

Mesa Verde

NATIONAL PARK

Colorado

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Historic Events

- 1st century¹ A. D.** Earliest occupation of Mesa Verde by farming Indians was about the beginning of Christian era.
- 5th to 8th centuries A. D.** Early agriculturists developed art of pottery making. Semisubterranean 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 Macomb and geological party.
- 1874 Discovery of Mancos Canyon ruins by U. S. Geological Survey party.
- 1891 Baron Nordenskiold led first organized archeological expedition to area.
- 1906 Mesa Verde National Park established June 29.
- 1908 to date. Excavation of ruins by noted archeologists.

¹ Approximate dating.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Oscar L. Chapman, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, Newton B. Drury, *Director*

Mesa Verde

NATIONAL PARK



SEASON MAY 15 TO OCTOBER 15

MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK, consisting of more than 51,000 acres of Federally owned land in the spectacular mesa-canyon country of southwestern Colorado, was established by an act of Congress in 1906. This national park was set aside in order to conserve and protect for all time the many hundreds of ruins of ancient villages that prehistoric Indians built on the mesa tops and in the caves of the score of rugged canyons.

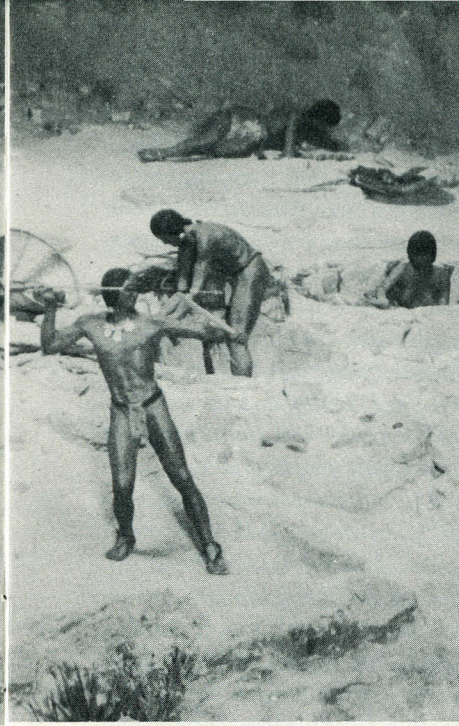
For well over 1,000 years agricultural Indians lived in the Mesa Verde and surrounding regions, and from the thousands of ruins now found in the area archeologists have compiled one of the most significant chapters in the story of prehistoric America. In addition to Mesa Verde National Park, a number of national monuments have been established in the Southwest to preserve outstanding ruins that remain as evidence of the ancient cultures: Aztec Ruins, 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 Colorado and Utah.

Preservation of the Ruins

Today there are hundreds of ruins in the Mesa Verde, only a few of which have been excavated. Abandoned for many centuries, they have been weakened by natural forces and some were badly damaged by modern man before the area was made a national park. Maximum protection must be given to the ruins in order to conserve them for the enjoyment of future generations, and visitors are asked to cooperate with the National Park Service by observing its rules.

One rule is rigidly enforced: VISITORS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ENTER ANY CLIFF DWELLING UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY A RANGER. Roads and ruins are patrolled and severe penalties will be imposed on anyone violating this regulation. This rule does not apply to ruins on the mesa top, and visitors who have registered at the park entrance checking station or at the museum may visit these ruins any time during daylight hours.



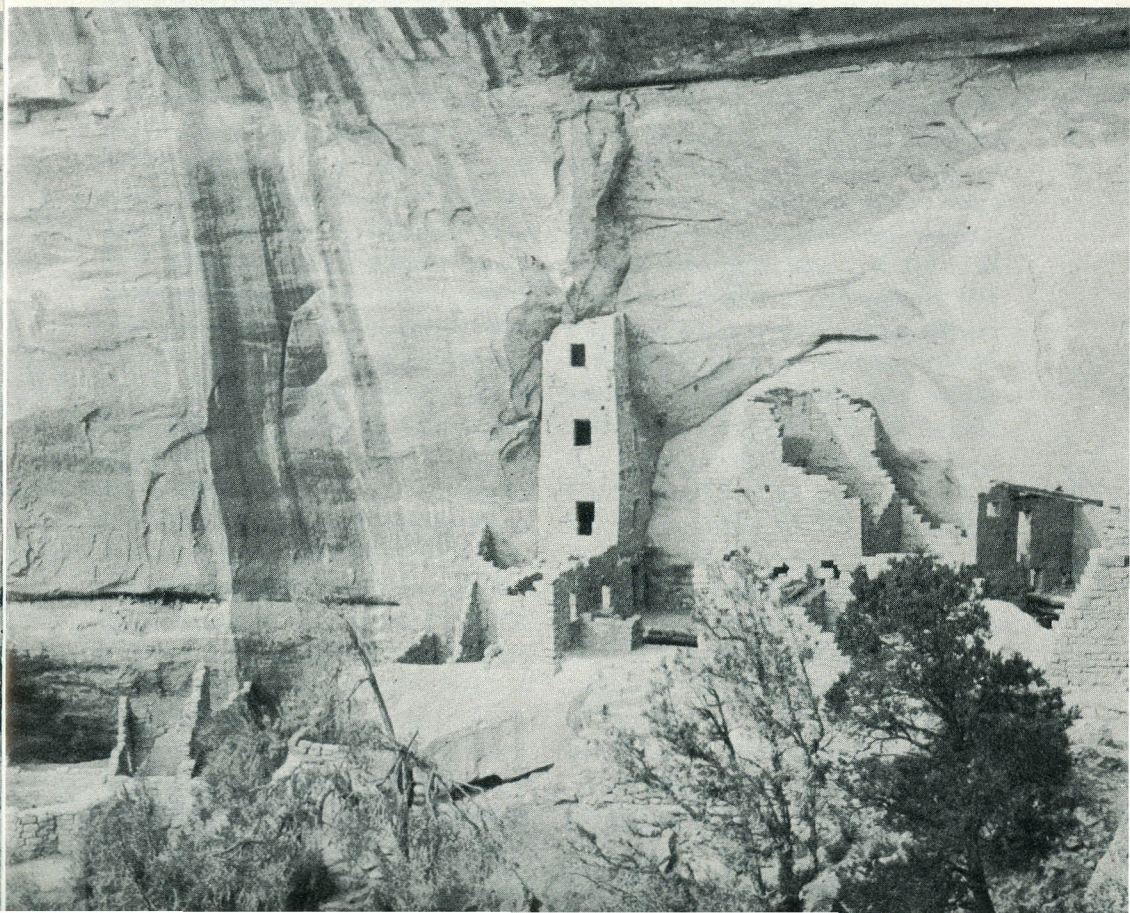
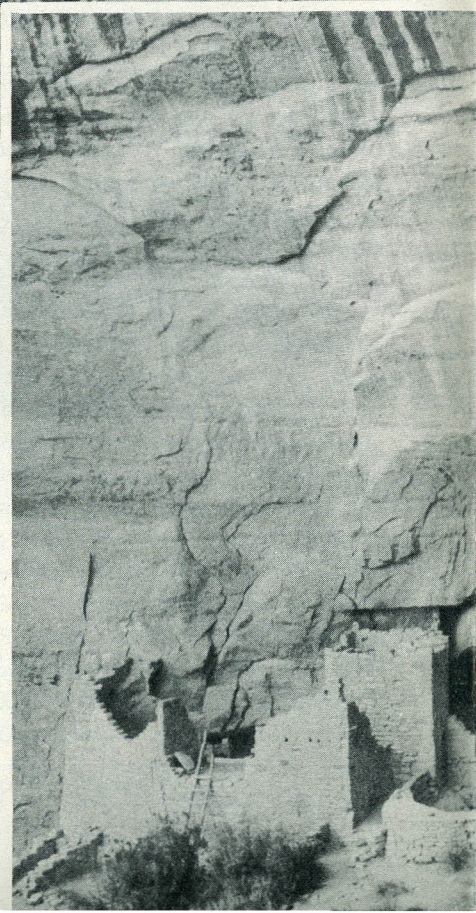
Basket Maker Period.—1 to 400 A. D.—The first farming Indians of the Mesa Verde are called Basket Makers, because the weaving of excellent baskets was their outstanding craft. At this early date three important things were unknown to the people: pottery, houses, and the bow and arrow. Since there was no pottery, baskets served for all household purposes where containers were needed. Having no houses, the people lived in shallow caves that were common in this area. In the floors of the caves they built small storage cysts for the corn and squash they raised in small mesa-top fields. Instead of the bow and arrow,

SQUARE TOWER HOUSE. AN ANCIENT APARTMENT HOUSE OF 60 ROOMS AND 8 KIVAS.

A PART OF THE BASKET MAKER DIORAMA IN THE PARK MUSEUM. SUCH EXHIBITS SHOW GRAPHICALLY THE LIFE OF THE ANCIENT INDIANS.

Prehistoric Inhabitants of the Mesa Verde

The Mesa Verde was inhabited for approximately 1,200 years by agricultural Indians who began to drift into the area shortly after the beginning of the Christian Era. At first their culture was simple, but there was constant progress and by the end of the thirteenth century they had reached a high cultural level. This progress was made in great steps, or stages, usually referred to as "periods." Archeologists have identified four of these periods in the Mesa Verde.



the atlatl, a primitive throwing stick, was used for hunting and defense.

Once the farming culture was well established the Basket Makers showed marked ability for development and a willingness to borrow ideas from other people with whom they came in contact. There was steady progress and by the fifth century significant changes were taking place.

Modified Basket Maker Period.—400 to 700 A. D.—About 400 A. D., important new developments came. The Indians learned to make pottery and build houses and, somewhat later, began to use the bow and arrow. Although the people were still the same, the culture was changing, and this is indicated by the name given to the second period, that is, Modified Basket Maker. The early pottery was a plain gray type that took the place of baskets for many usages such as cooking and water carrying. The houses were shallow pits with head-high roofs of poles and adobe. Each pit house probably served as the home for a single family. The bow and arrow, a superior weapon, gradually replaced the atlatl. Weaving was still an important craft, and farming was becoming more and more important, with beans, squash, and several colors of corn being grown.

The population seems to have increased 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 the architecture grew more elaborate. Rectangular rooms with vertical walls developed, and these were joined together to form large villages.

Developmental Pueblo Period.—700 to 1000 A. D.—From about 700 A. D. on, the people showed an increasing tendency to group their houses together to form compact villages. To

these a Spanish term, "pueblo," meaning village, has been applied. The name, Developmental Pueblo, simply indicates that during this period the groundwork was laid for the Great Pueblo Period that followed. As the term implies, it was a period of development and experimentation. Many types of house walls were tried: adobe, adobe and poles, stone slabs topped with adobe, adobe and stones, and finally true coursed masonry. The houses were joined together to form compact clusters around open courts and in these courts were pit houses that finally developed into ceremonial rooms, now called kivas.

As the result of much experimentation, pottery improved greatly during this period and certain definite types became associated with each area. Turkey feather blankets became common and the weaving of cotton cloth began. An odd development was a new cradle which had a pronounced effect on the appearance of the people. During the Basket Maker periods a soft woven cradle had been used and the babies' heads developed normally. About 700 A. D., the people adopted a cradle made of wood and as a result the heads of most of them were deformed, being noticeably flattened on the back.

The Developmental Pueblo Period was a time of peace, expansion, and progress. Innumerable farming villages dotted the Four Corners area, the population increased, and arts and crafts showed constant improvement.

Great or Classic Pueblo Period.—1000 to 1300 A. D.—As the name implies, this period marked the climax of the Pueblo culture in the Mesa Verde region, and arts and crafts reached the peak of their development. Houses were built of fine horizontal masonry of well-shaped stones laid in adobe mortar.

Most of the walls were smoothly plastered, and designs painted in red, yellow, black, and white added a touch of color to the homes. Villages ranged in size from a few rooms and a single kiva to great terraced structures with as many as 200 rooms and more than a score of kivas.

The pottery was well-shaped, carefully fired, and elaborately decorated with geometrical and animal figures, the outstanding Mesa Verde ware having black designs on a light gray background. The finely woven cotton cloth was often decorated with designs woven in color, and for personal adornment there was a profusion of jewelry made of turquoise and other brightly colored stones.

A rigid social structure developed and a highly ritualistic religion evolved. The importance of this religion in the lives of the people is evidenced by the large number of ceremonial rooms and by the fact that separate buildings, designed solely for ceremonial use, were sometimes constructed.

For a time the culture flourished, establishing a peak of spectacular archeological significance. It was the classic period of the prehistoric pueblo culture of the Mesa Verde, the period that produced such outstanding structures as Cliff Palace, Square Tower House, Spruce Tree House, Long House, and scores of other great ruins.

Although the pueblo culture reached its highest level during this period, there are certain evidences that adverse influences were affecting the people. During the early part of the period most of the Pueblo Indians of the Mesa Verde lived on the open mesa tops in widely scattered villages, both large and small. About the middle of the twelfth century there seems to have been a movement toward the caves, and within a short time pueb-

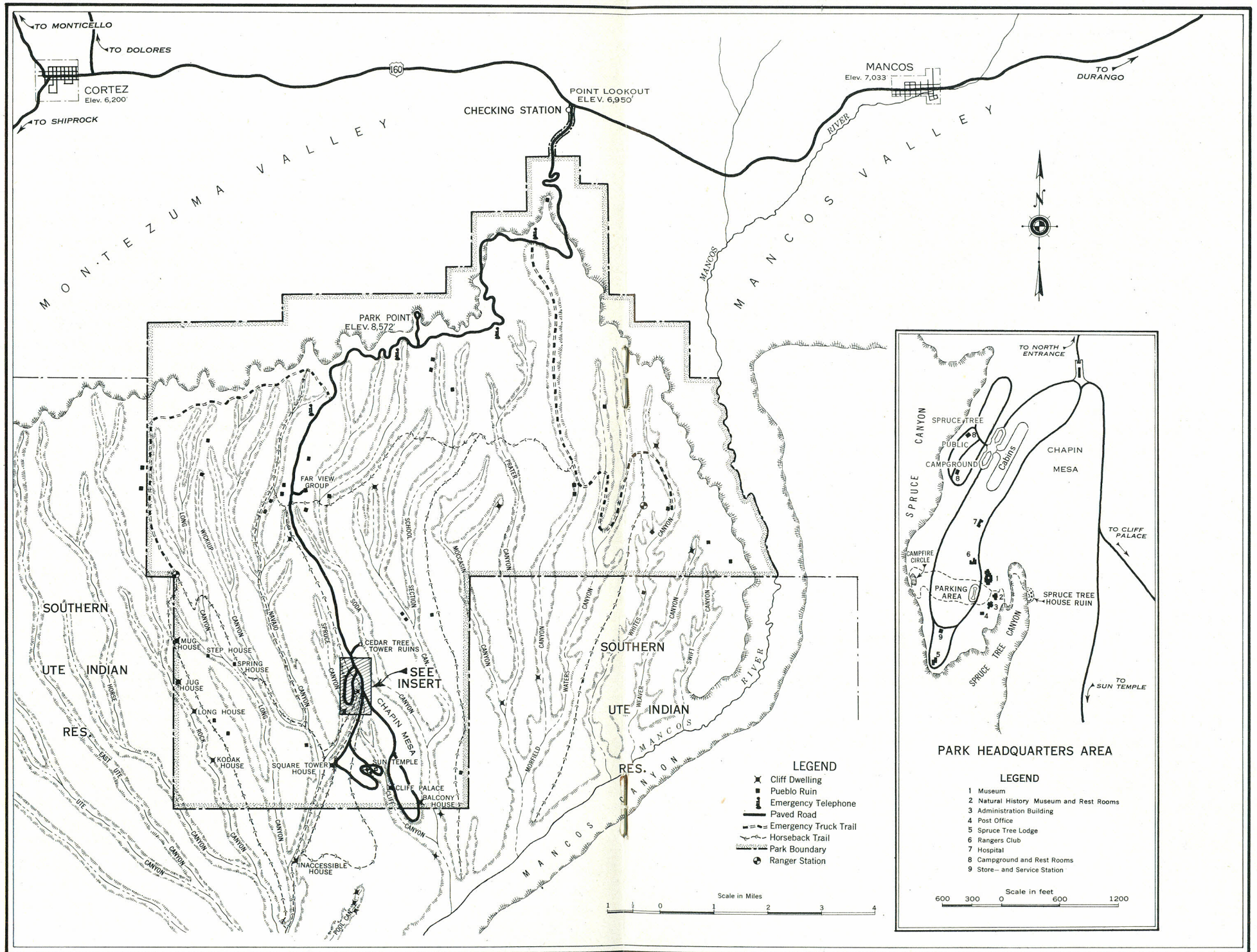
los were built in most of the caves of the Mesa Verde. There are numerous evidences that these cave pueblos, or cliff dwellings, were deliberately fortified and nomadic Indians may have begun to harass the peaceful Pueblo farmers. Conditions in the crowded caves were probably less sanitary than on the open mesa tops and it is possible that disease became more prevalent. Whatever the causes may have been, there are indications that during the latter part of the period the population had begun to decline.

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 Indians 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. Undoubtedly, 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: pit house, pueblo, and cliff dwelling. These ruins, taken in order, show not only the types of houses in which the people lived but also the amazing progress made by them during the time they lived in the Mesa Verde.



Pit Houses.—There are two examples of Modified Basket Maker pit houses. Pit House A, excavated in 1919, consists of a single room, while Pit House B, excavated in 1941, consists of a large room with a smaller antechamber. Pit House B is a typical Modified Basket Maker house. Although it once had a roof as high as a man's head, nothing remains but the underground part of the house. The pit, roughly circular, is 20 feet in diameter and 30 inches deep, with a fire pit in the center. Four holes in the floor indicate the positions of the four posts that once supported the roof of poles, bark, and adobe. South of this main room is a smaller antechamber. This was also formerly roofed over and was connected with the larger room by a covered passageway. The entrance was probably a small door in the south wall of the antechamber. The smoke hole in the roof of the main room no doubt served as an additional entrance.

Houses of this type were clustered in small groups, both on the mesa tops and in the caves, 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 Great 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. 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 early part of the Great

Pueblo Period most of the Indians lived on the mesa tops and some remained there even after a large portion of the people had moved into the caves. Ruins of these mesa-top pueblos are now covered by mounds of earth, but a few have been excavated in the park.

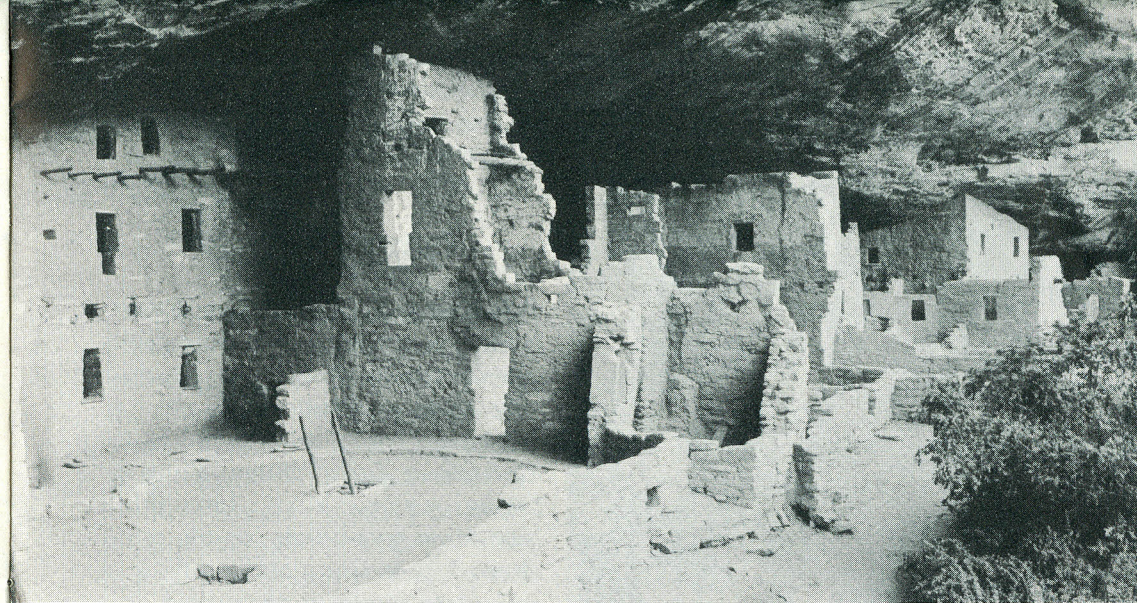
Far View House is a typical example of a surface, or mesa-top, ruin of the Great Pueblo Period. It stands on the east side of the park entrance highway, 5 miles north of the museum, and is open to all visitors. At the time of its occupation Far View House was at least 3 stories high and contained about 50 rooms and 5 kivas.

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

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 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. This



SPRUCE TREE HOUSE, THE BEST-PRESERVED LARGE CLIFF DWELLING IN THE PARK.

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 to be seen along the ruins roads are Square

Tower House, with its striking four-story tower; Oak Tree House; New Fire House; Fire Temple, an unusual ceremonial structure built in a cave; and Balcony House, best known for its spectacular defensive location.

Geology, Fauna, and Flora

Mesa Verde is important geologically as the type locality of the Mesaverde 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 plentiful, and the larger predators, such as



SEVEN CENTURIES AGO THESE TOWERS IN CLIFF PALACE WERE THE HOMES OF PEACEFUL FARMING INDIANS.

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 mesa 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 serviceberry, fendlera, antelope-brush,

and mountain-mahogany. Some of the most spectacular flowers are the pentstemon, lupine, sweetpea, paint-brush, mariposa lily, and sulphur flower.

Interpretive Service

In order to give visitors an understanding of the archeology of the park and a glimpse into the lives of its prehistoric inhabitants an extensive program of talks and guided trips is offered by the Government, free of charge, during the summer months. Visitors are urged to take advantage of these services, as the story of the ancient people is difficult to understand without an explanation.

Guided Trips.—During the summer season well-trained ranger naturalists conduct visitors to some of the outstanding ruins. Some of these trips start at the museum, with visitors going in their own cars. In other cases, visitors drive to the ruins and meet the rangers there. A schedule of the trips is given to visitors when they register at the park entrance and complete information is available at the museum.

Campfire Talks.—Each evening during the summer informal talks are given around a campfire by members of the naturalist staff. The talks deal with the prehistoric and modern Indians of the Southwest and the archeology of the region and are a featured part of the interpretive program. Navajo Indians who work in the park sometimes give parts of their tribal dances at the campfire ceremony. The campfire circle is within walking distance of the museum, the lodge, and the public campgrounds.

Museum and Library.—The archeological museum is the key to a real understanding of the prehistoric people of the Mesa Verde and visitors should see it

before going to the ruins. In addition to its dioramas and other exhibits, it contains an extensive library which is open to visitors during museum hours, 8 a. m. to 5 p. m.

Administration

Mesa Verde National Park is one of the areas 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. That Bureau 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.

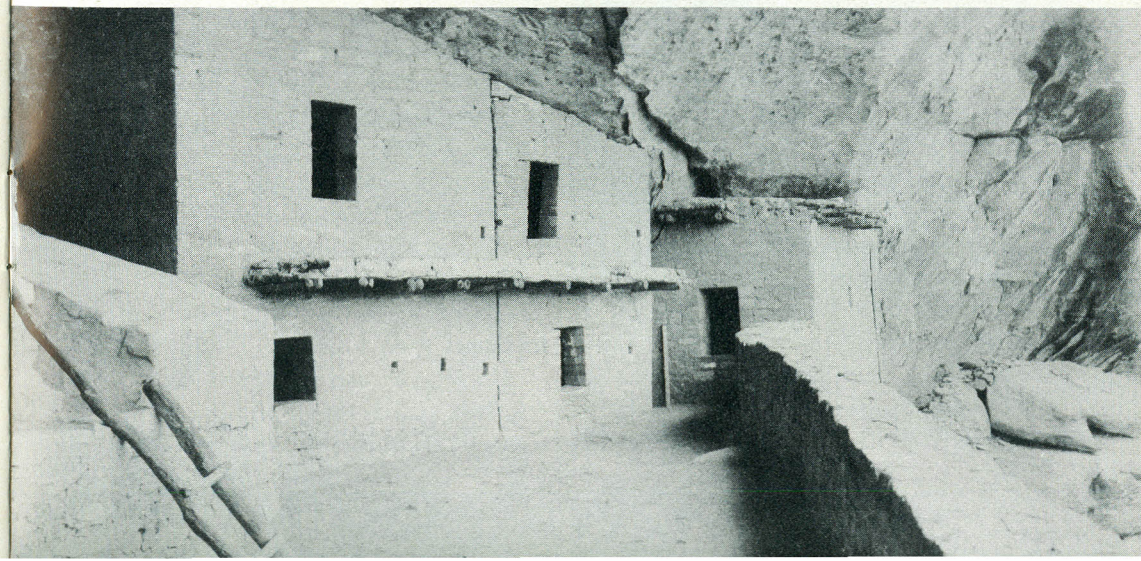
The park season extends from May 15 to October 15, when complete lodging, food accommodations, and automobile stage service are available.

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

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 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.

BALCONY HOUSE, WITH ITS WELL-PRESERVED BALCONY, IS NOTABLE FOR ITS DEFENSIVE LOCATION.



The park entrance is located at Point Lookout, Colo., on United States Highway No. 160, midway between the towns of Mancos and Cortez, Colo. From the park entrance it is 20 miles to park headquarters where the museum, lodge, and all facilities are located.

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 May 15 to October 15. Schedules are so coordinated as to connect at Denver, Pueblo, Alamosa, Salida, Grand Junction, and Montrose with transcontinental motorbus schedules, also with transcontinental train service of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. It is possible to secure 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 may be purchased from representatives of the Rio Grande Motor Way and the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. Detailed information as to schedules and rates may be secured

from any railroad or bus ticket agent.

The Cannon Ball Stage makes two trips daily in each direction between Durango, Colo., and Gallup, N. Mex. At Gallup connections are made with the Santa Fe Railroad and main transcontinental bus lines. Travelers using this stage can stop off at Point Lookout, Colo., which is located at the entrance to Mesa Verde National Park, and catch the daily mail stage for the 20-mile run to park headquarters.

Accommodations

Spruce Tree Lodge, operated by the Mesa Verde Co., is open during the official park season, May 15 to October 15. The lodge, which is located near the museum, provides sleeping accommodations ranging from tents to housekeeping and de luxe cabins.

The coffee shop at the lodge serves breakfast, luncheon, and dinner at scheduled hours, but the lunch counter and fountain serve sandwiches and soft drinks throughout the day.

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 a gift shop off the lobby. A well-stocked store and filling station are near the lodge.

For visitors lacking transportation the lodge provides automobile service to the various ruins and a special 21-mile sunset trip to the north rim.

All communications concerning rates and reservations should be addressed to The Mesa Verde Company, Mesa Verde National Park, Colo.

Horseback and Hiking Trips.—Horseback and hiking trips along the rim rocks and into the canyons lead to

spectacular ruins that cannot be seen from any of the highways.

Most of the trails require strenuous exertion on the part of the hiker, and maps and information must be obtained before leaving the headquarters area. Hikers must obtain a PERMIT at the museum so the rangers will know where they are going and when they expect to return.

Pack and Saddle Accommodations.—Saddle horses, especially trained for mountain trails, may be rented by the hour or the day and the reasonable rates charged include the services of a wrangler-guide. Pack trips of 3 days or more into the remote sections may be arranged on 2 days' notice. This service includes a wrangler-cook and furnishes each person with a saddle horse, a pack horse, bed, tent, canteen, and raincoat.

Rates.—Rates for all accommodations within the park are approved by the Director of the National Park Service and the latest schedules are on file with the

park superintendent. Due to the fluctuating price levels, no rates are quoted in this booklet.

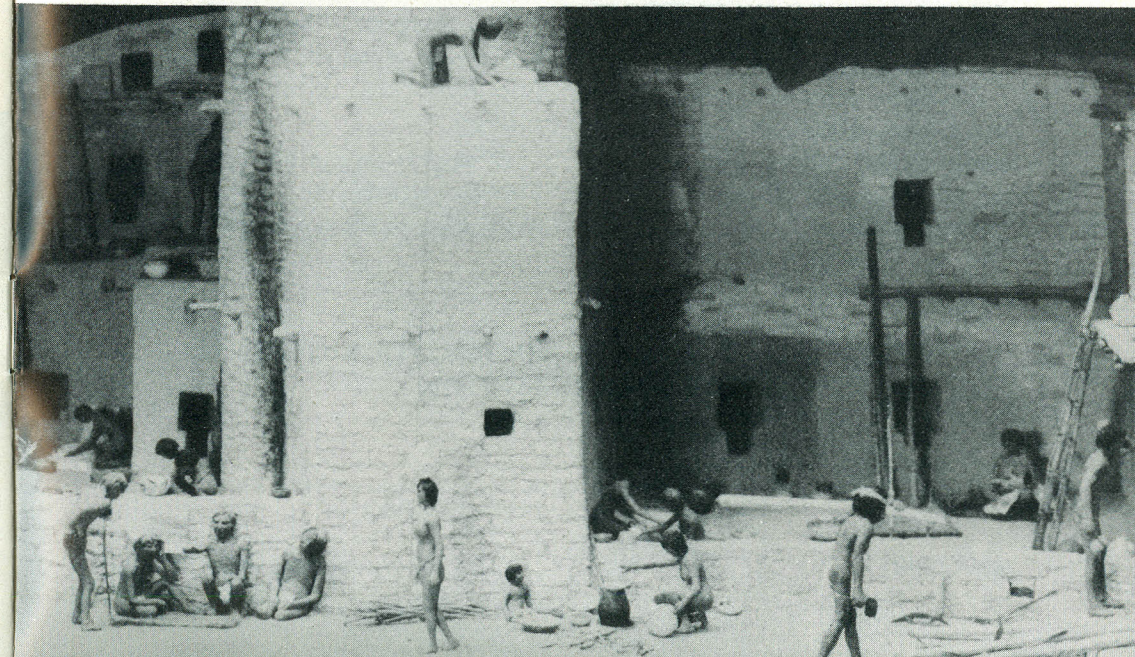
Free Public Campgrounds

The public campgrounds are located on the rim of Spruce Canyon, only a few hundred yards from the museum, lodge, store, post office, and park headquarters. Each campsite 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 firewood is provided without charge. Toilet facilities, showers, and laundry tubs are also provided.

Camping and picnicking are permitted only in these campgrounds. Leave your campsite clean. Do not drive cars on, or walk over the shrubbery.

Groceries, meats, gas, and oil are obtainable at the Mesa Verde Store which is located in the headquarters area.

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



Rules and Regulations

[Briefed]

Park Regulations are designed for the protection of natural and historic objects, as well as for the comfort and convenience of visitors. Please help the National Park Service in its duty of enforcing park regulations by abiding by the following rules:

Automobiles.—Consideration of other drivers is important. Drive carefully at all times and obey the park's automobile regulations. Speed limit is 35 miles an hour on entrance highway; 20 miles an hour in headquarters area and on ruins roads. Free-wheeling is prohibited. Secure automobile permit at park entrance: automobile or motorcycle fee, \$1; trailer, \$1 additional.

Fires.—Fires are permitted only in the fireplaces in the public campgrounds. *Extinguish your fire completely before leaving camp. 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 park headquarters without securing a *permit* at the Museum Information Desk. This precaution is absolutely necessary because of the danger of getting lost and the need for protecting the ruins.

Noise.—Be thoughtful of others by being quiet after they have retired.

Hunting.—The park is a sanctuary for all wildlife, so hunting is prohibited.

Ruins and Structures.—Do not mark, disturb, or injure in any way the ruins or any of the buildings, signs, or other properties in the park. *Do not enter any cliff dwelling unless accompanied by a ranger.*

Trees and Animals.—It is a violation of the law to carve initials upon or pull the bark from any logs or trees. The wild animals and birds in the park are protected for your enjoyment; do not harm or frighten them in any way.

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.

**OBEY ALL SIGNS. THEY ARE FOR YOUR GUIDANCE
AND PROTECTION**

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Washington 25, D. C. - Price \$3.75 per 100 copies