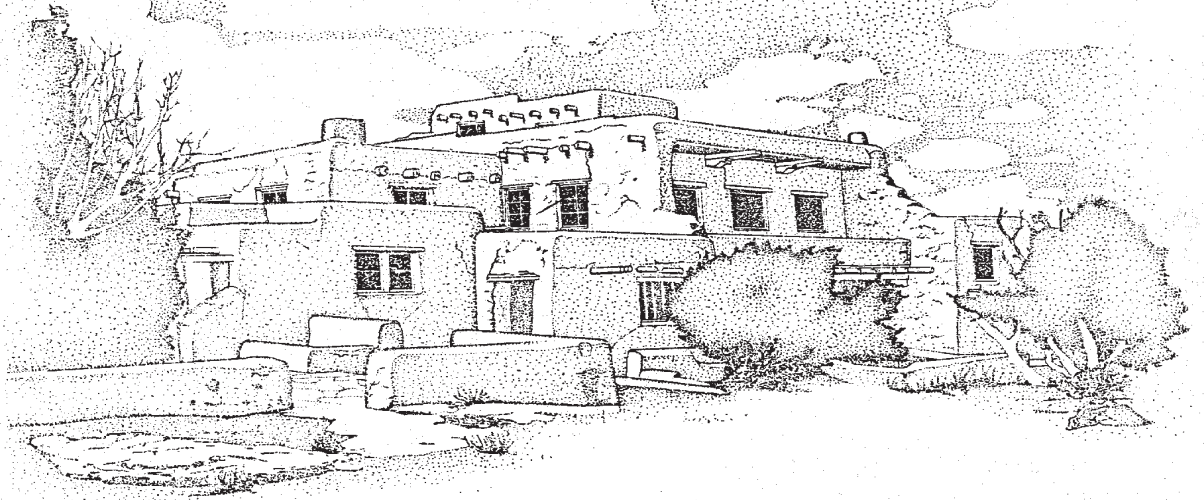




Painted Desert Inn

Declared a National Historic Landmark in 1987



The Stone Tree House



The Painted Desert Inn was the vision of Herbert David Lore. While his family remembers the finished building before 1920, Lore registered the Inn with the land office in 1924. For almost twelve years, Lore operated the inn as a tourist attraction—nicknamed the “Stone Tree House” due to the petrified wood in some of its masonry walls. Visitors could eat meals in the lunchroom, purchase American Indian arts and crafts, and enjoy a cool drink in the downstairs taproom. Six small

rooms were available for two to four dollars per night. Lore also gave two-hour motor car tours through the Black Forest in the Painted Desert below the inn.

The “Stone Tree House” was an oasis in the Painted Desert, but it was still isolated. As the inn was not connected to electrical lines, a shop containing a lighting-plant supplied electricity. Water was hauled from Adamana, ten miles south on the Puerco River.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)



In 1931, Lore had expressed an interest in selling or exchanging his property “in order that it could be preserved and protected.” It wasn’t until four years later that Petrified Forest National Monument purchased the “Stone Tree House” and four sections of land for \$59,400.

Due to the structural problems of the inn and the movement towards a “Rustic” style of architecture in the parks during the 1930s, the “Stone Tree House” was redesigned. Well-known for his southwestern style of design, National Park Service architect Lyle Bennett created a new look for Painted Desert Inn.

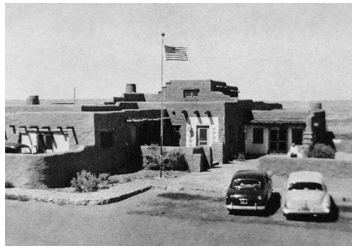
Bennett first started as a national park ranger in 1927, but moved on to use his degree in fine arts to become one of the best and most sought after architects in the National Park Service. He was considered a master of the Pueblo Revival style, as demonstrated by Painted Desert Inn.

A very special group of young men did the actual reconstruction of the building using Bennett’s plans. In the 1930s, many young men were finding relief from the Depression through the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). They built roads, buildings, and bridges in many national parks and other federal and state areas, including Petrified Forest National Monument.

The CCC used ponderosa pine and aspen poles cut from Arizona forests for roofing beams (*vigas*) and smaller crossbeams (*savinos* or *latillas*). Keeping with the Southwestern theme, light fixtures were hand-made from punched tin, and wooden tables and chairs were given a Native American design. The beautiful skylight panels were hand-painted by two of the CCC workers based on prehistoric designs unearthed at archeological sites in the Southwest. The concrete floors in the dining room and viewing porch were etched and painted with patterns based on Navajo blanket designs.



Open for Business



The fine work of the CCC gave the inn new life. The inn reopened for business on July 4, 1940, under the management of Edward McGrath for Standard Concessions. The Painted Desert Inn supplied Route 66 travelers with meals, souvenirs, and lodging. It was popular with local residents as a place for meetings and special events.

The good times ended with the beginning of World War II. The CCC was disbanded as most of the young men went to war. Travel was curtailed by rationing. The Painted Desert Inn closed in October 1942.

The Fred Harvey Company



Fred Harvey started his company as a partnership with the Santa Fe Railroad in 1876. His facilities for travelers were well known for comfort and quality. The company's architect and interior designer, Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter, arrived in December of 1947. She was already noted for her innovative Southwestern concepts when she came to the Painted Desert Inn. Along with renovations and repair, Colter created a new color scheme. She ordered new

plate glass windows placed in strategic walls of the inn to take advantage of the magnificent view.

Fred Kabotie, a renowned Hopi artist, was hired to paint murals on the dining room and lunchroom walls. The scenes are glimpses into Hopi culture: the Buffalo Dance, a trek to a sacred salt lake, planting time, and a sun face. The sun face was also the logo of the Fred Harvey Company.

Preserving Our Legacy

By the end of the next decade, the inn had seen better days. Cracks formed in many of the walls. A seam of bentonite clay caused the foundation of the inn to shift as the clay swells and shrinks in response to moisture. Water also caused damage to the interior walls, threatening the beautiful Kabotie murals.

The inn closed in 1963, after Fred Harvey and the visitor center moved to the new Painted Desert Complex. A continuing debate on the inn's future came to a peak. Some called for the building to be torn down. The park scheduled demolition of the building for 1975. However, the concerned public launched a campaign to save the Painted Desert Inn. The inn was reopened in 1976 as the Petrified Forest National Park Bicentennial Travel Center. In the beginning, the inn was opened on a limited basis. The Painted Desert Inn currently remains open year-round and serves as a museum and information center.

Because of its fine examples of Southwestern architecture, historic work by the CCC, touches by Mary Colter, and Kabotie's beautiful murals, the Painted Desert Inn became a National Historic Landmark in 1987.

The most recent rehabilitation project began on October 25, 2004, starting the effort to restore the Painted Desert Inn

to its appearance in its heyday. For a year and a half, the inn was closed as new wiring, plumbing, and security systems were added. Plaster and mortar were repaired and the floors refinished. Support beams were repaired or replaced. The walls received new coats of paint, reflecting the brilliant hues of Mary Colter's interior design. For better customer service, the bathrooms were updated and an accessible entrance to the building was provided. Furniture, hand-painted skylight panels, and tin light fixtures created by the CCC were conserved.

Today, the Painted Desert Inn remains a testament to the historic legacy of Petrified Forest National Park.



Design from CCC skylight pane, late 1930s