

A Visit to the Past and Awatovi

Hester A. Davis
Arkansas Archaeological Survey
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, Arkansas

It was a beautiful cool Arizona morning in August, 1991, when Anna Silas, Director of the Hopi Cultural Center Museum, guided me, Penny Davis Worman and Mott Davis to Awatovi, the large prehistoric and Spanish mission site on Antelope Mesa on the Hopi Reservation. The road consisted of two sandy ruts most of the way, well worn but, to a stranger, through a sameness of sage brush and small pinyon. Even for Anna, who had not visited the site for three years, a fork in the road was confusing, and we made a wrong turn. Reversing, we made our way back to the fork and continued anew to the fenced-in ruin. This was my first visit to this famous site. For Penny and Mott, it was the first visit in 52 years. They had both been a part of the Peabody Museum Expedition there in 1939.

Beginning in 1989, 50 years after the end of the Peabody Museum Awatovi Project, I have been establishing contact with the surviving participants of that five year project. Since Penny and Mott are my brother and sister, that contact is easy enough, and the dozen or so others have been enthusiastic about putting their memories down on paper. Our idea is to produce a manuscript which describes what a major pre-World War II expedition was like, how it was funded, how much it cost, what its high points and low points were, and what camp life was like in those days. What, indeed, made Awatovi special? Awatovi is well known to Southwestern archaeologists through its monographs. To the Hopi, it is still a very special place.

The field work from 1935 to 1939 was under the direction of Jo Brew, with Al Lancaster as second in command. We have missed getting the hindsight and wisdom of Jo, who passed away in 1987, but Al, at 97, has been generous with his time, interest, and wit. Wat Smith, whose research at the site was largely on the kiva murals and who subsequently wrote major monographs about the murals, kivas, and ceramics, has provided inspiration and encouragement from the beginning. Evelyn Brew, Dick Woodbury, John Longyear, Erik Reed, as well as Penny and Mott, have all written down their recollections of the time they spent on this project. (The project, as may be obvious, helped launch the careers of several people now well known in the profession.) But it is the archives at the Peabody Museum (Harvard) which are chock-full of wonderful information, from the correspondence concerning getting the permit to work, to the hundreds of photographs of people, camp life, and archaeology, most taken by Hattie Cosgrove, who was in charge of the lab work, specifically as a historic record. The last two years of the project are best documented, because Dick Woodbury's family saved all his letters home, but especially because Evelyn was there and Jo dictated a daily journal which she typed. The journal was not intended as a technical record (the archaeological work is recorded elsewhere), but is primarily a chronicle of camp life and problems, extracurricular activity such as visits to the Hopi dances, comment on how and what the Hopi were doing, and the coming and going of visitors. And indeed the visitors did come and go as the reputation of the project grew. The camp and the site, more than 50 miles from the nearest paved road, attracted quantities of professional colleagues. In the journal it sounds like an archaeological Grand Central Station.

For two special weeks in June, 1939, the journal was written by Wat. He recounts in his own wonderful humorous way, the wedding of Jo and Evelyn Brew which took place in the pottery tent in camp, and keeps the daily journal of events while they are on their honeymoon.

Jo's journal is supplemented by almost weekly letters from him to Donald Scott, then Director of Peabody, discussing administrative matters and providing a summary of the archaeological work accomplished.

Our visit to Hopi country and to Awatovi was a nostalgic one for Mott and Penny, and, in a different way, for me as well. The summer of 1939, when Mott and Penny were working at the site, I (back on the farm in Massachusetts) was nine years old. Surely their tales of that summer and the pictures I saw of the people must have had some small influence in setting me on my own archaeological career.

Mott had some difficulty in orienting himself at the site--we foolishly had not brought maps to the site with us--but the Spanish church with a few standing walls is still obvious, as is the Western Mound, the main area of the pre-contact pueblo village. We also found ourselves driving through the location of the Peabody expedition camp site, the remaining surface indications being the concrete steps to the absent cook shack, a scatter of sherds where Jim Gifford later had gone into the disposal area looking for corrugated ware, and a few pieces of wood indicating the location of the cistern. The 1930s photographs show the camp to have been in an open area; pinyons now grow where the tents once stood.

The Hopi tribe protects this National Landmark site, and a visitor must have permission from the Cultural Preservation Office and be accompanied by someone approved by the office. Although they have not allowed any excavation at the site since 1939, the Hopi are investigating the possibility of including the site as part of a tourist development which would include a museum, and guided tours to the site. Arizona State University has done a feasibility study for the Tribe, and architects have done preliminary drawings of a visitor center near Keams Canyon. Perhaps our account of "The Anatomy of an Expedition" will increase interest in the Hopi's past, increase the ability of the Hopi to attract people to their home land, and foster an appreciation of the Hopi's long history and the contributions of archaeology in revealing that history.

III. Current Research

Katherine Jones Garmil (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University) conducted a videotaped interview with Gordon R. Willey, Bowditch Emeritus, Harvard University entitled "Reminiscences of the Florida Gulf Coast: An Interview with Gordon Willey". In the interview, Professor Willey discusses the survey conducted in Florida in 1940. This survey led to several publications by Willey and Richard Woodbury about the chronology of this part of Florida. In 1949, Willey published his synthesis entitled *Archaeology of the Florida Gulf Coast*. He talks about the influence that Matthew Stirling, John Goggin and other colleagues had on the publication. Several sites are mentioned. Most notably the Crystal River Site. The video celebrates the 50th anniversary of the fieldwork.