

SECTIONS NN-EE

1948

Early Houses

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Excavation was confined to a strip about 20 m. wide along the west side of the Great Drain. Most of the north half of this area had been badly disturbed by Byzantine pits; a section beside the drain however was better preserved by the Roman Bath taken out last autumn, below which the Byzantines did not penetrate. The foundations of the bath were taken out this spring, and the area cleared of some rather tenuous remains of pre - (late Hellenistic) and post-Sullan houses.

The whole stretch of ca. 55 m. along the west side of the Great Drain was occupied by a series of four houses of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Each of these seems to have had at least two periods, and to have stood in a very definite relationship to the drain itself. Very clear evidence has been found in a number of places for the dating of the construction of the drain in the early fourth century; the pottery from behind its walls on both sides is consistently late fifth. Before the drain was built the waters running down toward the north from Pnyx and Areopagus took a natural course down the bottom of the valley between, and apparently no attempt was made to canalize or control them. The line of this natural watercourse is shown by the foundations for the east walls of the three northern houses. This line is practically continuous, diverging from that of the drain toward the south, so that the southernmost house is actually built (as far as as uncovered) in the area between the Great Drain and the earlier

house to the west of it. All the deep fill in the strip between drain and pre-drain houses was of sand and gravel deposited by water and producing sherds of the late sixth and early fifth centuries; there were no hard surfaces of road metal, but despite this one is inclined to assume that the open watercourse was used at this time as a means of access both to the houses beside it and to the areas to north and south.

We number the houses 1 to 4, counting from the south, and examine them in their early periods, and particularly in their relationship to the Great Drain.

House # 2 is evidently the earliest of the four. It consists of a wall of limestone carefully built and fitted in polygonal style, its north end right beside the corner of House # 3 and at a distance of about 1.50 m. from the drain. The wall has been exposed to a distance of 20 m. toward the south, ^{and may continue still farther,} under Apostle Paul St. Its distance from the drain at the southernmost point exposed is 7 m. This wall served at the same time as a house wall and a retaining wall, with a difference of level of nearly a meter between the inside level at the west and the outside level of the watercourse and hypothetical street at the east. The construction of this wall should probably be dated (and the style agrees) in the years following the Persian Wars: sherds from pertinent places both to east and to west of the wall included 4 ostraka of Hippokrates, 2 of Themistokles, and one each of Kallixenos and Aristeides. Over a stretch of about 3 m. the wall is preserved to its full height, ending in a flat surface on top which undoubtedly served as a socle for construction carried up in sun-dried brick. Only one return toward the west, uncovered in 1940, is left which may be associated with this wall

and serve to indicate that there were internal arrangements at the west. This house as described is earlier than the drain and bears no reaction to it; when the drain was built however a line of poros blocks with a water channel cut in their upper faces was laid across the area intervening between house and drain, in order to carry the drainage of the house out to the line of the drain.

The drain frontage to the east of House 2 is 18.50 m. long. There are indications that at the time the drain was built this frontage was divided between two houses. Six meters to the south of the north end of House 2 a cross wall runs west from the drain, the end of which appears very clearly embedded in the construction of the west drain wall. This may be associated with a southern house with frontage of 12.75 m. along the drain, a wall carried from the drain to the polygonal wall and thence toward the west, and an inlet for side-drainage left in the drain wall at the time of its construction. Over most of this stretch the drain wall is not well preserved, and the area immediately to the west was occupied to deep levels by a sand deposit of the late second century, probably overflow from the drain at the time of its abandonment after the sack of Sulla. Enough fill remained however to suggest a fourth century date for the house, and apparently its destruction at some time in the third century.

The northern of the two successors to House 2 had a frontage of 5.75 m. along the drain, and was apparently also made in the fourth century. It also had its outlet for drainage left in the construction of the drain wall; but it is covered

by a Roman house of the second century A.D. and further information about it is not available.

House 1 at the south is later than House 2 and has two periods, pre- and post drain. We have been able to clear most of one room at the extreme south end of the section, with indications of adjoining rooms to west and south. The house was made by carrying its north wall boldly out toward the east from the polygonal wall of House 2. This wall at its west end is built against the face of the pre-existing House 2 wall, and forms an acute rather than a right angle to it. Note that the new house is built right out into and across the line of the pre-drain natural watercourse and hypothetical street over it. This rash procedure may seem more rational if it is brought into relation with the cutting of the "deep drainage channel under the drain" cleared in 1939 and 1946: a simple channel cut in stereo partly to the east of and partly under the drain itself. The east wall of House 1 is approximately parallel to this cutting, which, however, lies some meters to the east. The northeast corner of House 1 formed a right angle, and the north wall is preserved, of small limestone construction intended to carry sun-dried brick superstructure. The east wall is preserved only in a bedding cut in stereo, and the lowest foundation stones in the cutting. When the drain was built its line carried over the east side of House 1 and so modified it that a wedge-shaped piece of the house (widening toward the south) was incorporated into the drain and subtracted from the house. The actual corner of the house was incorporated into the drain wall to its

full height; but from the corner toward the south the east wall was taken down to the level of the drain bottom, and rebuilt with a wall that served at the same time as drain wall and east wall of House 1. The first period of House 1 is thus pre-drain and is dated tentatively (from the fills below its floor levels) just after the middle of the fifth century; the second period is synchronous with the building of the drain, early fourth century, and involved not only the rebuilding of the east wall of the house, but the raising of its floor levels (to avoid flooding) and the rebuilding or heightening of the south and west walls of the corner room. The north wall of the house shows clearly where courses have been added to raise the height of the socle for the upper construction of sun-dried brick.

The course of the drain from the edge of the section to the north limits of House 2 is perfectly straight, its line converging with that of the pre-drain houses until at the north end of House 2 only about 1.50 m. separates the house from the drain (over seven meters at the south, occupied mostly by House 1). The drain wall to the corner of House 1 is built of large squared conglomerate blocks alternating with small polygonal limestone construction in "checkerboard" pattern; immediately to the north of House 1 the construction changes completely to small stones and rather shapeless limestone blocks. The socle for the east wall of the next house to the north is preserved, built directly on top of the drain wall, and at a slightly lower level than that of the floor of the second period of House 1. This section of the drain wall

(opposite House 2) shows the wall corner of another house, already mentioned, and the inlets from two house drains coming from the west.

The converging lines of drain and houses earlier than the drain would meet a few meters to the north of House 2 if the drain kept the same course; instead, in order to avoid the house (House 3) at the west, the line of the drain is bent slightly toward the northeast running parallel to House 3 and 80 cm. to the east of it, for a distance of 18.20 m. The line of the drain wall is straight, except for the last three meters toward the north, when it bends still further out toward the northeast in order to avoid the corner of House 4 which projects nearly 1.50 m. farther to the east than does House 3. The builders of the drain thus seem to have been obliged to respect pre-existing property lines. The slight curves in the line of the drain are all accounted for by this necessity for avoiding the houses or buildings already in existence. Thus the drain, curving eastward to avoid the corner of House 4, had to curve quickly back toward the west in order to pass by the southwest corner of the porous building (in sections NN and OO) which lay a few meters to the north on the east side. To the east of House 4 the drain passes between House 4 and the pre-drain industrial establishment ("latrine"); it narrows considerably, and passes through two "bottlenecks" where its width is only 70-90 cm., at the corners of the two rooms of House 4. The east wall shows sharp changes of construction at two points: at the north

limits of the "latrine", where there is a return toward the east, from excellent polygonal limestone, to squared block construction in poros and conglomerate; and at a point just south of the junction with the post-Sullan drain, where there is another return toward the east, from polygonal limestone to squared blocks (poros) filled out with stacked work and polygonal. The west drain wall is of different construction in front of House 3 and of House 4 : unfortunately the line of the change of construction, where the two houses meet, is masked by the south wall of the post-Sullan drain where it abuts against the face of the west wall of the original drain. Almost throughout the length of House 3 the bottom of the wall of the post-drain house is preserved, built directly on top of the drain wall itself. There is no provision for the insertion of cover slabs over the drain. The back of the west drain wall (especially in front of House 3) usually shows three levels of construction : the lowest, rough bedding, rising to just below the outside ground levels of the pre-existing houses; the second, rising to various heights, presenting a good finished face toward the west, and a level top; and the third showing walls with good faces in both directions, somewhat thinner than the drain wall below and set in from its edge - the lower courses of the house walls built on top of the drain wall. From this we draw the conclusion that, especially in front of House 3, the builders of the drain respected not only the lines, but also the outside levels, of the preexisting houses. In the case of House 3

this is again confirmed by the fact that the slot left in the drain wall as an inlet for the drainage of the house was left opposite the line of tile drain belonging to the pre-drain house. Thus the combined factors - orientation of drain to fit houses already in existence; changes in style of construction coming precisely at points where properties divide to each side; respect for pre-existing ground levels and for pre-existing side drains; and the building of house walls directly on top of the drain wall - all point to the suggestion that the drain was built, not by the state as a public work, but by the householders owning plots fronting it. The owner of House 1 gave up a bit of his property to the drain; the owners of Houses 3 and 4 increased their houses by extending their east fronts 80 cm. to the east, building on top of the drain wall, and covering over the original east wall foundations of their houses. The drain can hardly have served also as a street; it was too narrow (a minimum width of 70 cm.) and too deep (a maximum depth of 2.15 m) to have allowed of easy circulation within its channel, and the building of the house walls directly on top of the drain wall eliminates the possibility that it was covered and that its covers served as a roadway. The average width, 1.40 m., too, seems too great to have been easily spanned by stone slabs. The top of the east wall opposite House 1 shows a cutting on its inner face as if to receive the edge of a wooden planking laid across the drain; but such a planking must be interpreted rather as a bridge across the drain at

a particular point, than as part of a continuous cover over the drain throughout its length. The construction of the drain in the early fourth century and the alteration or reconstruction of the houses to the west of it at the same time may perhaps be brought into connection with repairs of damages done to the houses at the time of the "troubles" at the end of the fifth century. The householders may at the same time have agreed to canalize the stream bed which was always subject to freshets damaging to their property. The alterations to the Assembly Place on the Inyx at the end of the fifth century (Period II) may also have affected the drainage of the water flowing down from the Hill in such a way as to make more acute the problem of their proper disposal at the bottom of the valley.

House 3 is the best preserved of all the houses beside the drain at the west. As already noted it had two periods: a pre-drain period with an east wall continuing the line of that of House 2, and a post drain period when the east wall was moved outward and rebuilt on top of the drain wall. The floors of the house indicate that there was also a third period. Essentially however the plan of the house remained the same throughout. The internal walls were extended eastward to meet the new east wall. At the centre of the house was a court with an E-W length of about half the width of the house; from it rooms opened to all sides. Doors led to the rooms at south and west; the area to the east of the court was divided into two rooms, each of which had a door connecting with the court. The large room to the north was also connected

by a door, later with steps leading down from the court. Except for the room occupying the northeast area of the house there seems to have been no direct access from the court to the corner rooms. The wall dividing north room from northeast area however is set about a meter to the west of the corner of the court; and the space where court and area to northeast overlap was occupied by a door. The northeast area was itself divided into two rooms by an E-W wall; in the later period the northern of the two rooms was subdivided by a N-S wall, making a small room to the east, and another to the west which however was thrown in with the room to the south, making it L-shaped. The northwest room of the house bordered on the street at the point where it bends from its southward course and turns west. The area of this room was much disturbed by Byzantine pits and Hellenistic rearrangements; but it possessed a well of its own (in addition to the house well in the court) and a cistern, and was, like the court, paved with a pebble floor. These factors suggest that this room, bordering the street and equipped with its own water supply, may have been let out as a shop or tavern, and that it could be cut off from the rest of the house.

The inside dimensions of the house were 16.40 m. (at the north) by 17.30 m. (at the east), with a width at the west of 15.70 m. The south side, occupied in part by the Roman house, could not be measured. As may be seen the house occupies an irregular rectangle the dimensions of which are very similar to those of the more regular house lots at Olynthus. The

house was constructed of sun-dried bricks on a socle of stone; the walls are consistently 45 cm. thick or approximately 1.1/2 feet (the Attic-Euboic foot of .295 m.) Small fragments were found of mud bricks 7.1/2 cm. thick; and from these one can probably hypothecate bricks 45 cm. square by 7.1/2 cm. thick for the upper construction of the house.

Of the first period of the house hardly enough has been dug to venture a dating for its construction. It is probably later than House 2 at the south, and certainly post-Persian. The second period is related to the construction of the drain in the first quarter of the fourth century - probably an alteration made shortly after the drain had been completed, since the levels of the first house were respected by the builders of the drain. The tiling of the well in the court should be connected with the second period (incidentally, the well, dug last year, produced pottery as late as the II-I c.B.C. suggesting that the well remained in use until the Sullan destruction). Pottery from under the floor of the court in the third period suggests a date in the middle of the fourth century, or slightly thereafter, for the latest reconstruction of the house.

The northernmost house (4) lay between the drain at the east and the street at the west. Its northern part was largely obliterated in Byzantine times; preserved is a series of three rooms at the south, of which the middle room was apparently the court, and part of a second series of two rooms at the north. The northwest corner of the house is entirely gone, and only one block of the north wall remains in situ;

it is probable that the northwest room was bounded at the west by a house wall built on the old retaining wall of the street, of which the block remains in place in NN, and two to the north in III. Thus the house had direct access to the street at the west. Like House 3 it had three periods: a pre-drain house, a house altered when the drain was built (as in the case of House 1, the east wall of the southern room was taken out, and the new wall built in its stead served both as drain and house wall); and a third period dating from well down in the fourth century. The various periods of this house have not yet been straightened out; probably to the second belongs a stone base for a wooden column found in situ. In the third period the court was paved with a pebble floor; and still later a large hearth was built over the floor in its south-east corner. Under the area of the hearth were found masses of iron slag; and these, in combination with a lead curse tablet found in the room to the east and invoking various evils on certain "smiths" ($\chi\alpha\lambda\kappa\epsilon\alpha$) suggest that perhaps this house was a metal-working establishment. The curse tablet is dated to the fourth century.

Houses 3 and 4 both seem to have been demolished and gone out of use at some time around the turn of the fourth and third centuries. Eight pyres were found in the area of the two houses; in the case of six of these the evidence was clear, from the reddening and hardening of the earth by fire at the bottom and sides of shallow pits, that the burning took place on the spot. The pyres produced small fragments

of burned bones, the banded saucers that seem to be found only in such pyres, miniature saucers, lamps, and in three cases dummy alabastra made of poros. Such pyres have been thought to be the remains of the cremations of the bodies of small children; in no case has the extent of the pyre been great enough to have consumed an adult body. The distribution of these pyres was: one each in the southeast room, the third and fourth rooms from the south of the east side, and the northwest room of House 3; and one each in the court, and in the room to the north of the court, of House 4. These pyres could hardly have been burned when the rooms were standing with their roofs; and therefore the earliest of the pyres (providing pottery of the turn from the fourth to the third century) must give a terminus for the occupation of the houses. One of the pyres, however, was still earlier, producing the lidded pyxides, one red-figured, of the last quarter of the fifth century. This pyre lay in the court of House 4, well below the floor level of its second period and covered by it. The pyre may have been burned in the court of the first house while it was in use, or during a period of temporary abandonment or partial destruction at the end of the fifth century. The two remaining pyres produced a quantity of characteristic pottery, but the actual places where they were burned could not be located.

The abandonment of these houses at this time is borne out by further evidence. The houses seem to have been razed rather than destroyed by fire or violence, for which there

was no evidence. Long stretches of walls were stripped of their stones, and apparently at the time of the abandonment, for the wall trenches produced no later pottery to suggest a ransacking for building material at a later date. Further the earth of the levels in which the pyres had been burned in some cases ran right over the stumps of internal walls, or the trenches where they had been. Both well and cistern in the northwest room of House 3 were filled in the third century; the well in the court of the same house however seems to have continued in use until the Sullan destruction.

A later Mycenaean burial of two small children was found in a pit cut in the stereo under House 3 near its western limits. This grave lay only about 5 m. to the southeast of the chamber tomb cleared last year, and probably should be associated with it. The maximum dimensions of the cutting were 95 cm. (N-S) by 54 cm. (E.W.); into this small space were squeezed the contracted bodies of two small children, aged ca. 8 and 5 years old, one on top of the other. Even so the whole space was not hard; all the eastern side of the cutting was packed with field stones, probably put in to hold the bodies in place. The single grave offering was a large one-handled cup, slipped white and decorated with a simple band of red glaze below the rim. The grave was covered with a packing of small stones.

No wells were dug this year. One is known, found last fall and filled to the level of the floor of the

second period of House 4 with destruction debris of the Roman Bath, to which the well belonged. In the last days of excavation we came on what are probably two more wells, one in the southwest room of House 4, the other in the court of House 3; but both (if they are wells) are probably earlier than the houses and bear no relation to them.