

Kenneth Chapman's Santa Fe

Artists and Archaeologists, 1907–1931

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Artists and Archaeologists

If you visualize artists and archaeologists in two distinct camps, there still were times when the artists forgot their business and went completely archaeological. We learned all the familiar terms and became quite expert in identifying potsherds as belonging to this or that period. Since it all dealt with the dim past there was no quarreling with modernity.

—*Gustave Baumann, "Concerning a Small Untroubled World"*

To speak of Santa Fe is to conjure images of art and adobes: of Indians selling goods under the long portal of the Palace of the Governors and tourists browsing through bright turquoise jewelry, of the hush of museums and the crush of Indian Market. Yet a century ago, the high desert city was a sleepy town with a dusty plaza, struggling to define itself in a nation that was deeply ambivalent about the Southwest and its residents. Santa Fe's transformation from a "small untroubled world" to a bustling cultural center and the capitol of Indian art happened within the span of a single generation, between 1907 and 1931, through the efforts of a surprisingly small group of Anglos—outsiders who arrived from the Midwestern and Eastern United States. A varied group, they included artists and archaeologists, philanthropists and wealthy socialites. Originally in search of better health, artistic inspiration, or freedom from society's constraints, they found common interests in a central cause: the study and preservation of Indian cultures, both past and present. Their efforts at preserving ancient villages and promoting Indian art became a part of Santa Fe's struggle to invent itself, for Santa Fe was in the midst of an identity crisis, torn between the pull of modernity and the fascination of the dim past.

Of all the individuals who played a role in defining Santa Fe, only one was part of virtually all the central institutions and critical events that shaped the town's modern



Figure 1.1 Kenneth Milton Chapman, 1917. Courtesy Palace of the Governors (MNM/DCA), 30256.

identity: Kenneth Milton Chapman, illustrator, archaeologist, museum man, and reluctant administrator (figure 1.1). A transplanted Midwesterner, Chapman moved to New Mexico in 1899, hoping that the dry desert air would ward off the threat of tuberculosis. He was soon immersed in all manner of projects: mapping archaeological ruins, judging Pueblo pottery, teaching art, and studying ancient and modern Indian design. A self-made expert, Chapman rode the line between disciplines with consummate skill and

ability. Still, his quiet competence and modest manner meant that he was tapped more often as a right-hand man than given credit as a leader. His behind-the-scenes administrative and institutional contributions became obscured by the dazzle of self-promoters like Edgar Lee Hewett; Chapman's studies of Indian art and design were overshadowed by the groundbreaking research of archaeologists like A. V. Kidder and Nels Nelson and the artistic accomplishments of well-known Pueblo potters.

Now, a century later, Chapman's memoirs provide an alternative version of Santa Fe's vibrant era (1907–1931). Written in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Chapman's accounts offer a first-person view of this fascinating period, an intimate insider's portrait of the personalities and events that shaped Santa Fe.

Santa Fe and the Southwest

The Southwest was a relatively recent addition to the United States when Chapman and many others moved west in the late 1800s. Previously part of Mexico, the vast land from the Rio Grande to California had become part of the United States in a stroke of the pen, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.¹ The United States suddenly found itself with a large and exotic addition, a new realm that was greeted with a combination of interest and alarm. Americans' great fear was that the inhabitants of this new territory might maintain a dangerous loyalty to Mexico. At the same time, the national imagination was piqued by the new acquisition, for the landscape was foreign and tantalizing.

Until the late 1800s, though, there was little chance to indulge that curiosity. Although the Santa Fe Trail had already established an overland trade route between the Southwest and Missouri in 1821, it took the railroad's arrival in the 1870s to make New Mexico Territory readily accessible from the rest of the nation. Settlement followed the railroad as newcomers from the East arrived to take advantage of new economic opportunities. As "modern" opportunities arose, three frontier towns—Albuquerque, Las Vegas, and Santa Fe—vied for status as the territory's economic powerhouse. The balance among the three towns shifted continuously through the turn of the century. Las Vegas had strong railroad connections and the New Mexico Normal University; Albuquerque had economic clout. Santa Fe had the territorial government and the Catholic church but struggled nonetheless.²

It was not until the early 1900s that the tides began to turn, as Santa Fe transformed itself from a "dusty adobe town" into a tourist destination and the cultural and artistic center of the Southwest.³ By the 1930s, Santa Fe's place in the Southwest, and in the American imagination, had been firmly established. It became the "oldest city in America," the "City Different," a preeminent tourist destination with roots in quaint adobe architecture and ancient Pueblo culture.⁴ The story of Santa Fe's transformation from dust to glitter is more than just the story of a single town, for it is inextricably intertwined with dominant themes of early twentieth-century history: the growth of Americanist archaeology, the construction of a regional identity for the Southwest, the

invention of Pueblo Indians as icons, and the creation of a fine arts market for Pueblo pottery.⁵

Santa Fe Invents Itself

Santa Fe's struggle to invent itself unfolded over several decades, beginning in about 1905. It involved many players and multiple fronts, from Indian rights activists to phil-anthropists, cultural institutions to art movements. The period from the early 1900s to 1931 marked the creation of the Santa Fe mystique: the myth of the City Different, the ancient city with the contemporary twist. While businessmen and politicians, eager to put on a modern front, attempted to convince the rest of the nation that New Mexico Territory was suitable for statehood, new institutions and programs flourished, based upon the concept that Santa Fe was undeniably old, exotic, and uniquely authentic.

The creation of institutions such as the School of American Archaeology (established in 1907),⁶ the Museum of New Mexico (1909), and the Museum of Fine Arts (1917) helped reinforce modernity, establishing a critical mass of research institutions and museums and demonstrating that Santa Fe was not an isolated backwater but was instead a cultured and mature town. At the same time, these institutions reinforced contemporary ideas about the exotic and enticing historical and cultural roots of the city and the region. Together with the Laboratory of Anthropology (1929), these organizations created a legacy of research, exhibits, and education that established the past as the foundation for the present. The Museum of New Mexico, the Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations launched initiatives throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century to herald Santa Fe as the "oldest city in the United States" and to celebrate its history and culture.⁷

The effort began with a series of pageants and public festivals that incorporated a mixture of entertainment, education, and boosterism. The Santa Fe Fiesta (1911) and the Historical Parade (1919) were established as a way to lay claim to the region's conquistador history. After several years of seriousness, alternatives such as the Hysterical Pageant (1926) sprang to life as lively parodies of their somber counterparts.⁸ The celebrations and parody alike have shaped modern Santa Fe, where Fiesta is still marked on social calendars, along with the burning of Zozobra and other irreverent events.

The architecture of Santa Fe came to play a critical role as well, as elements of old vernacular architecture were reinvented as a uniquely American style.⁹ Adobe buildings, previously considered an embarrassment, were revitalized with the addition of elements drawn from the architecture of pueblos and mission churches. Buildings that had been updated with Greek Revival and Italianate façades were stripped down and rebuilt in the new style. Most of the buildings that are now icons of Santa Fe were constructed or heavily remodeled in the 'teens and twenties: the Palace of the Governors, the Museum of Fine Arts, the commercial buildings around the Plaza, and the famous La Fonda hotel. The "Santa Fe Style," consciously created in the 1910s, became a visible sign of the city's ancient heritage.

The image of Santa Fe as an ancient and uniquely American city was also shaped by its artists and writers. Painters drawn to the intense colors and abstractions of the desert landscape settled in northern New Mexico in the early twentieth century, forming prominent artists' colonies in Taos and Santa Fe. Their paintings and sculpture helped craft a picture of Santa Fe in the popular imagination, through romanticized representations of the region's native inhabitants and vigorous modernist paintings of the land and sky.¹⁰

The artists and writers of Santa Fe also helped to establish the city as a tourist destination, for their work was often sponsored by the railroads and the Harvey Company, which worked together to promote tourism throughout the region. Tourists found many attractions and facilities in Santa Fe, as well as opportunities to purchase Pueblo pottery as souvenirs. Within a short period, Pueblo pottery became inextricably linked to the Southwest as a region.¹¹ Initially seen as craft, Pueblo pottery was re-imagined as fine art, a process that was centered on Santa Fe and the efforts of the members of the Pueblo Pottery Fund, the Museum of New Mexico, and other organizations. This transformation of pottery from craft to art was a key event in shaping Santa Fe, which is today one of the world's leading markets in Indian art.

Thriving but Polarized: Santa Fe in the 1920s

By the 1920s, Santa Fe was thriving. It had a series of cultural institutions, a unified and highly distinctive architectural style, and a population that increasingly included artistic, philanthropic, and civic leaders. Despite these great strides and talents, however, Santa Fe was highly polarized in terms of philosophies, methods, and motivations. Conflict in Santa Fe centered on any number of opposing groups: scientific archaeologists and those with "unscientific" aesthetic interests, the "cheap artists" painting in Taos and the modernist artists of Santa Fe, the Southwesterners and the Eastern establishment.¹²

Many of the controversies centered around one man: Edgar Lee Hewett. Hewett was a brilliant promoter and controversial archaeologist, a man of big ideas and boundless energy. The founder of the School of American Archaeology (SAA) and the Museum of New Mexico, Hewett was involved in virtually every intellectual institution and cultural endeavor in Santa Fe from 1907 until the 1920s. He doggedly pushed his own initiatives forward and dug in his heels with just as much determination to fight any plan that he disliked. His mode of operation earned him the name "El Toro" (The Bull), which was applied behind his back by friends and supporters alike. Although Hewett's power had begun to wane in the mid-1920s, his influence was such that Santa Fe remained polarized long after his death in 1946.

Many other players were involved in inventing Santa Fe, of course, but it is Hewett's version of Santa Fe's "vibrant era" that has dominated for nearly a half century.¹³ Hewett is, nonetheless, only part of the story. Many other men and women also helped shape Santa Fe, from Frank Springer, a lawyer and an amateur paleontologist, to a group of

philanthropically inclined transplants from the East, including art patrons Amelia Elizabeth White and her sister, Martha, journalist Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, and art patron and Indian activist Margretta Dietrich.¹⁴ There was also a somewhat ragtag bunch of archaeologists and museum employees, many of whom got their first introduction to the Southwest through Hewett: Alfred Vincent Kidder, Sylvanus Morley, Jesse Nusbaum, and Kenneth Chapman.¹⁵

“Chap” (Kenneth Milton Chapman)

Born in Ligonier, Indiana, in 1875, Chapman spent his childhood in the Midwest; equally interested in art and science, he chose illustration as a career, attending the Art Institute of Chicago for a brief time before finding a series of jobs as an illustrator for magazines and catalogs. Plagued by ill health, Chapman moved to New Mexico in 1899, a twenty-four-year-old man in search of a cure. Along with improved health, he found a lifelong obsession: the pottery of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico.

Chapman would devote his life to Indian art. For almost six decades, he studied pottery designs and worked at various anthropological research institutions in Santa Fe. Chapman worked for Hewett at the Museum of New Mexico and on excavations carried out by the School of American Research (SAR). He was intimately involved in creating the new Santa Fe Style of architecture, drafting designs for the Museum of Fine Arts, the proposed National Guard armory, a war memorial hall, and various residences.¹⁶ He was one of the founding members of the Indian Arts Fund (IAF), a group devoted to saving traditional Indian art. An expert in Pueblo pottery, Chapman served as judge at the Indian Fair and became an arbiter of taste in Indian art, single-handedly defining “traditional” pottery for each pueblo. He also founded the Laboratory of Anthropology, an institution that challenged Hewett’s position of power within Santa Fe.

Memoirs

In 1956, after nearly six decades of work with Indian art, Chapman began to write his memoirs. The project was prompted by a suggestion from David H. Stevens, then the director of humanities for the Rockefeller Foundation and “a staunch friend of the Laboratory.”¹⁷ The staff of the Museum of New Mexico readily adopted the idea that Chapman’s memoirs be considered “a Museum project,”¹⁸ with “particular emphasis on that portion covering [Chapman’s] experiences of the past fifty years with museum developments,” including “numerous recorded but unpublished accounts of incidents in the growth of the School, the museum, and the laboratory.”¹⁹

For twelve years, Chapman worked on his memoirs, writing drafts by hand that were typed and sometimes edited by a series of secretaries and assistants. When Chapman died in 1968, at the age of ninety-two, his memoirs were substantial but incomplete. The memoirs were archived, along with his notes, outlines, and other papers, at SAR. The memoirs’ existence was fairly widely known,²⁰ although I was completely unaware of the material when I stumbled across it in the 1990s. I was a graduate

student in archaeology at the time and had no real understanding of archives, other than vague admiration coupled with a sense that their materials tended to the dry and lifeless. As I paged quickly through Chapman's memoirs, I soon saw that I was utterly wrong; here was an account of events from a distant past that were full of drama and emotion. I was astonished that so much of Chapman's work had never been published and was determined to see that happen. The memoirs were, I felt, a treasure, a complete account of Santa Fe's vibrant era, from one of its key players.

This view was undeniably naive, as I realized when I returned to SAR several years later to begin working with Chapman's papers. What appeared at first to be complete and neatly organized turned out to be highly selective, fragmentary, and sometimes disappointingly incomplete. The memoirs are neither autobiography nor history; they are the idiosyncratic memories of an elderly man, looking back on a long, fulfilling, and sometimes contentious life. Chapman, living alone and in difficult financial straits, struggled with feelings of isolation and loneliness as he worked on the memoirs. "This business of the last leaf on the tree," he wrote to a friend, "is no joke."²¹

For the most part, though, Chapman seems to have enjoyed the opportunity to revisit his past in the form of the memoirs. The material consists of two distinct parts. The first focuses on the early years of his life, from childhood through his years in Las Vegas, New Mexico (1899–1909), while the second relates more directly to his experiences during the golden age of Santa Fe, from the 'teens through the late 1920s. Although the project was intended to focus on his career, Chapman wrote extensively about his childhood, including detailed accounts of personal relationships and reminiscences about the way things used to be;²² he writes of friends and acquaintances from more than fifty years earlier, provides updates on the profession and last known location of his fellow art school students, and recounts chance meetings with famous businessmen and politicians. This meticulous accounting of Chapman's early years is overwhelming in its details of daily life: the hand-wrapped packages in grocery stores, the plumbing fixtures in the schools that he attended. For the most part, these early years are not directly relevant to Chapman's career in New Mexico. I have, however, included a few excerpts, heavily edited, that cover Chapman's early art training and employment. In addition to providing biographical details, these introductory sections establish Chapman's presentation of himself as an honest, reliable, and hard-working man—a portrait that becomes important for his credibility later when he levels a series of accusations at Hewett.

The detail present in Chapman's childhood accounts carries over into his description of his early years in New Mexico, from when he settled in Las Vegas in 1899 until his move to Santa Fe in 1909. The Las Vegas material tells of his arrival in town, his search for employment, and the circumstances through which he met two powerful patrons, Frank Springer and Edgar Lee Hewett. These sections provide insight into Chapman's adjustment to life in the Southwest, as well as his introduction to the work and subjects that would shape his entire career. In addition to these critical subjects, Chapman devoted considerable time to discussing the background of various Las Vegas residents,

the social and business clubs, and the confusion created by dual post offices in old and new Las Vegas. For the most part, I have left out these more mundane accounts; I have, however, included considerable sections on social activities and tourist resorts in the Las Vegas area, feeling that they reveal some of the character of one of New Mexico's most prominent towns at the turn of the century.

In the remainder of Chapman's memoirs, beginning with his arrival in Santa Fe in 1909, the light-hearted accounts of social activities and individuals give way to a more formal style, focusing on professional activities and events. Chapman's many outlines show that he intended to order sections by topic, such as the Santa Fe years, and then by chronology. He wrote individual vignettes on each topic, ranging in length from a paragraph to a few pages. The order of incidents within a chapter, and of chapters within the manuscript, was quite fluid. Chapman created numerous outlines, listing as many as twenty-eight chapters;²⁵ within each chapter, he spent considerable time rearranging the vignettes, numbering and renumbering each section as he attempted to find a satisfying order.

Chapman intended to document his life in an orderly fashion, but the constant rearranging resulted in chapters that mix incidents from different time periods freely and often include retellings of the same event. It is sometimes difficult to tell the dates of specific events, or to find enough context to make sense of them. The manuscript as a whole is even more confusing; Chapman's final outline calls for an erratic timeline, including such twists as placing the Indian Arts Fund, incorporated in 1924, and the Frijoles Canyon fieldwork of 1900–1920 well after the 1929 founding of the Laboratory of Anthropology. For readers without Chapman's grasp of the events of his life, this is unduly confusing.

For this book, I have largely followed the current organization of Chapman's papers in the School for Advanced Research (SAR) archive, using a combination of chronological order and topical groupings that I hope will prove easier to follow. The only major deviation from the archival order of the papers was in shifting those materials where Chapman focuses on Edgar Lee Hewett to fall after the general chapter on Chapman's time at the Museum of New Mexico. This helps establish the ill feeling between the two men, providing the context required to understand the founding of the Laboratory of Anthropology.

In working with Chapman's memoirs, I have tried to balance preserving his words and intentions with the need to clarify and provide context. Chapman sometimes assumed considerable knowledge on the part of his readers; in these cases, I have edited lightly or added endnotes to make his meaning more clear. At other times, he took great pains to explain potentially unfamiliar individuals or settings; in these situations, I did little more than edit lightly for idiosyncrasies of grammar and punctuation. I have not, however, significantly modified Chapman's vocabulary, although it includes terms and phrases, like "Indian" or "primitive," that have an antiquated (and often problematic) ring to the modern ear. These words reflect typical usage in the early to mid-twentieth century.

The most drastic liberties that I have taken with Chapman's memoirs were necessi-

tated by the fragmentary nature of the work; coverage of some topics consists of a series of disjointed vignettes, loosely grouped together. For these chapters, I reorganized Chapman's sections, combined repetitious passages, and eliminated incomplete fragments to create a single coherent narrative. On a few occasions, I inserted material from sources other than the memoirs; these include narratives that were incorporated into Chapman's letters or stand-alone accounts written for other purposes. These inserted sections sometimes involve a slight change in tone and may muddy the waters by introducing subjects that Chapman did not include in his memoirs; nevertheless, they provide context or details that would not otherwise be available. All inserted materials are indicated as such in the footnotes. Most of the headings for the vignettes are Chapman's; for sections lacking a title, I drew one directly from the text. Each chapter of his memoirs is introduced with a discussion of its historical context in which I cover the relevant events and provide an introduction to the people and issues raised in Chapman's writing. These prefatory remarks are meant to orient the reader in time and to provide the context necessary to understand Chapman's version of events.

Kenneth Chapman's Santa Fe

Kenneth Chapman's version of Santa Fe is his own. In editing his memoirs, I have tried above all to ensure that Chapman's voice comes through, for his memoirs provide a detailed but idiosyncratic portrait of Santa Fe's golden age. Some of his accounts are nostalgic, some bitter; a few are funny, although for the most part Chapman was reserved in his writing. Like the man who wrote it, the memoir is solid and pragmatic, unconcerned with colorful language or literary style. The nicknames and informalities that he used in letters to "Kiddo" (A. V. Kidder) and "Jess" Nusbaum are absent, as are accounts of family. It is only in his writing about Hewett that Chapman strays into more emotional territory, as he catalogued Hewett's faults and betrayals, large and small.

Chapman's single-minded focus on documenting his professional relationship with Edgar Lee Hewett meant that Chapman gave short shrift to seemingly important topics. In sharp contrast to the first portion of his memoirs, Chapman carefully avoided any personal subjects in the latter half, barely mentioning his marriage, his children, or his friendships.²⁴ Although this omission may in part relate to the "official" status of his memoirs as a museum project, he also failed to discuss much of his most important work—there is little about the activities of the IAF, his extensive involvement in the Indian Fairs, the Laboratory of Anthropology's projects after its founding, his work with the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, or his teaching at the University of New Mexico. In fact, Chapman gave short shrift to virtually everything that occurred after 1929.²⁵

In short, the picture that Chapman's memoirs paint is neither comprehensive nor balanced. The writing outlines the memories of an elderly man worried about controversy, unable to forget the situations that were difficult on a personal level: his conflicts with Hewett and his embarrassment at constantly soliciting funds for the Laboratory of Anthropology.

Through it all, Chapman's voice comes through clearly, the voice of a quiet and conscientious man, hardworking and loyal to a fault; never a self-promoter, Chapman was overshadowed by Hewett (and, in fact, most of his contemporaries). But it was Chapman, the "art archaeologist" and museum man, who reinvented Pueblo pottery as fine art and contributed to every aspect of Santa Fe's regional identity as a cultural and artistic center. One of the last self-made experts, an anthropological jack-of-all-trades, Chapman gracefully juggled seemingly disparate disciplines, leaving a complex legacy in the art, archaeology, and anthropology of the Southwest.