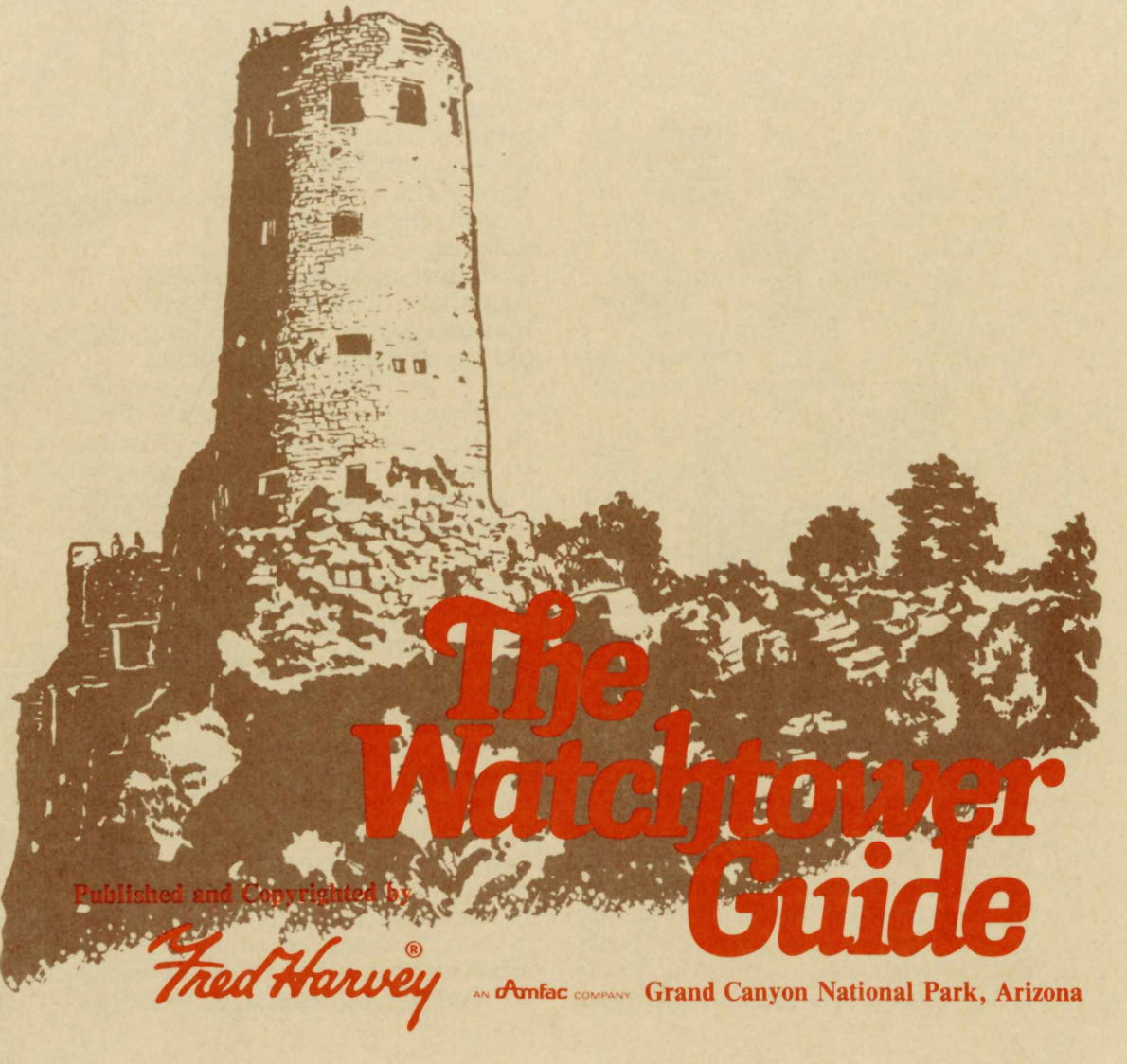




# The Watchtower Guide

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Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

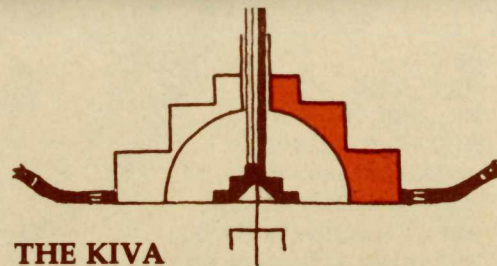


### An Introduction to the Watchtower at Desert View — a re-creation from the Southwest's remote past.

The Watchtower at Desert View was built in 1932 by Fred Harvey and the Santa Fe Railroad. Primarily an observation station and convenient rest stop for Grand Canyon visitors, it was also intended to bring about a better understanding of the American Indian and his life in past and present.

The Watchtower is no restoration or copy of any particular Indian building, but a re-creation of the strange prehistoric towers found scattered over large areas of the Southwest. Months of research preceded the actual building, which took three years. The finest examples of masonry and design found in prehistoric ruins went into the structure. Built in harmony with the eroded Canyon walls as well as with the legendary lore of the land, it seems a part of the rocky promontory from which it rises.

To the best of our knowledge, the ancient towers were used for the storage of food, and for protection in times of war. By the way of an inside ladder, the tribe could climb up to the several landings and, by removing the ladder, foil attempts to storm the citadel. Attackers were forced to replace the ladder and to climb single-file through the small floor openings — not an easy feat if the defenders were waiting, tomahawk in hand.



#### THE KIVA

The large circular View Room which you first enter represents the Kiva or Sacred Ceremonial Chamber, often built in conjunction with ancient towers. While these towers themselves no longer play a part in the life of the Indian today, the kiva is still his lodge room, meeting hall and place of worship.

Actual prehistoric kivas were mostly built underground, but modern kivas are sometimes built above ground or only partially submerged. The main entrance is always through an opening in the center of the roof, by use of a ladder. Smoke from a fireplace underneath purifies the descending and ascending participants in the meetings and ceremonies.

For obvious reasons, the View Room had to be built above ground, with doors and large windows not found in a real kiva. The fireplace was moved to the north wall and a few other modern touches added for the convenience of visitors; otherwise, stone work, log

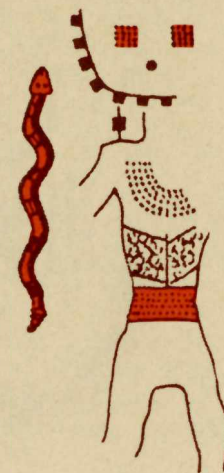
ceiling and decorative details are faithful copies of features found in the ancient kivas of the ruined cities of the Southwest.

The large picture windows frame some of the most spectacular Canyon views.

The black-mirror **REFLECTOSCOPES** at the windows are adaptations of an invention by the great seventeenth century French landscape painter, Claude Lorrain. Originally made of polished slabs of black onyx and now of black glass, these mirrors condense and simplify the views. At the same time, they seem to intensify the colors; also they help comprehension by separating and framing sections of the otherwise overpowering general Canyon view.

**THE WATCH-TOWER** itself is an illuminating record of Indian art, collected from various sources.

In mounting the stairways (modern substitute for the ancient ladder) to the top, the first room entered by the visitor is the most interesting





single unit in the Tower. It is called the Hopi Room.

Its center is occupied by a **SNAKE ALTAR** displaying all the objects used in the most sacred of all Hopi Indian dances, the famous Snake Dance. Essentially a prayer for rain, this dance is performed every summer at the Hopi Villages, 80 miles east of Desert View. The sand painting in the center of the altar is an example of the numerous ceremonial sand paintings produced painstakingly by sprinkling naturally colored sands from the Painted Desert from between thumb and forefinger. Sand painting used in actual ceremonies must be started at dawn and destroyed at nightfall. By special permission of the Hopi tribe, the Watchtower sand painting was permitted to remain — not entirely intact. Its colors represent the Directions of the World, red the South, white the East, green the West; black the "Above" and brown the "Below." The central figure, a mountain lion, symbolizing strength, shows a line of sacred breath leading from heart to mouth.

The slender bent and straight wands at both sides of the sand painting are contributions of the Antelope Clan to the Snake Ceremony, probably representing the clan's living and dead. The Katsina Clan con-

tributed the two carved dolls at the south side of the altar, the large doll representing the Snake Priest, the small one of undetermined meaning (perhaps symbolizing the Mother of all Katsinas). The tray at the foot of the sand painting contains sacred cornmeal to be sprinkled over dancers and snakes at the Snake Dance. The deerskin bags at the left typify the bags used by the priests on the snake hunts, the jar to the right is used for ceremonial washings of the snakes. The clusters of eagle feathers nearby are snake whips used to guide the snake and to detract them from attempted strikes. The paddle-like objects are known as Bullroarers and are used to imitate thunder, while lightning is produced by latticed devices behind the Katsina dolls.

The wall decorations of the Hopi Room are the work of the Hopi artist Kabotie, renowned beyond his native reservation. These pictographs represent Indian ceremonial paintings and designs passed on from generation to generation are still preserved in the ancient ruins of the Southwest. Some can be

explained, while the meaning of others has been obscured or lost in the careless flow of time.

The large circular painting opposite the entrance tells the **SNAKE LEGEND** — the story of the beginning of the Snake Dances. It is also the story of the first man to navigate the Colorado.

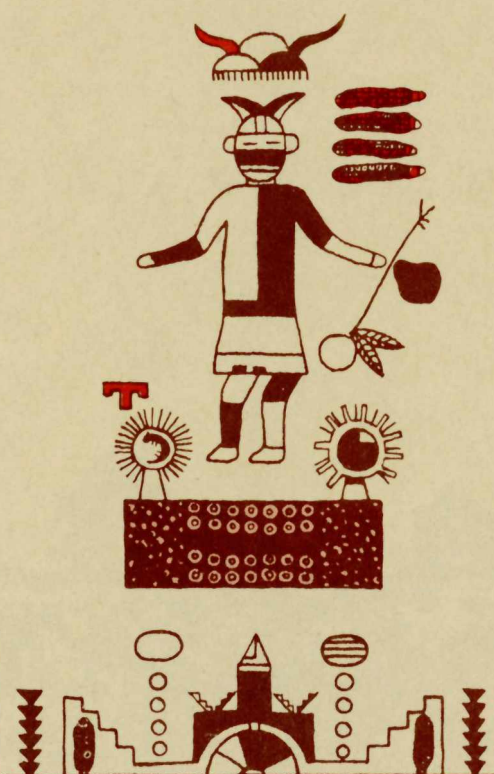
Again we find the four directional colors in the four quadrant panels. The story begins in the upper-left hand panel ("north") with a Hopi chief giving prayer sticks to his son before sending him on a hazardous exploration of the Grand Canyon. The purpose of the trip is discovery of the legendary Snake people, reportedly in possession of the power to make rain, which is badly

needed by the desert clan of the Hopi. The upper-right hand quadrant ("west") shows the son's boat floating down the Colorado River between stylized Canyon Walls. The lower-right hand quadrant ("south") depicts the Snake priest presenting the bow, symbol of the snake clan, to the traveler who already has the secrets of rain making "in the bag." So well



is he received that the Snake priest's daughter (to the right) is given to him as his wife. On the fourth, lower-left hand panel ("east") the young couple is shown on their honeymoon trip back to the Hopi clan. The blessings of the Snake people are upon them, for the bow is dripping water and rain is falling from six different clouds.

The painting also symbolizes the Center of the Universe in the design of the center of the circle, and Light and Life (identical in Hopi thinking) in the four circular colored bands around the four quadrants, with the Sun shown above and the



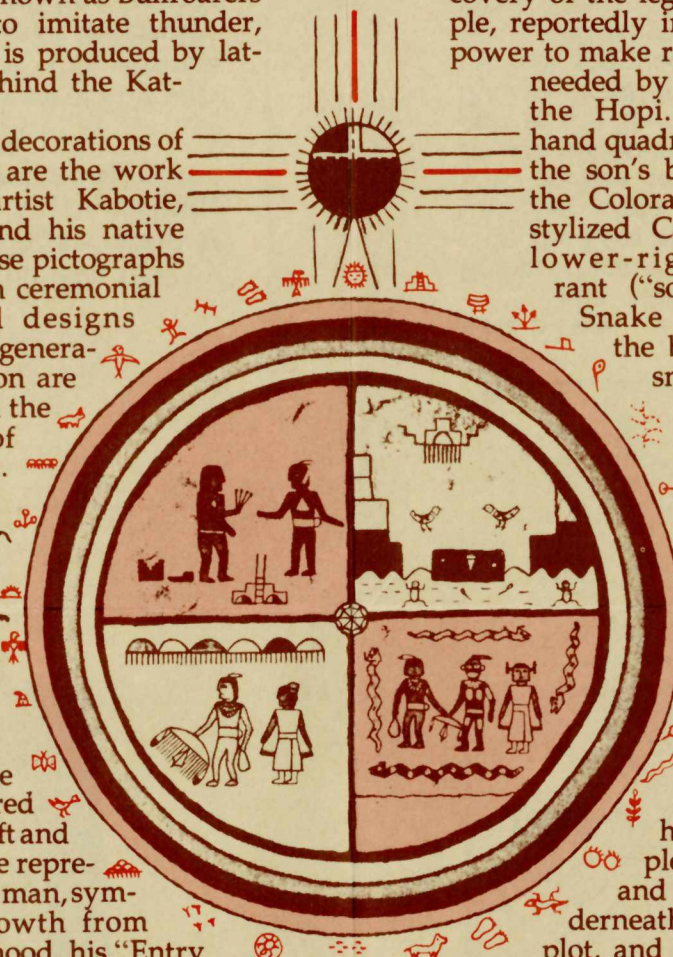
Moon below. (The Sun, being looked upon as the father of all living beings, has all the colors of the universe. He is shown spraying the "breath of eternal life" on the people as he circles them. The crescent-shaped creature shown in the Moon is a mouse — the Hopi's equivalent

to the white's "man in the moon"). The canes in staggered sizes shown to left and right of the circle represent the ages of man, symbolizing his growth from birth until manhood, his "Entry into the Universe," and, finally, his stature gradually dwindling with old age and approaching death.

To the left of the circular painting the winged **GOD OF THE CLOUDS** is shown; above him, a rainbow and a rain cloud, below, a "universal cloud" symbol dripping rain, with lightning symbols on both hands.

To the right of the painting, a rainbow with sacred kivas on both hands represents the **COURSE OF THE SUN** during the day. A thoughtfully provided little stool for a short rest marks the noon hour between the Sun's morning and afternoon work. When he reaches the "Kiva in the West" he refreshed himself with a little sleep and then begins the night journey under the world (not shown) back to the "Kiva in the East."

The next painting on the right represents the **GOD OF GERMINATION**, attended by both the



Sun and the Moon, rain clouds suspended over his head. In his hands are the implements for planting and watering corn. Underneath is shown a garden plot, and the Kiva where he lives.

The three little Indian girls depict a **HOPI WEDDING**. The bride wears her hair done in squash-blossom whorls, in the traditional Hopi maiden style. She is attended

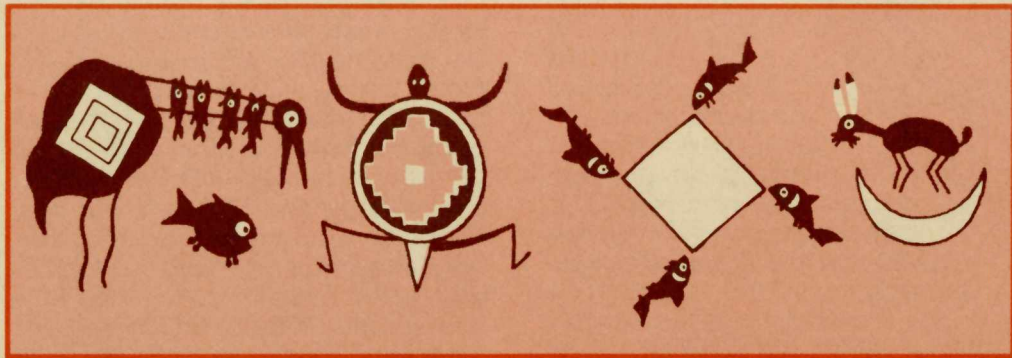


by two matrons with hair in braids as customarily worn by married Hopi women. The matrons carry basket plaques heaped with meal, while the bride's is filled with piki of her own baking. The marriage ceremony of the Hopi clan is very elaborate and expensive, requiring several months of preparation. The bridegroom furnished the food for a feast for all villagers, which may last for several days.

The "little black fellow" standing next is **THE LITTLE WAR GOD** distinguished by his bow and arrow. The star-headed figure seen to the right is the **STAR GOD**. We have little information on his activities. The **LITTLE GOD OF ECHO** above the door is very important, as he guards the secrets of the clan. The **GOD OF RECREATION**, twin brother of the Little War God, is depicted on the stairway wall. Sometimes the twins are considered as only one — a creature full of pranks and mischief.

Wall and ceiling decorations of the first and second gallery were executed by the noted artist Fred Gery, who painstakingly copied drawing an petroglyphs found in the ancient pueblos, in cliff dwellings and on rock walls scattered throughout the Southwest — at





Jemez Frijoles, Canyon de Chelly, Sikyatki, Keet Seel and many other places where Indians lived hundreds of years ago. It would take much more than this little guide to explain their meanings — and many have never been decoded. No “Rosetta Stone” (the discovery of which provided a clue to the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs) for Indian pictographs has yet been found, nor is one likely to be. Much of what we know has been passed on to us by our Indian friends by mouth as they learned it from their elders — but there is much whose meaning is still hidden and will perhaps remain so forever.

The top of The Watchtower has been designed as an observatory. It provides a magnificent view of the surrounding country. With the help

of powerful binoculars mounted on the floor, objects many miles away can be studied — the Colorado River, the snow fields on the 12,000-foot-high San Francisco Peak 41 miles to the south, the Navajo Indian School of Tuba City 30 miles to the east, or perhaps a roving band of mountain sheep in one of the small canyons.

The very tower top is the highest point on the South Rim — 7,522 feet above sea level, 70 feet above the ground.

To the west of the Tower, we have built a few walls to show the condition in which most prehistoric Indian ruins are found. It was from such and scarcely less scant remains of a vanished race that the idea of The Watchtower rose into reality.