

*Mesa Verde*

NATIONAL PARK

*... Colorado*

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE  
INTERIOR

Harold L. Ickes, *Secretary*



19 41

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Newton B. Drury, *Director*

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*Historic Events*

- 1st century<sup>1</sup> B. C. or A. D. Earliest occupation of Mesa Verde by Basket Makers was about the beginning of Christian era.
- 5th to 8th centuries A. D. Early agriculturists developed art of pottery making. Semi-subterranean homes spread widely over the Mesa Verde.
- 8th to 11th centuries A. D. Pueblo culture on Mesa Verde developed toward classical stage, culminating in the building of the great cliff dwellings.
- 1019 Earliest date established for large Mesa Verde cliff dwellings.
- 1073-1273 Construction of Cliff Palace.
- 1276 Beginning of 24-year drought, one of causes of evacuation of Mesa Verde.
- 1776 Padre Escalante expedition camped near base of Mesa Verde.
- 1859 Ascent of north escarpment by Capt. Macomb and geological party.
- 1874 Discovery of Mancos Canyon ruins by U. S. Geological Survey party.
- 1888 Discovery of Cliff Palace and other ruins by R. Wetherill and C. Mason.
- 1891 Baron Nordenskiold led first organized archeological expedition to area.
- 1906 Mesa Verde National Park created June 29.
- 1907 to date Excavations of ruins undertaken by noted archeologists.

<sup>1</sup> Approximate dating.



# MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK COLORADO

SEASON MAY 15 TO OCTOBER 15

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BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF CLIFF PALACE

**M**ESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK, one of the major archeological preserves of the Federal Government, is located in the spectacular mesa-canyon country of southwestern Colorado. It was designated as a national park by act of Congress in 1906, in order to protect the natural beauty and prehistoric ruins of the area. The park contains 51,333 acres, or 80.21 square miles.

Mesa Verde, Spanish for "green table," was so named by an unknown, early Spanish explorer because its flat top, heavily forested with piñon and juniper trees, is perpetually green.

Mesa Verde National Park features a fascinating story of prehistoric Indians who came to America by the northern route from their Asiatic homeland thousands of years ago. For many centuries they lived as roving hunters, but about 2,000 years ago they drifted to this region and became farmers. During their 1,300 years in the Mesa Verde region, these peace-loving people, who prized the security of their high mesas and perpendicular cliffs, achieved one

of the most amazing cultures of pre-Columbian America.

Today there are hundreds of ruins of ancient villages at Mesa Verde. Only a few have been excavated; the rest lie shrouded in a cloak of mystery, awaiting the archeologist's trowel. Each year, as more of the story unfolds, there comes a better understanding of the ancient peoples. The visitor who is able to leave his modern self behind, momentarily, and live and think only in the past, will soon learn to enjoy and understand the strange remnants of the ancient cultures.

## PREHISTORIC INHABITANTS OF THE MESA VERDE

Mesa Verde is known to have been inhabited by two principal groups of sedentary prehistoric Indians. The first, the Basket Makers, lived in the region from about the beginning of the Christian era until approximately 700 A. D. The Pueblo Indians came in at that time and remained until almost 1300 A. D. In order more readily to identify sequent stages of cultural evolution,

each of these two major groups has been further divided into two periods or phases. Thus known, the prehistoric occupation of Mesa Verde falls into four archeological periods.

**BASKET MAKER PERIOD—1 TO 400 A.D.**

—The Basket Makers were the first farmers in the Mesa Verde, raising corn and squash on the mesa tops. Only a few traces of these people have been found in the caves of the Mesa Verde.

The Basket Makers were short and slender and were, for the most part, long-headed. In the beginning their culture was very simple. Pottery was unknown, and baskets served for all household purposes. The excellence of the baskets gave the name to the culture. The atlatl, or throwing stick, was used instead of the bow. The Basket Makers lived principally in the open caves, building small storage cysts in the cave floors. They showed remarkable ability to develop new ideas and traits. All through this period there is evidence of progress, and finally a new name is given to the people.

**MODIFIED BASKET MAKER PERIOD—**

**400 to 700 A. D.**—These were still the same people, but the culture was modified by certain new developments, particularly pottery, houses, and the bow and arrow. The pottery was of a plain gray type and supplanted basketry for many usages, such as cooking and water carrying. Houses were shallow pits covered with head-high superstructures of poles and earth. Each house served as the home for a single family. The bow and arrow, a superior weapon, gradually replaced the atlatl. The people now depended almost entirely upon farming; beans, squash, and several

colors of corn were grown.

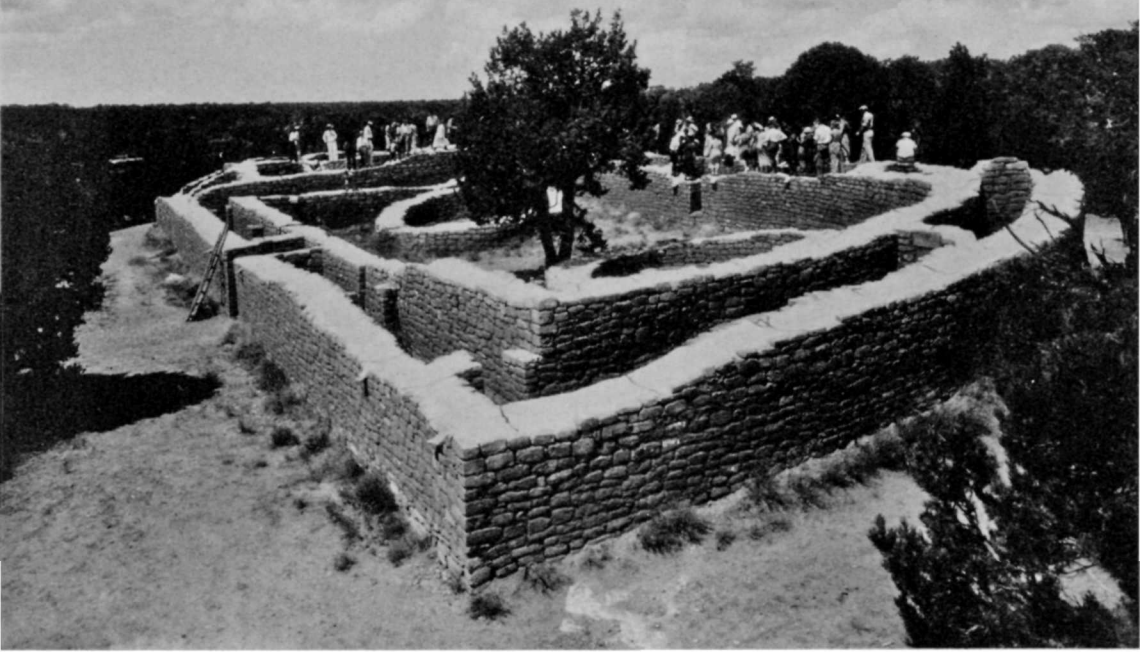
The population seems to have grown rapidly and soon there were hundreds of villages on the mesa tops and in the caves of the Four Corners region. Toward the end of the period new influences are apparent. Another group of Indians began to drift into the region. The Modified Basket Makers began to disappear, to be replaced by a new group, the Pueblos.

**DEVELOPMENTAL PUEBLO PERIOD—700**

**TO 1000 A. D.**—The Pueblos, so named for their custom of constructing their houses in large compact groups or small villages (Spanish pueblos), were of a different physical type, short and heavy-set. Most of them had broad, deformed heads.

These people represent a transitional or developmental stage in the archeological story of Mesa Verde. Picking up where the Modified Basket Makers left off, they soon developed new houses, rectangular structures with vertical side walls and flat roofs. Several types of walls were built: mud, mud and poles, stone slabs topped with mud, alternating layers of mud and stones, and finally walls of horizontal masonry. The houses were joined in long rows, and in the courts in front were one or more pit houses that eventually became kivas, the men's secret ceremonial rooms.

Pottery improved during this period, and many different types of well-decorated wares were made. The turkey was domesticated, and the weaving of turkey feather blankets and cotton cloth began. This was a period of great expansion. Thousands of farming villages dotted the entire region, the population



PARTY OF VISITORS AT SUN TEMPLE

increased rapidly, and arts and crafts improved.

**GREAT OR CLASSIC PUEBLO PERIOD—1000 TO 1300 A. D.**—During the eleventh century a large portion of the Pueblo Indians of the Mesa Verde moved into the most desirable caves and built the cliff dwellings. Those remaining on the mesa tops gathered in groups and built large stone pueblos. During the period arts and crafts reached the peak of their development. Walls were of fine horizontal masonry, and the villages were terraced structures of as many as 200 rooms. Some of the houses reached a height of four stories. Kivas were constructed in open courts, one single village having as many as 23 of these ceremonial rooms. The pottery was well-shaped, carefully fired, and beautifully decorated with geometric and animal figures. The cotton cloth

was often elaborately decorated. A rigid, matriarchal social structure developed, and a highly ritualistic religion evolved. This religion became so important in the lives of the people that separate buildings, designed solely for ceremonies, were sometimes constructed.

For a time the culture flourished, establishing a peak of spectacular archaeological significance. It was the great or classic period of prehistoric pueblo civilization for the Mesa Verde region. In the late stages, however, there are evidences of decay. Conditions in the caves probably were not as sanitary as in the earlier villages on the mesa tops, and disease seems to have become more prevalent. Nomadic Indians harassed the peaceful farmers, and the population began to dwindle.

The end came quickly. Beginning

in the year 1276 A. D. drought struck the region. For 24 consecutive years precipitation was deficient. Year after year the crops failed, one by one the springs dried up, and the people were in serious trouble. Their only escape was to seek regions with a more dependable water supply. Village after village was abandoned, and long before the drought ended all of the Cliff Dwellers had left the Mesa Verde, never to return.

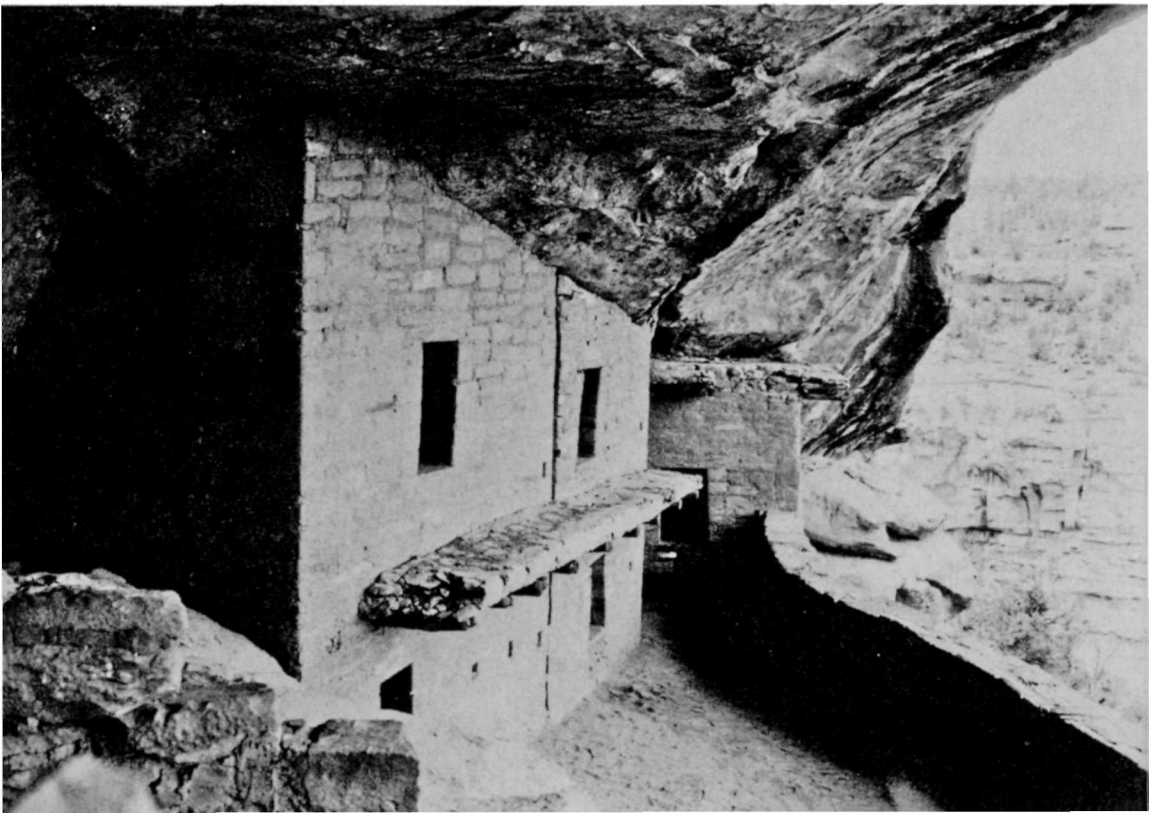
They drifted southward and eastward where today, along the Rio Grande, in New Mexico, and on west to the Hopi country in northern Arizona, live the modern Pueblo Indians. Without a doubt some of the blood of the former inhabitants of the Mesa Verde flows in the veins of these people.

## THE RUINS

Visitors to the Mesa Verde should see at least one ruin of each type: earth lodge, pueblo, and cliff dwelling. These ruins, taken in order, show not only the type of house in which the various peoples lived, but also the amazing progress made by them during the time they lived there.

**EARTH LODGE A.**—This is a typical example of the Modified Basket Maker houses. Although it once had a roof of poles and earth as high as a man's head, nothing remains but the underground part of the house. The pit is 17 feet in diameter and 30 inches deep, with a fire pit in the center. In the floor of the room, forming a large square, are four holes. In each of these the builders placed a post that stood as high as their heads. The top of each

BALCONY SECTION OF BALCONY HOUSE, A SUPERB EXAMPLE OF CLIFF DWELLER MASONRY



was forked. A small log, across the top of one post to the next, formed a square framework just above the builders' heads. Slender logs were leaned from the edge of the pit to this framework entirely around the room, and other logs were placed across the flat top. When these logs were covered with brush or reeds and several inches of earth, a substantial roof resulted. Most of the earth lodges had low tunnel entrances under the south wall; in some the only entrance was through the smoke hole in the center of the roof. Small storage bins made of stone slabs were often built around the walls of the room.

These houses were constructed in small groups both in the caves and on the mesa tops, and hundreds of the villages were scattered over the Mesa Verde region.

**PUEBLO RUINS.**—All of the mesa tops and wider canyon bottoms of the Mesa Verde are dotted with the ruins of ancient pueblos that date from both the Developmental and Classic Pueblo Periods. Countless hundreds of these ruins are to be seen, each covered with its protective mound of wind-blown earth.

None of the Developmental Pueblo ruins have as yet been excavated in the Mesa Verde, but it is hoped that within a short time one or more will be unearthed and made accessible to visitors. A number of these early ruins have been excavated in the immediate vicinity of the Mesa Verde, however, so the type is well-known.

During the Classic Period not all of the Pueblo Indians lived in the caves. Some remained on the mesas, living in

open pueblos. Of these pueblos, which are now covered with mounds of earth, six have been excavated in the park.

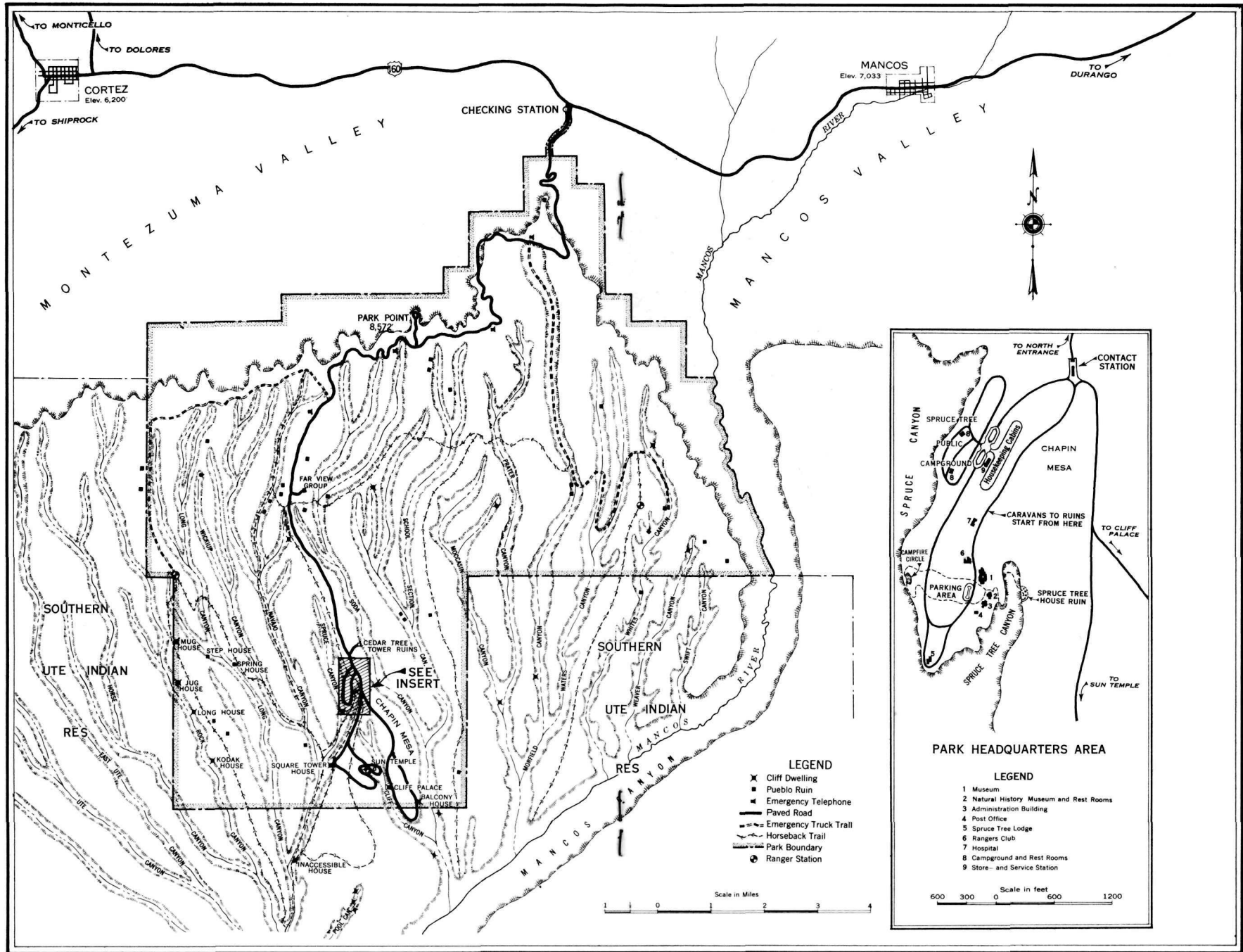
Far View House is a typical example of a surface ruin of the Classic Pueblo Period. It stands on the east side of the park entrance highway, 5 miles north of the museum, and is open to all visitors. At the time of its occupation Far View House was at least 3 stories high and contained about 50 rooms and 5 kivas. In structural details it was almost identical with the cliff dwellings but was on a mesa top instead of in a cave.

The rectangular rooms, which formerly rose in terraces, were living rooms. In them were found fire pits, grinding stones, pottery, and tools that were used by the women in their daily household routine. The round rooms were the kivas, which served as secret ceremonial and club rooms used principally by the men. All of the living rooms and kivas were covered with flat roofs.

**CLIFF DWELLINGS.**—During the Classic Pueblo Period most of the Pueblo Indians of the Mesa Verde left the mesa tops and built their homes in the great caves that abounded in the many canyons. It is possible this was done for security from harassment by some other tribe of Indians.

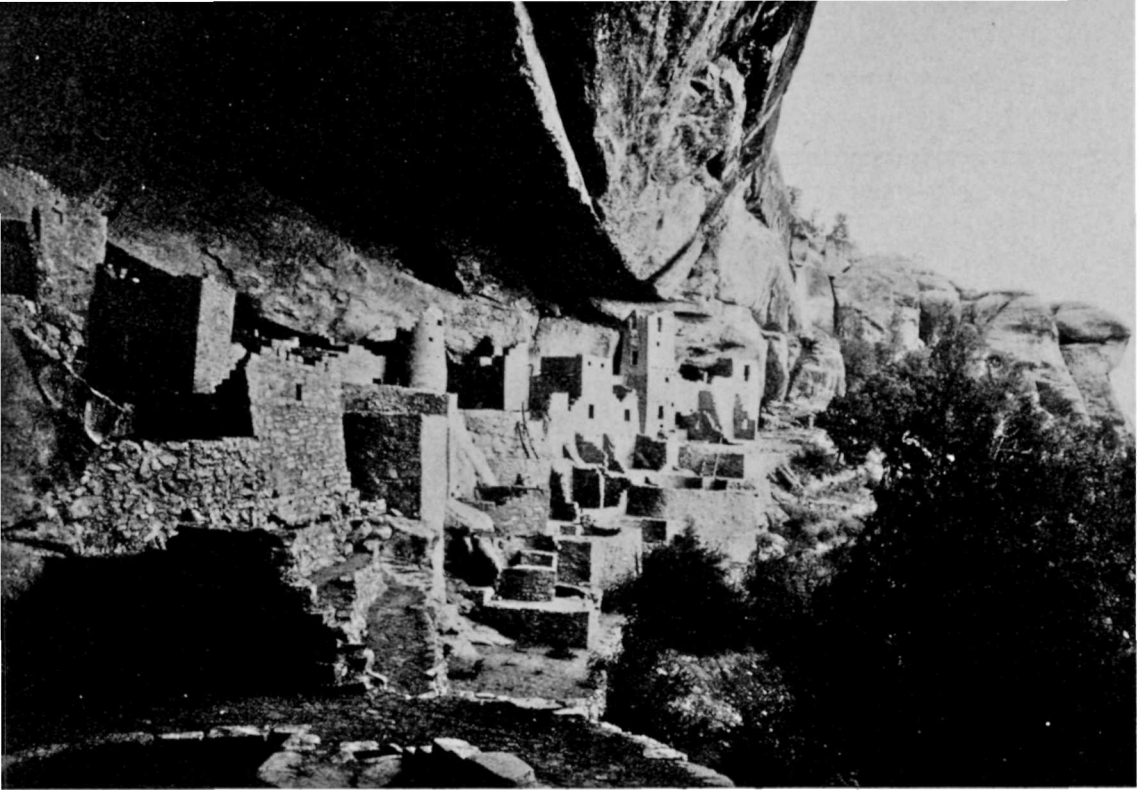
The cliff dwellings were pueblos built in caves; structurally, they were no different from the mesa-top pueblos. The Indians who lived in them are commonly called Cliff Dwellers.

The exact number of cliff dwellings in the Mesa Verde is unknown. The 20 large canyons and the numerous small side canyons contain hundreds of caves and in each is a ruin. Of the



MAP OF MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK





SOUTH HALF OF CLIFF PALACE, THE LARGEST KNOWN CLIFF DWELLING

major cliff dwellings there are possibly 300 or 400, and there are as many more small isolated structures that probably never served as permanent habitations.

Cliff Palace, the largest and most famous, was the first major cliff dwelling discovered in the Mesa Verde. It was first seen in December 1888 by two cowboys, Richard Wetherill and Charles Mason, and was named by them. This large village, built under the protecting roof of a tremendous cave on the east wall of Cliff Canyon, contains over 200 living rooms, and may have sheltered as many as 400 people. In addition to the living rooms, there are 23 kivas and many small storage rooms. Cliff Palace is notable for its vast size and for the amazing amount of masonry it contains. The

tallest tower is 4 stories high, but from the floor of the cave to the highest rooms there are at least 8 floor levels. The great amount of masonry and its excellence, even after seven centuries, attest to the skill and industry of the builders.

Spruce Tree House is one of the largest of the cliff dwellings and is notable for its excellent state of preservation. A great many of the high walls still touch the top of the cave and many of the original roofs are still intact. Spruce Tree House contains 114 living rooms and 8 kivas.

Other famous cliff dwellings that are accessible to park visitors are Balcony House, best known for its spectacular location and its ingenious defensive walls; Square Tower House, with its

4-story tower and well preserved kiva roofs; and Little Long House, an unexcavated ruin. In addition to these 5 cliff dwellings visited on the regular ruins trips, a score are seen from the canyon rims. In the more distant canyons are hundreds that can be reached only by hiking or on horseback.

### **GEOLOGY, FAUNA, AND FLORA**

Mesa Verde is important geologically as the type locality of the Mesa-verde formation, which consists of Cliff House sandstone, Menefee shale, and Point Lookout sandstone, in descending order. It is underlain to a depth of 2,200 feet by the shale, sandstone, and limestone of the Mancos formation. All have been extensively exposed by the forces of erosion.

The fauna and flora of Mesa Verde represent a mingling of types from the low arid country to the south with types from the high mountains to the north. Rocky Mountain mule deer are plenti-

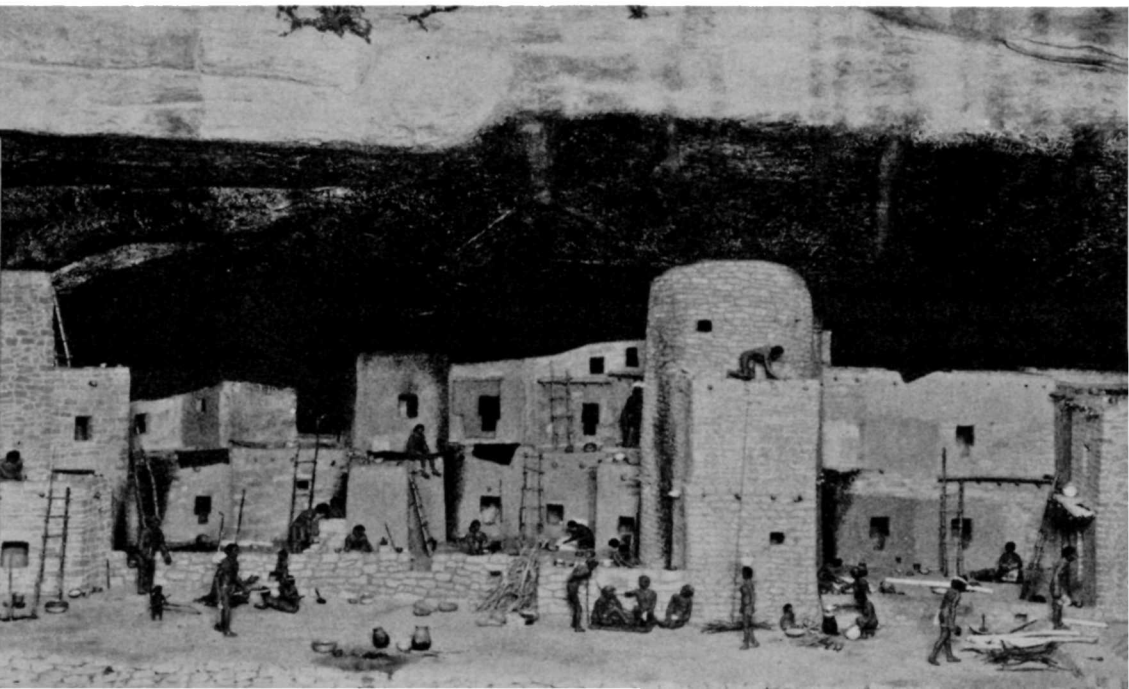
ful, and the larger predators, such as mountain lions, foxes, coyotes, and bobcats are common. Prairie dogs, rabbits, squirrels, porcupines, and chipmunks are abundant. More than 100 species of birds have been noted, and several interesting forms of reptiles are present.

The dense forest of the mesas is composed almost entirely of piñon pine and Utah juniper. In certain areas are small stands of Douglas fir and ponderosa pine, and along the high north rim are scrub oaks and such flowering shrubs as service berry, fendlera, antelope brush, and mountain mahogany. Some of the most spectacular flowers are the pentstemon, lupine, sweet pea, paint brush, mariposa lily, and sulphur flower.

### **HOW TO REACH THE PARK**

**BY AUTOMOBILE.**—Roads approaching Mesa Verde National Park from all directions offer motorists a great diversity of spectacular western scenery. Those from the north and east cross not only

LIFE IN A CLIFF DWELLING 700 YEARS AGO AS SHOWN IN SPRUCE TREE HOUSE DIORAMA IN THE PARK MUSEUM



the Continental Divide but a number of the magnificent mountain ranges of western Colorado. Those from the west and northwest pass through the colorful mesa country of southeastern Utah, while roads from the south and west cross the picturesque, semidesert areas of the Navajo, Ute, and Pueblo Indian Reservations of northern New Mexico. These primary roads are improved highways with oil surfacing.

The park entrance is located on United States Highway No. 160, midway between the towns of Mancos and Cortez, Colo.

**BY RAILROAD.**—Mesa Verde National Park is approached by rail both from the north and from the south: from the north via the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad main transcontinental line through Grand Junction and branch lines through Montrose or Durango; from the south via the main transcontinental line of the Santa Fe Railroad through Gallup, N. Mex.

### **MOTOR TRANSPORTATION**

The Rio Grande Motor Way, Inc., Denver, Colo., operates daily motor service from Denver, Pueblo, Salida, and Alamosa, Colo., to Durango; also daily motor service from Grand Junction, Montrose, Ouray, and Silverton, to Durango, Colo., with which connecting service is provided to Mesa Verde National Park, from June 1 to October 15. Schedules are so coordinated as to connect at Denver, Pueblo, Alamosa, Salida, Grand Junction, and Montrose, with transcontinental motor bus schedules, also with transcontinental train service of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. It is possible to se-

cure diverse routings, enabling passengers to utilize circle trip plan as a side trip on transcontinental journeys. Arrangements are in effect under which all-expense tours can be purchased from representatives of the Rio Grande Motor Way and the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. Detailed information as to schedules and rates can be secured from any railroad ticket agent or bus agent.

Entrance to Mesa Verde from Gallup, N. Mex., via the Navajo and Southern Ute Indian Reservations, is afforded, when there are passengers, by Hunter Clarkson, Inc., with headquarters at El Navajo Hotel. This company operates 2-day round trip light sedan service, leaving El Navajo Hotel at 8 a. m., and returning to the hotel at 6 p. m. the second day. This service permits the visiting of ruins in the park in accordance with established schedules. The round-trip fare for one person (360 miles) is \$25. A minimum of two passengers is required. Fare for children, 5 and under 12 years of age, is \$12.50. Meals and hotel accommodations en route or at the park are not included.

The Cannon Ball Stage bus leaves Gallup each day at 1 p. m., arriving at Durango at 6 p. m. Returning it leaves Durango at 7:30 a. m., and arrives at Gallup at 12:45 p. m. The fare from Gallup to Durango is \$5.40 one way and \$9.75 for the round trip. The round-trip to the park from Durango may be made via the Rio Grande Motor Way, Inc. Connection is made at Gallup with the transcontinental busses of the Pacific Greyhound Lines and the Santa Fe Trails System.

## ADMINISTRATION

The Mesa Verde National Park is under the exclusive control of the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior, which is authorized to make rules and regulations and to establish such service as it may deem necessary for the care and management of the park and the preservation from injury or spoliation of the ruins and other remains of prehistoric man within the limits of the reservation.

The park is in immediate charge of a superintendent, who is assisted in the protection and interpretation of its natural and prehistoric features by a well-trained staff. All communications should be addressed to the superintendent, Mesa Verde National Park, Colo.

The park season extends from May 15 to October 15, when complete lodging, food accommodations, and automobile stage service are available.

Telegrams sent prepaid to Mancos, Colo., will be phoned to addressee at park office. The post-office address for parties within the park is Mesa Verde National Park, Colo.

## EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

Educational service, carefully planned to provide each visitor with an opportunity to interpret and appreciate the features of the Mesa Verde, is provided, without charge, by the Government. This service is directed by the park naturalist, who is assisted by a group of ranger naturalists.

**GUIDED TRIPS TO THE RUINS.**—Conducted during the season from the park museum. Ranger naturalists, well trained in social and biological sciences, help the visitor understand the natural

and archeological features of the park. No one will be allowed to enter any cliff dwelling, except Spruce Tree House, unless accompanied by a ranger naturalist.

**CAMPFIRE TALKS.**—Each evening at 8 informal talks are given at the campfire circle near park headquarters. The superintendent, the park naturalist, and members of the educational staff give talks on the archeology of the region. After the talks, six of the best singers and dancers among the Navajo Indians employed in the park give some of their songs and dances.

**PARK MUSEUMS AND LIBRARY.**—The exhibits of the museums, consisting of dioramas and graphic displays, show the life, habits, and arts of the prehistoric Indians and their modern descendants, also the natural history of the Mesa Verde region. In the archeological museum there is an excellent library containing an extensive collection of books on the archeology, ethnology, and natural history of Mesa Verde.

## ACCOMMODATIONS AND EXPENSES

Spruce Tree Lodge, operated by the Mesa Verde Co., is near the starting point for all guided trips to the ruins. Sleeping accommodations are in cabins clustered around the main lobby and dining room building. There are 50 rooms with bath, 20 without bath, and 40 tents. The lodge is open during the official park season, May 15 to October 15. Cabin service is available during the entire year, but during the "off season" meals are taken at the Government dining room at the following rates: breakfast, 50 cents; luncheon, 65 cents; dinner, 75 cents.

Overnight rates for hotel service range from \$1.25 to \$4 single and from \$2 to \$5 double. "Campers' Tents," complete except for bedding and linen, rent for \$1 single or \$1.50 double. Housekeeping cabins, deluxe with bath \$4 double; deluxe without bath, \$3.50 double. Rates for children: under 3, no charge; 3 to 8, half rate.

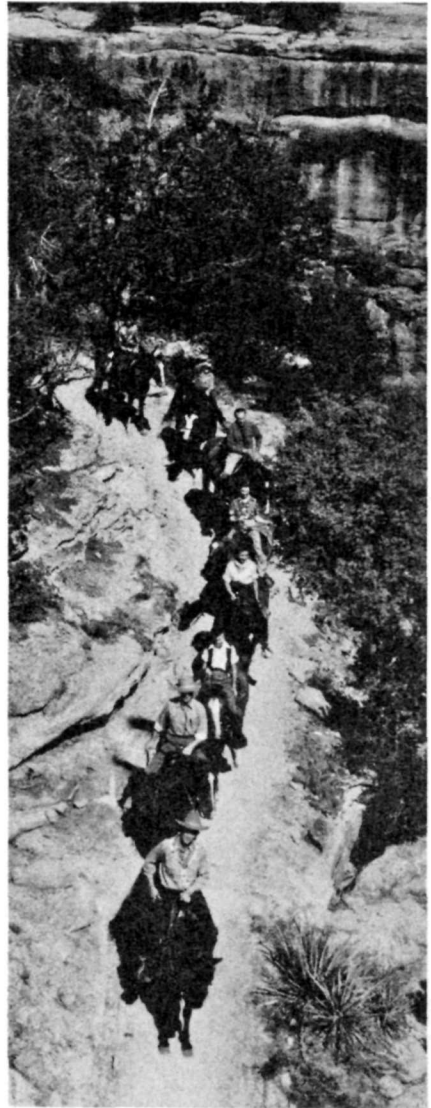
The coffee shop at the lodge serves club breakfasts at 25 cents to 75 cents; lunch, 65 cents to 90 cents; dinner, 75 cents to \$1.25; also a la carte. Sandwiches and light meals are served at the lunch counter and soda fountain.

Navajo rug weaving and silversmithing are demonstrated at the lodge entrance by native craftsmen, and a complete display of Southwest arts and crafts is maintained in the gift shop off the lobby. A well-stocked store and filling station are next to the lodge.

For visitors lacking transportation, the lodge provides automobile service to the various ruins for \$1 for 1 person, round trip, and a special 21-mile sunset trip to the north rim of the park for \$1.50 a person.

#### **HORSEBACK AND HIKING TRIPS.—**

Horseback and hiking trips along the rim rocks and into the canyons lead to spectacular ruins not seen from any of the roads. Such great ruins as Spring House, Long House, Kodak House, Jug House, Mug House, and Step House, as well as all of the ruins in the more remote canyons, can be reached by trail only. Each turn of the trail reveals entrancing vistas of rugged canyons, sheer cliffs, great caves, hidden ruins, distant mountains, tree-covered mesas, and open glades.



HORSEBACK PARTY IN SPRUCE TREE CANYON

#### **PACK AND SADDLE ACCOMMODATIONS.—**

Saddle horses, especially trained for mountain work, may be rented from the Mesa Verde Pack & Saddle Co. at \$1 per hour. For short 1-day trips for 3 persons or more the cost is \$3.50 each;

2 persons \$4.50 each; 1 person \$6. Longer 1-day trips for experienced riders are available at \$2 a person more than the rate for the shorter 1-day trips. All prices include guide service, slicker, canteen, and lunch bag. Arrangements should be made the evening before the trip is taken.

**PACK TRIPS.** — Nonscheduled pack trips of 3 days or more to remote sections of the park may be arranged (2 days' notice required) at prices ranging from \$9 a day each for parties of 5 or more to \$15 a day for 1 person. This includes a guide-cook and furnishes each person with saddle horse, pack horse, bed, tent, canteen, slicker, and subsistence for the trip.

This booklet is issued once a year and THE RATES MENTIONED HEREIN MAY HAVE CHANGED SLIGHTLY SINCE ISSUANCE, but the latest rates approved by the Secretary of the Interior are on file with the park superintendent.

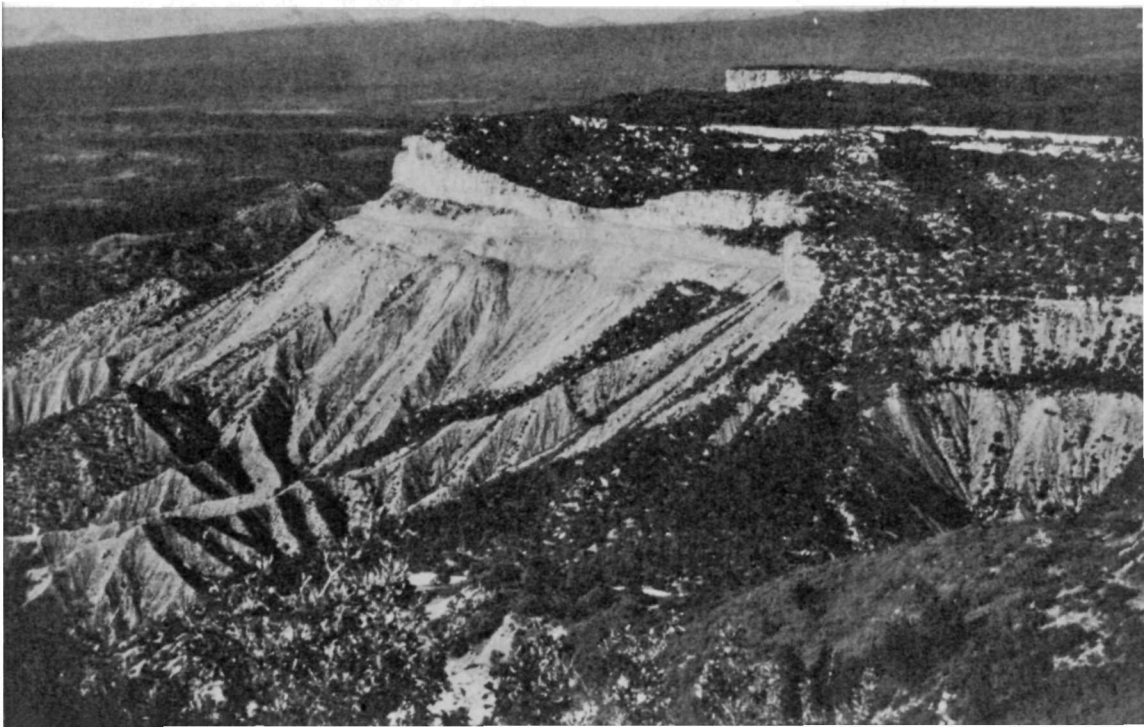
### FREE PUBLIC CAMPGROUNDS

The public campgrounds are located on the rim of Spruce Tree Canyon only a few hundred feet from Spruce Tree Lodge and park headquarters. Individual party campsites have been cleared, and a protecting screen of shrubbery contributes to their privacy. Each site is provided with a fireplace, a table with seats, and a level place for a tent. Good water has been piped to convenient places, and cut wood is provided without charge. Toilet facilities, showers, and laundry tubs are also provided. A ranger is on duty in the campgrounds to furnish information and help to campers.

LEAVE YOUR CAMPSITE CLEAN WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED WITH IT. DO NOT DRIVE CARS ON, OR WALK OVER, THE SHRUBBERY.

Campers' supplies—groceries, meats, etc.—and gas and oil are obtainable at the Spruce Tree Lodge store.

### THE NORTH RIM OF THE MESA VERDE



# RULES AND REGULATIONS

[Briefed]

*Let no one say, and say it to your shame,  
That all was beauty here until you came.*

**AUTOMOBILES.**—Secure automobile permit at park entrance; fee \$1 per car. Speed limit 35 miles per hour on entrance highway, 20 miles per hour in headquarters area and on ruin roads. Drive carefully; free-wheeling prohibited.

**FIRES.**—Confine fires to designated places. *Extinguish completely* before leaving camp, even for temporary absences. Do not guess your fire is out—**KNOW IT.**

**FIREWOOD.**—Use only the wood stacked and marked “firewood” near your campsite. In any event do not use ax on any standing tree or strip bark from junipers.

**GROUNDS.**—Burn all combustible rubbish before leaving your camp. Do not throw papers, cans, or other refuse on the ground or over the canyon rim; use the incinerators.

**HIKING.**—Do not venture away from the headquarters area unless accom-

panied by a guide or after first having secured permission from a duly authorized park officer. This precaution is necessary because of danger of getting lost and need of protecting ruins.

**NOISE.**—Be quiet in camp after others have gone to bed.

**HUNTING.**—Hunting is prohibited, since the park is a sanctuary for all wildlife.

**RUINS AND STRUCTURES.**—Do not mark, disturb, or injure in any way the ruins or any of the buildings, signs, or other properties within the park.

**TREES AND ANIMALS.**—Do not carve initials upon or pull the bark from any logs or trees. Do not harm or frighten any of the wild animals or birds within the park. We wish to protect them for your enjoyment.

**PARK RANGERS.**—The rangers are here to help and advise you as well as to enforce regulations. When in doubt, ask a ranger.

A complete copy of the rules and regulations governing the park may be seen at the office of the superintendent.

**OBAY ALL SIGNS  
THEY ARE FOR YOUR GUIDANCE  
AND PROTECTION**