

# The USF Excavations at Sepphoris, the 2000 Season

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## YEAR 2000 EXCAVATIONS PRONOUNCED SUCCESS--

### Breaking Story

Tampa (Ariel NS)--The year 2000 Excavations at Sepphoris saw more squares opened and balks removed than in any other season. The count is 10 squares opened and 18 balks removed. There were a total of sixteen teams in the field over eight weeks.

Senior staff came for either or both sessions, and three Area Supervisors stayed for both sessions. Dr. James F. Strange directed both sessions, assisted by Associate Director Dr. Thomas R.W. Longstaff of Colby College in the second session. (Dr. Dennis Groh, Associate Director from Illinois Wesleyan University, could not attend the first session, which he ordinarily does, for health reasons.) During the second Session Dr. C. Thomas McCollough of Centre College worked as Assistant Director and Field Archaeologist. Other staff included Ron Levy of Tampa, Surveyor (session 1 and part of 2), Rod Tanner of Tampa, Architect (session 2), Glenn Downing of Reston, Virginia and Virginia Skeeter

of Dahlonga, Georgia, Architect's Assistants, Carolyn Strange, Morale Officer for two sessions, Mary Lynn Jones of Houston, Texas, Registrar (session 2), Joan Keller of Palm Harbor, Florida, Glass Historian (session 2), and Miriam and Win McGee of Bradenton, FL. Miriam assisted Carolyn Strange and Win was in charge of tools and pottery wash. Both stayed for two sessions.

There is a long list of Area Supervisors because of the number of squares opened and balks removed. There were some field promotions to this position of some old names and a few new faces. For session 1 the Area Supervisors were Dr. Connie Groh from Illinois Wesleyan University, Barbara Pilcher of Tampa, FL, Joanna Strange from USF, James R. Strange from USF (now from Emory University), Sam Wood from Sydney, Australia, and Tammy Harmon from USF.

During the Second Session the Area Supervisors included Kristel Clayville, a graduate of Centre College, Joshua Davis of Centre College, Michael Friends from Redmond, Washington, Dr. John Hoskin from Sydney, Australia, Joshua Marks from Tampa, Pam

Mullins, a Ph.D. student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Barbara Pilcher from Tampa, Kelly Rhoads from Centre College, Sharon Sammons from Tampa, Lora Sorkin of Kansas City, Missouri, Joanna Strange again, and Justin Winger of Fuller Theological Seminary. This gave us a grand total of sixteen Area Supervisors and their teams. A few AS's excavated two squares each or removed two, three, or even four balks.

The season's digging concentrated on the west half of the building with its mosaics in hopes that we could disclose the stratigraphic history of as much of the basilica as possible. By the end of the season the amount of floor of the building that was visible impressed every visitor. But it was not merely the sheer amount of mosaics that impressed them; it was also the imposing architecture of the building itself, which stood at the corner of the two main streets of ancient Sepphoris.

Teams supervised by Joanna Strange, James R. Strange, Michael Friends, and Barbara Pilcher gave us the story of the building across the north wall in new or re-excavated squares.

Other teams removed balks in the north under the direction of Kelly Rhoads, Justin Winger, Dr. John Hoskin, and Dr. Connie Groh. They confirmed that the north street was paved with crushed limestone in the Early Roman period, which is what we discovered when Tom McCollough and Barbara Pilcher dug in the street in squares 4, 5, and 6 in 1988. The new item was a curbing against the building, also of crushed limestone, which protected the building from wash on the sidewalk. This appeared in Joanna Strange's square V.4. In V.126 first James R. Strange and then Michael Friends discovered that the curbing was built of stone. Barbara Pilcher dug two squares across the northern wall and found principally Byzantine rebuild of the northeast corner and the addition of a heavy drain outside the building under the sidewalk.

Also in the north a surprise was the discovery that there was an arrangement of three rooms beneath the mosaic floor of the building and north of the huge vaulted cistern. This feature came up in squares or balk removal supervised by Joanna Strange, James R. Strange, Michael Friends, Justin Winger, Kelly Rhoads, and John Hoskin. In addition Connie Groh and Sam Wood uncovered the east and west ends of the cistern. Now we know that it was about 13 m long and held upwards of 60 cubic meters of water if filled to the roof. The north corridor of the basilica was directly above it.

We dug across the south wall in squares supervised by Joshua Marks and Sharon

Sammons. Balk removal over the south wall took place under the direction of Kristel Clayville, Pam Mullins, and Joshua Davis. Tammy Harmon directed the first session's work in V.46 across the east wall, and Lora Sorkin continued that work in session two. V.111 also yielded some surprises across the east wall directed by Michael Friends.

We were unprepared to discover that there were a total of six thresholds in the south wall. We knew about five of them, but Sharon Sammons found yet another in V.40. Usually a string of doorways into a building off a main street indicates a string of shops. But in this case the shops or offices that lay inside the building all stood some three or four meters away from the entrances. This is a mystery that calls for more work.

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## NO DIG IN 2001

Tampa (Reuters)—Professors James F. Strange, Dennis E. Groh, Thomas R.W. Longstaff, and C. Thomas McCollough do not plan to dig at Sepphoris in 2001. Instead they will devote their energies to final publication of Fields I-V. Field V has generated the most scientific data and will probably appear last or near last in the series so far planned. Volume I is entitled *The University of South Florida Excavations at Sepphoris Final Report, Vol. I: Field I, The Soundings and Villa, 1983-1988*. The Publisher is Global Publications.

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## SUAVE SOIRÉE SEEN SOON NOV 4, 2000

If you are within hailing distance, please come to the party at Barbara Pilcher's house at 6:00 PM on 4112 Hudson Lane in Tampa. Bring your photographs and slides, and we will show what we can. You will have a chance to see your fellow diggers and talk all evening if you wish. We will furnish the meat, so bring a vegetable, salad, or desert. RSVP to Barbara at 813-961-0324.

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## WIN MCGEE RECOVERING IN FLORIDA

Since their return from Sepphoris, Miriam and Win McGee have found themselves dealing with a new challenge. Win was diagnosed with ulcers soon after their return. He has undergone surgery in the Blake Medical Center in Bradenton, Florida. Miriam and other members of the family have stayed with Win. He is scheduled to return home Oct 12. To drop him a card, write him at 3111 40<sup>th</sup> Ave., west, Bradenton, FL 34205-2745.

## Nat Fultz and Alysia to be married.