

**COLLECTION:** El Palacio Collection

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**ERRATA:**

**COMMENTS:**

Describes the extent of the flooding and damage to Chetro Ketl that occurred in 1917. Also includes National Park Service plans to reconstruct the walls to avoid further collapse.

**CITATION:**

Reed, Erik K.  
1947a Flood Damage to Chetro Ketl. El Palacio 54(10):238-240.



## FLOOD DAMAGE TO CHETRO KETL

ERIK K. REED \*

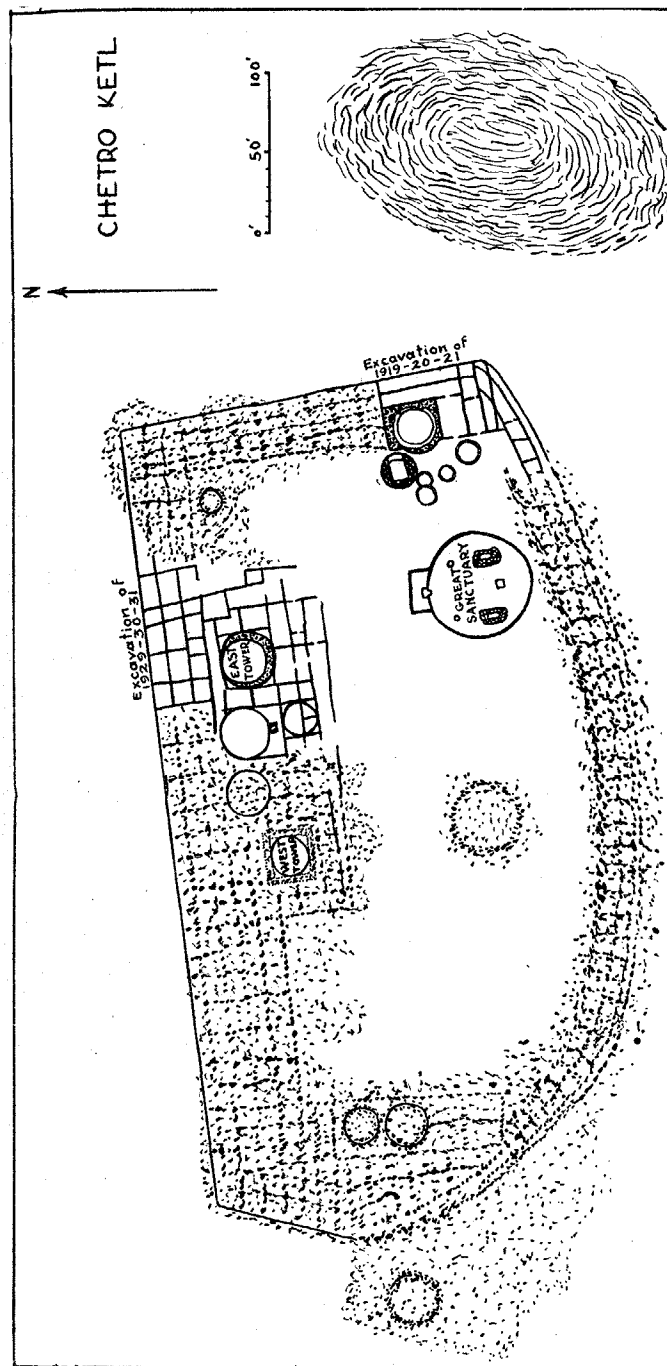
ON THE NIGHT of August 22, 1917, diversion from its usual channel of a flash flood resulting from torrential rains in the Chaco Canyon area caused serious damage to much of the excavated portion of Chetro Ketl. Normally, the little arroyo which drains the *rinçón* just northeast of this great ruin carries the runoff away from the ruin. The course of this channel is diverted away from the east end of Chetro Ketl by the embankment of dirt excavated from the ruin about fifteen years ago during Dr. Hewett's work there. On this occasion, however, it changed its course, the outlet at the end of the excavation-dump embankment becoming choked with brush and sand swept down by the flood, so that the water, instead of following the right-angle turn of the shallow arroyo bed at this point, rushed behind the embankment into the area between Chetro Ketl and the cliff and drained through into the deep, excavated rooms along the back wall.

A "lake" formed in the "cellars," water standing in the excavated rooms to the height of the adjacent ground level outside the back wall—a depth of 6 to 15 feet. The mud (adobe mortar) of the deep walls, thus immersed, dissolved; and the walls of some twenty rooms collapsed. A forty-foot segment of the exposed section (about 200 feet) of the 500-foot back wall fell inward. Large cracks developed in the adjacent high center section.

A particularly painful feature of this heartbreaking damage to one of the largest, finest, and best-known ruins of the Southwest is that at the time of the soaking of Chetro Ketl in a small lake, a thorough and painstaking program of protective capping and patching of the walls, giving adequate protection against normal weather damage through direct rainfall, had been carried nearly to completion.

The present plans of the National Park Service, in the circumstances, are to clear away the debris and rebuild as much of the fallen construction as is necessary to support the back wall and the high central section against further collapse. A few such additional losses will no doubt be unavoidable before repairs can be

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Ground Plan of Chetro Ketl in the Early 1930's

completed. The work is now under way, and a considerable part of it has already been accomplished, under the direction of R. G. Vivian.

Chetro Kettl is one of the several major ruins of Chaco Canyon. Excavations were carried on in this great pueblo by the School of American Research in 1920-21 and 1930-34, under the direction of the late Dr. Edgar L. Hewett. Highly interesting discoveries were made, forming the basis for a number of papers published by Dr. Hewett and his students. A large part of Chetro Kettl is, however, still unexcavated.

#### AT THE ART GALLERY

EXHIBITIONS during the first half of September were an interesting variety to follow the Annual Fiesta Show.

Arthur Musgrave displayed a group of burro subjects in the Mexican scene. Using the French impressionistic style with great skill, he gives these paintings the brilliance of sunlight or the glow of moonlight. Robert Dunagan was born in Lordsburg, New Mexico, and moved to Los Angeles, California, at the age of fifteen. He is mostly self-taught. A cattle rancher and rodeo enthusiast, he loves the outdoor life fully as much as his paintings indicate. Several pictures were of ranch life, but most were of mountain landscapes in which the artist showed skill in expressing his feeling for nature. James Morris' work showed marked attainment and growth characterized by strong brush-stroke and a talent for subtle satire.

Two alcoves were filled by the work of students of the summer school class of the University of New Mexico at Taos. There were many fine water colors in which ability showed more successfully than in most of the oils. The drawings were perhaps the finest part of the show. On the whole, this student work was unusually good.

During the latter half of September there was an especially fine group of exhibits. Karl Larsson's water colors, done this summer in the east, had the artist's usual excellent sense of design and clear-cut brilliance in brush handling and color. Blanca Will has returned to Santa Fe after an absence of several years. Her delicate water colors sparkle with vibrant rhythm, and her sculpture

shows marked talent. Edmund Kinzinger, head of the art department at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, spends summers in Taos. His unusually skillful figure designs in oil are evidence of sound knowledge of painting. Byron Goto had one of the finest exhibits at the Chicago Art Institute, and studied abroad for a year. His water colors and drawings show a rare gift.

Also shown in the Art Gallery during September were photographs from *Life Magazine* entitled "Houses in the U.S.A., 1607-1946," and a display of stamps by the Stamp Collectors of New Mexico.

HESTER JONES

According to the *Art Digest* of September 15, Zahara Schatz, Palestinian artist, periodical visitor to Santa Fe, is showing at the Museum of Non-Objective Painting in New York City "a pair of technically provoking works in plastic." Miss Schatz has been gaining considerable recognition for her very original and interesting work in this modern medium. The same issue of *Art Digest* reviews *Into the Night Life*, "a serigraph book conceived, designed and printed by Bezalel Schatz," brother of Zahara and also a frequent visitor in Santa Fe. The text of this splendid artistic production was written by Henry Miller, and consists of dream sequences taken from his *Black Spring*, published in Paris in 1936 and reprinted in *The Cosmological Eye* (New Directions). The text is in the author's own handwriting, photographed and then reproduced by silk screen process. The illustrations by Schatz, using eighteen colors, are complete works of art in themselves, rather than mere illustrations of the text. The book is printed on heavy watercolor paper. "The result is a volume in which perfect harmony between text and illustration is achieved."

D. M.

*Adventure in Drawing*, by Alfred Morang, art lecturer for the Extension Service of the Museum of New Mexico, will be published in October by Sage Books, Denver, Colorado. This book on techniques of drawing, in which Morang combines the realistic and abstract approaches, has been placed on the list of free textbooks adopted by the State of New Mexico.