

Transcription: A. C. Vroman's Account of Trip to Walpi and Petrified Forest, Arizona, 1895

Written in ink by Vroman on backs of photographs: photCL 86 (102-120)

Vroman's No. & Title

Huntington call number

No. 1 Our Outfit Leaving Holbrook, Ariz.

photCL 86 (102)

[Left to right: Horatio N. Rust, A.C. Vroman, C.J. Crandall, Mrs. Thaddeus (Leontine) Lowe.]
Vroman Neg. #A100

The Moqui Snake Dance is a religious rite of Moquis to propitiate rain and occurs yearly at a certain phase of the sun usually about the 18th of August.

The Dance takes place at Walpi, (town) one year and at Orabi, the next. This year it was at Walpi.

The "Moqui towns," are on Moqui Reservation about 90 miles north from Holbrook Arizona and are seven in number. Three Towns, Terra, Se-choy-u-vi, and Walpi being first towns, and located on a Mesa, or plateau, 600 feet above the valley, on another Mesa six miles further north, are three more of the villages. "She-mop-I-vi," "She-pau-li-vi," and Mo-shung-ni-vi." Twelve miles till beyond is "Orabi" on a third Mesa.

To reach the Towns one must drive from Flagstaff [sic], or Holbrook, as there is but two trading posts between Holbrook and the villages and no stage lines we engaged teams and wagon at Holbrook, loaded our luggage which weighed about 1500 pounds including camping outfit & photo material, & made a good load for our team. (See No. 2)

(No. 1 shows us "packed," and all ready to leave Holbrook).

No. 2 On the Way to Moqui Snake Dance. "An Early Breakfast." photCL 86 (103)

Vroman Neg. #A101

Our party. Mr. H. N. Rust (the elderly gentleman in No. 1), a noted collector of Indian curios. Mrs. T.S.C. Lowe, wife of Prof. Lowe, & a collector, also, of Indian Curios, as well as a noted scientist. Mr. C.J. Crandall a professional Photographer (& the man to whom I go for advise, when in trouble, photographically). Cilladon Montanyo, Guide and Driver, (and who proved himself equal to all needs during the trip,) and myself, a general "wanting to see" fellow.

Leaving Holbrook about 3:00 PM, we reached the first water (12 miles), (Water is scarce and we always tried to start and stop somewhere near water,) at six o'clock [indistinct] we called "Camp Lowes", ate supper, fed horses and after an hours rest started on , driving until eleven o'clock adding 15 miles more to our journey. When we turned in for the night Mrs. Lowe using the wagon for bedroom, balance of us taking a blanket, rolling up in it & sleep on the sand. Pretty good way to do when one has traveled 24 hours in train then driving 27 miles in Lumber wagon, with wagon packed full and (See no. 3)

No. 3 On the way to Moqui Snake Dance. "Biddehoochee." photCL 86 (104)

Vroman Neg. #A103

roads not the smoothest, but I thought how nice it would be to be in my own good bed at home instead of out there in the sand. Yet the next morning after a hasty breakfast (See No. 2) nothing would have induced me to turn back. All that day we drove on making about 25 miles only and camped on the sand at night meeting no one except an Indian on way to Holbrook once in a while. Second Camp we called "Camp Crandall" (See no. 2) which we left at 7 AM and reached "Biddehoochee." (Red Rock) was a Trader, who gave us the town. Old "Pap" Perkins we will long remember. A number of Indians were lounging about and just before left turned the Camera on groupe [sic].

The mass of Red Rocks back of the cabin gives the name to the place and is of peculiar formation." (See No. 4).

No. 4 On the way to Moqui Snake Dance. "Navajo, Hogan." photCL 86 (105)
Vroman Neg. #A104

Near "Biddehoochee" are a number of Indian Hogans. Navajos, mostly, we stopped nearly an hour at one and after considerable bargaining hired an Indian with team of mules to couple in and bring us along balance of way to Keams Canyon 40 miles. Don't know when I laughed more at a mule than at "Los" little fellows hitched up behind our heavy team and Lo keeping out of reach of their heels and at Biddehoochee he got in trouble with one of them and the air was full of heels and pieces of harness for a few moments, but Lo. never so much as allowed his anger to show itself. As soon as quieted the beast, he went at the harness as if it was an every day occurrence [sic] and soon had it repaired.

The Hogans are very interesting, the Indians patient and do any thing they can for you, can talk but little however. Hogans are clean & look comfortable if are small. (See No. 5)

No. 5 On the way to Moqui Snake Dance. "An Arizona Sky." photCL 86 (106)
Vroman Neg. #A106

The country between Holbrook & Moqui Towns is barren, no cultivation and of little value unless water can be put on it and as yet no plans for irrigation have been figured out. Water would however make it all valuable. The Moquis are a purely ?cultural tribe with little of the arts or mechanical instinct in their makeup but trust entirely to the rain fall for fields of corn and very frequently failure to have rain is a serious matter with them.

Some of the most beautiful clouds I have ever seen was on this trip. No. 5 may form some idea of what they are. Great banks of white vapor like clouds, changing every moment like a turbulent sea. High dark Buttes rise up from the flat country like sentinals [sic], placed there to see that man did not control the world. He might cultivate it nearly all, but these remains of a past age when the whole land was level with their summits and are still battling with time to keep their peaks, will keep the past in memory for ages yet. (See No. 6)

No. 6 The First Mesa, Showing Location of the Three Moqui Towns. Tewa. Se-Chom-o-vi. Walpi. photCL 86 (107)
Vroman Neg. # [No number]

We reached Keams Canyon about noon Saturday just in time for an excellent dinner. Capt. Keam had arranged for our comfort prior to his departure for England and so appreciated a good dinner after two days of our own cooking. (Can't say that I like camp cooking especially when water is scarce, and poor at that but before we were through with trip I could cook Beans, make supper etc. - enough to keep soul and body together anyhow).

Resting at Keams Canon until four P.M. we started on last ten miles of trip and about 5:30 stopped at foot of the Mesas. Here was found about forty others encamped for the Dance. Artists, Sculptors, Scientists, Writers, Correspondents for Our World & a number of other papers, also some fifteen ladies from Holbrook, Flagstaff [sic] Etc. We decided however to go to Mesa that evening & commence housekeeping in house Capt. Keam had secured for our use in Sechomovi Town.

Leaving our team in charges of Indian herder our next thought was how to get Mrs. Lowe to top. 600 feet, almost perpendicular wall of rock to climb, and Mrs. Lowe weighing 260 almost (See No. 7)

No. 7 Moqui Towns. "Walpi." (From North.) photCL 86 (108)
Vroman Neg. # A121

helpless as to walking and trail steep enough for any one good at climbing. We finally engaged seven Indians to carry her up on a ladder which we had provided for this use at Keams Canon, and at last the procession got underway. It was after dark when I had loaded up last piece of baggage on back of Indian

boy and started up myself and I shall never forget that climb in the faint light of a new moon winding about among the great pieces of Rock up and up until at last at top of Mesa was "Tewa" town. The Dogs must have known strangers were about for hundreds, it seemed ran out and barked at us.

Passing along the streets of Tewa and to Si-Chomovi at last found balance of party sitting in front of our house waiting for me. It was late so after a lunch we brought out our blankets and rolled up for the night. But oh, what a night to sleep. Some strange dog would pass along when immediately twenty dogs would start for the stranger and a fight would be the result we would scarcely get quieted down when, (see No. 8)

No. 8 Moqui Towns. "Over Walpi Town, From South." photCL 86 (109)
Vroman Neg. #A117

another dog would stray in. There was at least a dozen dog fights during night. I gave up and took my blanket and went inside to get away from noise.

No. 6 shows the Three Towns and Mesa from a point about a mile distant. No. 7 shows South end of Mesa and Walpi Town. Walpi is the most interesting of the three Towns as well as the larger one.

In No. 7 at right of town you can see, (six miles distant) outline of other Mesas and Towns.

Regret very much that we could not have visited the other four towns but hope to do this at some future visit.

We had no trouble in making our wants known but Moquis are slow at speaking English. They would pose for us when asked to do so and would do anything we asked of them and no objection made to our roaming about at will, walk into any house we wished without a word look it over and go out. No. 8 is a view taken from roof at (See No. 9).

No. 9 [untitled] photCL 86 (110)
Vroman Neg. # A115

south end of town may give an idea of its construction? Houses are built one above the other, each having distinct stairways or ladders (See in No. 8 at left end picture steps up to roof above?)

In one or two places we noticed as many as four houses or stories deep. It is my impression that families live this way, the older ones below and first generation next, second next etc.

Houses are of stone laid in mortar and have stood as they appear today as far back as we have any record.

There is little doubt but years ago the Moquis and Navajos were continually at war and the Moquis were driven to the Mesa for protection and finally built their towns on top 600 feet up above the valley out of reach of their foes.

Everything points to, and its thought by all who have investigated the matter, that the "breaks" or pass in Mesa shown in No. 6 was the hand work of the Moquis as by this means all connection with top was cut off except through a narrow pass which a dozen warriors could hold against (See No. 10)

No. 10 Moqui Towns. "Sacred Rock, and Where Dance was held." photCl 86 (111)
Vroman Neg. # A113

500. There is however, now another trail to top from south end landing at north end of Walpi. This trail however is thought to be of recent date.

It has often been said that a "Burro" would follow a man climbing mountains if the man did not use his hands to draw himself up with, and after seeing a Burro climb up and down this trail with pack of 100 pounds I am ready to believe they would climb a ladder, stairway would be easy to them.

But the Dance! Sunday evening August 18th the sun was in right position and the great Moqui event was to take place just before sunset when the sun had dropped below the buildings so the top of the "Sacred Rock" was in shadow. (See No. 10 showing Rock "kisi" (or Altar) and space where Dance takes place).

The entire Moqui population of the Mesa were out in best attire and almost 60 whites. I had located a favorable position for Camera in AM, and was in readiness an hour before Dance was to commence as well as probably a dozen (See No. 11)

No. 11 Moqui Snake Dance.

photCL 86 (112)

Vroman Neg. # [Unknown]

other "Camerests." The Dance views are quite unsatisfactory, but considering the time of day and light and continual motion of dancers they are as good as one should expect. (Am told by parties who have seen other views made at same time, that the ones I made are most successful of any, so in that much I am pleased!)

Preparations for the Dance had been going on for ten days, the "Snake men" dieting themselves and undergoing treatment to prevent snake bit, for they in no way disable the Snakes, and about 70 snakes of all kinds were used. Rattlesnakes as well as others probably one fourth of all were "Rattlers."

There are several societies or orders among the Moquis. The Snake "Kiva," being the highest order. The Antelopes next, and both orders are hereditary.

The Snakes, had been washed in large earthen jars during the day and placed at foot of "Kisi," (made of Cottonwood boughs) (See No. 10) The Snake woman stirs the sacred broth which she along, with the snake chief, holds the secret of (See No. 12)

No. 12 Moqui Snake Dance.

photCL 86 (113)

Vroman Neg. # [unknown]

its distillation [sic].

At last the crowd stirs. The girl members of the snake men families appear with baskets of sacred meal sprinkle it about the Sacred Rock and in another moment "Wi kit," the Antelope Chief is seen approaching, walking straight looking to neither right or left until the end of open space is reached, when he wheels and followed by the thirteen other members of the order (several of whom are men boys 3 to 10 years old) and march four times around the Rock stopping at the kisi and face about with back to kisi. The "Thunder man" meantime whirling a small piece of wood on end of string which makes the most weird sound one can imagine.

Scarcely are the Antelopes in place when "Kopali," the Snake Chief, and a magnificent looking fellow straight as an arrow, followed by 33 others file in march four times around Rock and stop facing the Antelopes, and kisi. Now commences the chanting of their prayers, swinging to left and right in a kind slow rotary motion moving their snake whips, (Eagle feathers fastened to small wooden handle). The "Thunder man" whirling his "Whip," harder than ever (See No. 13)

No. 13 Our Home on the Mesa. Mrs. Lowe. Crandall. Rust. Vroman. Montanyo.

photCL 86 (114)

Vroman Neg. #A123

Suddenly all thrust their hands into kisi and bring up a Snake or two, and the Dance in all its weirdness commences. Marching around the Rock in pairs with perhaps three or four snakes in their hands and one or two hanging from mouth.

At each circuit of Rock they will drop their Snakes and others will pick them up. As soon as dropped the Snakes start to escape and at times a dozen snakes would be crawling about the small space, (about 40 x 150 feet). Those who line the edge of cliff which is straight down 200 feet shove the Snakes back with foot or a stick if no Snake man moves close by to pick it up.

They are very cautious about picking a snake up while coiled, will attract his attention with Snake whip and then quickly grab Mr. Snake about four inches from head after which he apparently [sic] pays no attention by then may have half a dozen in his other hand, and all he can hold in his mouth. Finally all start toward the Rocks with in a circle of Sacred Meal the entire outfit of (See No. 14)

No. 14 Interior of "Our Home on the Mesa."

photCL 86 (115)

Vroman Neg. #A124

Snakes are dumped and then all "grab" into the heap of Snakes get as many as they can and start on a run for the Valley below and release the snakes and on return they all join in a banquet, and the Dance is over.

Words cannot picture it all. The location the surroundings the costumes which are beautiful, the bodies of the Dancers dyed a rich brown with the entire chin white, making face look almost hideous.

My first thought was after it was all over was, "to see it again and know more about it, why it was, and how it is planned. I felt I could spend a year right there, be one of them, and learn their ways and beliefs. It is a sacred rite with them and carried out to the letter as they believe it.

Two small prints c 28 and 29 best shows the Dance, which fails however in much that one could wish for. (See No. 15)

No. 15 Indian Girls grinding Corn.

photCL 86 (116)

Vroman Neg. # A126

Our quarters were very comfortable even chairs were supplied! Cooking we did in Fireplace in corner of room or outside. Nos. 13 and 14 will give an idea of "Our Homes on the Mesa."

We were on the Mesa two days and three nights and only wish we might have remained at least a week and become more acquainted with the "natives." They are a strange people, honest to extremes I am told. (But I am on last view and must cut this short.) Leaving Mesa Tuesday morning we made Keams Canyon for Dinner where we remained balance of day and bright and early next morning visited Indian school up the canon and started on our return trip about nine o'clock in morning we reached Biddehoochee where Old Pap Perkins gave us a hearty welcome giving us all he had in way of comforts even to his blankets for a bed! Early next morning we started the last 50 miles hoping to reach Holbrook that night. How long the miles grew (to our mind) after ten PM and at last when we stopped at the Hotel at Midnight what a relief. How nice to get between clean sheets after a week on the sand and how delightful that nights rest was.

No. 16 General View Petrified Forest (Arizona.)

photCL 86 (117)

Vroman Neg. # A137

Through the Petrified Forests of Arizona.

After the 90 mile in Lumber Wagon from Moqui country one would scarcely expect to enjoy starting on another 50 mile, or more, trip next day, but we found our time so limited that seven o'clock next morning found us at breakfast and arrangements made.

The Forests are distant 20-25 & 30 miles from Holbrook there being three forests properly speaking, the Third Park being the most interesting by far.

To save us some driving we learned that by taking train to "Adam Harrers?" station we could save 20 miles drive and decided to do so. Arriving at station we engaged team and wagon (unfortunately Adams spring wagon was away so the usual old Lumber wagon was our only conveyance, which after couple hours work repairing, putting on "brakes" etc we got started from Adams Ranch about 3 PM. Our team was slow beyond measure and road (See 17.)

No. 17 In Petrified Forest, (Arizona.)

photCL 86 (118)

Vroman Neg. #A135

nearly as smooth as no road at all. Simply a trail. Reaching the Forest about 4 PM (six miles) we were at first much disappointed in seeing no trees standing! - simply broken sections of petrified trees lying about. But when we took in consideration the ages that must have passed since these trees, were trees, and examined the beautiful agatized specimens we forgave our first feelings!

To show in a satisfactory manner this wonderful peak of nature is difficult, the one thing lacking in photography, Color is so important. However I made some 15 negatives all of which I consider "good."

Nos 16 and 17 will give an idea of country. Undoubtedly the Forest stood on a Mesa, 20 to 50 feet above the level now. No. 17 shows quite distinctly a log imbedded [sic] in beneath a strata of Rock twelve feet in thickness (see in view just below the little chimney like column!) showing conclusively that the Rock was a deposit after the (See No. 18)

No. 18 The Bridge, Petrified Forest, (Arizona.)

photCL 86 (119)

Vroman Neg. #A139

tree was felled! And that the level was at one time much above its present one, surrounding Buttes also show this. This Park (Third Park called) covers probably 1000 acres, strewn about as shown in No.s 17 and 18.

About one mile from where most of Forest lies, but up on the Mesa is the most curious and interesting of whole Forests. "The Bridge" (See No. 18). Here lying across a small Canon is a Petrified tree and the only one intact for so great a length (46 feet). The ends are imbedded in solid rock else it would drop of its own weight is riddled with cross seams but is held together by the pressure at each end. The canon has been washed out since it fell leaving it clear except at the abutment like ends. As this Agatized wood is almost as heavy as cast iron it must weigh many hundred tons (is from 24 to 32 inches in diameter). Some heathen will lay a pound of Dynamite on it some day, just to see it fall and thus remove the most interesting part of the Forest. (See No. 19).

No. 19 Around the Camp Fire. (Flash Light 10 PM.)

photCL 86 (120)

Vroman Neg. # A141

It was nearing sundown when we left bridge and water was not to be had there so drove on about eight miles to dry bed of river struck camp and while Old Adam and Mr. Crandall dug a well two feet deep getting some muddy water, I gathered up dry sage brush and we soon had the coffee out boiling. After a hearty meal we sat about the camp fire while Adams told stories of the early days in Arizona.

It must have been near ten o'clock when some one suggested our home friends seeing us at that moment just as we were. I thought of my "Flash Light" material and soon we had the camera out and in place but we wanted no one to be out of the picture and how to light the "Flash" without a fuse was the question! At last a thought we took a piece of string about six feet long soaked it in "Bacon fat" lay one end in Flash powder and all took placed one of us lit other end jumped in place before fire reached powder with the result is No. 19. Just as we were (except little trim negative) our friends can see us! Old Adam Homer proved interesting and a good Guide (as well as his nephew, Wood, one at left in view). All the next day we drove reaching Holbrook about 9:30 PM more tired than ever. To bed immediately, and at noon next day took train for home and [rest of sentence cut off at edge of view] comfortable! Mightily so.