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PITTSBURGH SEMINARY MOURNS KELSO MUSEUM CURATOR EMERITA NANCY LAPP

PTS grieves the loss of Nancy Lapp, curator emerita of the Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, who died March 3, 2025, at the age of 95. Nancy served as curator of the Kelso Museum (formerly the Bible Lands Museum) from 1970 until her retirement in 2000. In retirement, she continued to be substantially involved with the Museum, analyzing materials from Kelso-affiliated excavations and receiving teams of scholars from around the world. She also served the Seminary as lecturer in archaeology and Hebrew.



Lapp was a widely respected and internationally recognized figure in the field of Eastern Mediterranean archaeology, a discipline in which she accrued more than 50 years of experience. Renowned for both her fieldwork and publications, Nancy served as the first female research assistant to Dr. William F. Albright, widely regarded as the “father of biblical archaeology,” at Johns Hopkins University. She was heavily involved in the running of the American School of Oriental Research (now the American Society of Overseas Research) while her husband, Dr. Paul Lapp (who taught at PTS from 1962 to 1965), directed it, and she maintained strong ties with ASOR throughout her life. After her husband’s sudden death in 1970, she analyzed and published materials from the excavations on which they both had worked (an endeavor which she successfully completed through decades of work), including expeditions to Bab adh-Dhra, Shechem, Tell el-Ful (possibly Gibeah of Saul), the Wadi ad-Daliyah (where caves yielded manuscripts dating from the fourth century BCE), and others. In recognition of her contributions to the field, ASOR created the Nancy Lapp Popular Book Award, first presented in November 2015.



“Not only has the Seminary lost a substantial contributor and friend, but the field of biblical archaeology has lost a significant figure,” says the Rev. Dr. Asa Lee, president of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. “Nancy Lapp was a seminal figure in the maintenance, support, and preservation of the Seminary’s Kelso Museum, particularly its archives and records. The Seminary joins with the scholarly community to honor the life of a friend and colleague. Nancy’s work and legacy are secure through what she leaves for us to study and cherish. Though her work lives on, Nancy herself will be dearly missed.”

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