



## INTERNATIONAL CATACOMB SOCIETY UPDATE

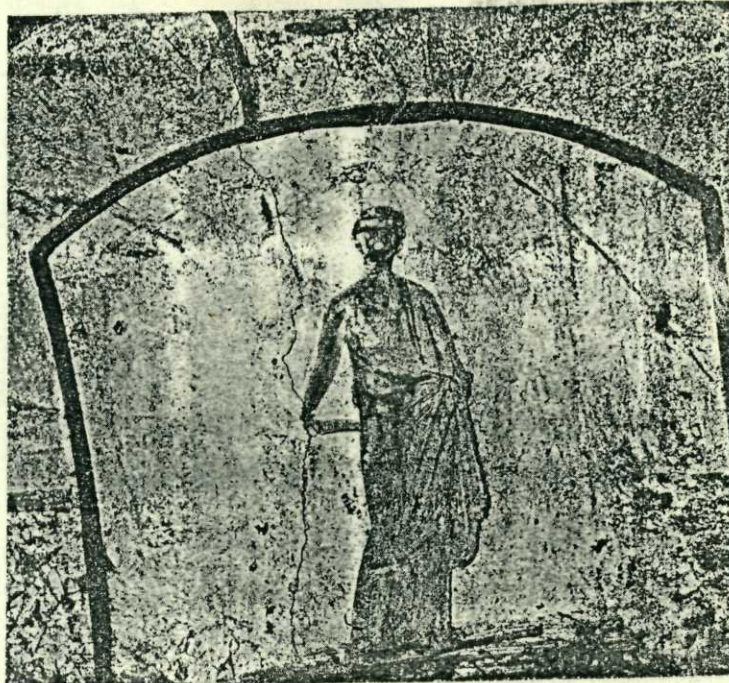
Just an update to augment our Occasional Newsletter, and to inform you of the happenings that the generosity of our supporters has enabled our project to achieve. Last year was busy and productive for I.C.S. A major event was the showing of our "Vaults of Memory" exhibit at Spertus Museum in Chicago (September 1989 - January 1990) which broke their attendance records. Opening night festivities in Chicago, including a lecture by our executive director, were attended by many dignitaries. Several board members and I.C.S. friends and supporters from the East Coast, the Italian Consul General of Chicago, Dr. Leonardo Baroncelli, and the Director of the *Istituto Italiano di Cultura*, Prof. Anna Maria Lelli, participated in these events with much enthusiasm. Italian Television (RAI) filmed a segment on the opening, and newspapers and radio programs gave laudatory reviews. Our cooperation and assistance in their outreach school programs, which included our briefing of docents, bore such rewarding results as an overbooking for school reservations.

Estelle Brettman, Executive Director of the International Catacomb Society, is currently completing a major publication, Vaults of Memory: Sources of Jewish and Christian Imagery in the Catacombs of Rome, as well as being closely involved in all aspects of the I.C.S. After completion of the book, our immediate top priority, I.C.S. can devote itself to pursuing other planned educational goals. Among these are enhancement of our exhibit, computerization of the exhibit materials and information from further research, creation of a children's exhibit, continuation of our usual Newsletters and program of lectures, and assistance in the conservation and documentation of significant sites and artefacts. We also hope to assist with exploration to unearth new finds in relatively unknown catacombs and sites of this crucial period.

Because of support from friends and members, we have been able to acquire the assistance of knowledgeable graduate students. This is mutually beneficial. It minimizes our costs while providing the student with a meaningful learning and work opportunity. Having been relieved of many administrative and logistic duties because of this assistance, we are able to approach the completion of a now much-enriched publication, our primary goal at this moment.

Under our organization and co-sponsorship, the first lecture of the I.C.S. Commemorative Founders' Lecture Series, in memory of Society Founders Mark D. Altschule, M.D., Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin, Louise LaGorce Hickey, and Robert M. Morrison, was delivered by Dr. Marisa de Spagnolis Conticello at the Hebrew College in Brookline on April 25, 1990. This was made possible entirely by the generous support of our members.

Spagnolis Conticello delivered a richly illustrated talk, presenting her archaeological evidence of a hitherto unknown ancient Jewish congregation at Nocera, in Campania, in which a prominent role could well have been played by women. The awareness created by this lecture has engendered much intense interest in the site by scholars and laymen, and stimulated desire to visit it.



Lady with a scroll, 4th century C.E. catacomb painting

I.C.S. also arranged and co-sponsored the lecture of our Vice President of European Affairs, Professor Baldassare Conticello, Superintendent of Archaeology at Pompeii, in Boston this spring. Speaking at the Museum of Fine Arts on April 22, 1990, Professor Baldassare Conticello described recent finds and innovative programs he has initiated at Pompeii. These programs offer great potential for significant and diverse environmental applications, as well as creative approaches to conservation and restoration techniques. He also discussed the exhibition, "Rediscovering Pompeii," organized under his supervision, which has just completed a successful showing at the I.B.M. Gallery of Science and Art in New York. Of particular interest is the demonstration of the pioneering role which the computer has assumed in archaeology and the exhibition of newly discovered, hitherto unseen Pompeiian artefacts. Our society has contacted the Museum of Science in Boston about the possibility of hosting this landmark exhibition and the prospect appears promising. We shall keep you posted!

