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# Mary Colter: Southwestern Architect and Innovator of Indigenous Style

Carissa Massey  
professorcarissamassey@gmail.com

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**MARY COLTER: SOUTHWESTERN ARCHITECT AND INNOVATOR OF  
INDIGENOUS STYLE**

**Thesis submitted to  
The Graduate College of  
Marshall University**

**In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Art**

**by**

**Carissa Massey**

**Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant, Committee Chairperson  
Dr. Susan Jackson  
Dr. Susan Power  
Professor Jean Miller, Art Department Chair**

**Marshall University**

**April 24, 2003**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **MARY COLTER: SOUTHWESTERN ARCHITECT AND INNOVATOR OF INDIGENOUS STYLE**

**By** CARISSA MASSEY

Mary Colter was an architect who contributed to the regional styles of the American Southwest. Her methods and habits, both as collector and creator, set her apart from her contemporaries as an individual who fervently valued indigenous art and culture. She thoroughly researched Southwestern cultures and used their architectural forms and methods of construction as inspiration for her architecture for tourists. Colter honored Southwestern traditions through her careful research and attention to detail. She was an architect who was passionate about her work and who designed buildings that were and are aesthetically potent. Colter's unique works, their intimate relationships with the region's cultures, and her sensitivity to the Southwest's unique landscapes make her a significant part of architectural history.

## **DEDICATION**

The author would like to dedicate this work to Sophie, Jason, Walt, Shelly, and of course, Kirk—thank you for your love and support.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author wishes to acknowledge Dr. Beverly Marchant, Dr. Susan Jackson, Jean M. K. Miller, and Dr. Susan Power. Thank you all for your advice, guidance, and editing. Thank you for being my mentors.

Thank you also to Professor Carlos Bozzoli for introducing me to architecture and a new way of looking at the world that surrounds us.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study establishes the important contribution of Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter (1869-1958) to a style of architecture unique to the American Southwest. She was one of the first architects to acknowledge and honor aesthetic facets of Native American art of the Southwest. Her role as innovator and distinguished architect in the early part of the twentieth century will be revealed in the context of a critical discussion of selected works, their major iconographic origins, and Colter's role in bringing Native American aesthetic ideas to the forefront of the history of American architecture.

The geographic region that will be the focus of this paper is the American Southwest where Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah meet in a place called the Four Corners. This area has a rich history that is both complicated and diverse. It is inhabited by people with varying degrees of mixed cultural heritage who trace their roots to Indian, Spanish, Mexican, and/or Anglo people. Over time, they developed definitive cultural traditions and aesthetic tendencies that blended traits originating in these distinct cultural groups. Collectively, this culture will be referred to as Southwestern.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Language has been revealed as a tool that can oppress and subjugate as ably as any physical act. Until recent times, the term "Indian" was popularly used in reference to Native Americans. It is no longer acceptable to many. Recent trends in writing and public discourse have been to do away with names that have discourteous overtones because of their erroneous origins and negative connotations. This is not only polite but necessary in an age when progress is synonymous with equality. Therefore, it is certainly understandable that, in recent movements toward equal treatment and status for all people, change must occur in all aspects of our culture.

However, in the context of this academic discourse it is necessary to revert occasionally to "Indian" as an alternative to Native Americans for several reasons. It was the accepted word until "Native American" came into use. Here, the word "Indian" is not intended to be a reference to any political or cultural beliefs. This selection was made because of a desire to adhere to the perspective of most of the resources used throughout this research.

The term "Indian" is used to mean all sorts of native peoples and, sometimes, it means Navajo and Pueblo. Though names that indigenous people prefer will be used as much as possible, there is no broader term than "Indian," just as there is no universally agreed-upon way of mentioning them all, so the term "Indian" serves that purpose here as it has among English-speaking people for centuries. Pueblo and Navajo cultures are mentioned specifically although Pueblo architecture is more important here as the inspiration for many of Colter's works. Colter translated traditional forms, such as multi-storied apartment dwellings and kivas, into larger constructions. She rarely used Navajo

The fundamental goal of this research is to analyze selected works by Mary Colter to achieve a better understanding of her work's place in Southwestern architecture. Colter's architecture intertwined with the land and its people, so understanding the region's architectural traditions is necessary in order to gain a thorough sense of her work. She sought to create buildings that mirrored the many aspects that make the Southwest culturally unique. Colter would not have been able to work with such freedom, at a time when professional women were still considered unusual, if not for the changes underway in the region. Opportunity presented itself to her in a unique environment where she was an expert on the right things. To understand her work is to understand the environment that produced the architect. The first chapter, therefore, is an account of the Southwest's past. It will begin with a historical perspective of the Indians, Spanish, and Anglos that populate the region. Focus will then shift to changes such as the construction of the railroad, Route 66, the Arts and Crafts Movement, and architectural trends that were thriving at the time Colter was beginning her work. It is

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architecture as a source of inspiration because hogans, the primary architectural form, are usually small, relatively isolated structures built with none of the concern for permanence that so characterizes the Pueblos. Hogans were not useful models for Colter's large-scale structures. Navajo aesthetics, textiles, and jewelry were important to the Fred Harvey businesses and to Colter as a collector but Navajo architecture was not.

Another reason to revert to an older term is that many Indians refer to themselves as such. Author Joe Sando in his 1992 book *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History* uses both "Indian" and "Pueblo" in his account of Pueblo history. A member of Jemez Pueblo, Sando chose to continue using "Indian" at a time when some historians were turning to vocabulary that was and is considered more politically correct. This is true perhaps because this change was not initiated by Indians, but rather by other Americans who were part of the trend that sought to adjust our language to fit the appearance of progress and equality. Therefore, a researcher faces the challenge of whom to follow: Native Americans who call themselves Indians, or Anglo-Americans renaming Indians who were misnamed in the first place? Do non-Native Americans or any people have the right to impose names on other groups of people?

The components of this culture area will be the subjects of discussion and will be referred to as "Indian" or "Pueblo", "Hispanic", or "Anglo" when addressing a single thread of Southwestern culture. The term "Anglo" may be misleading for it does not mean Anglo-Saxon culture here. It refers instead to any imported, non-Spanish, Western European tradition that accompanied the people who colonized North America. The phrase "Western tradition" will also be used when referring to Anglo and European tradition and its influence in the Southwest. In this context, it does not include Spanish influence because of the nature of the Spanish's cultural relationship with the Indians and the early date that the Spanish first encountered them. The Spanish influence in the Southwest was and is still very powerful and therefore demands close inspection.

also important to look at the impact that the Anglo economy had on the Southwest, especially in architectural commissions.

The United States and the American West were in tremendous flux when Colter worked. Most of the changes were social and economic, including increases of leisure time and disposable income. The train and Route 66 were important parts of this dynamic culture. Both influenced the expansion of American culture, were subjects of songs and movies, and were associated with the idea of freedom, adventure, vacations, and fun, as well as the myth of the American West. They also connected Americans, who often were fascinated by Indians, to the indigenous Southwest. Subsequently, the Southwest adapted to its visitors' needs through the construction of vacation-inspired architecture designed to attract guests. This commercial architecture responded to these changes in American culture by providing exotic destinations for vacationers who were traveling greater distances. Because it developed in response to increasing numbers of tourists, this architecture was considered more disposable than the kinds of buildings that make up most of architectural history—important religious, government, and residential buildings. As transportation, vacations, and dreams changed, accommodations for tourists changed correspondingly.

With the context thus established, Mary Colter's work becomes the focal point. It must be mentioned here that there will not be a lengthy discussion about the chronology of Colter's life. There are two books, *Mary Colter: Architect of the Southwest* by Arnold Berke and Virginia L. Grattan's *Mary Colter: Builder Upon the Red Earth*, that offer biographical information about the architect and her life experiences. Instead, the second chapter will turn to those experiences that directly influenced her style; it will briefly look

at the works of some of her contemporaries and her employment by the Fred Harvey Company. It will then move into a discussion of the two buildings that began her career and that are unique in their purpose, construction, and inspiration: these are the Indian Building in Albuquerque, New Mexico and the Hopi House at the Grand Canyon. The content and context of these buildings will be analyzed and their unique roles as part of the tourist industry of the Santa Fe Railroad will be assessed.

The next section of this work studies Colter's Grand Canyon works: Hermit's Rest, Lookout Studio, and Watchtower at Desert View. These buildings will be examined individually as unique works of art. They will then be assessed as a group that embodies the aesthetic importance of the style that Colter developed at the Grand Canyon. Hopefully, such a logical sequence will explain her style's development, the influences on her work, and the parameters of her career as dictated by circumstance and desire.

Chapter Four examines her works after the Grand Canyon: El Navajo, La Fonda, and La Posada. The first two buildings continue her Pueblo-Deco style and La Posada is proof of her adaptability and flexibility as architect. These three later works were the capstones of a career as designer of facilities for tourists and hotel architect.

The style that Colter created reflected each building's site, so it was as diverse as the landscapes upon which she built. Her architecture was inspired by the land and cultures of the region; it reflected the Southwest's beauty and contrasts and paid homage to its people. The purpose of this study is to reveal the depth of Colter's understanding of the Southwest's cultures and that this understanding contributed to her ability to create convincingly indigenous architecture. Because of her affinity for and insight into the

religious traditions and the region's cultures, Colter was able to create architecture that introduced visitors to the Southwest and interpreted its cultures for them. Colter set an example with visitors' facilities that are a high point of architecture for tourists. They comprise a uniquely Southwestern and American architecture.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE SOUTHWEST: THE LAND AND ITS DISTINCTIVE PEOPLE

The American Southwest is a region full of diversity; from the variety of the landscape to the composition of its culture, it is the epitome of contrast. The landscape is predominantly arid and is covered by ridges, canyons, mountains, plateaus, basins, and ranges. It is a land of few trees and limited water sources. It is the kind of landscape that cannot be subdued and a place where survival is dictated by nature's whim. In such a place as this, people must be robust and adaptable, able to endure change and survive accordingly. It is this commanding setting that has shaped the unique culture of the Southwest - one that has endured climatic change, withstood invasion, and survived political and economic transformation. To better understand the culture that inspired Mary Colter and the importance of the setting, each group contributing to Southwestern culture, Indian, Spanish and Anglo, should be observed.

There have been people living in the Southwest since at least 10,000 BCE.<sup>2</sup> Some of the oldest ruins in North America can be found in the region. The indigenous people had developed agriculture, complex religious and social structures (for them, religion was not separate from government), and architectural traditions and innovations. They survived drought, invasion, and oppression and their descendents have managed, probably more successfully than any other Indians in North America, to preserve many ancient customs and traditions. Many of the descendants of the Southwest's first peoples still live in pueblos their families have occupied for hundreds of years and it is to their

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<sup>2</sup> Joe Sando, *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light, 1992), p. 245.

ancestors' ruins that Mary Colter was drawn for inspiration. Her visits to abandoned and inhabited pueblos were well documented and her lifelong study of their culture is evidenced in her collection of Indian art that survives at Mesa Verde National Park. Colter's passion for Pueblo culture will be looked at later in the context of a discussion of her works and how her professional career was shaped by her experiences with Pueblo culture.

Native tradition and archaeological evidence found in pottery shards and tree rings indicate that the Pueblo people of today are descendants of the Anasazi, or the first people now often called Ancestral Pueblos. The first inhabitants of this region developed basketry and pottery with exceptional designs as well as regionally and culturally distinctive architectural forms. The level of development achieved by the ancient desert culture was at its historical peak at the time they encountered the Spanish.<sup>3</sup> Specific examples of such traditions will be mentioned in later chapters in discussion of Mary Colter's works.

By the end of the fourteenth century, the desert people had abandoned their sites and moved on to mesas, or into the Zuni River Valley or the Rio Grande Valley.<sup>4</sup> The reasons for their migration are unclear. In his book, *The Pueblo Indians of North America*, Dr. Edward Dozier asserts that "most anthropologists lean toward drought and arroyo cutting as the most suitable explanation."<sup>5</sup> Whatever the cause of their move, their strong connection to the ancient Anasazi is evidenced in the "social and cultural

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<sup>3</sup> Edward Dozier, *The Pueblo Indians of North America* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1970), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> William Morgan, *Ancient Architecture of the Southwest*, (Austin, Texas: U of Texas P, 1994), p. 155.

<sup>5</sup> Dozier, p. 3.

inventory of the present day Pueblos.”<sup>6</sup> The Anasazi established many of the architectural elements that appear in modern Pueblo construction such as sculptural walls, sensitivity to the environment and innovative use of local materials. Other elements of the Anasazi tradition are evident in art made by Pueblos; it was the Anasazi who developed many of the techniques and designs used by their descendants in the making of pottery, jewelry, and basketry.<sup>7</sup>

In the two hundred years after the abandonment of the ancient pueblos, the Anasazi’s descendants adapted their agricultural methods to include irrigation farming in the new, fertile yet dry land and had established permanent villages in their new setting.<sup>8</sup> When the Spanish arrived in the 1500s, the Pueblo people were firmly situated in their settlements in relatively new architecture. There is no evidence of a hierarchical order in the layout of the settlements save for the presence of kivas. Dozier defines kivas as “ceremonial structures used for ceremonies, as a men’s workshop and among Western Pueblos as a men’s dormitory. In some pueblos the kiva is wholly or partly underground; it is either circular or rectangular in shape.”<sup>9</sup> Kivas are found in almost every Pueblo settlement, new or old. As separate, freestanding constructions, kivas contrast with the contiguous dwellings and their party walls; the space around kivas indicated their special role and function in these societies. Otherwise, most of their structures were multi-storied “apartment” buildings that were products of careful planning and were customized to fit each site in a specific relationship to the terrain. This is apparent in

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<sup>6</sup> Dozier, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Dozier, p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> Dozier, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> Dozier, p. 213.

their use of local materials and the inclusion of natural obstacles in structures instead of changing the land to fit their architecture. As a result of this approach to building, each pueblo was unique. William Morgan has explained that “[e]ach site’s response to the precise nature of its special place imparts an integral character to its architecture.”<sup>10</sup> The Pueblo people were careful to do little to disturb the natural environment in the process of building their pueblos, even when they gathered natural materials for construction, choosing to use soil and easily quarried rock. Their sensitivity to the landscape, as reflected in their architecture, bears testimony to their respect for nature. The resulting architectural style is organic and sculptural with an intimate relationship to the world.

In his book *Pueblo Nations: Eight Centuries of Pueblo Indian History*, Joe Sando wrote that “all the native peoples had this in common: they had achieved a high order of their society; they had developed various forms of democratic government placing them in history as nations.”<sup>11</sup> The Southwest was founded by people who had a predominately harmonic relationship with nature. The indigenous culture of the Southwest was far more advanced than many people have acknowledged. This was the culture encountered by Western invaders in their quest for riches and converts.

The Pueblo way of life changed drastically when the Spanish arrived in the Southwest. In 1528, the Spanish, already in Central America, heard rumors of cities filled with riches to the north spread by four shipwreck survivors who had made their way from the coast of Texas to northern Mexico.<sup>12</sup> A second round of stories began to circulate in Mexico in 1539 when a Franciscan priest, named Marcos de Niza, brought

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<sup>10</sup> Morgan, p. 265.

<sup>11</sup> Sando, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Sando, p. 246.

back tales of Indians he had glimpsed from a distance during a trip.<sup>13</sup> The priest's stories prompted the launch of several expeditions from the already established colony in Mexico to explore the settlements to the north. The primary goals of spreading their colonies north were to continue the search for a waterway to the Pacific Ocean, discovering the source of the rumored wealth of the Pueblos, and continuing their mission to convert the natives to Catholicism.

The first white men glimpsed by the Pueblos were members of a group of colonizers led by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1540. Interaction between the groups began amicably with the Indians providing food to the Spanish when their supplies ran low. However, their relations soured when the Spanish continued to rely on the Indians for food, making relentless demands on the Indians for supplies and aid over an already extended period of time.<sup>14</sup> The friction that was initiated during this expedition was the beginning of the foreign threat to the Pueblo way of life and foreshadowed the conflict and upheaval that followed. Eventually, the Natives would lose their freedom, suffer physical abuse at the hands of the Spanish, and experience epidemic illnesses brought on by exposure to new diseases carried by the invaders.<sup>15</sup> The Pueblos suffered greatly under Spanish rule and many aspects of their existence were forever changed. In spite of it all they found a way to survive under the new rule and managed to preserve many religious and social traditions by practicing them in secret. However, their acceptance of abuse and forced labor was not immediate.

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<sup>13</sup> Dozier, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> Dozier, p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> Dozier, p. 50.

Until 1700, the Pueblos were able to rally opposition sporadically against the Spanish presence. They made several attempts to revolt, but only one of their endeavors was successful, albeit briefly. In 1680, they managed to drive out the Spanish in a united revolt that regained some of their land. However, the Spanish returned for good in 1692 to re-establish their presence.<sup>16</sup> After the Spanish regained control, the Pueblo people acquiesced to Spanish rule.<sup>17</sup> The colonizers continued to mistreat the Indians under the guise of municipal reform and persisted in their attempts to convert them to Catholicism. In speaking of the situation in the Southwest that followed the reestablishment of Spanish control, Edward Dozier wrote that “it is difficult, from this distance in time, to tell which source of oppression---clergy or civil---was the most abusive and generated the most suffering.”<sup>18</sup> Eventually, the descendants of the rebels settled into a pattern of life in which they minimally obeyed Spanish rule.

The Pueblos retained many rituals and did not completely abandon their faith and embrace Catholicism. Dozier excerpts a letter by a Catholic priest who wrote that:

Their [Pueblo] repugnance and resistance to most Christian acts is evident, for they perform the duties pertaining to the Church under compulsion, and there are usually many omissions. They are not in the habit of praying or crossing themselves when they rise or go to bed, and consequently they have no devotion for certain saints as is customary among us. And if they sometimes invoke God and His Saints or pray or pay for Masses, it is in a confused manner or to comply in their confusion with what fathers teach and explain. They use estufas (kivas)...they have preserved some very indecent, and perhaps superstitious customs...<sup>19</sup>

Dozier indicates that the Spanish were aware of the Pueblos’ private worship, but unaware of the extent of the practice. The careful manner in which the Pueblos

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<sup>16</sup> Sando, p. 251.

<sup>17</sup> Dozier, pp. 55-60.

<sup>18</sup> Dozier, p. 78.

<sup>19</sup> Eleanor Adams and Fray Chavez, eds., *The Missions of New Mexico, 1776* (Albuquerque, NM: U of New Mexico P., 1956), pp. 254-258. As quoted by Dozier, p. 72.

maintained some traditions ensured the preservation of many cultural practices; they were subtle enough not to raise the ire of the Spanish rulers. The Pueblos' ability to adapt was a characteristic that guaranteed the survival of their culture in the face of change wrought by settlers, economics and forced acceptance of Western ways.

Even after Anglo culture entered the mix of native and Spanish that had occurred by the 1800s, Pueblo people continued to build their homes in the same manner they had for hundreds of years, using the same materials, forms, and always maintaining their close relationship to nature. John C. Bouke, a visitor to the Pueblos in the late 1870s, wrote of their construction:

We observed on our way that the chimneys of the houses were made of earthenware pots, placed one upon another and coated with mud, that upon the roofs in nearly all cases were bake-ovens, and that to enter any house it was necessary first to ascend a ladder to the roof of the first story and then descend to the living rooms...the walls were not, as with us, flush with the front walls of the edifice. They receded in such a manner as to leave a platform in front; this was the roof of the first story and was formed of round pine logs, covered with small branches and afterwards plastered smoothly with mud.<sup>20</sup>

This kind of construction is still used today in the Southwest. Buildings such as this made an enormous impression on some of Mary Colter's designs, especially in Hopi House, El Navajo, and Watchtower. The stonework, tiered structures, and thrifty use of resources are all characteristic of Pueblo buildings and were qualities that Colter sought to emulate in works where an important element of the goal was authenticity. These buildings will be compared and their influence on Colter's work will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Dozier, p. 104.

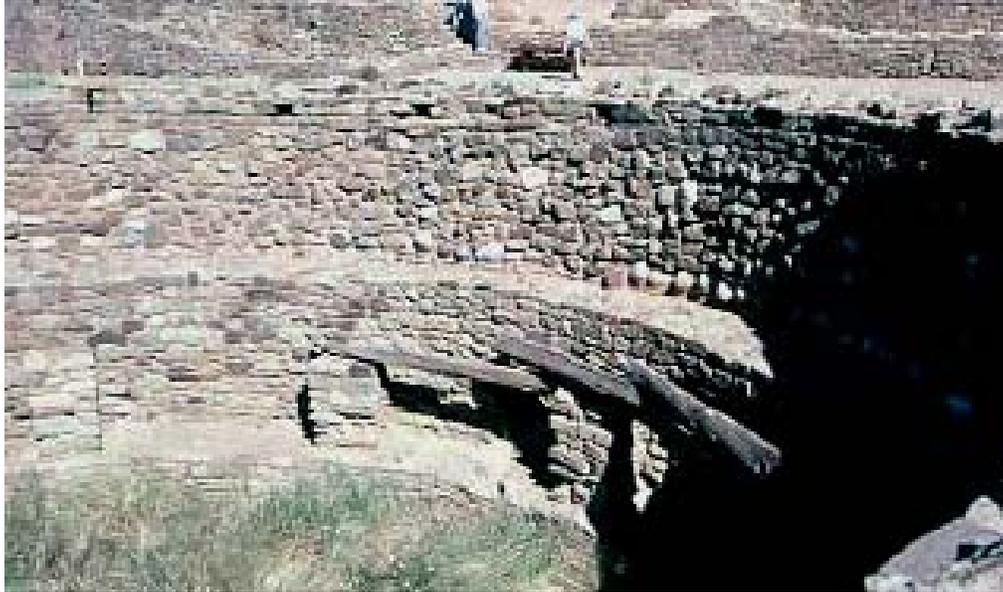


Fig. 1. Reconstructed Kiva, Aztec Ruins. 1121 C.E. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

In writing about the ancient southwest, Trent Sanford says that “it was in the Southwest only that it [architecture] took the form of permanent building for residential purposes” while the other people of North America constructed temporary, mobile structures suitable for seasonal migration.<sup>21</sup> Some of the earliest building types were pit houses, apartment-like pueblos, and cliff dwellings. The pit houses were structures built above ground with floors that were partially dug out so that the floors were below ground level. They were covered with dirt and had roofs made of branches and mud plaster. This building type was used in the construction of most kivas; they were built below ground and served as a place for communal and ceremonial gatherings and activities.<sup>22</sup> Figure 1 is a photograph a of kiva from the Aztec Ruin in New Mexico. This kiva shares

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<sup>21</sup> Sanford, p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> William Morgan, *Ancient Architecture of the Southwest* (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1994), p. 3.

characteristics with most of the Pueblos' kiva building forms; it is below ground and is a structure set apart from the main construction of the Pueblo.<sup>23</sup>



Fig. 2. Kiva at Salmon Ruins. c. 1090 C.E. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

Kivas in Anasazi sites tended to be round while the Hopi, Zuni, and Acoma Pueblos have rectangular kivas. All of these kiva shapes are linked to original pit house forms in the Southwest.<sup>24</sup> Author William Morgan wrote that the dominance of pit house structures in the early stages of architectural development in North America may have several causes:

The amount of labor required to build a pit house is relatively small, an earth-encased room is exceptionally well insulated against extreme temperatures, no special skills or sophisticated tools are required for construction, and the needed materials are readily available in most habitable locations.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sanford, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Sanford, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> Morgan, p. 4.

This traditional architectural form was abandoned by many Pueblos as the chief model for residential dwellings and, in its place, multi-room above ground structures were developed for living spaces.

Some of the multi-roomed dwellings were more than a story high. Other structures built by the Pueblos were sprawling, one story buildings. Kendrick Frazier, author of a book about the excavation and history of Chaco Canyon, wrote that most ancient Pueblos:

lived in houses made of stone. Sometimes these structures were tucked into depressions high up into the sides of canyons, as with the cliff dwellers of Mesa Verde. At other places, the homes were on mesa tops or along the sandy bottoms of shallow canyons, as we see in Chaco.<sup>26</sup>

Many of the apartment dwellings were plastered with mud on the inside and sometimes the outside walls as well. They were made mostly of stone and wood was reserved for making the roofs. The stones used to build the walls were usually cut, sometimes precisely and with great concern for smoothness.<sup>27</sup> The walls were very thick, tapering as their height increased. In places such as Chaco Canyon and its outliers, there were windows and benches incorporated in the construction of the walls and there were distinctive T-shaped doorways. Many of the buildings were oriented towards the Southeast and to the summer solstice.<sup>28</sup> They were the products of careful planning and they related to the environment symbiotically.

Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, and Aztec Ruins are just a few of the architectural remains abandoned in about 1200 C. E. The Spanish encountered a culture with an established architectural language and, as these cultures merged, the Pueblos were able to

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<sup>26</sup> Kendrick Frazier, *People of Chaco: A Canyon and Its Culture* (New York: WW Norton, 1987), p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Sanford, p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> Morgan, p. 39.

retain important elements of their historical forms and incorporate them into buildings they constructed under the supervision of the Spanish. By the time Anglo pioneers and prospectors reached the Southwest, Spanish control had diminished and the cultures had



Fig. 3. Interior of Pueblo Bonito Apartment Dwellings, Chaco Canyon. c.1080 C.E. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twichell Marchant. 2002.

merged. Pueblo building traditions were absorbed by the Spanish during mission and church construction before and after the Pueblo Revolt. The Spanish taught the Indians how to forge tools out of metal and introduced molds for adobe brick production. Trent Sanford wrote:

[...] some changes were made, but, the materials and their limitations remained the same, these changes consisted principally of certain improvements in practice due to new requirements, improved tools, and a broader background of construction experience. Imposed on the logical Indian style and with Indian labor, the blend was a harmonious one.<sup>29</sup>

Even with Spanish innovation, new Pueblo buildings returned to traditional forms and uses. Under the supervision of clergy, the Pueblos built churches for many of the

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<sup>29</sup> Sanford, p. 92.

villages, and it is in such large structures that the mergence of Spanish and Pueblo culture is most evident.<sup>30</sup>

One of the best examples of the Spanish and Pueblo blend in a construction is the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Like a Pueblo and a Spanish town, Santa Fe is focused on a plaza, one side of which is occupied by the Palace of the Governors. Trent Sanford wrote that:

The Palace of the Governor [sic], in its restored state, is an excellent exhibit of what has quite properly been called the Spanish-Pueblo style, where Spanish ideas and methods have been applied to an indigenous architecture of local materials put in place by Indian labor.<sup>31</sup>

According to Sanford, Spanish-Pueblo is one of the only architectural styles in the United States in which an Indian aesthetic is prominent. The Governors' Palace was designed to endure the harsh climate, withstand siege, and house state officials and military personnel.<sup>32</sup> Soon after 1600, Santa Fe and its Palace of the Governors were begun as the Spanish capitol of the Southwest with the aim of establishing central authority over the pueblos.<sup>33</sup>

Part of the architectural appeal of the Governors' Palace lies in its relationship with the land from which it was built. The walls of the structure are rounded and sculptural and, before there were asphalt roads, the natural materials immediately called forth the structure's intimate relationship to the landscape, which are characteristics that come from Pueblo tradition. A balustrade and towers were the victims of restoration and renovation over time and various additions, like cornices and columns, were added to its

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<sup>30</sup>Sanford, p. 105.

<sup>31</sup> Sanford, p. 91.

<sup>32</sup> Sanford, p. 91.

<sup>33</sup> Sanford, p. 90.

façade.<sup>34</sup> These architectural elements, as well as other decorative characteristics of the building that survive, were all facets of Spanish influence, which sometimes leaned more towards prestige than towards the traditional harmony that existed in typical Spanish architecture.



Fig. 4. The Palace of the Governors, Santa Fe, New Mexico. 1609. Restored 1909. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Marchant. 2002.

In the building's original form, which is not actually seen here since Figure 4 is a photograph of the building taken well after an early twentieth century attempted restoration to its original form, Spanish and Pueblo aesthetics were combined successfully. This is apparent in the purity of the material, emphasis on contours, and relative simplicity of design. For Southwesterners, the building was meant to be a visual reminder of authority, but it also was a reminder that even the Spanish could not escape the changes that both cultures experienced through the integration of each other's

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<sup>34</sup> Sanford, p. 91-2.

traditions. For both the Spanish and the Pueblos, this building served as a symbol of their coexistence, for the structure blurred the lines between their traditions.

Spanish authority eventually waned in the Southwest. Mexico officially separated from Spain in 1821, releasing the Southwestern territories from Spanish rule. With the change of authority came the loosening of laws that prohibited trespassing by Anglos from the East. The first Anglo to arrive in the Southwest after this change was trader William Becknell, whose 1822 arrival launched the opening of the Santa Fe Trail. The Southwest by no means settled into peaceful independence after its separation from Spain, but faced much conflict as various groups battled for independence and authority.<sup>35</sup> During this period of upheaval, the borders of the United States and Mexico were redefined and the Southwest began to assert itself as an active participant in the expansion of the American frontier. In the interim, the colonists from the East started moving to the Southwest in search of gold, land grants, and opportunities to start over.

The culture of the Southwest experienced further adjustment as it absorbed its ceaseless flow of new settlers. The Anglos who moved to the Southwest did not necessarily seek control, but the effects of their presence were nonetheless disruptive and damaging. The changes brought about by Anglo settlement were not immediate. The descendants of Pueblo and Spanish residents continued to live as they had for generations but, gradually, economic change infiltrated their lives. The Anglos had brought with them industry and introduced Southwestern culture to cheap, mass-produced goods. Initially, this had little effect on the culture because such luxuries were rare. This all changed after the Civil War when the railroad cut through the land and created an artery

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<sup>35</sup> Sanford, p. 241.

that connected East and West, accelerating the cultural evolution of the United States and expediting the spread of “manifest destiny.”

For the people of the Pueblos, Anglo settlement and the railroad’s expansion meant impending change. In *Inventing the Southwest: the Fred Harvey Company and Native American Art*, Kathleen Howard indicated that the changes wrought by Anglo culture made it impossible for the Indians to maintain the cultural isolation they had been able to sustain even after the Spanish first arrived: “Those Native Americans living in the West saw natural resources, which included abundant plant and animal life, greatly diminished as more Euro-Americans moved westward and fur trappers depleted available food sources.”<sup>36</sup> As more people moved to the Southwest, land owned and occupied by the indigenous people was coveted and some of it was eventually obtained from Pueblos. Though many of the Pueblo people had been deeded their land by the United States government, they were pressured to give up some of it to meet the demands of expanding industry.

The trains were also participants in the land-grabbing that occurred in the Southwest. The land the railroads needed to build their tracks was not unoccupied. Indians had long relied on it for grazing, cultivating, and hunting, all activities that allowed them to be self-sufficient.<sup>37</sup> Industry expanded and people continued to move to the Southwest, creating increasing demands for land. As the Pueblos lost land, their survival was threatened and they faced crisis as some of these native communities were so reduced they could no longer be self-sustaining. Eventually, they suffered loss of life

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<sup>36</sup> Kathleen Howard, *Inventing the Southwest: the Fred Harvey Company and Native American Art* (Flagstaff, AZ: Northland, 1996), pp. 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Sullivan, in the Foreword to Howard, p. xiii.

due to diminished food sources and could no longer remain self-sustained societies.<sup>38</sup>

Their only choice was to look toward the foreign economy to prevent starvation.

Though the Anglos did not directly attack or threaten Southwestern natives, the consequences of their presence were, in some respects, more harmful to Pueblo survival than the slavery and abuse that accompanied Spanish invasion. In both cases, the Pueblos were compelled to participate in the invading culture's society. The Spanish required religious conversion and forced the Pueblos to labor for them. In spite of these restrictions, Pueblo people remained self-sustaining, preserved some of their traditions, and continued to live in the same pueblos they had for hundreds of years. Conversely, Anglo settlement threatened the Pueblo way of life indirectly. Easterners subtly sought control of the land in order to use it for industry and ranching, both profitable endeavors, at the expense of the Pueblo way of life. Eventually, because of pressure and unrest in the area, the United States government established a reservation system that restricted indigenous people to smaller tracts of land that did not provide adequate means for self-sufficient survival. By controlling the land they occupied, Anglos were able to control the Pueblo people. For them, these changes meant that their only chance to survive in the new Southwestern culture was to participate actively in the alien economy or face starvation and the decline of their culture.<sup>39</sup>

Though the presence of Anglo settlers in the West meant unwelcome change for the Pueblos, the industry that accompanied them brought aspects of positive change experienced by middle class Americans in other parts of the United States. The railroads

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<sup>38</sup> Sullivan, p. xiii.

<sup>39</sup> Howard, p. 4.

offered freedom for many people by making them mobile. The railroad made travel cheaper, easier, and faster in addition to providing opportunity for travel to all classes. Railroad historian Keith Bryant wrote that supporters of the railway, those who attempted to convince the rest of the country of the merits of investing in its future, argued “that the railroad would open up new lands for settlement, improve communications, and aid in national defense. . . .”<sup>40</sup> These arguments attracted investors and earned the support of the United States government, which ensured the success and expansion of the railroads.

The first transcontinental railroad was finished in 1869, making it practical to expand Euro-American culture and industrialization to the West coast.<sup>41</sup> The railroad not only made it possible to transport larger loads faster than ever before, but it also provided a means of escape from the cities for the burgeoning middle class, whether to the suburbs or for vacations. Railroads revolutionized many aspects of nineteenth century American culture, even making it necessary to regulate time across the country when people had relied on the sun to establish local time.<sup>42</sup> There were 140,000 train stations in the United States by 1910 and the majority of the population was concentrated around them.<sup>43</sup> The railroads helped transform Americans into a new class of workers in the resulting economic boom produced by industrialization. Martin Sullivan wrote that “(b)y the 1890s, railroads had become the largest employers in the United States, the greatest consumers of iron, steel, and coal from the nation’s industrial plants, and the most

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<sup>40</sup> Keith Bryant, *History of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Sullivan, p. x.

<sup>42</sup> Sullivan, p. x.

<sup>43</sup> Sullivan, p. xi.

efficient and extensive movers of people and products in the history of the world.”<sup>44</sup> The railroads accelerated the development of cities and were responsible for spreading the population and its culture throughout the land.

The railroad eventually connected most of the continental United States, facilitating the exchange of goods, traditions, and people. It became the backbone of American culture and its presence in the Southwest affected the people profoundly. As they expanded, the railroads built stations to support their trains and travelers with fuel and accommodations. These stations were established in major cities, but some were built in smaller towns out of necessity because of the rural terrain traversed. In many instances, small towns became economically dependent on the train’s arrival. The train visited rural areas, exposing their traditions to travelers who passed through these stations.<sup>45</sup> Such places became destinations for curious travelers in search of entertainment. The average railroad passenger was a middle class worker who found travel possible; better wages, regular workweeks, and increased leisure time contributed to a newly acquired freedom. This new traveler was eager to see and experience the rest of the country and the diverse cultural experiences it promised.

One of the consequences of the railroad was the birth of the tourist industry in the Southwest. Travelers were not only willing to see the West, but were willing to take a piece of it back with them. One of the things Southwestern Pueblos had to sell to these tourists was art. J. J. Brody, museum director and professor of anthropology, wrote in an

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<sup>44</sup> Sullivan, p. x.

<sup>45</sup> Howard, p. 4.

essay that looked at the role of the consumer in the design process of Southwest Indian art that:

[...] Pueblo people had to find means to convert their own manufactures and services to money. Handmade pottery became a marketable commodity, and before 1900, some Pueblos were selling their entire production for cash to white tourists. Potters found that sales were made more quickly and profitably if the goods were small and exotic, and that craft qualities were of little value to their unsophisticated customers.<sup>46</sup>

Along with pottery, weaving and silver jewelry were produced for sale by the Pueblos. The production of such items was determined by what interested the tourists; most pieces were small, inexpensive, and meant to appeal to the average tourist's budget. In the process of developing these objects for sale, Navajos and Pueblos had determined that they had to appeal to these travelers' preconceptions of their culture by adapting traditional imagery to meet their tastes. They also developed new skills and learned new processes for creating art in their efforts to find alternative means to survive. They learned how to make silver jewelry that was extremely popular with tourists and also became part of their native Southwest culture.<sup>47</sup> The works they produced for their customers usually combined traditional Pueblo motifs with jewelry forms already familiar to Easterners.

The Pueblo people proved their resilience in adapting to their new situation, producing art to sell to the travelers that the trains brought to their rural communities. One of the reasons that travelers were so interested in native arts was a broader, newfound interest in handmade goods that had developed in Western culture. This trend, called the Arts and Crafts Movement, lasted from about 1875 to 1920 and was a time

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<sup>46</sup> J. J. Brody, "The Creative Consumer: Survival, Revival and Invention in Southwest Indian Arts" *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World*, Nelson H. H. Graburn, editor (Los Angeles: U of California P, 1976), p. 22.

<sup>47</sup> Howard, p. 44.

when new tendencies in art and design responded to new interests in handmade objects. According to Wendy Kaplan, the “Arts and Crafts ideal was not so much a style as an approach, an attitude toward the making of objects.”<sup>48</sup> There developed an unprecedented interest in non-Western arts and, eventually, many people began collecting all kinds of handmade goods. This kind of interest fed into the developing economies of the Pueblos and helped to make their survival in the Anglo economy possible.

The Anglos had brought ranching, industry, and tourism to the Southwest. These innovations changed the region’s indigenous culture irrevocably. Earlier, the people had evolved slowly in response to change, preoccupied with the struggle to survive in the unforgiving landscape. Their rate of change was accelerated by the industrious Easterners who disrupted their simple existence and forced the Southwest’s participation in national development and economic expansion. The region became a vital resource for cattle, mining, tourism, and subsequently, art. The railroad was its connection to the East and was the beginning of the end of the Southwest’s isolation. When the automobile began to replace the train as the favored means of transportation after World War I, even more people came to the Southwest and great roads, such as Route 66, built in 1926, were built that cut through the harsh, arid, desert land, creating another vital artery for travel and commerce. The Southwest was firmly connected to the rest of the country.

The magnetic pull of the Southwest is remarkable. The landscape is harsh and unforgiving and welcomes drastic climatic variations. Some winters are quite severe and can be as dangerous and unbearable as polar conditions.<sup>49</sup> Annual rainfall, on average, is

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<sup>48</sup> Wendy Kaplan, *“The Art that is Life”: the Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 1987), p. 52.

<sup>49</sup> Hollon, pp. 313-4.

below 10 inches, qualifying it as a true desert. In some years, rainfall is scarce enough to damage livestock, destroy crops, and cause the loss of human life.<sup>50</sup> Residents in this land must be tough; able to endure extreme weather conditions and capable of living in tune with its moods. People are drawn to it; some for medical reasons, others because of curiosity, and a few because of a fascination with the land's merciless nature. Others are captivated by its ancient culture and are drawn by the fact that it has been the backdrop for the famous American Western movies, modern images and caricatures of the region's cultures. Whatever the reasons, this area has been a destination for tourists for almost two centuries and has been molded by its booming industry.

The demands of the Southwest's prosperous tourist trade made it possible for Mary Colter to gain entrance to the male-dominated world of architecture. Tourism was so successful that Colter found herself with the opportunity to develop architecture geared towards the thriving tourist and create a style that would appeal to travelers as exotic and Southwestern. Her expertise in Indian art and experience in design facilitated her entry into the architectural profession and got her a job with a company that, as Frank Waters wrote in *Masked Gods*, "Perhaps more than any single organization (...) introduced America to Americans."<sup>51</sup> She found herself in the unique position of having the education, experience, and expertise in Indian arts that filled the unique requirements of the Fred Harvey Company for which she worked. Perhaps stereotypes and biases associated with study of indigenous art made her interests and knowledge rare, and thus, more in demand when need for such credentials arose. Regardless of the causes, she was

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<sup>50</sup> Hollon, p. 314.

<sup>51</sup> Frank Waters, *Masked Gods* (1950), quoted in Sullivan, p. 1.

able to grow professionally without much concern for acquiring and competing for commissions. Mary Colter found the means to create architecture based on her life's interests and passions, finding a specialized niche where she could work as a professional first and woman second.

## CHAPTER II

### MARY COLTER: HER ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIENCE

Mary Colter was a Midwesterner whose family had moved to Minnesota from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when she was just a little girl.<sup>52</sup> Colter was formally educated and had a passion for learning as well as a deep respect for the arts and traditions of the people of the Southwest. Prior to becoming an architect, she had worked as a teacher, an artist, and a designer. In her spare time, she studied anthropology as much as possible. The story of Colter's life is amazing considering the odds that she faced as a woman attempting to launch a professional career at a time when women had yet to acquire the right to vote.

Mary Colter was an avid collector of Indian art; it was an interest that began as a child when a man gave several Sioux ledger drawings to her family.<sup>53</sup> Those drawings began a collection that played an integral role in her life's work. Collecting focused her interests in art and indigenous traditions, both of which would profit her professionally when she went to work for the Fred Harvey Company in 1902.<sup>54</sup> While in Minnesota, she worked as an artist and lectured on metalworking and jewelry, processes she knew from her own experience.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Virginia Grattan, *Mary Colter: Builder Upon the Red Earth* (Grand Canyon, AZ: Grand Canyon Natural History Association, 1992), p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Arnold Berke, *Mary Colter: Architect of the Southwest* (New York: Princeton Architectural P, 2002), p. 27.

<sup>54</sup> Grattan, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Berke, p. 34.

Mary Colter was an advocate of functional art and spent much time researching, acquiring, and lecturing about contemporary arts and crafts of the Southwest. She also lectured on the basketry and pottery traditions of the ancient, indigenous people of the region. Her efforts did not go unnoticed by the communities in which she worked and by the time she joined the Fred Harvey Company, Colter had served for over a decade as a professional artist and educator.

Colter's architectural experience began as an apprentice in an architectural firm in San Diego before many western states had established professional licensing laws. She was in California at a time when architects were searching for new architectural forms that were more visually harmonious with the landscape, forms that would not appear so alien to the terrain as imported European styles seemed. Colter found herself in the middle of a change in Southwestern architectural tradition: she was there for the beginning of the revival of Spanish architecture.

The aesthetic climate that existed in Colter's inaugural exposure to the profession of architecture had a profound effect on her. In talking about the artistic environment that Colter entered, author Arnold Berke wrote that:

Rebellious designers...during the 1880s...were concerning themselves with the question of which architectural style best suited the young, vigorous, and still provincial state...Some of them were reacting against the European-based Victorian and Classical revival modes popular in so much of the nation...<sup>56</sup>

Many of the Victorian and Beaux-Art structures that were popular during this period of change had no historical connection to the local cultures nor did the imported styles relate to the landscape. Instead, much of the architecture brought to the West by Easterners

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<sup>56</sup> Berke, p. 30.

looked like misplaced orphans with nothing to help them belong to the places where they were built.

The West was ready for its own distinctive style. The Spanish Renaissance in the West started a trend in building that quickly spread throughout the United States. In writing about the beginnings of this movement, Trent Sanford explained that after “recognizing the possibilities of intelligent use of the Spanish tradition, a group of the leading architects began to design buildings, particularly houses, which soon took the lead in residential architecture away from the East and transferred it to the Pacific Coast.”<sup>57</sup> Mary Colter entered the world of architecture at a time when the Pacific coast was beginning to assert itself as a source of innovation and a birthplace of styles. Working in California, Colter took part in changing attitudes toward the imported styles that dotted the Southwestern landscape. Her participation in this movement had a profound effect on the rest of her professional life. In many of her buildings, she continued to make reference to forms that developed during the California revival, demonstrating her predilection for the Spanish traditions that were part of the landscape upon which she built.

Colter worked as a teacher and designer in St. Paul, Minnesota in the time between her apprenticeship in California and her hiring by the Fred Harvey Company.<sup>58</sup> Colter came to the attention of the company through Minnie Harvey, daughter of Fred Harvey; Minnie Harvey shared Colter’s passion for collecting indigenous art. Fred Harvey, an immigrant, had worked vigorously to build a company that would cater to the

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<sup>57</sup> Sanford, p. 248.

<sup>58</sup> Grattan, p. 6.

needs of the railroad passengers. He was the first to create a chain of restaurants and hotels for train passengers and, in 1876, expanded his business through a partnership with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway, which contracted with him to provide food service to dining cars.<sup>59</sup> His success was guaranteed because, at the time, his major competitors were eateries that served spoiled food and swindled passengers out of their money; those who catered to train travelers were more concerned with earning easy money than with providing decent food and establishing reputations for good service.<sup>60</sup> Harvey also took over some of the Santa Fe Railway's hotels and purchased new ones for the railroad, making vast improvements in the menus and hospitality at each one.

In 1883, he launched his plan to staff his railway hotels and restaurants with young women.<sup>61</sup> These educated, attractive and young women called Harvey Girls were the advertising magnet that assured the success of his company. Such hiring today seems sexist. However, Harvey provided an opportunity for hundreds of women to find jobs when it was still unacceptable for them to venture far from the hearth. Women proved to Harvey that they were more responsible than the men who had worked these jobs previously. William Armstrong, in describing the origins of the Harvey girl campaign when circumstances forced them to fire all of their male staff and hire new workers on short notice, wrote that “the entire community found the new staff to be very charming and much more dignified than the original crew.”<sup>62</sup> The contributions of women to the success of the Harvey enterprises cannot be doubted and may have encouraged hiring

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<sup>59</sup> Howard, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> William Patrick Armstrong, *Fred Harvey: Creator of Western Hospitality* (Phoenix, AZ: Canyonlands, 2000), p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Sandra D’Emilio, *Visions and Visionaries: the Art and Artists of the Santa Fe Railway* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith, 1991), p. 12.

<sup>62</sup> Armstrong, p. 13.

Colter. That Harvey was willing to look to them as a resource made the hiring of Mary Colter understandable. Harvey's confidence in the abilities of women was inherited by his son; Ford Harvey hired a woman architect to design and build some of the most famous hotels resulting from the Santa Fe-Harvey alliance in the Southwest.

When he died in 1901, Fred Harvey and his partner the Santa Fe Railway had successfully established twenty-six restaurants, sixteen hotels with passenger restaurants, and twenty dining cars.<sup>63</sup> His children continued to operate the business successfully. Ford Harvey had taken over the family business after the death of his father and, together with his sister Minnie and her husband J. F. Huckel, formed the new management team; they set out to expand the business from providing hospitality and accommodations to railway tourists to also include promoting Indian arts for sale to their guests and other tourists. To oversee the acquisition of artifacts for the company's new agenda, Huckel established an Indian Department within the company and commissioned Herman Schweizer, an immigrant who had acquired extensive connections to Indian artists and collectors during his years working with Southwestern trading posts, to oversee the buying and selling of art. The Indian Department eventually became a key source for artifacts and commissioned hundreds of works by Southwest Native Americans, promoting the "unusual" cultures to vacationing tourists through the Indian Building in the Alvarado complex.

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<sup>63</sup> Howard, p. 9.

## **Indian Building of the Alvarado Hotel**

The new operators of the Harvey Company wanted to alter the image of their business to make it more congruous with Southwestern culture and, thus, more appealing to tourists. Their goal was to become more appealing to people interested in Pueblo cultures, especially academics and art collectors. Native Americans had sold their work alongside the railroad tracks to passengers as they alighted from the trains and the company used this practice as inspiration for their expansion. The Fred Harvey-Santa Fe corporation started publishing manuals and booklets about the indigenous cultures of the Southwest and built gift shops to house their art.<sup>64</sup> Their next step was to expand their campaign to include buildings. Their new buildings would be advertising lures for tourists in search of the exotic, tourists who were becoming more aware of and interested in indigenous peoples' art. Until this point, the company had provided "islands of American culture," bringing the East to the West in their attempts to make the Southwest more attractive to travelers and had acquired a reputation for offering the best food and hotels Western culture had to offer in the "uncivilized" West.<sup>65</sup> This strategy had served Fred Harvey well, but when Ford's time as head of the company began, it was clear that to stay strong the company would have to expand and diversify. Their key to success was developing tourist architecture that attracted thousands of vacationers to the Southwest by providing exotic and extravagant destinations.

Its new Indian Department was successful in making the Fred Harvey Company a competitor in the burgeoning trade of Indian arts in the Southwest. Its first major

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<sup>64</sup> Berke, p. 50.

<sup>65</sup> Donald Duke, *Fred Harvey: Civilizer of the American Southwest* (Arcadia, CA: Pregel, 1995), p. 23.

endeavor as promoter of Indian arts came in 1902 when the Fred Harvey Company and Santa Fe Railroad jointly built the Alvarado Hotel in Albuquerque, New Mexico.<sup>66</sup> Their largest hotel to date, it was built by the Santa Fe Railroad's architect Charles F. Whittlesey, who was chief designer of passenger architecture for the railroad. The Alvarado was built in the Spanish Mission style that had become popular since the Californian revival of Spanish traditions.<sup>67</sup> The style chosen for the Alvarado was intended to make it appear as if it had emerged from the local traditions and trends of Spanish New Mexico. For those familiar with the region or the Californian style, the hotel did not look like local Spanish architecture. "Yet the traveler arriving at the Alvarado for the first time met with an architecture, while not really drawn from New Mexican sources, that suited its larger region and offered an experience quite different from eastern hotels" wrote Sandra Lynn in a description of the Alvarado's early years.<sup>68</sup>

The Alvarado Hotel was the main building in a complex of structures. These buildings took up one and a half blocks and were positioned beside the train tracks so that all passengers had to pass through them. The buildings were completely modern; at night the glow of electric lights brightened every window. The Alvarado was a starting point for many tourists and its gated courts gave carriages and cars access to the passengers, offering transportation and tours to visitors.<sup>69</sup> The hotel had eighty-eight rooms and provided every service that a passenger might need; there was a barbershop, laundry service, several rooms for reading, relaxation, and offering food. All of the hotel's

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<sup>66</sup> Howard, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Sandra Lynn, *Windows on the Past: Historic Lodgings of New Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: U of NM P, 1999), p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> Lynn, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> Lynn, p. 15.

employees lived on site, guaranteeing their intimate involvement in providing Harvey's famous customer service. The majority of the furnishings were custom built and each room was carefully and uniquely decorated with objects from the region, surrounding its guests in the convincing Southwestern ambiance that only the Harvey Company could effectively create.<sup>70</sup>

The Harvey Company was able to succeed in the new venture of selling Indian art to passengers because of the Indian Building and its careful placement in the Alvarado complex. Every aspect was devoted to visitors and enticing their interest in the cultures of the Southwest. Sandra Lynn has called it "an entire complex of buildings dedicated to the traveler, resembling a mission transported from the misty coastal mountains of California to dry New Mexico. All the superlatives of Harvey Service [sic]. What more could anyone ask?"<sup>71</sup>

Every passenger who alighted from the Santa Fe trains had to pass first through the Indian Building. Its purpose was to display Indian art, demonstrate its production, and showcase the Indian Department's enviable collection of Native American art. Every surface was covered with art. What prevented the room from resembling a junk shop was its careful arrangement and decoration. It was Mary Colter's expertise and discernment that transformed the space into an unconventional, desert reality for the passengers of the Santa Fe Railroad.

The Harvey Company turned to Colter as an expert in Southwestern indigenous traditions who could design an interior space using an aesthetic that would tie the

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<sup>70</sup> Lynn, p. 16.

<sup>71</sup> Lynn, p. 17.

collection in an authentic atmosphere that captured the essence of the Southwest. Mary Colter was hired to create designs serving the function and contents of the Indian Building's rooms without appearing contrived. There were collection spaces, demonstration rooms, and sales rooms all meant to entice passengers to buy. The sequence of spaces built up the passenger's appetite for buying and the building was the only route from the tracks to the city.<sup>72</sup>

The main sales room in the Indian building contained a profusion of merchandise: weavings, baskets, sculptures, and pottery. Most of the goods in the room were small enough for a traveler to take home, but a boat hung near the ceiling in case someone was undaunted by handling a large souvenir. The space was arranged so that there was a central area for traffic as well as nooks and alcoves of space large enough for people to move around in without the threat of knocking something over. The room itself was made of wood with arched doorways and electric light fixtures. Worn materials suggested age and the trading posts traditional in the West. Every object was placed so that nothing was hidden from a visitor's gaze.

Colter hung weavings carefully to ensure they were displayed to their best advantage. Many of the Navajo rugs that covered the floors were artfully placed in the middle of the floor so that their patterns and fine craftsmanship were visible. Colter used animal skins to cover shelves and tables in order to separate the objects from the furniture and establish islands of display to make it easier for viewers to take in the overwhelming number of pieces. Large pots and baskets were sat on the floor to minimize accidents that might occur if they were on tabletops; they were carefully set back under the ledges

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<sup>72</sup> Grattan, p. 13.

of tables to further protect them from traffic. The space was eclectic without appearing overcrowded, accomplished by Colter's careful placement of objects in different locations; she hung some on the walls and others from the ceiling while the rest of the souvenirs were set on shelves, tables, or the floor up against the furnishings of the room. The space created an open and inviting means to look at the items for sale, enhanced by the tiered display spaces created by furniture and arrangement of items for sale. Most of the work in the sales rooms was inspired by the company's collections that passengers saw as they made their way through the building.<sup>73</sup> The space greeted them with texture and color, bidding visitors to look, touch, and revere the art, which was carefully and artfully displayed to appear enticing and exotic to the dusty travelers from the East.<sup>74</sup>

A photograph taken of one of the Indian Building's work rooms depicts several Navajo women weaving blankets and rugs that will be taken to a sales room after they were completed.<sup>75</sup> The space replicated the work atmosphere of Indian artists. In the center of the room is a Navajo rug and around it are the women and their looms. Many of the room's features are rough and natural; the looms are made of hewn branches and tree stumps serve as workbenches. Each woman in the photograph wears traditional clothing with Indian jewelry much like what visitors would see later for sale in the shops. The center of the room was left open to allow space for the passengers to watch the weavers work. On the walls murals showed Southwestern terrain, adding to the illusion of otherworldliness that Colter was attempting to create. Colter was successful in stirring

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<sup>73</sup> Berke, p. 56.

<sup>74</sup> Due to the electronic nature of this document, copyright permission for certain photographs could not be obtained. Photographs of the Indian Building's sale rooms appear in Grattan's *Mary Colter: Builder Upon the Red Earth*, p. 11-12.

<sup>75</sup> Grattan, p. 12.

interest in a striking, Southwestern atmosphere. Her designs for the Indian Building contributed to the success of the Alvarado complex and guaranteed that her summer work as decorator for this project became the first stage in a forty-year professional career with the Fred Harvey Company.<sup>76</sup>

### **Hopi House**



Fig. 5. Charles F. Whittlesey, El Tovar, 1905. Photograph by Mary S. Hartz. 2002.

The next part of the Harvey Company's campaign to cater to the burgeoning tourist trade in Indian art was a pair of buildings constructed at the southern edge of the Grand Canyon. The Harvey hotel, called El Tovar, was built by Charles F. Whittlesey in 1904 and its location at the canyon's rim was meant to attract the increasing stream of

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<sup>76</sup> Grattan, p. 8.

tourists traveling to see the harsh desert from its edge.<sup>77</sup> The hotel boasted one hundred rooms, offered modern accoutrements, and provided entertainment and education through its galleries and novelty rooms. Its décor was based on hunting motifs but also included Native American art scattered throughout the hotel. It attracted rich and famous people, even President Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>78</sup> El Tovar was a very successful venture for the Harvey Company.

The company also built another Indian art building at this new site. Instead of commissioning Whittlesey to do both the hotel and an Indian art building, Mary Colter was to design and construct the second building, which was to be built separately from the hotel, situated across from it to make the buildings appear independent of one another. The illusion that the buildings were constructed at different times was reinforced by Colter's departure from the traditional Spanish Mission style usual in works by other architects of the Fred Harvey and Santa Fe companies. She made Hopi House, as the building was called, to seem old, an embodiment of the indigenous traditions of the ancient cultures prior to settlement of outsiders. It was a showcase for native works, with the same purpose as the Indian Building in Albuquerque. But here, Colter's design was an architectural essay about an indigenous culture, with the structure appearing to have endured the test of time and nature, looking as if it had always stood on the rim of the Grand Canyon. (This contrasted considerably with Albuquerque's Indian Building, where she created an ambiance through interior design.) Instead of simply decorating it to look like a white man's version of an Indian building, Colter attempted to recreate an

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<sup>77</sup> Grattan, p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> Grattan, p. 14.

authentically aged pueblo. Visitors to Hopi House were meant to believe that they were stepping into a genuine piece of Southwestern culture. Narratives of Hopi origins locate their place of emergence in the Grand Canyon, so while the Hopis live several hours away by car today, linking them to this site is not far-fetched.

In order to prepare her design for the building, Colter visited Oraibi, a Hopi village at Second Mesa in Arizona, less than 100 miles away from the new construction site. Oraibi “may have been continually occupied since around A.D. 1150,” making it one of the oldest settlements in the United States.<sup>79</sup> The settlement is made up of seven blocks of multi-storied, stone built structures. Access to each room is gained through its roof; the Hopi used ladders to climb up to the roof and then could pull them up behind them as a means of protection against unwanted human and animal guests. When Colter visited the Hopi village between 1904 and 1905, she encountered an ancient settlement that was still thriving. She observed the culture as it existed and took careful note of Hopi architectural style and methods of construction and used them as the basis for her building at the Grand Canyon. It is also likely that Colter encountered Hopi artists at work, or was at least able to view their work spaces and tools.

Hopi House was built with three stories. Hopi workers, in the traditional manner of Hopi pueblos, constructed it using local materials. The exterior adheres to their architectural tradition, evidenced in the careful placement of the stones and the presence of the protruding wooden beams. Sandstone and wood are the primary materials of the exteriors, and adobe plaster covers the interior walls. The ladders were made of wood that was not completely smoothed from its original form as a trunk or limb. Most of the

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<sup>79</sup> Morgan, p. 195.

building was constructed like any Hopi pueblo, only departing from indigenous architectural traditions occasionally in favor of non-native materials as a concession to practicality and function. The floors were made of cement that was stained to look like packed dirt and the furniture appeared to be simple and “primitive” as any one might find in such a pueblo.<sup>80</sup> As far as the architecture is concerned, Colter was faithful to the observations she made at Oraibi and created a structure that appeared to be, at least externally, a traditional Hopi pueblo. Colter’s experience with Pueblo aesthetic made her capable of constructing this tourist building and convincing many that it belonged to the landscape.

The personality of the building greeted visitors even before they entered its interior, then the inside was cleverly laid out in a succession of display, work, and sales rooms that all were part of its commercial purpose. The shops, much like those at the Indian Building in Albuquerque, were designed to entice the visitor and encouraged purchasing hand-made Indian art. The Navajos and Hopis who produced art for the sale rooms were on display as they worked, so that the artists became an essential part of the sales process as visitors passed by on their way to the sales rooms.

The authentic atmosphere of Hopi House was enhanced by its workers. The majority of the people working at this museum/sales building were Hopi and, in the beginning, many of them were contracted to live on the premises in the building’s upstairs, coming downstairs to work making art for the shops during the day.<sup>81</sup> Some of the greatest Hopi artists, Nampeyo and Paul Saufkie among them, lived and worked

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<sup>80</sup> Grattan, p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> Grattan, p. 14.

there. They posed for postcard photographs on the roof of the building; these spaces were meant to be traditional in use, reserved for the use of the artists, and generally were not open to public access.

Though the exterior of the building was mostly Pueblo, the interior was not entirely dedicated to Hopi and Navajo culture. The building's interior was also decorated with Spanish-inspired designs in rooms where Spanish Southwestern goods were sold. Some of the spaces included Spanish style fireplaces and cowboy gear throughout added to the decorative flavor. Sculptures of Christian saints, called *bultos*, were sold alongside Hopi religious sculptures in the Spanish-Mexican Room; the interior architecture and furniture departed from Native American motif in favor of Spanish designs.<sup>82</sup>

Most of the goods sold in the Hopi House were eclectic samplings of the different cultures of the Southwest. In the design and acquisition stages of the building's progress, Colter consulted with H. R. Voth on the collection and display of art and artifacts in Hopi House's museum.<sup>83</sup> Several years after the completion of the building, Voth installed replicas of Hopi altars, an addition that was part of a trend towards the pseudo-scientific display of Indian artifacts.<sup>84</sup> The rest of the collection included Navajo rugs, native pottery and baskets from all over the country and a room called the Totem Room, which was dedicated to the Northwest Coast Indians. Colter's biographer, Virginia Grattan, in discussing the origins of the collection, wrote that "the display grew to be the Fred Harvey Fine Arts Collection of nearly five thousand pieces of Indian art over the

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<sup>82</sup> Grattan, p.14.

<sup>83</sup> Berke, p. 69.

<sup>84</sup> Berke, p. 69.

years.”<sup>85</sup> The works owned, exhibited, and commissioned by the Fred Harvey Company were considered some of the best and most sought-after by later collectors. Many of the company’s pieces and collections came from or went to Indian and natural history museums.<sup>86</sup> Mary Colter created an authentic venue for display of portions of the Harvey family’s renowned collection, setting off the objects’ beauty in artfully designed interior spaces that, when combined with the exterior of Hopi House, created a powerful buying atmosphere. As Berke put it, “Once again, by gathering a bounty of hand-made artworks and showing them off with calculated informality, Colter proved herself a consummate disciple of the Arts and Crafts.”<sup>87</sup>

Hopi House became one of the biggest attractions for travelers on the Santa Fe Railroad. It was the subject of many of the brochures and posters printed by the Harvey Company, representing the exotic nature of the Southwest and access to wonders that their tourist establishments offered. Unfortunately, while Colter’s tourist structure was intended to be respectful of the Hopi, paying homage to their aesthetics through her faithful recreation, much of the imagery produced by subsequent brochures and advertisements for the budding Southwestern tourist market lacked that respect. Many of the images reduced the Pueblo people to caricatures, emphasizing those characteristics of their culture that non-Indian people considered “primitive” and exotic.<sup>88</sup> Berke raises an interesting point when talking about the divergence between Colter’s perspective and intentions from those of her employers, writing that “she displayed great admiration for

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<sup>85</sup> Grattan, p. 19.

<sup>86</sup> Howard, p. 24.

<sup>87</sup> Berke, pp. 65-67.

<sup>88</sup> Berke, p. 68.

the peoples and the individuals who created the culture. But a larger question looms as to the impact of Harvey/Santa Fe architecture and mercantilism on the Indians themselves.”<sup>89</sup>

Whatever the company’s motivations, it is clear that its work influenced the lives of Indians. Colter’s role in this profitable industry was as an employee who had a sincere respect for Pueblo and Navajo cultures, perhaps especially its art and architecture, and was able to demonstrate these beliefs in her position as architect with the Fred Harvey Company. She had discovered her “dream” job and become an architect who could use her life’s collecting and study of indigenous art as the inspiration for her own art. Hopi House secured her professional future as producer of Southwestern styles and, in 1910, Colter became a permanent designer and tourist architect for the Fred Harvey Company.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Berke, p. 69.

<sup>90</sup> Berke, p. 73.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE GRAND CANYON: COLTER'S INDIGENOUS STYLES

After Hopi House was completed, Mary Colter returned to Minnesota to resume teaching for a short period. Dissatisfied, she quit her job and headed for Seattle to become a designer for a department store.<sup>91</sup> The Frederick and Nelson department store had her decorating, designing, and arranging interior spaces in much the same way she had for the Fred Harvey Company. Colter's work for the new company brought success in sales and attracted new business as competition for consumer patronage was intensifying.<sup>92</sup> Though Colter was able to continue working as a designer, she was unable to use her skills and experience in architecture and did not have much artistic freedom in the work she did for the department store. Her work was limited by the products to be showcased. For someone who possessed a degree in art, had apprenticed in an architectural firm, and had already created her own works of art, working for the department store may have seemed restricting. When the opportunity to move on presented itself, Colter was eager to accept it.

She left the department store after her mother died in December of 1909 and she found herself unwilling to return to Seattle after her mother's funeral. The year following her mother's death, she was contacted by the Fred Harvey Company and offered a permanent position as decorator and designer.<sup>93</sup> The company was looking for someone to head its design team, work in conjunction with the Indian Department, and coordinate

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<sup>91</sup> Berke, p. 70.

<sup>92</sup> Berke, p. 72.

<sup>93</sup> Grattan, p. 20.

its staff in the development of designs and architectural plans for new buildings. The company hired Colter because of her extensive expertise in Indian styles and her already proven ability to create effective, original designs for the company. The new design and decorating position that Colter accepted was the starting point for some of the Southwest's most famous architecture and offered her an opportunity to create buildings and experiment with some architectural traditions that are still with us today. As for the Harvey and Santa Fe companies, Colter's collaboration with the design staff brought profit, success, and added momentum to the corporation's expanding tourist enterprises. It was an important contribution to the entire Southwestern region.

In her years as a professional architect and designer, she created two kinds of buildings for her employers: tourist facilities and resort-hotels, both for the Harvey and Santa Fe enterprises. The tourist buildings functioned as resting and observation stops for tourists traveling through the Grand Canyon sightseeing. Designed to make a tourist's experience at the canyon more exotic and mysterious through their artful and historical ambiance, these buildings were based on regional traditions and contrived to appear indigenous. The ancestral Pueblo ruins in the region influenced Colter's designs and the results must have pleased her, for they appear convincingly old.

The second genre of Colter's designs for the Harvey-Santa Fe companies was hotel architecture. These buildings were part of the Harvey Company's tradition of hospitality and offered high quality accommodations. Most of these buildings were a mix of the Spanish-Revival style with New Mexican Spanish-Pueblo. Colter's hotels were different from her work at the Grand Canyon in their styles and functions and, as such,

will be examined separately. First, we will look at three of her Grand Canyon works; her hotels will be looked at in the following chapter.

Colter went to the company's head office in Kansas City to start work for her new boss J. F. Huckel (husband of Fred Harvey's daughter Minnie Huckel).<sup>94</sup> She worked with the staff to create designs for new sites and proposals for the renovation and expansion of already existing, company-owned buildings. Design proposals included floor-plans, descriptions and drawings for interiors, drafts for landscaping concepts, and drawings of finished buildings' exteriors.<sup>95</sup> After each design was approved by the administration, it was sent to the Santa Fe Railroad's licensed architects who then created the detailed blue prints necessary to complete the building's plan. The company then hired contractors to build it.

This design process was divided into tasks that involved both companies. The Fred Harvey Company was in charge of creating the style and developing comprehensive design schemes for each site and the Santa Fe Railroad was responsible for translating them into physical structures. This divided process evolved out of the contractual relationship established by the Fred Harvey Company's founder; the Santa Fe Railroad provided the buildings and transportation of materials and the Harvey Company supplied the buildings with comfortable, stylish interiors.<sup>96</sup>

It is important to note that Colter did not take a subordinate role in the construction of her buildings, though the finished designs that she created received the signatures of the Santa Fe's architects so that they were officially recorded under the

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<sup>94</sup> Berke, p. 73.

<sup>95</sup> Grattan, p. 21.

<sup>96</sup> Berke, p. 73.

railroad architects' names. Because Colter began her career in California prior to that state's establishment of licensing laws, Colter did not receive a license. She became an architect by learning the trade as an apprentice. The alternative was to receive a degree in architecture, the more usual process of the women the U. S. census documented as working architects. It reported that there were over one hundred licensed women architects nationwide by 1900, when many states had started to regulate the licensing of architects.<sup>97</sup> At the turn of the century, women were slowly becoming integrated professionally in the field of architecture through both processes and Colter's status as a prominent designer and architect was more commonplace than it first appears.

Some of Mary Colter's early projects as designer and architect brought her back to the Grand Canyon to create buildings that catered to sightseers. The Grand Canyon's surge in popularity as one of the West's tourist attractions was, in part, due to a newfound interest in the outdoors; this was promoted by President Theodore Roosevelt's establishment of National Parks several years before.<sup>98</sup> One of the most visible legacies of Roosevelt's presidency, the National Parks were the result of his passion for nature, demonstrated when he "set aside almost 150 million acres of unsold government timber land as national forest reserve (...). Five national parks were created in Roosevelt's administration, together with two national game preserves and fifty-one wild bird refuges."<sup>99</sup> By establishing these parks, Roosevelt provided places for people to visit nature where they could observe, learn, and hike at sites maintained by the government.

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<sup>97</sup> Berke, p. 76.

<sup>98</sup> Berke, p. 88.

<sup>99</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People: Volume Three, 1869 Through the Death of John F. Kennedy*, 1963 (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), p. 141.

The new buildings at the Grand Canyon established some of the park and tourist traditions that would become part of National Park Service architecture.<sup>100</sup> The Grand Canyon was made a park in 1919 and a plan was developed for the park's new buildings.<sup>101</sup> The park's planners used the Harvey and Santa Fe companies' buildings as a starting point; the subsequent design plans for the National Park Service' Grand Canyon buildings were in what author Harvey Kaiser called "classic Rustic Style."<sup>102</sup> This style gave them a studied natural and haphazard appearance, nestled as they were sometimes unobtrusively in the land. It is clear that the style for park buildings attempted to emphasize nature's dominance over the man-made structures, a philosophy of style that, essentially, is the opposite of most traditional Western architecture.

The Harvey-Santa Fe buildings were influential and innovative because of Colter's careful research and sensitivity to the terrain's dramatic nature. The Grand Canyon buildings designed by Mary Colter included Hopi House, Lookout Studio, Phantom Ranch, Desert View Watchtower, and Bright Angel Lodge. She used natural materials so that the forms appeared subdued and native to each site. Every structure's design was tailored to fit its site, conforming to the natural pathways and careful not to block access to the canyon or detract from the natural landscape. The buildings were observation stops for tourists eager to view the canyon from dramatic locations and lodgings that were in the form of rustic cabins or log houses.<sup>103</sup> Colter's work at the

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<sup>100</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 153.

<sup>101</sup> McClelland, p. 164.

<sup>102</sup> Harvey H. Kaiser, *Landmarks in the Landscape: Historic Architecture in the National Parks of the West* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1997), p. 220.

<sup>103</sup> McClelland, p. 113.

canyon was extensive and each building an aesthetic experiment of note. However, only Lookout Studio, Hermit's Rest, and Desert View at Watchtower will be subjects of closer observation in this work.

### Hermit's Rest



Fig. 6. Mary Colter. Hermit's Rest, Grand Canyon. 1914. Photograph by Maurice Hartz. 2002.

Hermit's Rest was one of the first buildings that Colter designed after she became a permanent employee of the Harvey Company. Initially, she proposed several styles for the buildings, the first of them European-inspired mountain lodges: an "alpine" style and a "Swiss chalet with gingerbread trim."<sup>104</sup> These would have been appropriate for the rocky setting but were ultimately set aside in favor of a third concept. The final decision

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<sup>104</sup> Grattan, p. 25.

was to use Colter's indigenous style and build a structure that looked like it had been made by "an untrained mountain man," a concept that Colter developed as she studied the site and its environment.<sup>105</sup> By developing an imagined scenario for every building that she designed, Colter was able to create structures that appeared authentic. Each building's well thought-out, believable history was applied comprehensively to its site and surroundings. Her careful attention to detail and analytical response to the location made her buildings successful and contributed to making Hermit's Rest the popular destination at the Grand Canyon that it still is today.

From a distance, Hermit's Rest is difficult to see. The stones blend into the cliffs and the building's design makes it seem like jagged outcrops of rock. The area surrounding the building appears natural and overgrown with shrubs. There are stone stairs, walls, and an arch made of large boulders. Arnold Berke describes its haphazard, naïve appearance: "Hermit's Rest seems like it simply happened, accreting randomly through the years (...). Of course, none of it did; the apparent lack of contrivance masks Colter's exacting artifice."<sup>106</sup> Colter intended to make it difficult to discern the building's origins; its mystery was part of its appeal. The exterior's simple and misleading appearance was meant to enchant visitors when viewed in combination with its interior.

In a description of Hermit's Rest, Harvey Kaiser wrote that, "The interior of Hermit's Rest is medieval in character, shaped by the rugged stonework and cave-like space, with dramatic changes in volume and light."<sup>107</sup> The interior walls were built with the same natural stone as the exterior. None of the materials used for the building were

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<sup>105</sup> Grattan, p. 26.

<sup>106</sup> Berke, p. 95.

<sup>107</sup> Kaiser, p. 227.

highly processed. Much of the lumber was left rough-hewn. The wood used to support the roof was left exposed, free of any plaster or paint. The timbers and stones were left as close to natural as possible; the glass in the windows is the only exception to Colter's adherence to the use of found materials. The windows were essential, however, because they let in light from the canyon side of the building that was intense and undiffused, breaking up the cave-like darkness of the interior. The windows also made the canyon the focus of the building, making it a shelter from which to observe the canyon.

In the main hall is an enormous fireplace whose hearth extends into the room so that there is enough space to sit close to the fire on the cozy, patio-like surface of the hearth. To separate the hearth space from the main hall, the ceiling over it is lower and is shaped like a parabola, making the space seem cave-like and trapping the rising warm air overtop of its sitters. Creating a welcoming focal point in common rooms through the emphasis and placement of fireplaces was a trademark feature of many of Colter's buildings.<sup>108</sup> It was an effective way of adding comfort and intimacy to a large room and, in the fireplace at Hermit's Rest, it added authenticity to the building's supposed age.

### **Lookout Studio**

In the same year that Hermit's Rest was constructed, Colter also designed Lookout Studio. Lookout Studio was the third building that Colter built for the Harvey Company from start to finish. Historian Harvey Kaiser wrote, "Perched on the edge of the rim west of El Tovar, it was designed to allow visitors to observe the canyon through the Harvey Company's telescopes, with opportunities to take photographs from a

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<sup>108</sup> Berke, p. 95.

porch.”<sup>109</sup> Though the building is not based on Native architecture, it does share some of its characteristics.



Fig. 7. Square Tower, Hovenweep. c 1232 C.E. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

Lookout Studio has a square tower that looks similar to some of the Square Tower Community towers of the Hovenweep ruins that are situated less than seventy-five miles from the Grand Canyon. The construction of Hovenweep’s towers is similar to Colter’s; most materials used were local and the stones were carefully hand-cut yet still uneven and unique. Even though Colter’s building was not in an indigenous style, she managed to create a work that had cultural roots in the region. Author Thomas Ian, in his work *The Towers of Hovenweep*, described the tower form as a trademark of this ravine and canyon sprinkled land, writing that “large towers were being constructed in isolation on

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<sup>109</sup> Kaiser, p. 221.

the canyon rims and atop huge boulders that had broken from the cliff and come to rest on the talus slopes and canyon bottoms.”<sup>110</sup>

By using the square tower form on the rim of the Grand Canyon, Colter was continuing an architectural tradition that had begun in the region over seven hundred years before. Her awareness of the towers and their archeological significance is evidenced by her discussion of them in a book she wrote eighteen years after she completed Hermit’s Rest and Lookout Studio. Colter wrote:

Perhaps when the numerous towers of the Hovenweep country are given careful study and some of them excavated, the question of the purpose of the tower will be answered. So far the survey made of them by Fewkes in 1919, which consisted of mapping and listing and photographing a few of them, is the most that has been done for this interesting subject.<sup>111</sup> While it has been made a National Monument, Hovenweep, the virtual focus of towers, is untended and neglected alike by the Government and archeologists. Built, as these towers are, either on the brink of canyons or in the arroyos themselves, the cutting away of arroyos by torrential floods (grown greater since grazing has destroyed to a great extent the natural ground protection) has brought about, even during the last ten years, unprecedented disintegration.<sup>112</sup>

Colter’s statement indicates that she had visited the ruins often enough to be aware of the changes caused by lack of care. She wrote this in a guide book for tour drivers so that they would be able to discuss the region comprehensively and help tourists identify the significance of the architecture. Colter’s interest in the ruins was longstanding and she used her knowledge of the region’s ancient cultures to develop her buildings.

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<sup>110</sup> Ian Thompson, *The Towers of Hovenweep* (Mesa Verde National Park, CO: Mesa Verde Museum Association, 1993), p. 23.

<sup>111</sup> Jesse Walter Fewkes was an author who wrote about his studies of Indian architecture and history.

<sup>112</sup> Mary Colter, *Manual for Drivers and Guides, Descriptive of the Indian Watchtower at Desert View and its Relation, Architecturally, to the Prehistoric Ruins of the Southwest* (Grand Canyon National Park, AZ: Fred Harvey Company, 1933), p. 6.

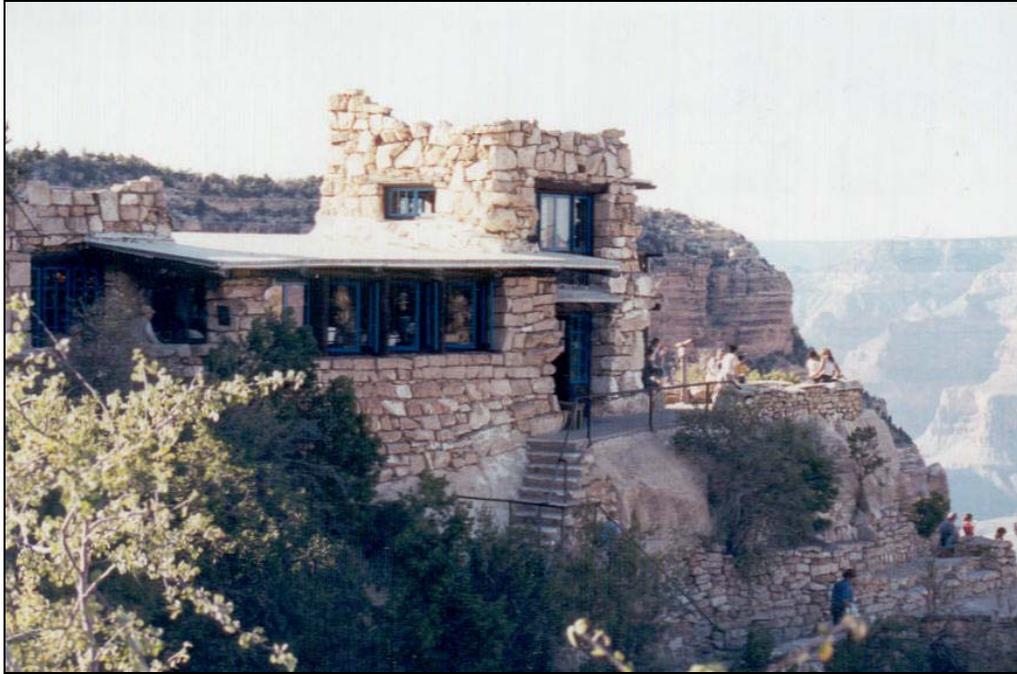


Fig. 8. Mary Colter. Lookout Studio, Grand Canyon. 1914. Photograph by Maurice Hartz. 2002.

Like the rock face of the canyon walls, the Lookout Studio's form is tiered unevenly so that it has an undulating outline shaped by the rocks' edges. The paths that lead up to the building are made of stone-cut stairs that appear uneven as they emerge and recede seamlessly into the cliffs.<sup>113</sup> To enhance this illusion and extend it to the building's façade, Colter used local limestone to build the walls, leaving them rough and somewhat irregular in shape; the walls were not smoothed over with plaster to even the surface because she was not interested in a consistent, finished appearance. Instead, the walls are made of stones that are different colors, shapes, and sizes creating the illusion that they came out of the canyon walls. Colter ordered native shrubs and foliage planted between the looser rocks at the base of walls so that, eventually, it looked like the rocks

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<sup>113</sup> Kaiser, p. 221.

had been there so long that nature was taking over.<sup>114</sup> In fact, Colter had originally designed the chimney to look as if it were ready to crumble. Since it was first completed, the chimney and many of the walls have been altered so that they are more durable and appear sturdier.

The Studio's interior was decorated with Navajo rugs and sturdy wooden furniture. It had a dramatic fireplace that, although it did not dominate the main hall as much as the one at Hermit's Rest with its alcove-like structure, managed to create a comparable sense of intimacy. Colter accomplished this by occupying a room off the main hall that was easily accessible through its wide entrance and was set off from the rest of the main hall by its raised floor. Aside from the comfort and view the Studio offered, there were also topographical maps of the region and photo albums for visitor reference.<sup>115</sup> Until it was devoted to selling things to tourists, the interior of the Studio remained relatively subdued and uncluttered.

Originally intended to be an observational and contemplative resting place, today the building is dedicated completely to the sale of souvenirs and no longer provides the tranquility and rest it once offered.<sup>116</sup> However, in its original state, it was not completely without its tourist gimmicks. The Fred Harvey Company provided transportation to the buildings as regular trips to and from Lookout Studio and Hermit's Rest that were the beginnings of the Harvey-Santa Fe Indian Detours. They began as carriage rides that toured the countryside, stopping at points of interest as guides told stories and provided facts about the region and its cultures. This tourist venture became

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<sup>114</sup> Berke, p. 100.

<sup>115</sup> Berke, p. 100.

<sup>116</sup> Berke, p. 101.

one of the Harvey Company's most profitable as it adapted to the evolving needs of the traveler.<sup>117</sup>

The Detours initially used carriages for the trips but eventually switched to automobiles as they became more available. The cars were popular for many of the tourists because they were not yet affordable enough for everyone to own one. Families who did not own cars could afford a Harvey-Santa Fe automobile tour after arriving to the canyon via train beginning 1901.<sup>118</sup> They could then book a tour with an Indian Detour driver and make a daylong journey through the Canyon, visiting the observation points and tourist attractions. As sturdier roads were built in the region, most of the buildings expanded their business to accommodate the steady flow of travelers by offering refreshments and souvenirs. Tourists also arrived at the canyon in their own cars and could tour without the Detours. The Harvey and Santa Fe companies were able to attract their business by offering lodgings, food, and also a modern garage housed at El Tovar that could offer emergency repairs and fuel.<sup>119</sup> Colter's buildings were part of the companies' attractions for both Detour travelers and private visitors, providing enchanting resting places where weary travelers could overlook the canyon as they relaxed. Her buildings helped make the Harvey-Santa Fe companies' one of the most successful tourist companies in the region.

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<sup>117</sup> Berke, p. 92.

<sup>118</sup> Diane Thomas, *The Southwestern Indian Detours: The Story of the Fred Harvey/Santa Fe Railway Experiment in 'Detourism'* (Phoenix, AZ: Hunter, 1978), p. 15.

<sup>119</sup> Thomas, p. 20.

## Watchtower at Desert View

After several more projects in the Grand Canyon, Colter focused her attention elsewhere on new projects. In the eighteen years between the completion of her first two buildings as full-time architect and designer for the Harvey-Santa Fe corporation and Colter's return to the Grand Canyon, she worked on projects that ranged from exposition displays advertising Harvey-Santa Fe tourist attractions to renovation projects. She built El Navajo Hotel in Gallup, New Mexico, redesigned the Harvey shops at the Chicago Union Station, created interior designs for La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe as it was renovated, and built La Posada in Winslow, Arizona.<sup>120</sup> Her final work at the Grand Canyon, however, was the Watchtower at Desert View.



Fig. 9 Mary Colter. View of Watchtower at Desert View's Round Tower, Grand Canyon. 1933. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

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<sup>120</sup> Berke, pp. 104; 127; 144; 154; 165.

In 1931, a new road opened up in the Grand Canyon that provided access to the east rim that overlooks the Painted Desert. The Harvey Company had wanted to expand its tourist enterprise to include a building at this site. This part of the canyon was, at that time, relatively underdeveloped compared to the cluster of tourist attractions stationed twenty-five miles away. The company wished to capitalize on this location and did so once there was a means for travelers to access the isolated spot.<sup>121</sup> The view from the rim's edge was and is breathtaking and it is understandable why the Harvey Company believed that the Harvey Company could find success in such a spot. The company's decision to assign the project to Colter was wise; it needed someone who could build something that was rich with history and did not attempt to compete with the view. Colter turned again to the ancient Indian ruins for inspiration.



Fig. 10. View from Watchtower at Desert View, Grand Canyon. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

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<sup>121</sup> Berke, p. 188.

Mary Colter had been fascinated with Hovenweep's towers at least since designing her buildings of 1914. She started a collection of photographs of the sites in 1927 while she was working on La Fonda. She obtained them from John Gaw Meem, the architect in charge of La Fonda who had gotten the pictures from a Santa Fe museum.<sup>122</sup> In her Drivers' Manual, Colter discussed the kind of towers built, their purpose, and where they were located:

Hovenweep is above everywhere else—"the playground of the Towers". So literally are they the "whole show" that one cannot but believe that here the TOWER form of building originated and was only adopted by the builders of other localities. There are towers of every description here. As at Mesa Verde, there are towers at Hovenweep built in connection with pueblos, but the most important stand isolated or in conjunction with other towers. There are small towers and large towers; square towers and round towers; oval towers and D-shaped towers. They play "hide and seek" among boulders in the arroyos; chase each other up the rugged sides of cliffs; hang to the very brink of the canyon walls; and scramble to the slanting crowns of monolithic rock pinnacles. We cannot but question what it is all about!<sup>123</sup>

Colter had visited both Mesa Verde and Hovenweep several times and even requested six months of leave so that she could study them in person without interruption as she prepared her designs for Watchtower.

Numerous photographs taken of Colter while she researched the ruins were eventually bound into four albums.<sup>124</sup> They captured her in the act of climbing, looking, and touching the ruins that were near her, creating the appearance of a woman in constant motion. At the end of the six months, Colter had decided to base the Watchtower's dimensions and design on Cliff Palace's Round Tower at Mesa Verde. Colter was insistent in claiming that the Watchtower was not a replica of a ruin, but referred to it as a

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<sup>122</sup> Berke, p. 189.

<sup>123</sup> Colter, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Berke, p. 190.

“recreation” of the past that paid homage to the desert’s ancient ruins and the cultures that had abandoned them.<sup>125</sup>

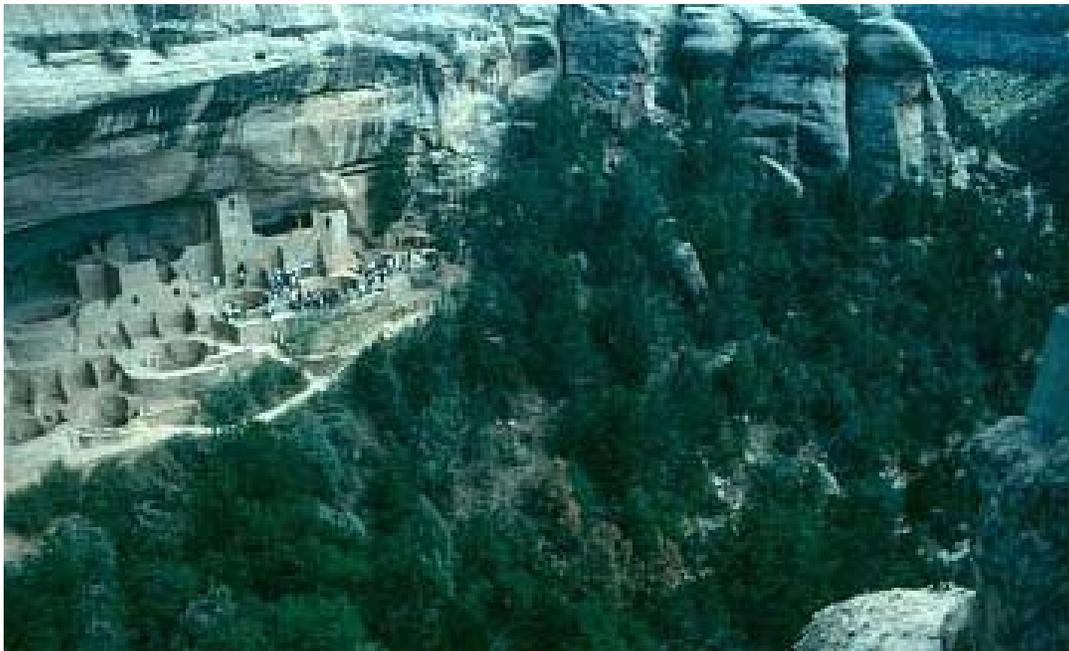


Fig. 11. View of Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde, Colorado. 1073 C.E. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

The Watchtower’s construction had to begin with a cement foundation and steel frame. Though neither of these materials was used in the ancient towers’ construction, they were necessary in ensuring the stability of the building. Colter’s tower, though based on the Round Tower at Cliff Palace, was to be much bigger when finished. At Mesa Verde, much of the adobe plaster can still be seen today because it was well protected from the elements set back as it was under the cliff’s edge. At Desert View, using plaster on the stone walls would have been impractical because of the intense exposure the building would experience perched on the edge of the canyon with no shelter from wind and rain. To combat this problem, Colter designed a steel frame that

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<sup>125</sup> Berke, p. 192.

the tower would be built around that would act as a skeleton, bearing the tower's weight, and keeping the stones in place.<sup>126</sup>



Fig. 12. Mary Colter. Façade of Watchtower at Desert View, Grand Canyon. 1933. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

To hide the foundation, Colter had large boulders placed at the base of the building.<sup>127</sup> The effect was that the boulder size progressed from largest to small as the tower rises from what appears to be a pile of stones. As at Hermit's Rest and Lookout Studio, the rocks help anchor the building to the site and soften the hard, geometric lines of the building's edges. In the sides of the tower can be seen many windows, both large and small, that spiral up the cylinder's sides. The stones' careful placement creates a pattern that is reminiscent of the stone construction of Salmon and Chaco Canyon ruins;

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<sup>126</sup> Berke, p. 195.

<sup>127</sup> Berke, p. 195.

some of the larger stones have petroglyphs similar to ones found at the ancient sites. At both sites, the stones were layered so that stones of similar sizes were placed in bands, and on some walls, there appeared distinctive bands of lighter stone.



Fig. 13. Mary Colter. Detail of Façade of Watchtower at Desert View, Grand Canyon. 1933. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

Much of the stone used in Watchtower's construction was found in the canyon. Some of it was taken from local ruins, though they were careful to select stones that did not damage the ruins and instead used stones that had already been dislodged from the ancient structures. The stone walls do not continue in unbroken patterns. Intermittently, large dark stones can be seen appearing almost like patches in the sides of the building. Around these stones are numerous smaller ones that appear to cluster around the darker stones. Together, these various rocks appear to fill in shapes or holes in the wall. In some places, there are T-shaped holes or doors that appear to have been filled in, much

like some of Chaco Canyon's T-shaped doors are filled in. In this instance and several others, Colter had intentionally based the idiosyncrasies of her building on the ancient ones found in the ruins of the region.<sup>128</sup>

Colter's kiva-shaped room attached to the tower was another reference to local ancient architecture. She had studied many of the kivas at Hovenweep and Mesa Verde during her trips to those sites. She was aware of their religious significance and was perhaps enchanted by it. She chose the kiva shape because, as she had noted in her studies and explained in her *Driver's Manual*, they appeared on several occasions at several different sites next to square and round towers. By pairing them at Desert View, she was extending the essay in the architectural history of Indian ruins in the building's exterior. Further demonstrating this is the (now closed) stairway that led to the top of the kiva, allowing access to its roof for observation and demonstrations. As author Arnold Berke states, "Like most of her works, Watchtower is a stage set and Colter a master of special effects."<sup>129</sup> She had even added a ruin to the site so that visitors could see the building's connection to the Indian ruins.

Colter's kiva was the point of entrance to the Watchtower's three gallery floors. The interior of the kiva is decorated with Indian art and had a fireplace and windows but no hole in its roof. The roof is made of wood that was salvaged from a nearby building's demolition. She decorated the kiva with shields, headdresses and most of the furniture and art was commissioned specifically for this site. The furniture was made of found materials of unique origin; there was a stool made of gnarled tree roots and a bench made

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<sup>128</sup> Berke, p. 196.

<sup>129</sup> Berke, p. 196.

“from a grotesque tree root found by a park ranger.”<sup>130</sup> Today, the kiva is a cramped space where the gift shop is packed with souvenirs for tourists.



Fig. 14. Cliff Palace Kivas, at Mesa Verde, Colorado. 1073 C. E. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.



Fig. 15. Mary Colter. Ceiling Detail of Watchtower at Desert View, Grand Canyon. 1933. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

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<sup>130</sup> Berke, p. 198.

Once visitors leave the kiva for the tower space, they are greeted by a barrage of imagery representative of indigenous culture. The walls of the interior space of the tower in the first level are covered with plaster that is not perfectly smooth. On the walls around the first room, Colter concealed light fixtures in spectacular examples of Pueblo dough bowls on shelves. She had also commissioned Fred Kabotie, a Hopi painter from Second Mesa, to paint a snake legend mural on the wall.



Fig. 16. Fred Kabotie. Mural of Hopi Snake Legend on an Interior Wall of Watchtower at Desert View, Grand Canyon. 1933. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

In addition to his mural, Kabotie also painted images throughout the room that represent Hopi spiritual beliefs and mythology. The largest painting in the room depicts a Hopi story about the first man to navigate successfully the Colorado River in his search for power and knowledge of rain and its source.<sup>131</sup> The rest of the kiva space is covered

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<sup>131</sup> Berke, p. 203.

with motifs ranging from eagle feathers to kachina figures. Some of these forms are reminiscent of pottery motifs and petroglyphs and occupy three levels of the building.

At the top of the tower is the last room, “Eagle’s Nest.” The name refers to its height and vantage point perched high above the canyon. The room was painted blue entirely so as not to detract from the breathtaking panoramic view from the top. This room’s simplicity is indicative of Colter’s careful consideration when it came to coordinating her architecture and designs with the landscape. On the outside, it appears to be architecture of the ancient peoples of the Southwest. On the inside, it displays imagery that is at the heart of Southwestern culture. The combination of the two designs resulted in a tourist building that summarizes Colter’s career as an architect who genuinely respected the architectural accomplishments and iconography of the Southwest’s indigenous people.

## CHAPTER IV PUEBLO AND SPANISH-MISSION REVIVAL HOTELS

### **El Navajo**

Between 1922 and the completion of Watchtower at Desert View in 1932, Colter worked outside of the Grand Canyon on other assignments for the Harvey-Santa Fe alliance. Three of those four building projects were hotels. She planned the interiors for Harvey Company hotels that were under renovation and designed two entire new railroad station-hotel complexes. In these hotels she returned to a style that was more characteristic of her first works for the company, a style that did not need to complement (or submit to) the drama of nature as did her work at the Grand Canyon. By this point in her career, Colter had become the primary designer of the companies' new Southwestern architectural style. Two of the projects were primarily Indian in style and contributed to a New Mexican revival of Pueblo architecture. Colter had worked in a similar vein prior to her time at the Grand Canyon when she built Hopi House and returned to it when she built her first hotel.

Colter's first hotel for the Fred Harvey Company and Santa Fe Railroad was started in 1918 and finished in 1923 in Gallup, New Mexico.<sup>132</sup> Called El Navajo, it was in a location central for railroad tourists who were eager to see the Southwest's ruins and Painted Desert. The city owed its existence to the railroad's presence and relied on the travelers that passed through its town to survive.<sup>133</sup> El Navajo made Gallup a much more attractive destination for tourists, offering Harvey's famous hospitality in a hotel whose

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<sup>132</sup> Berke, p. 137.

<sup>133</sup> Berke, p. 127.

reputation and style were meant to invite its guests to explore the native wonders of the region.

El Navajo's style was based on architectural themes, primarily inspired by the Indian architecture of the Southwest's mesas; the building has the same solid and simple exterior that Hopis developed in response to a functional need for durability.<sup>134</sup> It was a resort hotel where passengers could linger, a vacation destination in its own right. Colter developed the hotel's theme in response to a surge in the "prevalent use of diluted and commercialized Indian imagery in advertising."<sup>135</sup> Some of the tourist-hotel competition drew eclectically on a mixture of Southwestern cultures for their styles. The Harvey Company's decision to name the new building El Navajo deviated from Colter's authentic style but it was the name of a Santa Fe Railroad line that had run from Chicago to Los Angeles since 1915. The building is not in any respect an example of Navajo architecture but does combine various aspects of indigenous and Spanish aesthetics with some aspects of contemporary architecture as well.<sup>136</sup> Colter's plan was to build a hotel whose style was regionally authentic; her penchant for thorough research and careful planning resulted in a building whose interior and exterior designs partnered to create an atmosphere in which the essence of the Southwest resonated.

When Colter designed El Navajo, which was the first hotel that she built, she returned to an Indian and Spanish aesthetic. As at Hopi House, Colter based her design on a particular Indian building type. Where she had set out to create an authentic Indian building in her creation of Hopi House, El Navajo was a combination of Indian

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<sup>134</sup> Berke, p. 131.

<sup>135</sup> Berke, p. 128.

<sup>136</sup> Berke, p. 128.

inspiration and contemporary architecture: “El Navajo was a bold new statement for Colter, perhaps her boldest, if one considers the building’s place in the progression of international modernism. In this country, it was one of the earliest modernist structures of its kind.”<sup>137</sup> The exterior was a mix of hard-edged, modern blocks that were tiered and it had sparse landscaping. The harsh façade was softened by occasional Indian accents in its doorways, windows, and building profile. The Indian details of the building’s façade and interior were based on local Navajo culture: “Navajo references could be found in the arch of the main entrance, which resembled the roofline of a hogan, and the stair-step blocks used as ground-hugging buttresses and at the meeting of building segments, recalling a motif found in Navajo rugs.”<sup>138</sup> (This stair-step design sometimes also represents kiva steps and clouds and can be found on Pueblo pots.) The façade was made of thick plaster covered concrete, appearing massive and dense. Recessed windows added variety to the façade, with their modern lines, and created convex spaces in the massive stone.

Colter designed the interior to be as simple and modular as the outside with details inspired by Navajo art to break up its stark, stony interior; the only bright spots were the traditional Navajo textiles and baskets on display inside. She continued her practice of using fireplaces centrally in public spaces; however, in this case the fireplace was part of a focal wall where two Navajo sand paintings and other Indian accents flanked it. Wood existed mostly as furniture and was only rarely used to break up the red tile and plastered stone textures that made up El Navajo’s interior. This was in keeping

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<sup>137</sup> Berke, p. 141.

<sup>138</sup> Berke, p. 130.

with her theme for the building, which was based on the construction methods of indigenous structures.

Each guest room was decorated with Navajo baskets, rugs, and was painted in oranges and blues. These colors reflect the dramatic oranges of the desert's rock and sands and the blues of its sky. Colter, in her attempts to use authentic Navajo imagery as much as possible, went so far as to commission paintings based on Navajo sand painting traditions to decorate some of the interior walls. This was a practice that she would employ ten years later at Watchtower, but at this time the idea was somewhat controversial for local Navajo leaders for whom sacred painting was a key element of healing rituals. It was "medicine," not decorative art. After much negotiation, they agreed to perform rituals on them so that the imagery would be spiritually pure, "rendering them acceptable to the Navajo Gods."<sup>139</sup> El Navajo had the blessing of its namesake.

El Navajo marked Colter's return to an indigenous architectural style after the rusticism she had developed at the Grand Canyon before the 1920s. Destroyed in 1957, El Navajo linked Colter's career as decorator of the Indian Building and architect of Hopi House to her creation of Watchtower at Desert View, the most powerful of her Indian inspired structures. El Navajo also is the second building by Colter that was more Indian than Spanish and could fit the general term "Spanish-Pueblo Revival". The Indian themes prevalent in her style served her well and were motifs that she returned to in her career for inspiration. After El Navajo, she went on to decorate the interiors of a few of the Harvey-Santa Fe's buildings under renovation. Colter eventually found herself

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<sup>139</sup> Berke, p. 137.

working on designs for the interior of La Fonda Hotel, an expansion project in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

## **La Fonda**

La Fonda Hotel was purchased in 1924 by the Santa Fe Railroad after it had been shut down due to financial problems.<sup>140</sup> The building was originally constructed in the Santa Fe Style, an architectural style embraced by the city in a reaction against the Spanish Mission-Revival.<sup>141</sup> This style was the product of a revival and restoration movement that began with the city's restoration of the Palace of the Governors; it was a return to Pueblo traditions that had emerged from the Spanish and Pueblo cultural relationship. The Spanish Pueblo Revival combined Spanish building techniques with the Pueblo's sculptural treatment of building facades. This style evolved out of the city's efforts to attract tourists and was codified it as its official building style. Author Chris Wilson describes it as:

... an extreme and therefore instructive example of the invention of tradition and the on-going interaction of ethnic identity with tourist image making. The Santa Fe style of architecture, sometimes known as the Spanish Pueblo revival or simply the Pueblo style, emerged first and has continued to epitomize local identity ... this distinctive regional revival has provided a unifying civic identity for the city, a promotional image to attract tourists, and a romantic backdrop for Anglo-American newcomers.<sup>142</sup>

The architectural firm that designed and built La Fonda was Rapp, Rapp, and Hendrickson. Though not the first to employ the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style in their architecture, they were one of the first firms to abandon Beaux-Arts classicism and fully

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<sup>140</sup> Berke, p. 152.

<sup>141</sup> Berke, p. 150.

<sup>142</sup> Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp. 7-8.

embrace the new style of New Mexico. La Fonda's purpose was similar to the Harvey Hotels': offer good hospitality packaged as exotic regional tradition with its collection of "regional Arts and Crafts furnishings (Navajo blankets, Pueblo pottery, and New Mexico Mission style furniture)." They also conveyed this in an ad campaign declaring the hotel to be the "Inn at the end of the Santa Fe Trail."<sup>143</sup> La Fonda was designed to woo the same tourists who were attracted by the Alvarado Hotel and Indian Building. The hotel's closing did not reflect a rejection of the style nor was it because of a lack of success, but was the result of a financial crisis experienced by the hotel's stockholders.<sup>144</sup>

Recognizing the hotel's potential, the Harvey and Santa Fe companies set about to expand and reopen it as a Harvey Hotel.

They hired architect and preservationist John Gaw Meem to build an addition to the hotel. Meem, who had originally moved to the Southwest to recover from tuberculosis, had studied architecture during his recovery.<sup>145</sup> Prior to his work at La Fonda, Meem was an engineer who became passionate about restoring and preserving mission churches and pueblos in the Southwest. His expertise in this field and his knowledge of architecture made him an attractive candidate for the La Fonda project. In hindsight, hiring him was logical, for he was "an advocate of the new Santa Fe style who went on to become New Mexico's most celebrated architect."<sup>146</sup> For Meem, La Fonda

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<sup>143</sup> Wilson, p. 139.

<sup>144</sup> Berke, p. 152.

<sup>145</sup> Beatrice Chauvenet, *John Gaw Meem: Pioneer in Historic Preservation* (Santa Fe, NM: Historic Santa Fe Foundation/Museum of New Mexico Press, 1985), p. 3.

<sup>146</sup> Berke, p. 154.

was a learning experience where he combined Pueblo style with modern construction methods that he later applied to his restoration projects.<sup>147</sup>

The Santa Fe's plans for the hotel expanded the number of guest rooms, added a wing to the original structure and redesigned the interior's arrangement. Meem added a mission-style tower to the corner of the building based on towers at Acoma that he had restored.<sup>148</sup> For Meem, this project was the beginning of his career as an architect. Colter was the interior designer for the project and worked closely with him during the six years it took to complete the hotel's expansion. They spent these years between 1924



Fig. 17. Rapp, Rapp, and Hendrickson, 1920. Expanded by John Gaw Meem and Mary Colter, 1926-29. Shelby Street Façade, La Fonda Hotel, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

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<sup>147</sup> Chauvenet, p. 52.

<sup>148</sup> Berke, p. 155.

and 1930 co-operating and offering feedback and suggestions about each other's work.<sup>149</sup>

The result of their efforts was a much larger, more successful hotel that was purely

Southwestern. Bainbridge Bunting, in his biography of Meem, wrote that:

Everything was done to make the hotel reflect the character of the Southwest. La Fonda aspired to be more than merely eye-catching; its architecture and interior appointments were intended as serious interpretations of the region. One might see it as John Meem's "master work," his demonstration piece done at the end of apprenticeship, which proved that he was now a full fledged master.<sup>150</sup>

Their work made the hotel an extraordinary building whose décor was a balance of Pueblo and Spanish tradition.

As opposed to El Navajo, whose façade was predominantly a modern translation of indigenous architecture with sparse Indian accents, La Fonda's exterior was almost entirely Pueblo in style with occasional Spanish details appearing in the tower and the patio's decorative details. The public rooms were a mixture of Spanish and Pueblo; the furniture, light fixtures, and tile work were all Spanish or Mexican while the art depicted Indian ceremony and culture. Pueblo and Navajo artists created the works that came from the collections of Colter and the Harvey Company's Indian Department. The guest rooms were entirely Spanish with ornate beddings, golden embroidery, and elaborate furniture decorated with traditional Spanish designs.<sup>151</sup> When put together, the interior and exterior of La Fonda Hotel become an essay about New Mexico's cultures. Its careful balance of cultural traditions ties the hotel intimately to its land and people. La Fonda's style has endured.

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<sup>149</sup> Berke, p. 154.

<sup>150</sup> Bainbridge Bunting, *John Gaw Meem: Southwestern Architect* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), p. 78.

<sup>151</sup> Berke, pp. 161-162.

## **La Posada**

Colter created a few buildings almost entirely according to regional versions of Spanish tradition. Whereas she spent the majority of her career designing architecture and interiors that interpreted indigenous styles, she was unable to combine all these threads in every commission for the Fred Harvey Company and Santa Fe Railroad. She found herself with the task of building a railroad station-hotel in Arizona using the Spanish Colonial Revival. It would be a return to the style of her apprenticeship in California and her experience with the Indian Building and Alvarado Hotel complex, but the result of the intervening years was not just a reprise of that style.

In 1922, Colter was given the task of designing and overseeing the renovation of the Alvarado. She expanded the guest rooms, worked with a landscaper on its exterior, and revamped its public rooms.<sup>152</sup> She added Spanish accents to each room and brought in Mission furniture. She lightened the interior's décor and added art from company collections: "Colter's unusual, one-of-a-kind finds deepened the sense of authentic history and culture and the feeling of age that she craved for her designs."<sup>153</sup> At the Alvarado, she was able to work thematically as she had in all of her projects; in this instance, she based her designs on the imagined idea that the Alvarado had been a Spanish manor owned by a baron. She applied her myth to all the rooms, making them seem to reflect the eclectic tastes of a wealthy family. This is the tactic she would later

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<sup>152</sup> Berke, p. 123.

<sup>153</sup> Berke, p. 124.

employ in her work in Winslow, Arizona. Developing even a pseudo-history for her projects provided unity in their design. It made Colter's buildings unique and enduring.

Four years before building of Watchtower at Desert View, Colter began her designs for a hotel whose style was very different from her other works. She was sent to Winslow, Arizona, to design Harvey's final grand hotel-resort in the popular Spanish Revival style of the West. Colter's work on the Alvarado provided the experience she needed to create a complete, diverse, and antiquated home with a believable history based, predominantly, on Spanish colonial traditions.

In 1927, Ford Harvey began promoting the construction of an expanded hotel and train station for the Fred Harvey Company and Santa Fe Railroad in Winslow, Arizona, to replace the administrative and maintenance center that was already there. Writing to his brother, Ford noted the potential he saw in expanding the presence of the Harvey Company in Winslow from a small Harvey House to an ambitious hotel station. To Ford Harvey, the railroad town was a perfect location; it was close to the Petrified Forest in the east, south of the Hopi mesas, west of the White Mountain Apache reservation, just outside the Navajo Nation, en route to Flagstaff and the gateway to the Grand Canyon. All of these attractions became part of the Indian-Detours tourist line provided by the Harvey Company; Winslow's central location in relation to these attractions made it a prime candidate for transformation into an oasis in the desert.<sup>154</sup>

In the early 1920s, the number of train travelers began to drop steadily. With increasing frequency, tourists were turning to automobiles for vacation transportation. In spite of this trend, the Santa Fe Railway and Fred Harvey Company continued to build

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<sup>154</sup> Berke, p. 164.

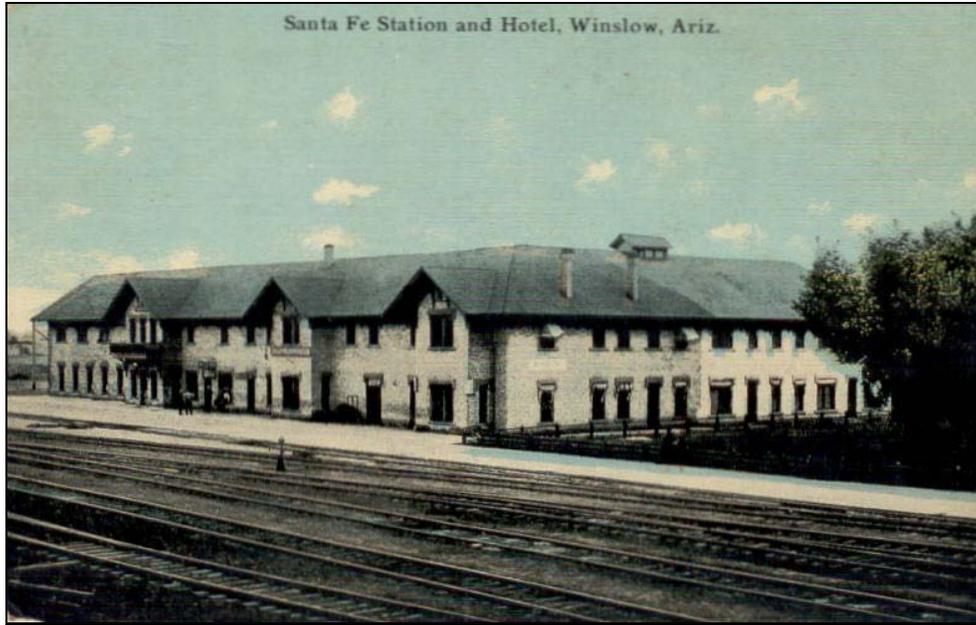


Fig. 18. Postcard of Santa Fe Railroad Station in Winslow, AZ. c. 1911. Collection of the author.

their grandiose tourist hotels in the Southwest in the hopes of attracting tourists.<sup>155</sup> La Posada was the last grand station-hotel built by the companies and its site, filling the space between the railroad tracks and Route 66, allowed it to serve as an investment that would bring the railroad company's competition for tourism up-to-date. La Posada was their concession to growing popularity of the car.

Colter had the task of designing and building from the ground up a hotel that embodied the landscape and Spanish traditions of the Southwest. She designed and managed the construction of the buildings, gardens, the interior, and furniture.<sup>156</sup> Her research was essential in developing the traditional early-Spanish architectural motifs that made La Posada a convincing, sprawling, Spanish Colonial ranch. The result of her efforts was a rambling structure that had rectangular projections extending in all

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<sup>155</sup> Grattan, p. 59.

<sup>156</sup> Berke, p. 164.

directions. She built a hotel that embraced the train traveler on one side and greeted the newest mode of transportation, the automobile, on its other. Colter successfully created a grand hotel that was emblematic of the comfort, elegance, and Southwestern ambience that the Harvey Company offered to its visitors.

A “posada” is an inn and this one was constructed with stucco covered concrete and roofed with terracotta tiles.<sup>157</sup> Almost all of the materials were local; the garden wall, for example, was made of cut stone that was brought to the site from a local source. While it seems logical to use local materials, the Santa Fe Railroad and Fred Harvey Company had the ability to import materials in from the east and unload them only feet from the building. Instead, Colter chose to use local materials in order to enhance the hotel’s authenticity and adhere to the colonial traditions that inspired the structure’s design. Colter’s use of local materials gave the hotel a natural appearance. She brought in rocks and pieces of petrified wood to bring the desert into the garden around La Posada, creating literal, visual ties to the desert. The colors of the materials mirror the colors of the desert surrounding Winslow. The light color of the stucco is a reminder of the desert’s sand and the thick concrete inside provides insulation from the intense summer sun and the bitter winter winds. Colter’s choice to use regional materials was a longstanding practice she employed in every project throughout her career.

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<sup>157</sup> Berke, p. 165.



Fig. 19. Postcard of Mary Colter's La Posada. Winslow, AZ. n. d. Collection of the author.<sup>158</sup>

Like the Alvarado, La Posada was designed to engage its visitors well before they were inside. It is the only building built by Colter for which she developed a comprehensive design for its landscaped gardens.<sup>159</sup> The lush grass and cooling shade provided by the trees alters the exterior's temperature and separates this oasis from the dry landscape with its lush foliage. The garden's effect is cooling, an inviting reprieve from the intense sun and winds. The carefully landscaped shade offers shelter for passengers after they leave the train and, nearer the entrance, the garden and its walls

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<sup>158</sup> The postcard's back reads: "La Posada, the new Fred Harvey Hotel at Winslow, is built in the low rambling style introduced into the Southwest by the early Spanish emigrants. Its decorations are in the primitive Mexican manner, painted freehand directly on stucco walls. La Posada is headquarters for motor trips via Harveycars to the Petrified Forests, Painted Desert, Hopi Indian Villages and other points of scenic interest in the territory around Winslow." *Phostint Cards* published by the Detroit Publishing Co.

<sup>159</sup> Berke, p. 176.



Fig. 20. Petrified Trunk by Door of La Posada, Winslow, Arizona. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.



Fig. 21. Mary Colter. Detail of Wooden Fence Between Hotel and Railroad Tracks. La Posada, Winslow, Arizona. 1930. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

enfold the guests. As they approach the building, they are greeted by an alcove created by gabled extensions. Passenger traffic is channeled through a section of the hotel's grounds, then into the hotel itself. It is this journey Colter exploited in her designs for the hotel.

The space constructed was 78,000 square feet built in several adjoining sections that look like additions to the main structure that happened over time.<sup>160</sup> The building sprawls across the land, with these apparent additions jutting and splicing through the space around it asymmetrically. Instead of building it up, Colter kept the structure low to the ground, only extending it two stories high. The building seems to cascade in different directions. The north side is oriented to receive guests from the highway as “the hotel’s residential arms reach toward Second Street” while the south side receives railroad guests.<sup>161</sup> The space provided by the building’s extensions allowed cars to corral in a parking area away from the highway, providing front door access for motorists and the Indian Detours.

The alcove space of the north side still serves for parking and provides immediate accessibility for guests. Though the Indian Detours no longer run, the north entrance is still very important. The guests arriving in automobiles are embraced by the architecture before they leave their cars. The arms that extend from the structure ease them into the building and begin the transition from traveler to guest. This architectural detail hints at the importance of hospitality to Colter and is one of the many features that made it a successful hotel.

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<sup>160</sup> Berke, p. 167.

<sup>161</sup> Berke, p. 167.



Fig. 22. Mary Colter. North Entrance From Route 66. La Posada, Winslow, AZ. 1930.  
Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

Colter's treatment of La Posada's entrances extended to the guests' access to the lawn via a sunken garden. She designed a patio that extends from the building's western arm out into the lawn, an exterior room that eases the transition between indoor and outdoor. The patio has furniture for lounging and eating and the space is bordered on three sides, designed to encourage visitors to linger as it descends to a lush green lawn. It has two desert-rock fountains and was, as Berke wrote, "an outdoor room complete with a flagstone terrace, a lawn, flowers and trees, vines on the walls, and yet more of the decorative pieces that Colter had amassed—huge ceramic urns, for instance."<sup>162</sup> The passive solar heating of the walls would make this space a refuge when it is too cold to be outside generally, but it could not be used for the colder and snowier parts of Winslow's

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<sup>162</sup> Berke, p. 176.

winters. Colter's sunken garden is an eclectic element that provides a mixture of her indoor and outdoor aesthetic, something rarely seen in her other buildings.



Fig. 23. Mary Colter. Sunken Garden to Cinder Block Court. La Posada, Winslow, AZ. 1930. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

The interior of La Posada was designed as thoughtfully as the exterior. This attention to detail is evident in an indoor “patio” that faces the sunken garden. The hallway and room is made of cinder blocks that Colter left exposed, something that was perhaps more exotic seventy years ago in a building like La Posada. All of the Spanish-style furniture of Cinder Block Court was designed specifically for the room or came from the Harvey Collection. Careful attention was paid to every detail by Colter in the pieces she chose for the room, ranging from “a 200-year-old chest moved from a ranch house near Winslow and carved benches fitted over radiators to a Mexican pottery-vase

table lamp with a goatskin shade and all manner of wall and ceiling light fixtures made of iron, tin, and glass.”<sup>163</sup>



Fig. 24. Mary Colter. Interior Cinder Block Court. La Posada, Winslow, Arizona. 1930. Photograph by Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

The unique character of Cinder Block Court is indicative of Colter’s treatment of every room. All of the hotel’s ironwork was done on site. The hotel’s furniture was a mix of authentic antiques and replicas of old pieces from the Harvey collection. The doorways between public rooms were enormous arches, emphasizing the openness of the spaces. The floors that were tiled were made of red-quarry tiles. Colter added wooden beams to every ceiling, even though the support was not needed, something of which her Bauhaus contemporaries would not have approved. The lobby and lounge both were decorated with Spanish and Mexican imagery. Colter accented the lounge with silver and gold paint on the turquoise ceiling and the floor was constructed of large oak boards that

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<sup>163</sup> Berke, p. 169.

were highly polished. The high-backed lounge furniture was arranged around the fireplace, something Colter emphasized in the surface of the wall above the mantle. Pieces of mission furniture mixed in with aristocratic pieces in the lounge's islands of private seating.

Colter gave the guest rooms of La Posada as much attention as the public spaces. There were seventy rooms in the hotel. The halls had floors of mosaics of linoleum to soften footsteps.<sup>164</sup> Each guest room was filled with art and “antiques”; some pieces were genuine while others had been made to appear old by the company carpenter.

Berke's description of their interior listed

Hammered tin, painted in colors to harmonize with the room scheme, was also used for mirror and picture frames and bedside lamps. Hand-painted shades were installed in the windows. Hanging in each room was a picture of San Ysidro, the patron saint of farming and gardening—a hand-colored linoleum-block print created by Harvey artist Fred Geary that depicted the saint standing behind a plow with oxen and attended by guardian angels, conveying the essence of La Posada's make-the-desert-bloom aura.<sup>165</sup>

Colter's design of La Posada was thorough and convincing. The hotel was aged convincingly by Colter's hard work and comprehensive designs. The landscaping, exterior and building's interior were all thoroughly planned and executed so that they are all thematically connected.

The architect was successful in creating an authentic hacienda from the colonial Southwest. In it, she employed many of the design techniques and approaches that had proven successful in her previous tourist works; the hotel's fireplace, treatment of façade, use of natural materials, and Colter's use of real and recreated antiques made her hotel and her imagined Spanish family come to life for guests. Colter's design is successful

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<sup>164</sup> Berke, p. 174.

<sup>165</sup> Berke, p. 175.

because of her approach to its design and her comprehensive theme. The history she contrived for the building determined every aspect of the hotel thoroughly, though it is unclear whether Colter attempted to convince hotel guests of its authenticity. While this was the only building that Colter designed completely in the Spanish-Revival style popular in the Southwest, she was fluent in the style's characteristics and effectively created a tourist hotel that was one of the Harvey-Santa Fe Corporation's finest.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

Mary Colter's success in creating innovative architecture was largely due to her inventiveness and expertise. Cultural changes in the early part of the twentieth century provided her the opportunity to find success. The Arts and Crafts movement combined with the expansion of tourism to create a demand for hand-made art of all kinds, including Navajo and Pueblo. Companies seeking to profit from this new interest in indigenous art sought professionals with expertise in indigenous cultures. Companies such as the Fred Harvey Company and Santa Fe Railroad constructed new vacation destinations based on native Southwestern cultures in order to attract business. There were not many experts of indigenous art at that time and even fewer who also happened to be architects. The art made by minorities was not part of mainstream, Western art history, contributing to the limited number of experienced experts on indigenous art. Colter's unique position as collector, architect, and academic made her a perfect candidate to design this new kind of architecture. It is possible that her gender, in combination with her interest in art overlooked and disregarded by many, made it more acceptable for her to work professionally. Whatever the case, Colter was successful by any standard.

The Fred Harvey Company and Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad alliance was extremely successful and nationally renowned; they were household names that had come to epitomize Southwestern culture. In 1946 a musical comedy, "The Harvey Girls," appeared in theaters and featured the pop song "On the Atchison, Topeka and the

Santa Fe.” The corporation had left an impression on American culture through its marketing enterprises that ranged from artwork to vacations. Fred Harvey’s name is still associated with the Southwest, appearing sometimes in captions describing works sold in online auctions like Ebay. In 1996, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, presented an exhibit recognizing the role of the Harvey Company in shaping early twentieth century Southwestern culture.<sup>166</sup> The exhibition acknowledged Colter’s importance as contributor alongside the company’s, a fact that is indicative of Colter’s role in the company’s success. Such a corporation would not have put its faith in anyone casually given the scope of their business interests and financial motivations. Their decision to hire Colter reveals how effective her architecture was.

As Colter’s career progressed, she gained increasing control and artistic freedom in her projects. She had acquired a professional position as an architect that was both secure and challenging, something that was exceptional for a woman of her time. Colter’s interest in native art is well documented and many photos show Colter wearing Pueblo and Navajo jewelry. Her large collection of pottery, jewelry, and pictures, on display today at Mesa Verde, reflected her intense interest in the Southwest. Colter’s passion for Pueblo and Navajo arts and Minnie Harvey’s influence were important factors in her hiring by the Fred Harvey Company. However, Colter would not have been repeatedly contracted as a designer and architect had her work not been excellent. The Fred Harvey and Santa Fe alliance was in the business of making money and never lost sight of this goal. The corporation’s confidence in Colter’s ability as an architect was explicit; she was given bigger and bigger projects and supervised less and less as her

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<sup>166</sup> Berke, p. 284.

career advanced. Her growing skill as an architect was an essential part of the corporation's expansion and tourist investments.

When many architects were searching for new architectural tradition, Colter developed her style from the Southwest's cultures. She designed buildings that had characteristics of many early twentieth century styles; careful study and use of materials are just a few of the traits her work shared with contemporaries. Active when the Bauhaus was in its heyday, she chose ornamentation over modern simplicity. She used the Southwest's existing traditions as inspiration for any embellishment; some of La Posada's windows were based on Spanish Baroque sculptural forms found in Southwestern structures like San Xavier del Bac and Watchtower at Desert View's stonework was inspired by the indigenous architecture of the region. She created architectural details that referenced Southwestern culture and used them, at times, as subtle accents that are reminiscent of Art Deco motifs. Her emphasis on site-specific themes resulted in unique buildings that were an important step away from some of the eclectic styles of the period.

Her career comprised three closely related styles. Her rusticism at the Grand Canyon was dominated by the landscape. Her buildings were shy shelters that were both natural and mythical. They were havens that provided an exotic and aged atmosphere for which many travelers were searching. Colter's works at the Grand Canyon were subtle essays about the region's ancient cultures.

Colter's second style was inspired by her Pueblo and Navajo collections. She started and ended her career building in this style. Her Indian inspired tourist architecture responded to specific cultural elements. She was careful in these works to keep exterior

ornamentation minimal and use expressive details inspired by regional aesthetics in the interior spaces. In these works, she introduced Spanish elements in the furniture, fireplaces, and mosaic patterns. Her Native American inspired works were the result of a distinctive, respectful, highly informed blending of regional traditions. Her works reflect regional characteristics that are recognizable even today. Unlike the architectural pastiches based on diverse regional cultures, Colter's works were not colonialist or disrespectful. Her thorough knowledge of the region's peoples made her work unique, reflective, and dignified.

Colter continued to use Spanish themes in restoration projects and new designs. Her Spanish designs were meticulous and thorough. Her career began at a site where Spanish tradition dominated; the Alvarado Hotel complex's exterior and majority of its interior was Spanish-Revival in style. The Alvarado certainly left an impression on Colter as is evident in her later work at La Posada, though the Alvarado was eventually torn down. (A facsimile of the Alvarado Hotel was constructed on the original hotel's site with updated building methods beginning in 2002 on the same site.) La Posada, her last hotel project, was Colter's own interpretation of the regional Spanish style. Though the hotel is still standing, it was turned into an office building. Restoration of La Posada is not yet complete. The fact that these buildings have both managed to remain influential testifies to the strength of character and enduring nature of Colter's style.

It seems ironic that the proximity to the railroad—less than fifty feet from many rooms—became a liability after the shift from train to car, for that location had been intentional. While the noise and dirt of steam engines appear to have been acceptable to those who traveled by train, automobile passengers soon wanted both the quiet and air

conditioning of newer hotels and motels. La Posada's location became a liability after the shift from train to car. Updating some of Colter's buildings makes them more compatible to modern travelers and their needs.

The destruction of some of Colter's buildings does not mean that her architecture was unsuccessful but reflects a change in the purpose of the architecture she was commissioned to build. Many of her destroyed or altered works were hotel-train stations designed to cater to specific tourist interests. As these interests changed, companies like the Fred Harvey Company and Santa Fe Railroad had to respond to changing needs of their guests. As a result, they tore down some of their buildings to make way for newer structures that enabled these companies to remain competitive. The nature of Colter's work made some of it vulnerable to the industry's evolving demands. This trend towards changing architectural forms was an indication of their response to these economic changes.

The buildings that were not destroyed are in places where competition was not as keen or where the land was protected. Colter's Grand Canyon buildings may have survived because they were built on land that would be protected by the National Park Service. El Navajo did not fair so well. El Navajo's hotel portion, where many of Colter's sandpaintings existed, was destroyed in a 1957 expansion of Route 66, leaving only the station part of the structure standing.<sup>167</sup> Her use of Navajo sandpaintings in the hotel was copied in later Southwestern structures to the extent that even projects by the Works Progress Administration incorporated them in their decorations.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Berke, p. 275.

<sup>168</sup> Berke, p. 143.

John Nash may have unknowingly invented modern vacation architecture when, in 1815, he built the Royal Pavilion, in Brighton, England, a sea-side royal retreat that alluded to the Taj Mahal. Colter designed architecture that similarly referenced other cultures. She worked at a time when tourist architecture was gaining strength. Commercial constructions were the most inventive and frequently built structures of that time and ranged widely in style and purpose. Works like Robert Reamer's 1904 Old Faithful Inn at Yellowstone National Park provided rustic vacations for travelers, much as El Tovar would a bit later at the Grand Canyon. It was also built with natural materials to make it look like a rustic mountain lodge from the Alps. The Old Faithful Inn was not based on imaginary fables nor does it appear as environmentally harmonic as Colter's work, but it was very different from today's plastic structures.

Other tourist architecture attempted to attract customers by using diluted and stereotypical indigenous motifs as their inspiration. Frank Redford designed a chain of virtually identical Wigwam Motels beginning in the 1930s. The one built in 1937 at Horse Cave, Kentucky, was razed in 1981. The one in Holbrook, Arizona,—the Interstate 40 exit before Winslow—was built in 1950, open until 1974, and reopened in 1988. Redford used stereotypical tipi forms to attract attention to the hotel's name and theme without using traditional tipi materials. The shape is that of a tipi, not a wigwam. They are made of concrete, each about 25 feet tall and 25 feet in diameter. This is an instance where the architect chose a generic native form to create "authentic" architecture, indicating that the architect did no real research to create the hotel's theme.



Fig. 25. Frank Redford. Wigwam Motel, 1950. Holbrook, Arizona. Photograph Courtesy Dr. Beverly Twitchell Marchant. 2002.

This is something that would have been beneath Colter and was certainly something she would not have done herself. This building's lack of realistic history makes it a plastic, disposable work with an understandably short lifespan, yet it would have left a lasting impression in the tourist's mind.

Today, most tourist architecture is garish and makes little attempt to relate to its environment. The Las Vegas Strip is a prime example because it is without its own indigenous identity. Most of these buildings are smaller and cleaner copies of other buildings, from the Eiffel Tower and Venetian palazzos to the Sphinx and pyramids at Giza. This city protrudes from the landscape and competes for attention with its surroundings. Las Vegas is not the only city with this kind of architecture. Disney World and Disney Land are other examples of cultural transplants for the sake of tourist dollars. They mine the world's architectural traditions to create buildings alien to their

environment, as if they just appeared out of nowhere. Are these copies of buildings not a form of cultural plagiarism? They are no more appropriate to their locations than Nash's ornate domes are to the coast of England.

Though there are subtler forms of tourist architecture that are more congruent with their environment than these examples, there are still very few that can compete with Colter's works. The absence of real study and lack of finesse makes much of today's tourist architecture appear trite in comparison to Colter's works. It is clear that Mary Colter would not have approved of modern tourist architecture's lack of respect for its sources.

Colter's works had gone unnoticed for a long time because she was a woman architect who created works using forms from minority cultures. Though she was recognized for her achievements in her lifetime, the history of art has been slow to take note of her. Her architecture is the subject of recent attention perhaps because art history has become more democratic in its study of non-traditional art created by non-traditional artists. Cultural changes like the Feminist Movement have helped broaden research to include women and minorities. Art history is now less discriminating and more open to kinds of art previously overlooked.

Colter's successful use of elements and sources is directly related to her passionate study of Southwestern cultures. Colter's works embraced innovation, indigenous materials, and modern methods in a marriage of past and present, Spanish, Anglo, and Native America. Where others merely copied originals, Colter successfully brought together regional characteristics in a new and harmonious synthesis of her own and created multi-cultural architecture that pays tribute to the Southwest. Her careful

cultural observation and attention to detail resulted in works that are deeply rooted in the region and have integrity. The integrity of her work, like its quality, makes Colter's work important architecture, not to mention exemplary as architecture for tourists.

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**APPENDIX**  
**RESOURCE INFORMATION**

The following are a few of the many sources providing material about native cultures of the Southwest and/or Mary Colter:

**Grand Canyon National Park Museum Collection**

[www.nps.gov/grca/](http://www.nps.gov/grca/)  
Grand Canyon National Park  
PO Box 129  
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

**Heard Museum**

[www.heard.org](http://www.heard.org)  
2301 North Central Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85004-1323

**Mesa Verde Museum Association, Inc**  
**Mesa Verde National Park**

[www.Meve\\_General\\_Information@nps.gov](mailto:www.Meve_General_Information@nps.gov)  
PO Box 8  
Mesa Verde National Park, CO 81330-0008

**Museum of Indian Arts & Culture**

[www.miaclab.org](http://www.miaclab.org)  
PO Box 2087  
Santa Fe, NM 87504-2087

**Museum of New Mexico**

[www.museumofnewmexico.org](http://www.museumofnewmexico.org)  
113 Lincoln Avenue  
Santa Fe, NM 87504-2087