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INDIAN TOP OF EL MORRO NATIONAL MONUMENT

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PHOTO BY VOGT

A CONCRETE DAM IN "EL RINCON COMO UNA NARANJA" AS DE VARGAS REFERRED TO HISTORIC CAVE HAS BEEN BUILT THUS FURNISHING A RESERVOIR OF CLEAN WATER FOR VISITORS AT EL MOZO

INSCRIPTION ROCK

Evon Z. Vogt, the Custodian of Inscription Rock and National Monument also known as "El Morro," is making interesting experiments in coating the surface of the great rock upon which there are so many historical inscriptions, with a protective compound that it is hoped will preserve these inscriptions for centuries to come. Vandals have done some damage to the inscriptions and a number of tourists have scratched their names on the rock surface.

Dr. Charles F. Lummis, who came to Santa Fe to attend the annual Fiesta again visited Inscription Rock during September and made the following entry upon the visitors' register:

"Nowhere else does geology open to the layman so obvious, so dramatic, so spectacular a page as in that region which I christened, 40 years ago, by the name it bears today-Inscription Rock. There is no other such cross-section of earth-building sequences as in the Grand Cañon; nor is there elsewhere on earth such an exposition of the earth-carving forces as the unique Mesa Country of northwestern New Mexico, with its vast waves of red or fawn or grey Navajo Sandstone breaking off in sheer lofty cliffs; its lofty table-topped Islands of the Air which are

left in valley to witness to the far day when no valley were, but one vast upland of triassic sandstone; its monumental erosion, prophesied by its jointing in an ancient uplift, sketched by frosts, ardent suns, turned, carved, chiseled, sandpapered by flood and rain and wind. The world has many famous freaks and wonders of erosion; but it has nothing else to compare with this great area of water and wind erosion of the Navajo Sandstone.

“I believe there is no question that the two most interesting Rocks in the the world —counting their picturesque, intricate, and fanastic erosion and their historic associations—are in this formation, Acoma, The Sky City, a pueblo still living as Coronado found it in 1540, east of the Zuñi Mountains or Continental Divide (whose up-humping broke the great sand stone blanket) : on the west El Morro, La Mesa Escrita, Inscription Rock, the “Stone Autograph Album.” So far as I can learn, no other cliff on earth records so much—or a tithe so much—of Romance, Adventure, Heroism. Certainly all the other rocks in America do not, all together, hold so much of American History. Oñate here carved his entry with his dagger two years before an English speaking person had built a hut anywhere in the New World, 15 years before Plymouth Rock.

“I first visited El Morro in 1885; again in

1886, 1888, and 1890. I photographed all the inscriptions I could then find—at this present visit I see several others since discovered. Probably the first popular account was my series *Strange Corners of our Country* published in *St. Nicholas* in 1891-92, and in book form under the same title in 1892. That book is now included (rewritten) with the equivalent of two volumes more, in my book (1895) *Mesa, Cañon, and Pueblo*. I hope sometime there will be an adequate book about *Inscription Rock*—it is sufficient for a worthy book by itself. It needs no vanity to hold that mine is the only competent account thus far; but this heroic old monument at once of *Nature's Whim* and of *Man's Daring*, is worthy of a chronicle not only expert but complete.

“And I am profoundly gratified to find that *El Morro*, now a National Monument, is being safeguarded so that some day the competent historian and paleographer may read its ultimate secrets. Thoughtful people, the world over, are debtors to Mr. Vogt for his protective care of this great historical heritage.

“Ramah, New Mexico, Sept. 1, 1926

Chas. F. Lummis

“Los Angeles, California.”

Mr. Vogt writes as follows:

“Years before the colonial history of the eastern coast of America begins this region of the

southwest was being explored by the intrepid representatives of the king of Spain. His colorful caravans of capitans of the army, governors general, padres and soldiers were entering this region from the south via the Rio Gila and the Rio Grande after fitting out their commands at Mexico City and other capitals of Mejiico viejo. Thus Coronado came to the Seven Cities of Cibola (Zuñi villages) in 1540. Others followed including Chamuscado, Espejo and Juan de Oñate.

"In traveling from Zuñi to Acoma and other pueblo towns to the east these picturesque Spaniards were wont to stop at the old camping place of El Morro where wood, water and shelter were offered by the great monolith which is still one of the most notable cliffs in the country. The head men as well as the soldiers and padres took to carving their inscriptions on the smooth inviting walls of the mesa. Many of the old escrituras tell interesting stories of their travels and the purposes of their expeditions.

"The Juan de Oñate inscription dated 1606 in which he tells of the discovery by him of the sea of the south (Gulf of California), the Inscription of Governor Manuel de Silva Nieto 1620, of De Vargas, 1692, and many others are still legible owing to their fine carving and the very sheltered places on the rock chosen by the Spaniards.

"The work of the elements, wind, rain, frost,

heat and cold is beginning to tell, however. The national park service has been planning to preserve the inscriptions for several years so that there will be no further wearing away of these valuable historical records.

"Through the help of the bureau of standards of Washington, D. C., whose experts conducted tests on samples of the sandstone sent to Washington a plan was hit upon which it is believed will save the inscriptions for posterity.

"It was found that a colorless paint made largely of paraffin if applied carefully when the stone was perfectly dry would stop any wear of the stone and it is believed would at the same time not in any way mar the surface of the rock by staining.

"During the present summer the custodian of El Morro National monument has been trying out materials on some trial inscriptions made a quarter of a mile away from the old Spanish ones.

"Five words were carefully carved as follows:

"Colorless, No. 1;

"Covering, No. 2;

"Save, No. 3;

"Old, No. 4;

"Inscriptions. No. 5.

"Each word was covered by a different commercial product so as to determine the most effective coloring. The materials being tested are

Gar Kem, Super Por Seal, Gliddens compound, Driwal and Transview.

"While several coats remain to be put on, the indications at present are that several of these materials appear to be equally colorless and it is hoped they will be permanently water repellent in their nature.

"By the end of the summer the custodian will be able to cover all the old inscriptions with the material chosen thus saving them any wear from the weather. It is likely that the older Indian pictographs of which there are many carved on the rock, may also be covered.

"The annual allotment for the up-keep of fences, gates, signs, trails, camp house, bridges and to make needed improvements is usually about \$150. This sum is wholly inadequate to pay for the work. It is hoped that congress will some day realize the importance of being a bit more generous with this national monument as well as others.

"Inscription Rock as it is often called is located about 50 miles southeast of Gallup and 11 miles beyond the irrigated village of Ramah. A trip to Inscription Rock can be nicely combined with a visit to the perpetual ice cave which is 19 miles further away and 30 miles from Grants if one enters this region from the east."