Abstract:

The works of Dr. Jesse Walter Fewkes at Mesa Verde National Park celebrate their 100th anniversary in 2008. Notes, maps, and photographs from his 35 year career in Southwestern Ethnography and Archaeology shed new light on the life and work of this unfairly criticized anthropologist. New discoveries reveal details of his work at Casa Grande, in the Verde Valley, Flagstaff area, Hovenweep area, and Mesa Verde National Park. An unpublished manuscript gives details of his conclusions on archaeological classification systems, architectural development, ceramic analysis, site dating, and regional depopulation theories years before dendrochronology and the first Pecos Conference. Digitizing this archive will make his insights accessible to researchers. Help is needed from many sources to make this valuable resource available.
It was 100 years ago, in May 1908, when Dr. Jesse Walter Fewkes of the Smithsonian Institute began his documentation, excavation, and repair of Spruce Tree House at the newly formed Mesa Verde National Park. His notebook from that work shows that it was the well preserved pictographs that first captivated his attention. In 1909 he continued his work at Cliff Palace using a crew from Mancos, CO that may have included the Scharf brothers, Pete Fisher, John Sheek and Pearl Shay. Here he recorded more detailed information such as kiva dimensions while trying to prepare the site for visitation in a matter of weeks.

After a period of investigations in other regions, Fewkes returned to Mesa Verde National Park in 1915 to excavate a most unusual structure, that which was to become known as Sun Temple. Here he hired a surveyor, a Mr. C. Stansbury, to complete a detailed map. Fewkes' notebook from this excavation contains site plan maps, descriptions of work performed, and locations for recovered artifacts. He clearly felt that this was a "new type of ruin" for Mesa Verde. The 1915 field season also included initial investigations at Oak Tree House, New Fire House, and Fire Temple in what is now Fewkes Canyon. A reconnaissance of Square Tower House yielded a fine willow mat.

Fewkes continued his excavations at the Far View Complex in 1916. Fewkes' work in southwestern archaeology culminated with the excavation and repair of Square Tower House in 1919. He concluded his work in Fewkes Canyon in 1920 and completed the excavation and repair of Cedar Tree Tower with the assistance of Archaeologist Jean Allard Jeancon. He left Mesa Verde in 1922 following the arrival of the Park's new Superintendent, Jesse L. Nusbaum. He returned to his home in Forest Glen, MD and served as Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology from 1918 until his retirement.

Throughout his work at Mesa Verde National Park Fewkes regularly published site reports of varying detail in the Miscellaneous Collections of the Smithsonian Institute or the publications of the Bureau of American Ethnology. Formal reports were published for Spruce Tree House and Cliff Palace under the series title Antiquities of the Mesa Verde National Park. A formal report for Square Tower House under this series title has been unknown, until now.

Fewkes at Other Archaeological Sites

Dr. Fewkes career did not begin at Mesa Verde. He was born in 1850 in Newton, Mass. and educated at Harvard earning his PhD in Zoology in 1877. For the next 12 years he worked and taught on invertebrate zoology. A trip to California in 1887 with Mr. Augustus Hemenway was a turning point in Fewkes' career. With the support of Mrs. Mary Hemenway, Fewkes became associated with the Hemenway Southwestern Expedition and joined in examinations at Zuni and Hopi. Dr. Fewkes was in charge of the Hemenway exhibit at the Spanish Historical Exposition in Madrid from 1892-93. Following the death of Mary Hemenway in 1894, Fewkes concentrated his ethnological work at Hopi for the Smithsonian Institute (Nichols ND).

The turn of the century found Fewkes continuing his archaeological explorations at sites in the vicinity of Flagstaff, AZ. This includes work at what is now Wupatki National Monument and in the Verde Valley. His notebook contains annotated maps and room descriptions. After several years of work in the West Indies, he returned to his southwestern archaeological work in the winters of 1906 and 1907 by conducting excavations at Casa Grande. Additional work in 1907 and 1908 took him to the Gila River Valley and included work at what are now Gila Cliff
Dwellings and Tonto National Monuments. A 1910 expedition took him to Betatakin, Keet Siel, and Inscription House and other sites in what is now Navajo National Monument. His notebook from that trip contains early derivations on the now controversial term "Anasazi". Another four years were then occupied on further investigations in the West Indies, Europe, and Egypt. His 1915 investigations in the Mimbres Valley worked to define a unique cultures characteristic ceramic style.

Fewkes remained in Southwest Colorado after his investigations at Sun Temple and Far View in Mesa Verde. The field seasons of 1917 and 1918 were involved with investigations of sites that are now in Hovenweep and the Canyon of the Ancients National Monuments. His 1917 notebook is of particular interest as it contains comparative discussions of southwestern archaeology and proposed architectural classification systems. Also included in this notebook are descriptions and maps of major sites now known as Goodman Point Pueblo, Yellowjacket Pueblo and Yucca House National Monument.

Fewkes at the National Anthropological Archives

Following Fewkes' death in 1930, a representative of the Smithsonian Institute recovered the majority of Fewkes' research materials for the Bureau of American Ethnology collections. The remainder of his estate was distributed to relatives or sold. Over the years relatives and other interested parties have donated or otherwise returned portions of Fewkes collections to the Smithsonian Institute. The collections of the BAE were consolidated into those of the Smithsonian Institute when it was merged with the US National Museum Department of Anthropology in 1965. These materials are now housed at the National Anthropological Archives (NAA) of the Smithsonian Institute at the Museum Support Center in Suitland, MD.

While researching the architectural history of Sun Temple at Mesa Verde, I became aware of Fewkes material at the NAA. With the financial assistance of the Ballantine Family Fund of Durango, CO I took Larry Nordby to the NAA to review and inventory Fewkes' archival and material collections. His archival collection is contained in two main lots. MS 4408 is his manuscript and notebook collection. It contains almost all of his known notebooks from 1881 through 1926. Also included in this lot are his correspondence files and draft typed manuscripts.

MS 4321 is the other main lot which contains Fewkes' extensive photograph collection. We completed a detailed inventory showing over 500 photographs and drawings. In general, these graphics are those that were used in his publications as well as those sent to him. The collection includes early photos of Chaco Canyon, Casa Grande, Mesa Verde, Hovenweep, Tonto, Gila and Verde Valley sites. Many of the photos depict critical architectural data at a level of detail not available in his reports. His notebooks, correspondence, and manuscripts also provide additional insights to the condition of Southwestern Archaeology, classification systems, and details of his excavations not found in his published reports.

An example of the value of this information is the case of Sun Temple at Mesa Verde National Park. The Park archives contain very little information on Sun Temple other than Fewkes' report and stabilization photos. While sorting through his notebooks, we found his detailed notes on the excavation and repair of Sun Temple. A staff list, project budget, detailed plan map sketches, room notes, and locations for excavated artifacts were found in these notes. We also found the original annotated pen and watercolor field map for what is now known as Sun Temple. Previous names for Sun Temple include Community House, Twin Cedars Ruin, Fort
Fewkes, and its original official name Cliff Pueblo. According to his notes, Fewkes first began referring to the structure as Sun Temple on October 27, 1915.

Sun Temple Field Map
Courtesy Smithsonian Institute, National Anthropological Archives, MS 4321

Fewkes' Square Tower House Report

Probably one of the most significant finds in Fewkes' materials was a typed manuscript titled *Antiquities of the Mesa Verde National Park: Square Tower House and Fire Temple*. It was immediately clear that this was a third installment in the "Antiquities of the Mesa Verde National Park" series. Despite extensive searches of bibliographies, academic libraries, and the internet, I could find no evidence that this report has ever been published. Portions of the report were published in BAE articles and archaeological magazines but not as a cohesive detailed report on the excavation of Square Tower House. To further analyze this manuscript, we obtained a photocopy and converted it to an MS Word document remaining faithful to the text and Fewkes handwritten edits. We also obtained some of the graphics for the report from Photo Lot 30.

Ground Plan, Square Tower House, Unpublished
Courtesy Smithsonian Institute, National Anthropological Archives, PL 30
During this process we learned that this document was much more than a site report as the installments on Spruce Tree House and Cliff Palace were. While the manuscript was undated, clues in the text revealed that it was written in 1922, Fewkes last year at Mesa Verde. It does include a detailed report on the excavation and repair of Square Tower House and descriptions of work at Fire Temple, New Fire House, Oak Tree House, Cedar Tree Tower, and Painted Kiva House. Fewkes does digress in these descriptions to address proposed archaeological classification systems and theories on development of architectural styles. A large section analyzes Mesa Verde ceramics. The report also contains an extensive Conclusions section which address such issues as site dating and regional depopulation theories, much of which is currently taught dogma at Mesa Verde National Park. Fewkes commented that "It is impossible at present for us to say in what century of the Christian Era this drama of evolution of the cliff dwellers occurred, but there seems no reason to doubt that the steps in the evolution of the pueblos took place in the region where the most perfect of these buildings is now found. From evidence which has been brought forward my belief is that this date was about the thirteenth century of our era." (Fewkes 1922) Either Fewkes' intuition or insights were extremely keen or he had a little inside information from his friend JA Jeancon, leader of the first beam expeditions.

Over the years Fewkes has been criticized for not publishing such a comprehensive report (Fiero 2006). Our research at the NAA showed that such a report was written. The real question is why was it never published? In 1922 Fewkes was age 72 and Mesa Verde's new young Superintendent, Jesse Nusbaum, came on duty. Nusbaum excavated Balcony House in 1910 and was known to be a close friend of AV Kidder, founder of the Pecos Conference. The NAA records show that Kidder and Fewkes corresponded regularly. In a letter dated September 28, 1914, Kidder requested Fewkes' permission to excavate at Sun Temple and Fire Temple at Mesa Verde. While there was no response in the records, Fewkes conducted excavations at these sites in 1915. Was this a cause of contention between Kidder and Fewkes? What was the nature of the relationship between Fewkes and Nusbaum and did this factor into the publication of the Square Tower House report? Did Nusbaum place editorial or publication restrictions on Fewkes? Was Fewkes invited to the first Pecos Conference in 1927? The answers to these questions are locked away in the National Anthropological Archives.

Fewkes Digital Archive Project

While the National Anthropological Archives are open to public research they are remotely located and ever increasing costs prohibit many people from taking advantage of these invaluable resources. Some of the photos and numerous catalog entries are available through the SIRIS search system (http://siris-archives.si.edu). However, the real meat of these records will only be readily available to researchers if a well planned digitizing of all of Fewkes records is completed. The resulting database would consist of approximately 10,000 images including copies of all photographs and notebooks in his collection. The cost of digitizing alone will be about $75,000.00. Cataloging and making the records available to researchers will add another $30,000.00. Consultations with interested tribal representatives will be needed to insure that potentially sensitive information in these records will be handled in an appropriate manner. The total cost of this project is estimated to be $125,000.00.

Providing access to these records is not the only reason to complete a digitizing project. The preservation of these records is also at stake. Fewkes' notebooks are on acid paper and are in a state of deterioration. Many of the notebooks were too fragile for us to even open and determine the contents. De-acidifying the entire collection is cost prohibitive for the amount of
use it receives at the NAA. They have agreed to digitize all materials in the Fewkes collections in the interest of access and preservation.

Fewkes' collection at the National Anthropological Archives is a critical resource for the study of southwestern archaeology. The photographs, notebooks, correspondence, and manuscripts add significant background and previously unpublished data. The material we found contradicts modern or rumors that Fewkes kept no notes and rebuilt the majority of the structures he excavated. It also serves to provide a previously unknown narrative on the state of southwestern archaeology from the 1890's through the late 1920's. Frank HH Roberts, a respected archaeologist who attended the first Pecos Conference in 1927, felt that Fewkes' contributions were so significant that he should have earned the title "dean of American Archaeology." (Swanton 1930)

The Fewkes Digital Archive Project has already received enthusiastic interest from the staff at Mesa Verde National Park, Hovenweep National Monument, the Anasazi Heritage Center, and Crow Canyon Archaeological Center. What is needed is funding. Grants through the Colorado Historical Society and other entities are likely available but require large cash matches. It is with the help of people like you, the people attending this conference, the people who would be using these resources, that we will be able to complete the Fewkes Digital Archive Project.

For more information or to help, please contact:

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