



El Palacio

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Ecologist

1910 in El Rito de los Frijoles

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El Rito de los Frijoles was a far-away place in 1910. Black bears were seen frequently, especially in the upper reaches of the valley; from time to time the night cry of a mountain lion could be heard. El Rito had few visitors.

Even Santa Fe, 1910, was dull, as it always had been. Burros and wooden-wheeled carretas piled high with firewood patiently awaited prospective purchasers at the edge of the Plaza, across from the Governor's Palace. Masculine members of the local citizenry took their positions early to await the Sunday afternoon band concert.

From Santa Fe to El Rito de los Frijoles was a jerky, disjointed journey in 1910, fraught with discomfort if not danger. First, by the old narrow-gauge "chili line" eighteen or twenty miles northwest to an abandoned lumber camp, Buckman; thence across the Rio Grande on a long-neglected corduroy road and up a rocky trail to the crest of the Pajarito Plateau; thence more miles through the pines and cedars to the rimrock overlooking Frijoles Canyon. The road stopped at the rim in 1910. From road-end all supplies, all food stuffs, bedrolls and baggage, had to be man-handled down a steep and gravelly trail to the valley floor. Then as now, Frijoles Canyon was walled on the north by a precipitous cliff of tufa; opposite, the forested slope reached gradually to the mesa top.

In 1910 the School of American Archaeology held its second field session in El Rito de los Frijoles. Director Edgar L. Hewett was in charge, as previously. Members of his regular staff included Kenneth M. Chapman, Sylvanus G. Morley, Jesse L. Nusbaum, Percy Adams, surveyor, and J. P. Harrington, life-long student of Indian languages. Miss Maud Woy, of Denver, and Miss Barbara Friere-Marreco, of London, were students of Ethnology; Donald Beauregard, the artist, Goldsmith, whose last name I have forgotten, and I were rather super-cargo students of archaeology. Dr. Junius Henderson and Prof. Wilfred W. Robbins of the University of Colorado, were engaged in gathering the data incorporated in their joint volume, *The Physiography of the Rio Grande Valley* published by the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1913 as *Bulletin 54*.

Excavations for the summer centered in Tyuoni, the great circular ruin in mid-valley, and two terraced dwellings at the base of the north cliff, the

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*Robbins Beauregard Harrington Hodge Hewett Judd Woy
Morley Chapman Adams Nusbaum Goldsmith Frier-Marreco*

upper terraces opening into individual cavate lodges. Beauregard and I occupied a suite of half a dozen such lodges or rooms, in Snake House, highest of all, thinking we would be safe from interruptions. But, to our surprise, when Charles F. Lummis and his son arrived to attend an annual meeting of the Council, they took up residence in a suite just around the corner from our retreat. At that time Lummis was convinced, along with Thomas A. Edison, that no man needed more than three hours' sleep a night so he built a small fire outside his cavate room at eleven o'clock and played his guitar until four when he retired, unmindful of the fact we working men had to be at a 7:00 o'clock breakfast and ready for work at 7:30. Not that we didn't appreciate Lummis's endless repertoire of old Spanish and cowboy songs; it was just that we needed more than three hours' sleep.

The Director, never one to give free rein to young appetites, had driven a tight bargain in contracting meals for the summer camp. As I recall, each of us was allowed three thin pancakes and ham gravy for breakfast. We never did learn who got the ham. All we got was the gravy, and it was thin too. If those pancakes had been square-cut they could have served as cigarette papers. For at least part of the season Morley had the morning and I the afternoon shift. So distributed, time remained for individual study at the camp library. One morning Morley came running into camp to show an Indian idol that one of his Tewa crew had just uncovered. Not until later was it discovered that the "idol" had been carved from a piece of cottonwood and carefully aged with bacon grease and red ochre. But there was relatively little horse-play on the job; everyone was too busy. When the Director announced to our San Ildefonso Indian workmen that Harrington wanted to learn their language he had several volunteers, each of whom thought it would be easier to sit in the shade of a cave room and talk Tewa than to work in the sun nine hours a day. But none lasted more than two days; after that they begged to be put back on the pick-and-shovel crew. Harrington was a Simon Legree; he was utterly relentless in pursuit of a new word.

Sunday was the day for washing clothes; bathing in the ice-water pool down canyon below the falls; and for walks to places of interest: the Ceremonial Cave; the Stone Lions of Cochiti; or the Painted Cave, some five or six miles south of Tyuoni. The rest of the week we worked nine hours daily. I recall seeing Juan Gonzales, San Ildefonso Indian and a graduate of Carlisle sitting in breech-cloth on the round of a ladder in Tyuoni, reading the funny page of the New York Times. Another time, perhaps the day after the Jack Johnson-Jim Jeffries prize fight of July 4, 1910, an Easterner with great expectations, knowing there was a Harvard graduate in camp, stood silhouetted momentarily on the cliff 200 feet above Tyuoni, and gave the traditional Harvard 9. And I can still imagine his disappointment when he received in return, not the answering 9 but an impatient "Who won the fight?"

Today's broad blacktop highway with an easy grade all the way from Santa Fe has robbed El Rito de los Frijoles of its isolation. The canyon is too accessible today. Tourists go there just because it is one of the things to see. But, whether or not they wish it, they come away rewarded. The little local museum is a marvel; the full story is intelligently and convincingly presented, even for those who spend only ten minutes. It was not so in 1910! In 1910 Frijoles Canyon was far-away and wild. One moon-lit night a youthful huntsman in the party, proud of his .22 rifle, shot a bear in the vegetable garden, only to discover next morning he had killed our host's black calf.