

Aztec in the lower Animas Valley. It was created a national monument in January 1923 by Presidential proclamation, and contains the famous Aztec Ruin and adjacent sites. Since the original proclamation, several additional tracts have been purchased, and the monument now contains 25.88 acres. It is open the year around. There is an admission fee of 25 cents a person. A custodian and a ranger are stationed at the monument. Conducted trips through the ruin are made from 8 a. m. to 5 p. m. A wide variety of unusually interesting prehistoric pottery, stone, bone, and wooden implements, stone and bone hand tools, various kinds of weaving and wearing apparel, ceremonial paraphernalia, trinkets, and other interesting artifacts, taken from the Aztec ruins

and surrounding area, are displayed by the National Park Service.

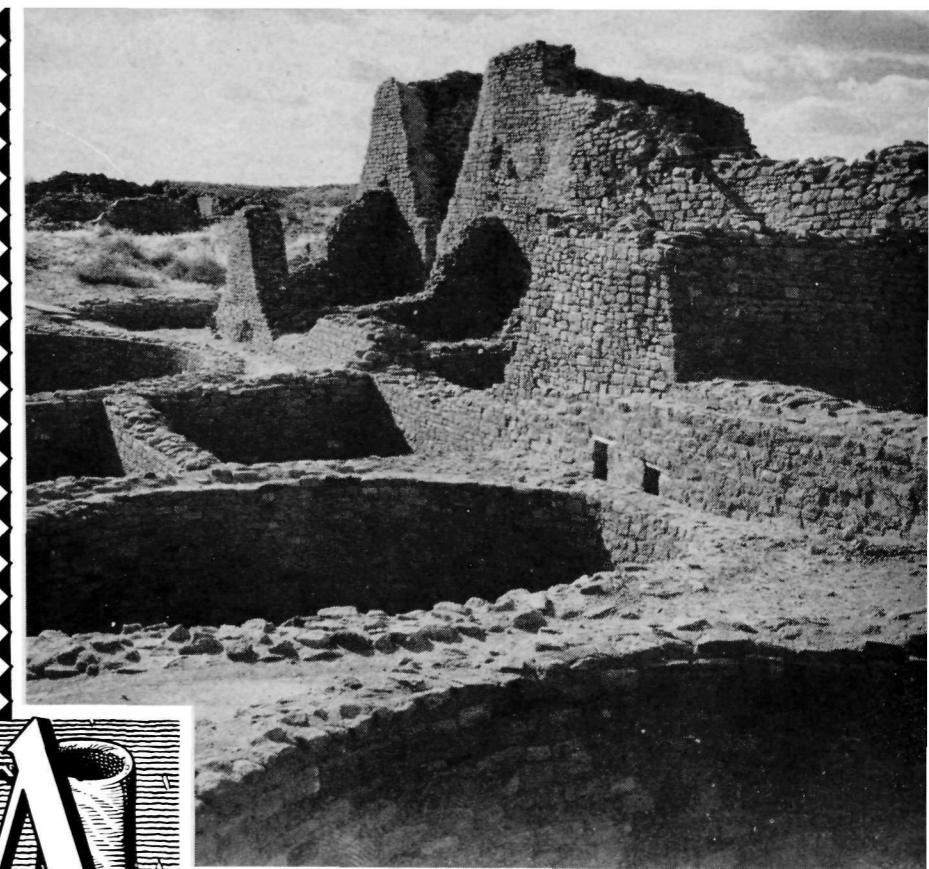
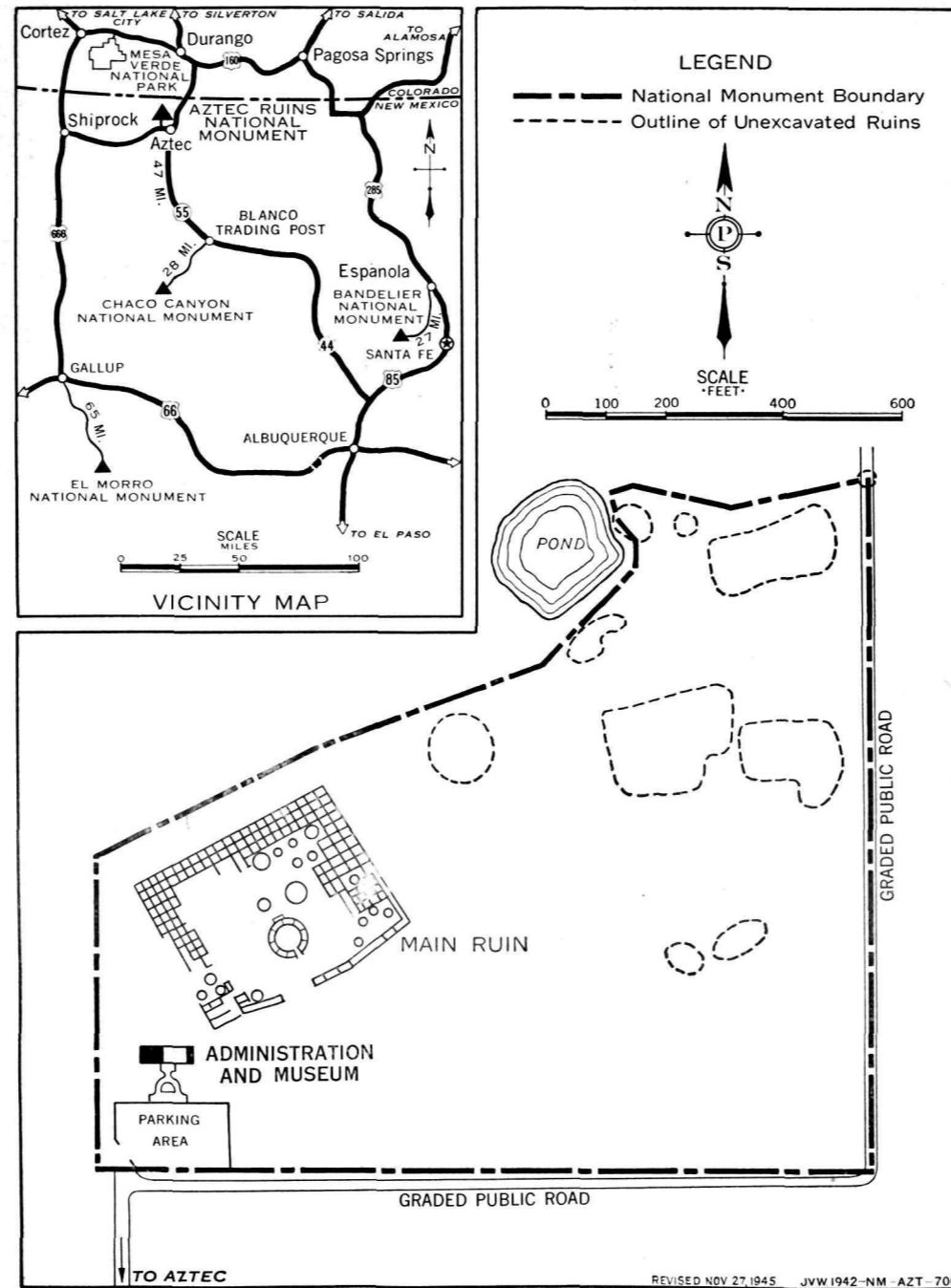
Aztec Ruins National Monument is one of a number of southwestern areas in the National Park System which have been established to provide special protection for prehistoric structures. These include Mesa Verde National Park, in southwestern Colorado, and the following national monuments: Bandelier, Chaco Canyon, and Gila Cliff Dwellings, in New Mexico; Canyon de Chelly, Casa Grande, Montezuma Castle, Navajo, Tonto, Tuzigoot, Walnut Canyon, and Wupatki, in Arizona; Yucca House, in Colorado; and Hovenweep, in Utah and Colorado.

All communications regarding the Aztec Ruins National Monument should be addressed to the Superintendent, Aztec Ruins National Monument, Aztec, N. Mex.

Masonry of the main ruin, showing decorative inlay band of dark stones.



AZTEC RUINS NATIONAL MONUMENT



Aztec Ruins

NATIONAL MONUMENT

New Mexico

Aztec Ruins

NATIONAL MONUMENT



AZTEC RUINS National Monument consists of the ruins of a great prehistoric town built in the twelfth century by American Indians. It is a part of the National Park System owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. In these areas the scenery and the objects of historic, prehistoric, and scientific interest are carefully preserved and displayed for public enjoyment.

The main ruin at Aztec Ruins National Monument has been excavated and stabilized to a large extent. There are several smaller, unexcavated ones which appear today as large mounds with occasional pieces of masonry wall protruding from them.

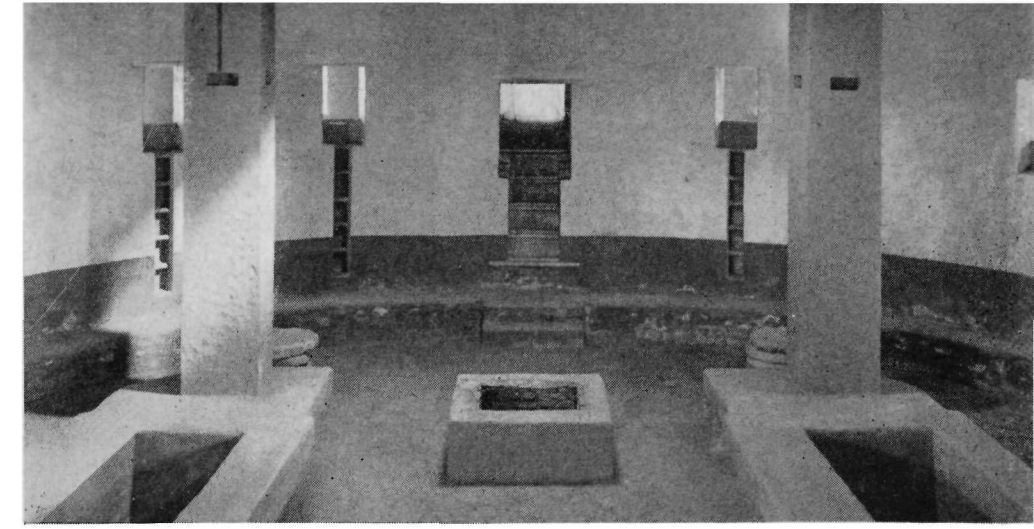
Many visitors to Aztec Ruins are under the impression that the ruin has some con-



Reconstructed kivas



Entering the smaller roofed kiva.



Interior of the restored great kiva.

nection with the Aztecs of Mexico, but this is not the case. The term "Aztec" is often mistakenly applied in the Southwest to such ruins. Those who built and occupied this great communal village were Pueblo Indians, sedentary, peaceful, agricultural people whose descendants live in villages in the Southwest today, much as did their prehistoric ancestors.

The Village

The main Aztec ruin is built around a huge court or "plaza." The front of the village structure is the lowest and is closed in by a row of one-story rooms with no entrances from the outside. Back of this front wall lies the court, surrounded by terraced rooms on the other three sides, 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**—Thirty-six ceremonial rooms have been found in the main ruin. One of the best preserved of these kivas has been reroofed in the original manner and

can be entered by ladder. These rooms were probably used much as the modern kivas of the Pueblo Indian, as ceremonial chambers and men's clubs. Kivas in the region of Aztec are circular and usually subterranean, 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, possibly a great community ceremonial room. In 1934 this great kiva was completely restored under the supervision of Earl H. Morris, the original excavator for the American Museum of Natural History.

The Period

There were two phases of occupation in Aztec. Dates established from three rings of timbers in the ruins indicate the structure was built in the first quarter of the twelfth century by Indians who, judging by their masonry construction, pottery, and artifacts, were related to those of Chaco Canyon which lies nearly 100 miles to the south and which is now embraced in Chaco

Canyon National Monument. 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

The prehistoric farmers who lived at the Aztec site found conditions there ideal for growing crops and building homes. The Animas was an unfailing stream to supply water for irrigation ditches, game was fairly plentiful, the piñons furnished nuts, the cactus furnished fruit, and there were wild berries and seeds to give them a varied diet. Corn, beans, and pumpkins were the main agricultural products. Rocky ledges nearby furnished rock for their walls, and adobe mud was used as mortar. Timbers for roofs were cut with stone axes. Many original first-story ceilings remain intact.

Implements of stone, bone, and wood were used. Among those of stone were axes, hammers, polishing stones, knives set in

wooden handles, grinding stones, etc. Bone implements included needles, awls, 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 hides and cotton, the woven cloth or the raw cotton perhaps being secured by trade. Sandals were woven for footwear. Feather cloth was woven from yucca cord wrapped with the soft, downy part of the turkey feather. 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 willow 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 Prof. J. S. Newberry, a 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. Since then the ruins have been well known. 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, between 1916 and 1921, and most of the rooms were cleared. About 150 rooms remain unexcavated.

Administration

Aztec Ruins National Monument is in San Juan County, northwestern New Mexico, about 1 mile north of the town of