

geologist, on August 4, 1859. On July 22, 1878, Lewis H. Morgan visited the site, made a thorough examination of the ruin, and published a good description and fairly accurate ground plan of the great village.

Settlers moved into the lower Animas Valley in 1876, and used many stones on the ruin site for building chimneys and fireplaces. Some of the lower floors were broken into, and digging in the mound by pot-hunters took place. It was not until 1916 that this great site was scientifically excavated. This was done, under the auspices of the American Museum of Natural History, by Earl H. Morris. Excavations were made between 1916 and 1921, and most of the rooms were cleaned out. About 150 remain unexcavated.

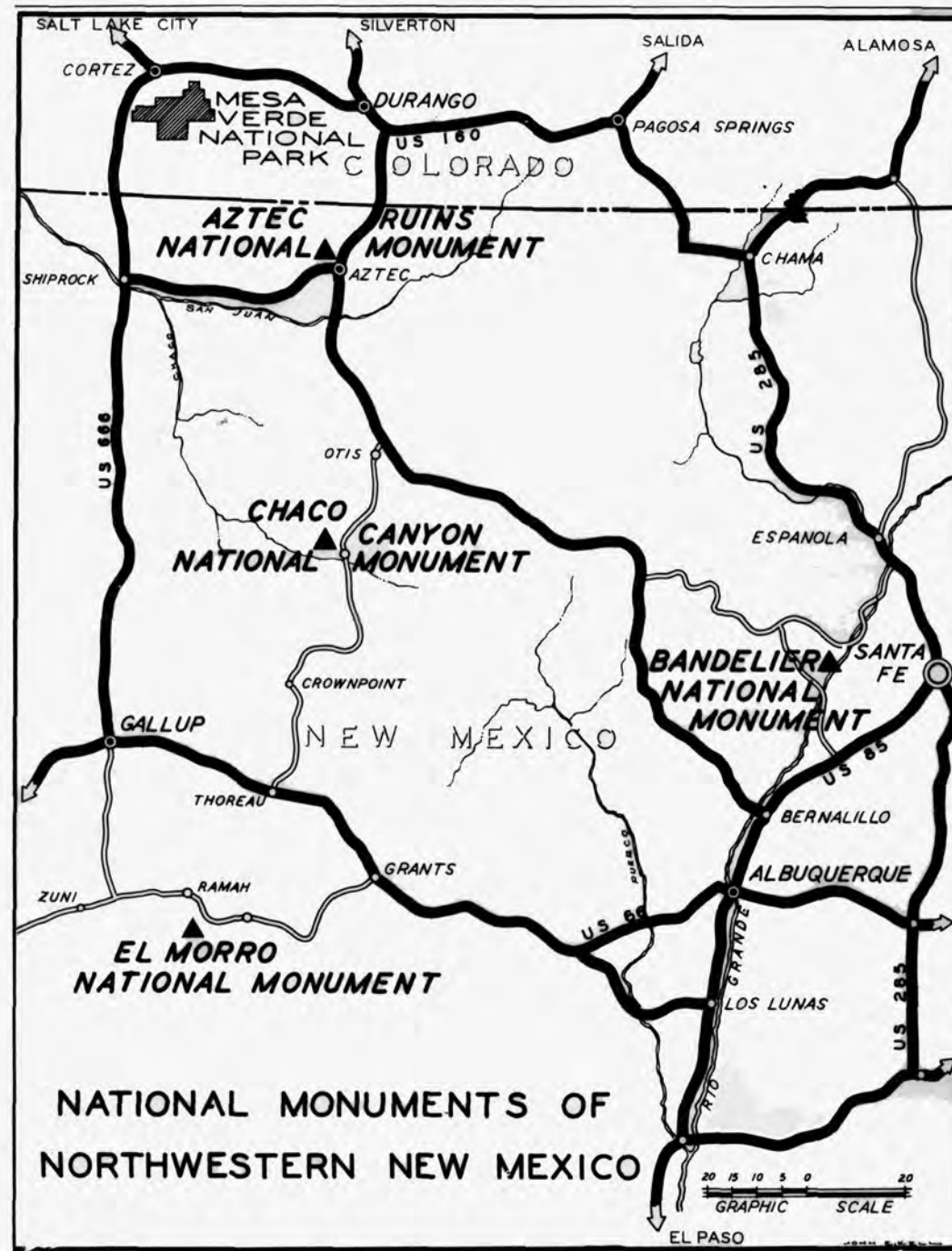
Administration

Aztec Ruins National Monument, in San Juan County, northwestern New

Mexico, about 1 mile north of the little town of Aztec in the lower Animas Valley, is one of the many areas set aside by Presidential proclamation to preserve prehistoric, scientific, or historic values. It was created a national monument in January 1923, and contains the famous Aztec Ruin and adjacent sites. Since the original proclamation, several additional tracts have been purchased, and now the area contains 25.88 acres. The monument is administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and is open the year round. There is an admission charge of 25 cents. A custodian and a ranger archeologist are stationed in the monument. Material from the ruin and other exhibits are displayed in the National Park Service Museum.

All communications regarding the monument should be addressed to the Custodian, Aztec Ruins National Monument, Aztec, New Mexico.

Interior of the restored great kiva



Kiva interior

AZTEC RUINS

National Monument

NEW MEXICO

Aztec Ruins National Monument



United States Department of the Interior
Harold L. Ickes, Secretary

National Park Service, Newton B. Drury, Director



Aztec Ruins National Monument consists of the ruins, largely excavated and stabilized, of a great prehistoric town built of masonry and timber centuries ago by American Indians; and another, unexcavated, similar site.

The average visitor to Aztec Ruins is under the impression that the ruin has some connection with the Aztecs of southern Mexico, but such is not the case. The term "Aztec" is often mistakenly applied locally in the Southwest to such ruins as these. The people who built and occupied this great communal village were Pueblo Indians, the sedentary, peaceful, agricultural Indians

whom we find still living in villages in the Southwest today.

The Village

The main Aztec ruin is built in the shape of a capital "E." The front of the village consisted of a series of one-story rooms with no entrances from the outside. Back of this front wall lay a huge court, which was surrounded by terraced rooms on both sides and the back wall, the rooms being three stories high in many instances. There were about 500 rooms in the village. The population must have been quite large at the time of major occupation.

Kivas—Fifty-two ceremonial rooms have been found. One of the best preserved of these "kivas" has been re-roofed on the original plan, and visitors are allowed to enter it. These rooms were probably used much as the modern kivas of the Pueblo Indian, as ceremonial chambers and men's clubs. They are usually circular and subterranean, in effect if not actually so, and were entered through a roof hatchway by ladder.

The Great Kiva—In the court of the village not far back from the front wall is an unusually large kiva with many interesting features. It is believed to have been a great community ceremonial room. In 1934 this great kiva was completely restored, under the supervision of Earl H. Morris, the original excavator.

The Period

There were two phases of occupation in Aztec. The pueblo was originally

built in the first quarter of the twelfth century, by Indians related to those of Chaco Canyon, judging by their pottery and other objects. There apparently was a break in the occupation, and temporarily the site was deserted. In the middle thirteenth century, Mesa Verde people occupied Aztec, building the other large pueblo (unexcavated, just east of the main ruin). The site was finally deserted later in the thirteenth century.

The People and Their Life

A group of prehistoric farmers found conditions in Aztec ideal to grow crops and build homes. The Animas was an unfailing stream to supply water for irrigation ditches and canals, game was fairly plentiful, the pinyons furnished nuts, the cactus furnished fruit, and there were wild berries and seeds to give them a varied diet. Maize (corn), beans, and pumpkins were the main agricultural products. Rocky ledges in the

near vicinity furnished rock for their walls, and adobe mud was used as mortar. Timbers were cut with stone axes for roofs and floors.

The prehistoric people did not know the use of metal. Many implements of stone, bone, and wood were used. Among those of stone were axes, hammers, polishing stones, knives set in wooden handles, skinning knives, grinding stones, etc. Bone implements included needles, awls, knives, and scraping and fleshing tools. Wooden digging and planting sticks were used in the fields; babies were securely strapped to wooden cradleboards. The typical pottery of both occupations in the Aztec Ruin is black-on-white. Many beads and pendants have been found, made from turquoise, stone, bone, and shell.

Garments were of cotton, the woven cloth or the raw cotton perhaps being secured by trade. Sandals were woven for footwear. Feather cloth was made

by wrapping the soft, downy part of the turkey feather spirally around pieces of yucca cord. Rabbit fur and hide were used to make soft cord for robes and blankets.

The bow and arrow were used to kill game; and bones of antelope, deer, mountain sheep, elk, and smaller game have been found in the trash mounds.

In excavation of the ruin, about 200 burials, flexed, with offerings, were discovered scattered throughout the village. Some were buried in rooms, some in kivas, and some in trash mounds. A number of burials were wrapped with feather cloth, with an outside covering of matting.

History

Escalante in 1775 mentioned large ruins in this section, and it is generally believed he meant Aztec itself. First written record by an American was made by Captain J. S. Newberry, a

Unexcavated rooms in foreground



Reconstructed kivas



Entering the smaller roofed kiva

