



The Felt Shops of Pompeii

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In direct contrast with the festooned borders of the beginnings, crinkly strands growing almost at right angles to the forehead will characterize the next stages within the fourth century: a rendering ultimately to triumph in the Knidian Aphrodite by Praxiteles.

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THE FELT SHOPS OF POMPEII¹

PLATE 46

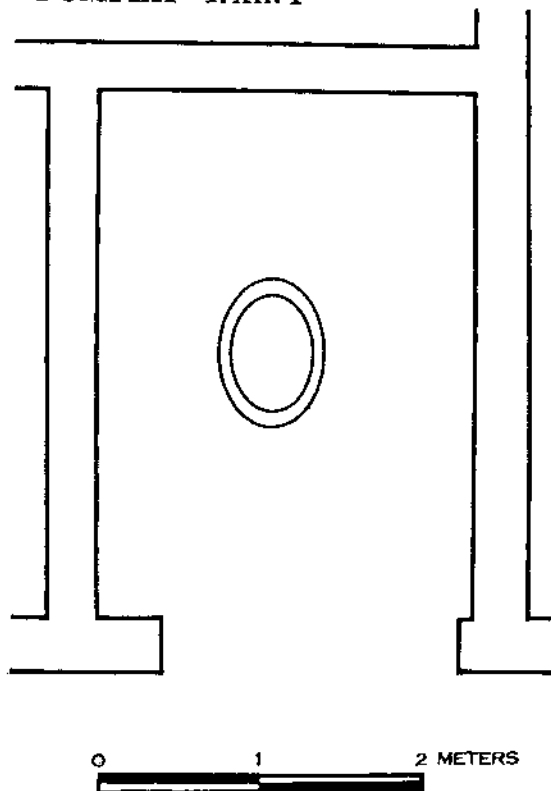
Up to the present two felt shops, *officinae coactiliariae*, have been identified at Pompeii. They are both in the same *insula* and face on the Via dell'Abbondanza. Since they have not as yet been fully excavated, they are recognized only from the evidence on their façades: one (IX.vii.1) from an electoral notice of the felters;² the other (IX.vii.5/7), known as the shop of Verecundus, from an electoral notice and a wall painting of felters at work.³ In the painting (pl. 46, fig. 1) is a furnace with two tables at the sides and four workmen at the tables kneading long sausages of wool. There must have been a pan on top of the furnace in which the sizing was kept warm and viscous. It should be emphasized that these identifications were made entirely from external evidence.

I believe, however, that two other *officinae coactiliariae* have been fully excavated in the city. In the summer of 1961 a small one-room shop (I.xii.4) was uncovered on the Via dell'Abbondanza (ill. 1). Its only notable feature is an oval furnace, completely detached from the walls. The furnace has since been reconstructed to a height of about 53 cm. (pl. 46, fig. 2), but, as shown by its condition at excavation (pl. 46, fig. 3), there is no way of knowing how high it was originally. The shop has not as yet been published or identified, although some feel that it was devoted to the preparation of food, since it is located between two *thermopolia*. This idea, however, should be rejected, partly because the furnace is not well adapted to the preparation of food and there are no serving counters. What struck me upon seeing the location shortly after excavation was that the furnace is like the one portrayed on the façade of the shop of Verecundus. It could have been high enough to reach the waists of the Pompeian felters, who were short by modern standards. The girl in pl. 46, fig. 4 is about 5' 4" tall; but in any case the furnace might have been higher than the reconstruction. This shop, too, probably served as

the chest, but what matters in this context is the rendering of the hair itself, not the intricacies of its arrangement. It is interesting, in this connection, to note how the popularity of the Erechtheion must have influenced subsequent sculpture, so that the old-fashioned chest-locks reappear in the fourth century Eirene by Kephisodotos.

¹ This note was presented as a paper at the Seventy-first Gen-

OFFICINA COACTILIARIA POMPEII - I. xii. 4



ILL. 1. Author's plan of I.xii.4

a felting plant. To those who might object that there was no room for drying pieces of felt, it must be pointed out that this could have been done on the street, as is suggested by what appears to be a drying rack in another painting from the shop of Verecundus (pl. 46, fig. 5).⁴ The use of the street for industrial drying is common in the Mediterranean today and it undoubtedly was an ancient practice. To those who might object that an *officina coactiliaria* would not have been placed next to food shops, I can only say that this is imposing our standards on the Romans; a people who had no qualms about building latrines in kitchens would not have been excessively bothered by having a felt shop next to *thermopolia*.

The other fully excavated shop (IX.iii.16) has two rooms with a detached furnace in the front room (ill. 2). Unfortunately there is no trace of the furnace left,

eral Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America on December 29, 1969. It was made possible in part through a grant-in-aid from Temple University. I wish to thank Professor Alfonso de Franciscis, Superintendent of Antiquities in Campania, for permission to publish location I.xii.4.

² M. Della Corte, *Casa ed abitanti di Pompei*³ (Rome 1964) 282; *CIL IV* 7809.

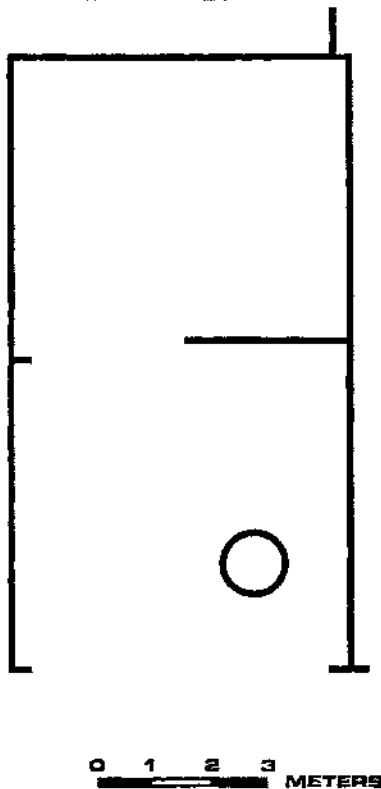
³ Della Corte 278f; *CIL IV* 7838.

⁴ Della Corte 279.

OFFICINA COACTILIARIA POMPEII IX. iii. 16

A SERIES OF EPIGRAPHICAL JOINS

PLATE 47



ILL. 2. Plan of IX.iii.16 from city plan in *CIL*

so we must work from the description and the plan. The shop has been identified as a dyehouse.⁵ Since, however, it shows no similarities to any of the dyehouses of the city with their many deep vats fixed to the walls (pl. 46, fig. 6) and the shop's plan is like that of the recently uncovered shop on the Via dell'Abbondanza, this establishment also was probably devoted to felting.

There are, then, four locations that may be classified as felt shops at Pompeii. I.xii.4 and IX.iii.16 have been fully uncovered, whereas IX.vii.1 and IX.vii.5/7 are recognized only from paintings and graffiti. When these latter two shops are completely excavated, we should not be surprised if we find furnaces like that discovered in 1961 on the Via dell'Abbondanza.

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⁵ *Ibid.* 191.

¹ Professor Dow's studies in the early 1930's of letter styles in Attic epigraphy and his consequent identification of a number of masons, most easily seen in his *Prytaneis*, *Hesperia* Suppl. I (Athens 1937), prepared the way for the study of a single mason. He set me to work on a tentative list of inscriptions

The joins of the fragments listed below came about in a rather unusual way. Under the generous guidance and encouragement of Professor Sterling Dow, the present writer undertook the task of identifying a single letter-cutter and collecting all the inscriptions which could be assigned to him.¹ In the course of my researches I examined most of the fragments stored in the Athenian Agora, in the Epigraphical Museum in Athens, and at Delphi. Letter-shapes constituted the sole criterion employed in the selection and assignment of fragments to the mason under study. Only later did I discover that a number of these fragments actually joined larger steles which I had already assigned to the mason.

The inscriptions affected are: 1) *Fouilles de Delphes* (hereafter *FD*) III 2 nos. 6, 31, 48; 2) *IG II²* 2336; 3) *IG II²* 1028. I have published several of the joins with photographs elsewhere; I note them here in order to provide a complete list by way of summary.

Fragment No.	Publication
1) { Delphi Museum inv. no. 4689	<i>BCH</i> 93 (1969)
{ <i>FD</i> III 2 no. 6. 1-2	373
2) { Delphi Museum inv. no. 4744	<i>ibid.</i> 375-379
{ <i>FD</i> III 2 no. 31	
3) { Unnumbered fragment	<i>ibid.</i> 387
{ <i>FD</i> III 2 no. 48. 18-21	
4) { Agora I 5045	<i>Hesperia</i> 36
{ <i>IG II²</i> 2336. 78-86	(1967) 245-247
5) { Agora I 717	<i>ibid.</i> 244-245
{ <i>IG II²</i> 1028. 108-113 (I)	
6) { Agora I 3810	<i>ibid.</i> 245
{ <i>IG II²</i> 1028. 154 (II)	

The following are the remaining joins made during the study.

7) The fragment in pl. 47, fig. 1 was discovered during a search for further examples of the mason's work in the collection of the Epigraphical Museum in Athens. The second line was immediately recognizable as by this mason, for the nature of the serifs, and the shape of sigma, epsilon and pi are very characteristic. The fact that three different hands appear in the four preserved lines suggested that the piece might belong to *IG II²* 2336.² It joins lines 260-263 (Dow's line numbering), as inspection in the museum immediately revealed. Subsequent reference to the pub-

which he thought to be by the same mason or, at the least, very close in style. The results are embodied in a Harvard University Ph.D. dissertation (1967) entitled "A Letter-Cutter of Classical Athens"; certain of the results appear in *Hesperia* 36 (1967) 242-248 and *BCH* 93 (1969) 371-395.

² The frequent change of hand in this inscription is clearly indicated in S. Dow's text, *HSCP* 51 (1940) 111-124.



FIG. 1. Wall painting of felters at work from shop of Verecundus, IX.vii.5/7 (V. Spinazzola, *Pompei alle luce degli scavi nuovi di Via dell'Abbondanza*)



FIG. 2. Reconstructed furnace in I.xii.4



FIG. 3. Original state of furnace in I.xii.4



FIG. 4. Shop in I.xii.4 in 1961



FIG. 6. Vats attached to wall of dyehouse, I.viii.r9



FIG. 5. Wall painting of shop of Verecundus, drying rack in foreground