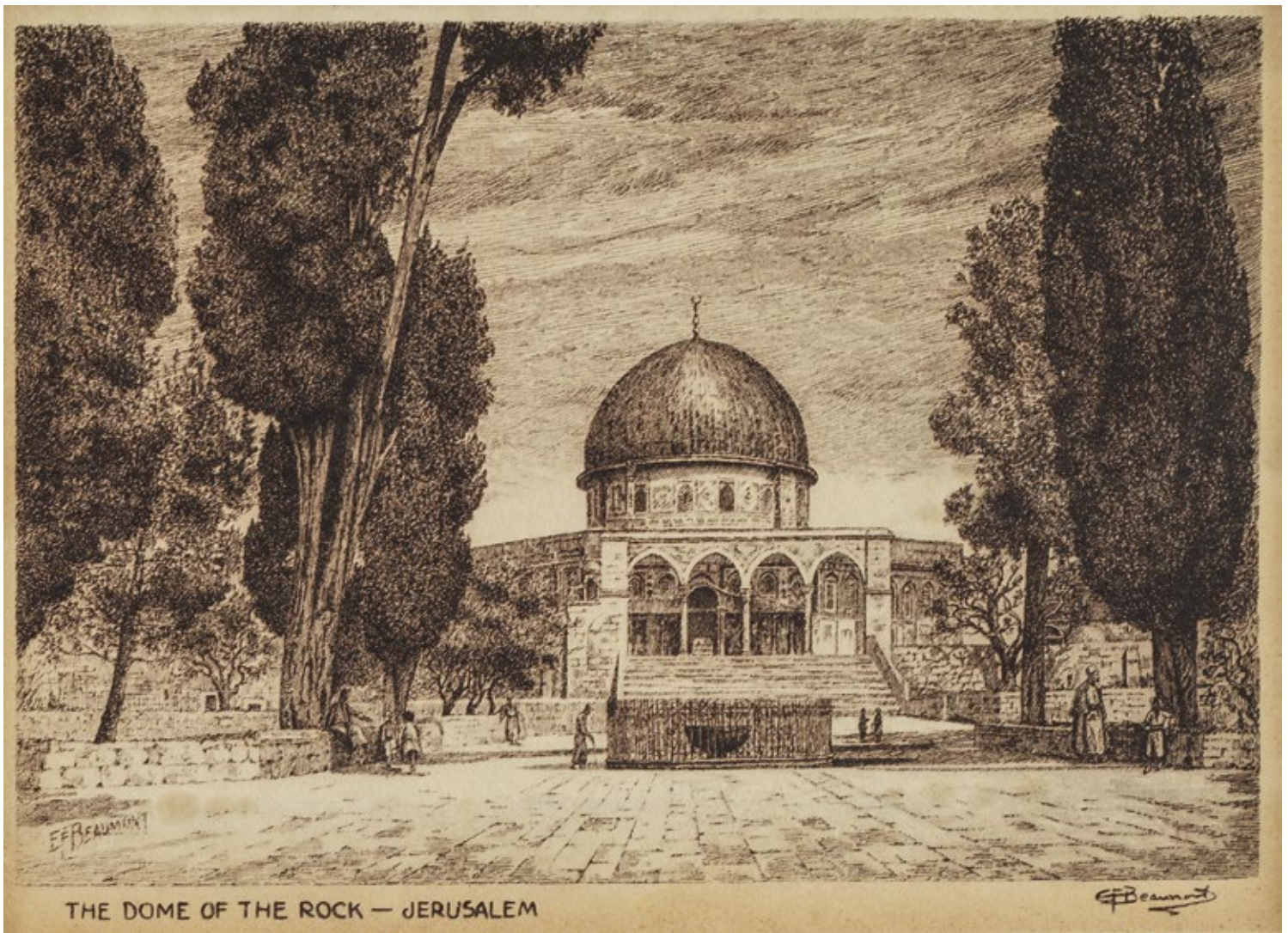
"BETHLEHEM FROM THE BELL TOWER," UNDATED (PROBABLY 1930S). PEN AND INK ON PAPER. 24 X 33 CM.

some of Beaumont's scenes were featured on Christmas cards exchanged by Colony members.

Twenty-two artworks by E. F. Beaumont were kindly donated to the Oriental Institute in 2014 by Margaret Green, who resides in northern California. Ms. Green is E. F. Beaumont's great-granddaughter and his last living descendant. The donation was made in memory of Ms. Green's grandmother, and E. F. Beaumont's only child, Lillian E. Beaumont (1893–1969).

The artworks comprise eight pencil and four ink drawings of landscapes, ruins, and places of interest in Jerusalem and

the Holy Land. There are also eight lithographs and two small paintings. A number of smaller artworks were perhaps intended for reproduction as greeting cards (for example "Bethlehem from the Bell Tower" and "Damascus Gate — Jerusalem"). More unusual subjects include the Nabataean ruins at Dat Ras near Kerak, Jordan. The collection is not an entirety of Beaumont's work and it appears to date primarily from the 1920s and 1930s. A much earlier work by Beaumont, dated 1903, can be seen at the American Colony Hotel — a reconstruction illustration of Robinson's Arch, Jerusalem. Several of the ink draw-



"DOME OF THE ROCK - JERUSALEM," UNDATED (PROBABLY 1930S). ORIGINAL LITHOGRAPH. 9.2 X 7.0 CM.

ings and small lithographs in the present collection appear to date from the time between Beaumont's departure from the American Colony in 1930 and his leaving of Palestine in 1938. According to newspaper notices from 1933, the Nile Mission Press in Jerusalem was a sole agent for Christmas cards that featured "Beaumont Etchings of the Holy Land," some of which may correspond with this collection.

The artworks often incorporate figures for scale, usually in traditional dress, a clearly Orientalizing motif aimed at reflecting the antiquity of the Holy Land as an idealized, exotic, biblical, and eternal place, in the face of rapid modernization. The collection is significant in that it represents a small portion of the artistic output of one of the American Colony members at a time when photography was a more common vehicle for its promotion and financial support. Many of the drawings closely replicate the subjects, angles, and architectural framing of the American Colony photographs. This collection of overlooked artworks therefore may prove of interest to researchers of modern history and the reception of the past (and present) by visitors to the Holy Land. While many are atmospheric renderings, some do reflect the archaeologist's eye, featuring

architectural features and details that could serve as a partial preservation record.

Beaumont's role as an archaeologist may have partly filled a gap left by the German architect, archaeologist, and missionary Conrad Schick, who died in 1901, as well as that of C. A. Hornstein, a Jerusalem-based contributor to the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement (PEFQS). Beaumont served as a draftsman for Duncan MacKenzie at Beth Shemesh (1909–1911) and surveyed and recorded archaeological findings in Jerusalem, particularly during building works (PEFQS for 1914). Soon after leaving the American Colony, he was recruited to assist the University of Pennsylvania's expedition to Beth Shan in 1931, producing a plan of the Byzantine Monastery of Lady Mary. He was hired as a surveyor for the Oriental Institute's Megiddo Expedition (1933–1935), which included excavations of Megiddo's tombs. It is worth noting that the Megiddo Expedition had already hired one of the Colony's other members, Olaf E. Lind, as their photographer (1926–1936). This highlights the longstanding relationship between archaeological expeditions and the American Colony. After an apparent involvement with the Oriental Institute's Expedition to Medinet



"RUINS OF DAT RAS TEMPLE IN MOAB, NEAR KEIRAK" [KERAK, TRANSJORDAN], UNDATED (PROBABLY 1920S OR 1930S). PEN AND INK ON PAPER. 12.8 X 14.0 CM.

Habu (Luxor), Beaumont's final foray into archaeology was for Nelson Glueck of the American Schools of Oriental Research at Tell el-Kheleifeh (Transjordan) in 1938.

Beaumont was one of "The Eleven" members who left the American Colony in 1930 following legal, financial, and ideological disputes with its leaders. He soon set up a lodging house in Jerusalem known as Beaumont House, which became a magnet for travelers and archaeologists passing through Jerusalem. Guests included Sir Flinders Petrie, John Crowfoot, and Olga Tufnell. With the Arab revolt of the 1930s, the decline of business and tourism, and tensions on the rise in Europe, Beaumont returned to the United States after forty-two years in the Holy Land, settling with his wife in San Diego, California, in 1938. Beaumont witnessed changing times and fortunes, and was adaptable as a self-trained man, applying his skills and expertise to recording observations, creating impressions, sharing his knowledge, and expressing his love of the Holy Land. We are pleased to have a little piece of this history back in Chicago, where the story began back in 1896. The artworks are now housed in the Oriental Institute's Museum Archives, along with other prints and drawings in our collection.

Thanks to Margaret Green, the donor of the E. F. Beaumont artworks, for family research that contributed to this article. I am also grateful to Ms. Green for sharing the insights of Tom Powers. Thanks also to John A. Larson, Head of the Oriental Institute Museum Archives. You can view images of the artworks online via our collections database oi-idb.uchicago.edu using the keyword "Beaumont" and browsing under the "Museum Archives" tab.

Jack Green, Chief Curator