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MUSEUM NOTES

Museum of Northern Arizona



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DR. FEWKES AND MASAUWU THE BIRTH OF A LEGEND

In the autumn of 1898, the late Dr. Fewkes, archaeologist of the Smithsonian Institution was staying at Walpi, one of the Hopi Indian Pueblos. In the annual report of the director of the Bureau of Ethnology his visit is noted as follows:

"In November, Dr. J. Walter Fewkes repaired to Arizona for the purpose of continuing his researches concerning the winter ceremonies of the Hopi Indians, but soon after his arrival an epidemic of smallpox manifested itself in such severity as to completely demoralize the Indians and to prevent them from carrying out their ceremonial plans, and at the same time placed Dr. Fewkes in grave personal danger. It accordingly became necessary to abandon the work for the season."*

The Hopis at Walpi have another story of the cause of Dr. Fewkes' departure.

Now one of the most important of the Hopi winter ceremonies is the Wu-wu-chim which comes in November. At a certain time during this ceremony the One Horned and the Two Horned Societies hold a secret rite in a certain part of the pueblo, and all the people who live on that plaza go away and close their houses. "No one may witness this ceremony, for Masauwu is there with the One Horned Priests who do his bidding in the Underworld and the Spirits of the dead are there and it is said that anyone who sees them will be frozen with fright or paralyzed or become like the dead."

Masauwu owns all the Hopi world, the surface of the earth and the Underworld beneath the earth. He is a mighty and terrible being for he wears upon his head a bald and bloody

*B.A.E. 20th an. Rpt., Washington, 1903, p. X.

mask. He is like death and he clothes himself in the raw hides of animals and men cannot bear to look upon his face. The Hopi say he is really a very handsome great man of a dark color with fine long black hair and that he is indeed a great giant. When the Hopi came up from the Underworld and looked about them in fear, the first sign which they saw of any being of human form, was the great foot-prints of Masauwu. Now Masauwu only walks at night and he carries a flaming torch. Fire is his and he owns the fiery pits. Every night Masauwu takes his torch and he starts out on his rounds, for he walks clear around the edge of the world every night.

Now you must understand that the Hopi world is flat and that it is completely encircled by the two great Water Serpents. These Paloolokong serpents are powerful and dangerous and by their writhings may cause earthquakes upon the earth; therefore, the Pukong-ho-yat, the two little war gods, who have compassion for the people, are seated upon the necks of the serpents forever holding them down.

Dr. Fewkes had been in the kivas every day, witnessing and recording the Wu-wu-chim ceremonies. This was the winter of the smallpox epidemic, which began in January and which was the reason that Dr. Fewkes gave for quitting the pueblos; but the Hopis say that he actually left soon after the Soyal Ceremony had taken place in December, and this was before the smallpox epidemic had broken out.—Ed.

* * * *

Dr. Fewkes had been in the kiva all day taking notes on what he saw going on there. Finally the men told him that he must go away and stay in his house for Masauwu was coming, and that part of the ceremony was very sacred and no outside person was ever allowed to see what was going on. They told him to go into his house and lock the door, and not to try to see anything no matter what happened, or he would be dragged out and he would "freeze" to death. So he went away into his house and he locked the door just as he had been told to do and he sat down and began to write up his notes.

Now suddenly he had a queer feeling, for he felt that there was someone in the room, and he looked up and saw a tall man standing before him, but he could not see his face for the light was not good. He felt very much surprised for he knew that he had locked the door.

He said, "What do you want and how did you get in here?" The man replied, "I have come to entertain you."

Dr. Fewkes said, "Go away, I am busy and I do not wish to be entertained."

And now as he was looking at the man, he suddenly was not there any more. Then a voice said, "Turn your head a moment," and when the Doctor looked again the figure stood before him once more, but this time its head was strange and dreadful to see.

And the Doctor said, "How did you get in?", and the man answered and said, "I go where I please, locked doors cannot keep me out! See, I will show you how I entered," and, as Dr. Fewkes watched, he shrank away and became like a single straw in a Hopi hair whisk and he vanished through the key hole.

Now Dr. Fewkes was very much frightened and as he was thinking what to do, there was the man back again. So he said once more to him, "What do you want?", and the figure answered as before and said, "I have come to entertain you." So the Doctor offered him a cigarette and then a match, but the man laughed and said, "Keep your match, I do not need it," and he held the cigarette before his horrible face and blew a stream of fire from his mouth upon it and lit his cigarette. Then Dr. Fewkes was very much afraid indeed, for now he knew who it was.

Then the being talked and talked to him, and finally the Doctor "gave up to him" and said he would become a Hopi and be like them and believe in Masauwu, and Masauwu cast his spell on him and they both became like little children and all night long they played around together and Masauwu gave the Doctor no rest.

And it was not long after that Dr. Fewkes went away but it was not on account of the smallpox as you now know.

—EDMUND NEQUATEWA.

* * * *

Although Dr. Fewkes never reported this story to the outside world the Hopis now tell that he related it to the priests in the kiva the next day after the strange occurrence. We can see how in less than forty years a legend had its birth.—Ed.

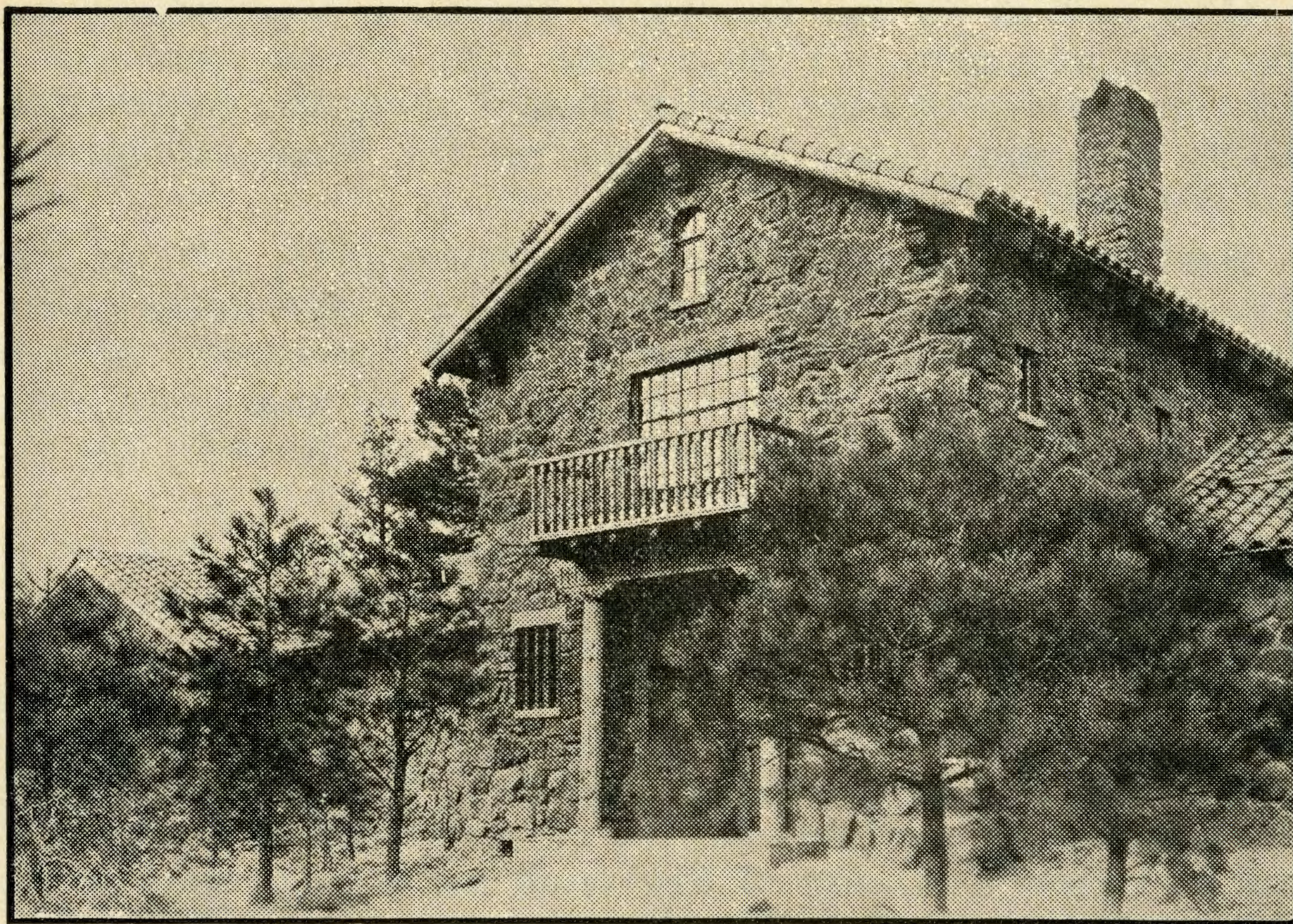
NOTES

A Brief History of Navajo Silver by Arthur Woodward will appear late in August as Bulletin 14 of the Museum of Northern Arizona. Cloth bound copies will sell for \$1.85, postage 15c. It will consist of 78 pages and contain 15 illustrations—many full page.

Hopi Ethnobotany by Alfred F. Whiting will go to press in September as Bulletin 15 of the Mu-

seum of Northern Arizona and should be out in December.

The Museum Archaeological Expedition under L. L. Hargrave, which has excavated a series of small sites near Williams, Arizona, and which was financed by a grant from the American Philosophical Society, will leave the field on the first week in August. A preliminary report of their work will appear in the near future in the Museum Notes.



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