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WAYNE L. MAUZY ----- *Associate Editor*

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DR. HEWETT'S BOOK ON CHACO CANYON APPEARS*

THE CHACO CANYON and Its Monuments," by Dr. Edgar L. Hewett, a splendid achievement in writing and book-making, has just come from the press of the University of New Mexico, carrying the imprint of the University and the School of American Research. Seventy-five page plates make the book magnificent in picturization—every important ruin of the Chaco region is shown in half-tones from good photographs, many splendid artifacts that have been recovered are illustrated in the same manner, and likewise reconstructions in oil of the great communal dwellings. The absorbing and vivid writing of the author, combined with his knowledge of the subject gained from many years of study and investigation have made this handbook an invaluable source for the student and the traveler, as well as for those who journey by the fireside.

This Chaco volume comprises 234 pages, including the illustrations and a thorough index, is bound in a good format of attractive size between stiff cloth covers of a dark washable blue. A captivating cover jacket was designed by the Indian student, Paul Goodbear. Without doubt it is the finest volume mechanically and artistically, yet to appear from the University of New Mexico Press.

Even the general reader will find himself engrossed from the first paragraph of page one: "—Of all the peoples of

*Published December 10. All illustrations used in this issue are from the book, which may be secured from the School of American Research, Santa Fe, or The University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque. Price \$2.50, carriage prepaid.

the ancient world whose achievements have survived the ages, none has more completely attained oblivion . . . A strip of land ten miles long by a mile wide between the canyon walls constitutes the principal area that these communities inhabited. It is probable that they never cultivated more than five thousand acres of land at any one time . . . and never numbered more than ten thousand inhabitants; but they left, as their racial autograph, evidences of unusual cultural vitality. In enduring architecture for residence use, indicating highly organized religious life and social structure, they attained to levels not surpassed by architects of the ancient world. The master builders of antiquity in Asia, Africa, and Middle America excelled them in temples and mural embellishments but not in substantial residence building. In ceramics and some minor arts they reached a plane equal to the greatest of their contemporaries. The ruins of twelve large community houses, numerous small sites, and the accessories of community life, . . . constitute the material available for study.

"Whoever reaches Chaco Canyon will have some experience with the desert. It is fifty miles in any direction to a living stream. From any point of approach the desert barrier must be crossed . . . In the old days, one toiled across on horseback or by wagon, and it was a march for the seasoned veteran only. It was safe only when accompanied by a trusty Navaho (whose people) . . . have, for some centuries inhabited the region.

"The Chaco Canyon . . . has not the picturesque beauty of the Rito de los Frijoles, nor the color of the Canyon de Chelly. . . . In human associations, however, it is without a parallel. Silence brooded here for ages, then was broken by the voices of humanity for some centuries, and then again the silence, more poignant than that of wastes that have remained forever uninhabited . . . Generally it has been man's privilege to transform the earth at will. Mountains are honeycombed with mines; plains and forests have yielded to agriculture; cities have sprung from primeval



North Wall, Chetro Kedi in 1902

swamps. . . . Here for centuries man wrought and made these monuments to his vast endeavors, but on the country made no lasting impression. The desert remains unmastered.

"The Chaco basin, treeless except for juniper and pinon over perhaps twenty-five per cent of it . . . is marked by shifting sand drifts, broad dry washes, plains sparsely covered with grass and the characteristic sage brush of the Southwest. . . . The trader has come and gone. A few Navaho families, perhaps a hundred, live in the nearly dry waterways and in little side canyons . . . Here are the ruined houses—enormous community structures of stone—which sheltered thousands of people in times long past. Here are their abandoned fields, irrigating ditches, sanctuaries, stairways, picture writings, graves, relics of vast activities . . .

"From an eminence on the south wall of Chaco it can all be seen. The view must have been an inspiring one in the ancient days, as it is now one to awaken profound awe. Pueblo Bonito occupies the center of the picture. It was not as beautiful as its neighbors, Chetro Ketl and Pueblo del Arroyo, but its vast size, the great sweep of its curving walls, the variety in styles of masonry . . . make it a most impressive sight. To the right, Chetro Ketl, with its fine curving facade, inner towers, immense sanctuary within its courts, and a half dozen adjacent smaller structures, must have been one of the most striking settlements in ancient northern America." A description follows of the location of all the principal communities of the Chaco region.

Dr. Hewett estimates that the great building culture that flourished in the Americas was at its height from eight to twelve centuries ago. Certainly decay had set in before the European arrived in 1492. He reasons that the energies of the people turned to building not altogether from a need of housing but as an expression of religious activity. Indications are that at least fifty kivas (sanctuaries) will

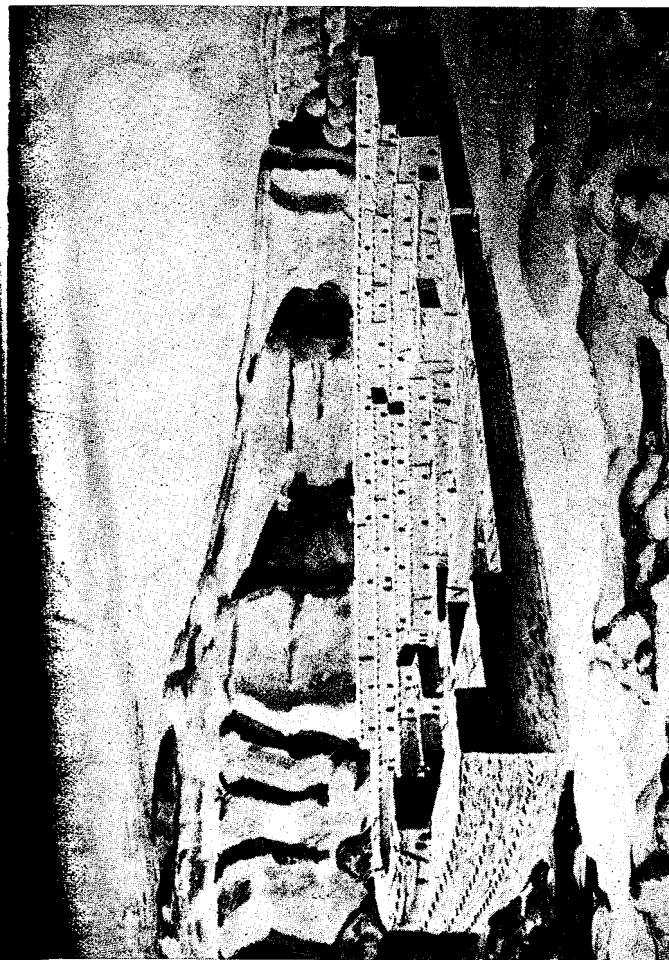


The Threatening Rock Back of Pueblo Bonito (Note Ancient Bracing-masonry at Base)

be uncovered at the town of Chetro Ketl alone. From the pyramid of the sun at Cholula, Mexico, sites of ninety temple-pyramids may be seen. The decline he attributes to no single cause. He suggests that the building impulse, that in the Chaco produced structures beyond any real need, simply spent itself.

Architecturally, evidence points to definite planning of the community houses. "The typical Chaco town consisted of one compact, terraced structure, which, in general, took the form of our capital letter E. The order of growth probably was first the straight linear mass, represented by the back of the letter. When needed, one wing was built on, giving the building an L shape. Several of the Chaco pueblos remained in this form to the end. With the majority the other wing was added, and in some instances the central stem of the E. . . . The extremities of the wings were usually connected by a curving front wall, or, . . . by a series of one- or two-story rooms, built on a sweeping curve, forming a formidable rampart for the fourth side of the building . . . It should be pointed out that this ground plan (with the exception of the curved front) is now widely used in hotel and office buildings in modern American cities, being dictated by economy and efficiency as to light, air, space." A general description follows of Pueblo Bonito, Chetro Ketl, Casa Rinconada, Pueblo Alto, Tsin Kletzin, Penasco Blanco, Hungo Pavi, Una Vida, Wijiji, Pueblo Pintado, Kin Klizhin, Kin Biniola, and Kin Ya-ah, principal towns of the Chaco.

"The Stones Come to Life" is an exciting long chapter dealing with the excavation of Chetro Ketl, a prodigious task begun in 1919-21 and resumed in 1929, continuing annually to the present, directed by Dr. Hewett for the associated institutions, The School of American Research, The University of New Mexico and the Museum of New Mexico. The excavation of the great bowl (sanctuary) of Chetro Ketl is described at length. It was here that the magnificent discovery was made of ten crypts containing



Restoration of Pueblo Bonito (R. M. Coffin)

deposits of garlands of beads, made of shell, Mexican onyx, and a black material not fully identified, together with pendants and buttons of turquoise. More than seventeen thousand beads were recovered in the ten crypts forming the strands varying in length from seven to fourteen feet. These deposits are splendidly pictured with half-tone plates.

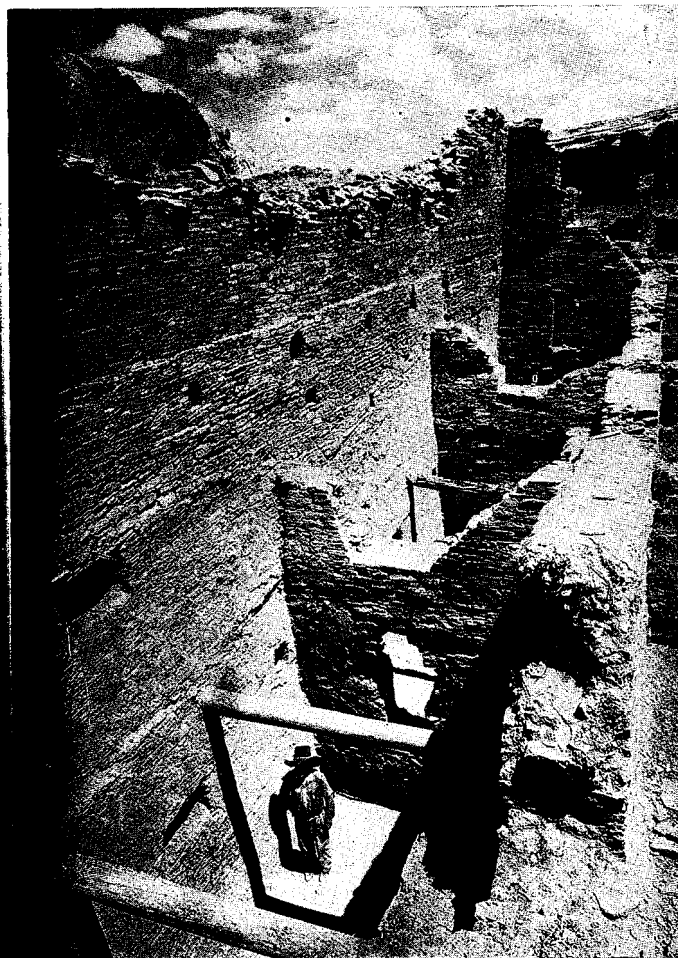
In this chapter Dr. Hewett gives us a more direct view of excavation work as seen through an archaeologist's spectacles; laying bare a buried past "that the culture shall live again." The Chetro Ketl excavation is called a type project. This site was previously untouched by archaeologists. The area was first examined for refuse heaps and burial places, a section marked off and trenches started. When the work was resumed in 1929, a more comprehensive plan was worked out for excavation of the central portion of the great community house. The work was supervised by Paul Reiter. It was found that the old floor level previously uncovered was built on top of an older abandoned structure, a lower mass of walls having been leveled to make way for the later structure. Besides unusual shafts and cists, nine ordinary kivas have been found. Notes on each season's work on the Great Sanctuary showed changing concepts of the original structure, —in regard to the ante-chamber, stairways, roofs, floor, fire vaults, altar, and fire-pit, which characterized it. An earlier structure was also found here in massive terraces beneath the first floor. The south half of the bowl has been uncovered. Deeper excavations of the pits disclosed massive sandstone disks piled four-deep. Toward the end of the season of 1931 the first pocket was uncovered containing over a thousand black and white beads; and in a nearby pocket, a thousand bits of turquoise. A presumably secret entrance for the priests was found. Excavated walls have been treated and repaired to insure against further deterioration.



Ceiling in Chetro Ketl

Another of the "greater sanctuaries" in the court was excavated in 1934 by W. W. Postlethwaite and Janet Woods. Dorothy Luhrs supervised work on a large kiva in Una Vida. Two "Tower Kivas" requiring extra engineering feats have been excavated by Dr. Reginald Fisher assisted by J. Marshall Miller. Tunneling and supports of iron beams on stone and concrete piers were required here. Fragments of seven distinct structures have been dealt with. In 1933, Paul Walter, Jr. commenced excavation of the small ruins called Talus Unit 1. In the cliff walls Mrs. Dorothy Keur and Hurst Julian cleared a number of natural and carved cists containing unusual material not finally studied. Work has been supervised by Edwin Ferdon on the nearby ruin of Yellow House. Small house units in outside precincts have been excavated by Bertha Dutton and Marion Hollenbach and the 1936 field class. These produce much skeletal and cultural material. Dr. Hewett says of the "Great Kiva": "The lower level of the great bowl at Chetro Ketl is the most convincing ancient sanctuary that has come to my notice in the Southwest, rivaling those of Mexico, Central America, and Peru."

A chapter on "Miscellaneous studies" discusses the arts of Chaco Canyon, burial customs, influence of the cliff walls, the water question and the time question. "Summaries," a short chapter that closes the main section of the book, relates that evidence of physiographic changes indicates clearly that the Chaco desert was once a fairly productive region, that Chetro Ketl, at least, shows signs of two distinct periods, possibly three, of flourishing occupation, that the last occupation dates from the nine to the eleven hundreds, that Chetro Ketl was a least five stories high. The cause of abandonment is discussed without arrival at a satisfactory answer. Chetro Ketl was deserted in one mass movement; whim, superstition, a complete stoppage of water, only these readily explain such an exodus for no signs of war, destruction or epidemics are shown.



Excavation of Main Community House, Chetro Ketl

The last section of "The Chaco Canyon and Its Monuments, classed as appendices, is arranged to show the results in substance of the work of other authorities in the Chaco field. It is designed for the student and outlines the history of the explorations and investigations that have been made in the canyon. Among his own associates, Dr. Hewett quotes from Professor Lansing Bloom, Dr. Reginald G. Fisher, Dr. Florence Hawley, Paul Reiter, and Kenneth Chapman. Excerpts from the work of other scholars and investigators include: Lt. J. Hervey Simpson, Professor Richard E. Dodge, George H. Pepper, Neil M. Judd, Dr. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr. and Dr. N. C. Nelson. This chapter is invaluable for those who desire a summary of the conclusions that have been reached by various authorities who have worked in the Chaco.

"The Chaco Canyon and Its Monuments" is the first of a series of handbooks of archaeological history announced for publication by Dr. Hewett last fall. He stated then that their purpose should be to "extend knowledge of Ancient America by presenting in readable form, descriptions of important centers of cultural development . . . sufficiently scientific for elementary textbooks, written also for the traveler and others who are eager for dependable information, . . . who care little for technicalities and much for sound, fundamental knowledge." This purpose has been more than realized in the present volume, and readers will look forward eagerly to succeeding volumes on other areas.

—WAYNE MAUZY.

ANCIENT AMERICA

Peruvians Had Pet Bull Dogs.

THERE were bulldogs in Ancient America, kept as pets by the Incas of Peru. German archaeologists have proved this by vases, which they unearthed in Peru, adorned with realistic figures of dogs. The animals have the large head, divided lips baring the teeth, the dished-in



Chaco Canyon Pottery

nose, all reminiscent of the English bulldog, and the stiff bat-like ears of the French dwarf bulldog. The American breed developed entirely separately from the European bulldogs, and has become entirely extinct.

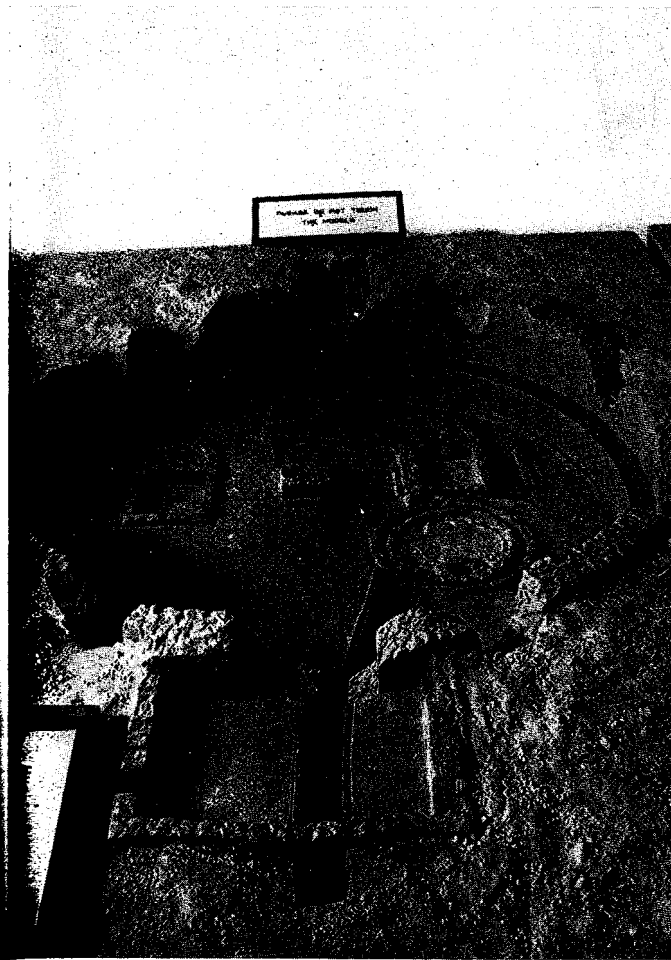
X-Ray Reveals Sea Shell Contents.

A prehistoric sea shell box, sealed and buried centuries ago, has been penetrated by the sharp eye of the X-ray. The box has long been an intriguing puzzle at the Southwest Museum at Los Angeles, since an early expedition dug up the box on San Nicholas Island, off Southern California. It is made of two big pink abalone shells sealed together with asphaltum and was obviously a valued object of Indians on the island. The attempt to X-ray the box, successfully achieved by Miss Vera Bowman, of the staff of the Pasadena Hospital Dispensary, is described by Edwin F. Walker, of the Museum staff. The X-ray photograph negative examined under powerful light has enabled museum experts to identify these Indian treasures within: Two large heads, probably of abalone; an oblong pendant, probably of abalone; two bigger pendants, about three and one-half inches long, made of shell; two irregular objects suggesting stone knives; a triangle of stone, possibly an arrow point; a long pointed object, possibly a spear or harpoon point; and one tiny ornament less than an inch long shaped like open scissors with holes at the tips.

ANCIENT EGYPT

Dream Book 3000 Years Old.

A NEW AND unique relic from ancient Egypt is a dream book used over 3000 years ago, to advise whether dreams were good or bad, says *Science Service*. The book lists various things that an Egyptian was likely to dream of. Each item is followed by the terse verdict: "good" or "bad." If an Egyptian dreamed of binding fast baleful



Model of Rinconada Sanctuary, Chaco Canyon