

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK
MANCOS, COLO.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Feb. 25th.1925

Dear Laura,

Pardon the delay in writing. Have been awfully busy getting out plans and elevations for the new buildings. The Community Building goes up this spring. The Log cabin will be taken down and reconstructed on the Public Camp Grounds. It will go ~~where~~ over on Spruce Canyon and the new building will go up where it now stands. The Finnans cottage will be just where you camped last fall, and the Hospital to the north of the Ranger Quarters.

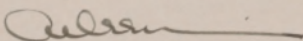
Deric's book comes out next month I believe. It is in, and Putnam crazy about it. He predicts quite a success. I do hope so.

Now about your article.- You have a copy of the Play. I will go over it and put down everything I can think of that you will need. Do not hesitate to ask if I miss anything you want.

Jess, Deric, Marsh and four other men have been excavating on the west side for over a month. They have been making some very interesting finds. Jess will publish a paper on it.

Heaps of greetings and a world of love.

Sincerely,



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Notes for Laura's article (FIRE)

- (1)- Page 1. Introduction... "After the roar... etc." also "The noise of passing feet...etc." taken from Alice Corbin's "RED EARTH"
- (2)- It would be well to mention here the original idea .. When first looking down on Spruce Tree Ruin, about dusk, the desire to see the curtain of time drawn aside, and the ruin a dwelling with the people walking around etc.
- (3)- In 1922 tried posing a few people (whites). Used red powder (old fourth of July stuff) for lighting.
- (4)-The first Indians came to work on the Mesa, and I thought of getting them to act one of the old myths. I wrote "The Eagle Woman" (Thaken from the Zuni story of "The Youth and his Eagle" in Cushings "Zuni Folk Tales".) As I have been studying and collecting material for my book on the Zunis for years , I felt that as the story told of the dwellings in the caves in the cliffs, it would be fitting.
- (5)- "The Eagle Woman" was given twice. Once for The Brooklyn Eagle Party on the 28th of June, 1924, and on the 4th of July of that year.
- (6)- During the winter of 1924 and 5, I worked on another play. It was based on the ancient fire ceremony we know existed during the Cliff-Dweller period. Fire Temple etc. I studied everything I could find on the fire ceremonies of the Pueblo Indians and the Navajos.

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Dr. Fewkes has written about it . "Fire Worship Among the Hopis" *Jc.*
The play is as nearly as ~~can~~ possibly ~~be~~, the reproduction of the ancient ceremony of the Cliff-Dwellers. The story running through it is, of course, my own, but Nordenskiöld is said to have removed the mummy of a young girl wrapped in a feather-cloth robe. This robe was alone of its kind, having been made of blue-bird feathers. The blue-birds, the Corn-Maidens, the Germ-God (who is the same as the Sun-God and the Fire-God) are always connected in the myths. The blue-bird brings the spring, hence warmth and life. The Corn-Maidens are the dieties of corn, fertility, life. The Sun-God and the Fire-God both represent warmth, life and therefore they are the same being as the Germ-God. The Goddess, or God of death is usually represented by a petrified log. Once having had life, now cold and therefore dead. This goes straight through the whole series of legends. Much of this I have gotten from the Indians, as well as from reports, books etc.

- Part I*
- ⑦- On Page 2, the ancient custom of the boy, having reached the adolescent period, tries his nerve. Among the uneducated Indians, this is still practiced.
- ⑧- Page 2,3- The poem is taken from "The Song of the Earth" Navajo. I have rewritten it though, using only a part of the original and adding in places to fit the story.

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People have asked why we have Navajos instead of Pueblos for the actors. There is one good reason. No money with which to bring in Pueblos, and the Navajos are working ^{here} ~~in the Park~~. Another thing, they are good.

They have however a superstition that if they enter a ruin (a place of the dead,) that bad luck will follow them.. If they touch the dead, bones, mummies etc., they will swell up and burst. Not very pretty, but it was very hard to overcome their fears. "The Eagle woman" was acted by only Young Men. This year the old medicine-men came up from the reservation. They took charge of the dancing-Lay stress on the fact that it was done "the very old way".

Year before last some of the chiefs and medicine-men came up and wanted to put a stop to it as they said it was bad medicine for them and their crops would fail. I assured them that it could not hurt them or their crops as we did not mean to be in anyway disrespectful to their gods, of their ancient customs. We wanted to do something very beautiful and of educational value. I assumed all responsibility and they came around. (Lordy, Laura, dont tell the gentle public how really hard it is. I vowed I'd never give another after the last one last fall, but am hard at work already for this coming year.)

Another thing - The old Navajo Chief said when he saw a play for the first time. " It is not real - I have looked upon the Dream Pictures of my People - " I had asked him, through Saw, what he thought of it -

The idea of the whole thing is not for money but to do something artistic and

correct according to archeologists etc. That is why it is a Commercial Play & not a Pageant - (make believe) -

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- ⑨-Part 2- Page 5, The idea is to show as nearly as possible, the life of the Cliff-Dwellers. The song is from the Huni. The old custom of the firing of the pottery etc is true. Lending of finery etc. and ofcourse the Speaker-Chiefs message.
- ⑩-Part 3-Page 8,- This is taken from the fire ceremony of the Hppis. In here comes the part of the girl which I wrote. It is not read if you remember. The girl comes in to see her lover as the fire-god. She crosses the marks of sacred meal ^{with which} ~~that~~ the Horn-priests have just closed the paths.
- ⑪- Part 4-Page 10,- The chant is from the Navajo. The song "To All Things Precious." Here again the action carries the story. The old Fire-Priest sends the Horn-priests for the maiden. You remember he kills her. Her lover sees her and wishes to stop, but according to custom he is NOT a human being but the Fire-God himself during the dance. The old Priest points to the others and he follows. He covers her however, with the blue-feather robe. them out. ^ The Corn-Maidens come in and take the maiden with them.
- ⑫- Part 5-Page 12,- This is just the Fire Ceremony as it must have been a thousand years ago.
- ⑬- Part 6-Page 14,- The chant is taken from the Night Chant of the Navajos, but of course I rewrote part and rearranged it. However it is "The Prayer" from "The Night Chant". The strange part of the whole thing is that all of the people of the Southwest have stories that dovetail.

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Am working on the new play for this year. Here it is in brief.

An old Franciscan Padre wanders up one of these Canyons. He is lost of course, it is storming. He enters a cave for shelter. Part 1 - He enters ruin, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ chants an old Latin chant, lies down and sleeps. Part 2- Is really his dream, A really very elaborate, ceremonial, masked dance and some action. Lots of light, color and singing and dancing. Part 3- Padre awakes to find it only a dream. He chants the old Latin chant again- End

This is not a hard one, but I do not want to do the really big one this year. I simply must have money for it. "The Spider Woman" must be by all odds the best, and although I am working on it, I will not do it before 1927- Then you must come and we will make a big thing of it.

We will give either "Fire" or the new one in June, about the 15th. And I want to put on The Eagle Woman again this year. About July 4th and a couple more. It all depends upon the money. Honestly we simply cannot afford to do it ourselves. Will get busy on costumes etc.

Let me know if you need anything more.

Aileen

*Excuse mistakes but I know that you
can make it out.*