

**Panoramas of Desert View Watchtower Murals**  
**Grand Canyon National Park**  
**Robert Mark & Evelyn Billo**  
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The Desert View Watchtower is a three-story building that is open in the center. Designed by Mary Jane Colter and dedicated in 1933, it contains murals painted by Hopi artist, Fred Kabotie. In order to photograph the murals to create five panoramas, our Nikon Coolpix digital camera had to be placed in the center of each level and rotated about the null-point of the lens. To accomplish this, a T-shaped rig was constructed. A remote-controlled camera was positioned by the use of a laser plumb bob placed at the bottom of the tower. Photographs were taken at about 30° intervals with flash, at night, to avoid daylight through the windows. Panoramas were stitched on an Apple Macintosh G5 computer using Realviz Stitcher.



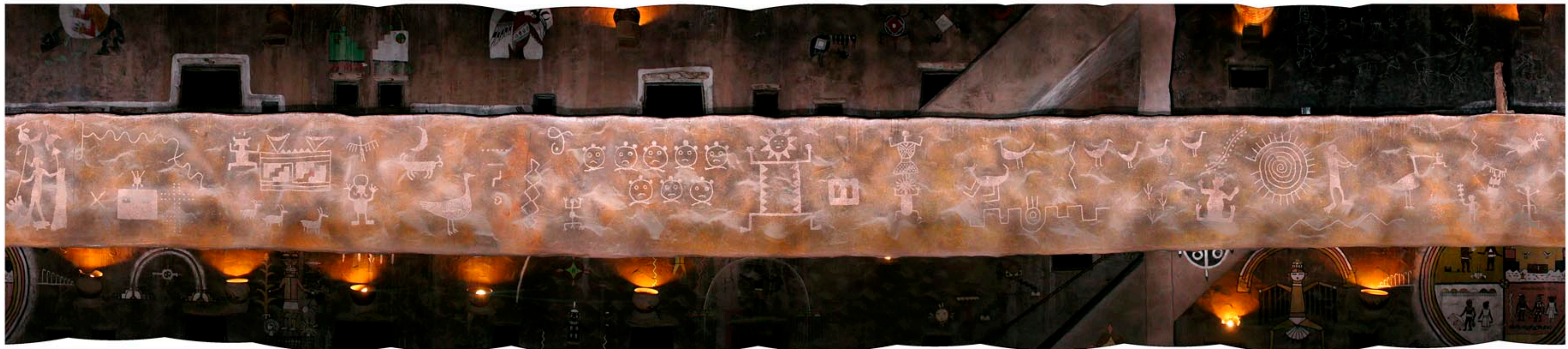












Desert View Watchtower  
Rupestrian CyberServices  
2004





From architect Mary Jane Colter's Manual or drivers and guides – descriptive of The Indian Watchtower at Desert View, 1933

## Chapter 11

### FIRST FLOOR – HOPI ROOM

Paintings by Kabotie, Indian Artist

Of paramount interest is the large CIRCULAR PAINTING directly opposite the entrance door of the Tower. This depicts the “Snake Legend” or the story of the first man to navigate the Colorado River.

The four colors (symbolic of the Universe) are used for the background of this legend because it begins with the home of the young son of the Hopi Chief, in the north, represented by yellow; carries west in his journey, represented by the turquoise blue; - then south which is red, ending in the east which is white.

In the heart of the circle is the design that represents the center of the universe – the Pueblo Indian's “four worlds”. (This design is shown many times in the Abo Caves and probably bore the same meaning in prehistoric times as now. It is frequently found in other localities associated with prehistoric pictographs.\*)

The four colors around the circle represent LIGHT and LIFE. These two terms mean exactly the same thing to the Hopi.

The white band surrounding the rainbow border is the PATH OF LIFE and in it are drawn the signs of the clanship of the Hopi tribe.

The Hopi are divided into numerous clans or gens. Each clan has a sign or symbol, usually taken from the animal kingdom or the elements, which is used as a signature. These signs or symbols are drawn in the PATH OF LIFE – some being shown definitely as representing the clans that have always been and still are powerful. Some are only shadows, representing the clans that are extinct; some are drawn faintly and then redrawn plainly – these are the clans that almost “died” but are surviving.

The legend is given at the end of this Chapter.

The story begins in the upper left-hand corner where the father gives the prayer sticks to the son. They kiva is show at their feet. The upper right-hand section shows the boat floating down the Colorado River. (Note the walls of the Canyon on either side!) In the lower right-hand corner is depicted the Snake Priest giving the bow symbol (Aoad natsi) of the Snake Clan to the Chief's son. The “beautiful maiden” stands beside her father. The lower left-hand corner shows their honeymoon trip back. Because of the blessing of the Snake People upon them, the bow is shown in action, dripping rain, and above them are all the different rain clouds, six in number.

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\* Note – This design is frequently erroneously called “The Squash Blossom”.

On each side of the circle of LIFE are processions of CANES (Natungpi) representing the ages of man. The procession from the east represents the growth of man from childhood to where manhood is “inlet” (the word is Kabotie’s own) into the Universe. The “outlet” on the west represents manhood down to old age, gradually dwindling in stature to the grave.

The SUN is depicted above this circle. “The SUN is looked up to as a sacred father of all living beings, - the “medicine man” or the giver of life. For this reason the Sun is represented as having all the colors of the Universe, and here is shown with the “breath of eternal life” spraying medicine on the people as he circles them.”<sup>1</sup>

The symbol of the MOON is shown at the bottom of the design.<sup>2</sup>

HAY-A-PA-O, the large winged figure on the left of the main circle represents the POWERS or FORCES OF THE AIR. A RAINBOW ending in the clouds is above him, and a rain cloud is over his head – and the birds fly around him.

Directly below him is a “UNIVERSAL CLOUD” symbol dropping rain. Note the six cloud forms used instead of the usual four. These Cloud Symbols represent the Hopi’s six direction, - NORTH, WEST, SOUTH, and EAST – to which are added “ABOVE” and “BELOW”. To the four colors previously given – yellow for north; turquoise blue or green for west; red for south; white for east, are added – BLACK for “above” and BROWN for “below”<sup>3</sup> (The six clouds are also shown in the quarter of the shield of the legend, recording the return of the Snake Priest).

At both ends of the cloud symbols are shown forked lightning symbols. The forked lightning are messengers of the gods.

To the right of the main circle is the RAINBOW with sacred kivas at both ends. This represents the COURSE of the SUN during the day. He rises from his “Kiva-in-the-East” and the Rainbow shows his path above the world. The world is represented by the symbol for the “FOUR WORLDS” and the RAYS going out in the four directions are the “FOUR PATHS” or ways.

At the top of the Rainbow is shown the “SEAT of the SUN” where he rests a moment at noon before he begins to descend to his “Kiva-in-the-West”. On reaching the “Kiva-in-the-West” he refreshes himself with a little sleep and then begins the night journey under the world and at the dawn reaches the “Kiva-in-the-East” once more. Every day and night is a repetition of the same journey of the Sun around the world!<sup>4</sup> The black snakes outside the kivas are the guards of the sacred kivas at all times.

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<sup>1</sup> See Legend “The Making of the Sun and Moon” in Legend Book.

<sup>2</sup> See Legend “The Making of the Sun and Moon” in Legend Book.

<sup>3</sup> Note – Any color except yellow, blue, red or black may be used for “Below”. For instance, purple is sometimes used instead of brown.

<sup>4</sup> Note – This painting shows only the daytime journey.

Continuing to the right, the next picture represents the GOD OF GERMINATION – MUYINGWA. The cornstalk is in his right hand; in his left are the planting stick and the bag containing seed, also a gourd containing the water with which to water the seeds.<sup>5</sup>

Both the Sun and the Moon attend him and over his head is shown the rain cloud. Like the sun, the God of Germination is represented as having many “colors” with which to develop the various plants, but he requires assistance from the outside powers shown in his attendants – for he needs the sun for its heat; the clouds for their rain; and the moon for its influence over the time of germination.

The next picture is the symbol of the Lalakontu Dance. Lalakontu is a Women’s Secret Society. The constellation that is the basis of this society is shown in the ceiling panel above. The explanation is given under “Ceiling Decorations” – Hopi Room.

The two upright designs made of triangles with the points down, one placed above another, always represent FLOWERS. Kabotie says that flower lovers paint these designs in their homes and that they stand for “every kind of flower.”

Above these flower symbols is shown a HOPI WEDDING. Note the bride with her hair done in the squash-blossom whorls, the style the Hopi maiden wears. She is attended by two matrons with hair in braids. The matrons carry basket plaques heaped with meal, while the bride’s is heaped with piki of her own baking. The shooting stars in the ceiling panel above are scattering around her the “sacred meal” from their tails which are composed of the magic making material.

“The little black fellow” standing next is POOKONGAHOYA – THE LITTLE WAR GOD. He is also the God of Defense. He is shown with bow and arrow in his hands. At his feet are the ball and stick of the game he favors – a kind of hockey played with a puck made of pitch and sand. The two snakes are his attendants. (He acts as the main Katsina in the Snake Dance and a snake is one of his symbols.) Above him is his war shield bearing the sign of the star, - two short parallel lines. The ends of lightning rods project on four sides of the shield. The shield itself means “DEFENSE” and the lightning rods are the “Powers of Destruction”.

The star-headed figure seen to the right of this Pookongahoya is the STAR PRIEST who is usually classed with the “Warrior Group”.

The Pookangahoya are twins and the other twin is shown on the wall of the stairway. Sometimes these twins are spoken of as if there were but one god. They and the BALOONGAHOYA, the Little God of Echo, are the grandchildren of the Spider Woman – a very important person, indeed! They are always spoken of as “little” and always as ill-favored. When not engaged in war they play boisterous games and are full of pranks and tricks. Always making trouble for others and always getting into it themselves. They provide the slap-stick comedy of every story – at once fools, knaves

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<sup>5</sup> Note – See Legend – “The Little Bird and Muyingwa” in Legend Book.



and heroes, falling into dire calamity but inevitably coming out on top – even to the winning of “the beautiful maiden”!

Over the door is the LITTLE GOD OF ECHO – BALOONGAHOYA. He is the little brother to the Pookongahoyas, and just another of the same kind. He carries the BULLROARER<sup>6</sup> in one hand and BOW and ARROW in the other. (There is a very strong echo in the Tower; - hence BALOONGAHOYA over the door!)

Over this figure is the RAINBOW ending in FALLING RAIN CLOUDS. The rain falls on the FLOWER SYMBOLS. This is a “very great blessing” over a door to a room.

### HOPI ROOM – CEILING DECORATIONS

In the sky realm above, the Hopi have names for the prominent STARS. Each star, or group of stars, means something. The stories of the stars as depicted on the ceiling panels of the HOPI ROOM were taught to Kabotie by his grandmother when he was a very little boy sleeping on the housetop where the bright desert stars were always reminders of the old stories. He says that his “grandmother died long ago and few now know these old legends”.

The CAPTAIN OF THE STARS is the SUN. This symbol already described is directly over the main decoration.

To the left of the Sun is depicted the EVENING STAR. MI-HEK-SHU-HO is his name taken from the word for “Night”.

To his right is the MORNING STAR. TAL-A-SHU is his name taken from the word for “Light”.

“The MORNING STAR” is said to still guard the entrance to the SUN in the front; the EVENING STAR the entrance to the SUN in the rear.”

To the right of the Morning Star comes the MILKY WAY, the PATHS OF GOOD and BAD PEOPLE. The long and continuous line is the path of the good; - its branch, which is short, is the path of the evil.

Next to the right is a circle of stars with only two stars in the enclosure. These stars represent the dance, Lalakontu (one of the women’s societies) – a ceremony and

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<sup>6</sup> Note – Bullroarer is a small flat stick to which a cord is attached. When the stick is rapidly whirled at the end of the string, a sound is produced not unlike a cyclonic wind or distant thunder. It is used in many dances to give that effect.



dance performed in the late summer. This group of stars is our Corona borealis<sup>7</sup> - a conspicuous constellation which is overhead about nine in the evenings of July.

When a shooting star is seen, it is taken for granted that the star is off to officiate at a wedding, spilling some of the sacred cornmeal from his brilliant tail over the bride. Shooting stars are lucky – a sign of plenty and prosperity.

There is the NORTH STAR known as QUE-NINK-SHU.

Kabotie writes – “There is a group of stars that always cling together like mud and they are called by that name – “CHOCHOOKAM”. (We called them the Pleiades.)

In the next panel (over the stairway) “are the three shining stars in their same position eternally – called HOTUMCOMU. They are directly overhead by midnight during the winter.” Kabotie probably means the North Star and two pointers of the Dipper.

Completing the ceiling decoration is painted on the soffit of the balcony parapet, the GREAT SNAKE who carried on his body, repeated many times, the symbol the Priests use on their ceremonial kilts in the Snake Dance. He is the father of all serpents – the GREAT PLUMED SNAKE, that goes back to the farthest prehistoric times and is shown with the KOSHARE in the caves at ABO.

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<sup>7</sup> Note – This constellation was identified from Kabotie’s description by Dr. Colton.