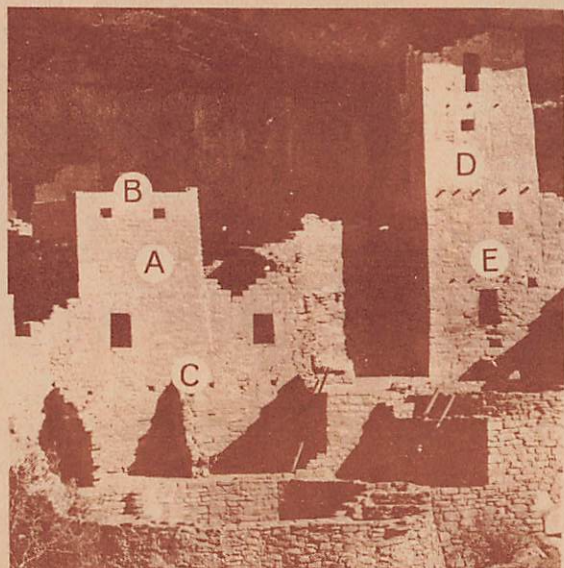


SAVE THIS ONE FOR US

# CLIFF PALACE GUIDE

5c



Cliff Palace - south end

Note the extremely fine masonry of the wall to the east of the kiva (A). This wall is original. The small openings at the top were for ventilation (B). The holes below the doorways (C) indicate the former presence of beams which formed the roofs of the lower rooms.

To the right of this section, we encounter one of the tallest buildings found in Cliff Palace (D). This structure did not stand out as a tower when the village was inhabited. At that time, rooms, now fallen away, rose up on either side, making this section more of an apartment complex. But eventually the Indians abandoned their homes and moved away. As centuries passed, walls crumbled and fell, leaving us with "towers" and only reminders of what used to be.

If you look into the doorway at the base of the four-storied building (E), you will get an idea of room size. Imagine living here. Probably rooms such as this were used only for sleeping; daily activities were carried on in the courtyards formed by the roofs of the kivas.

When you are ready, follow the trail leading from the south end of the ruin, in order to get back to the parking lot. The exit trail closely follows one of the original routes the Indians used to gain access to their village.

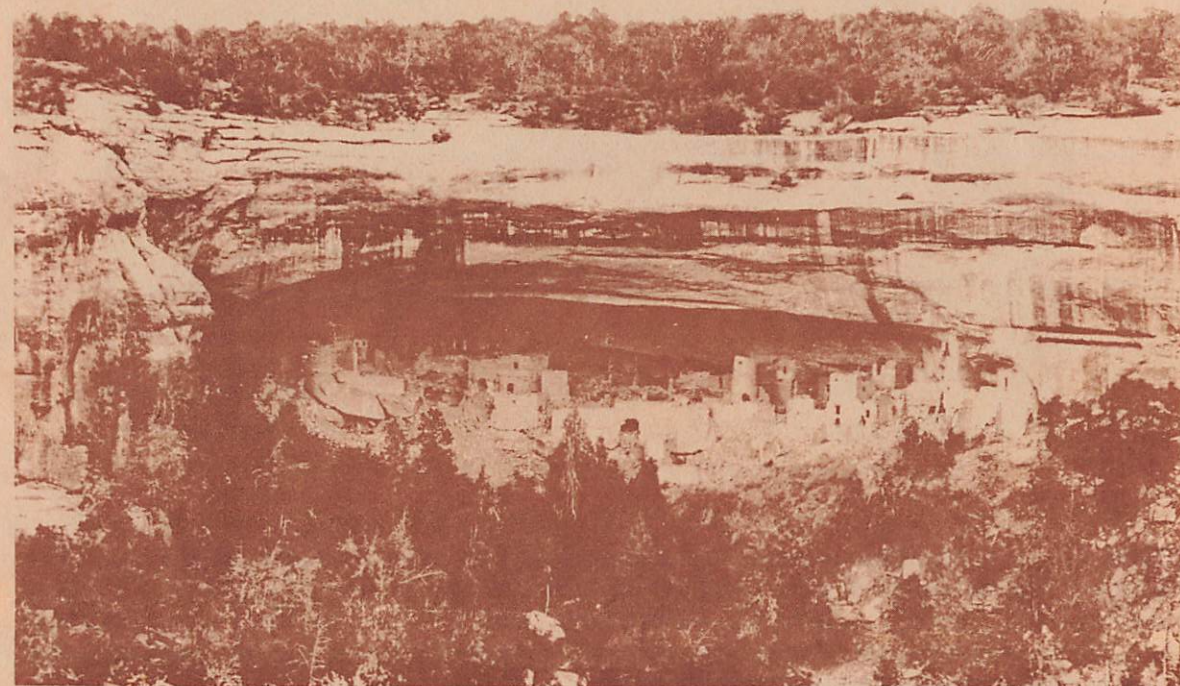
Why did the Pueblo Indians leave Cliff Palace? Warfare? Famine? Drought? All may have played their part. We do know that this was no isolated incident. During the last half of the thirteenth century, the whole Four Corners area was being abandoned by the farmers who had lived here for hundreds of years. We think that many of these people traveled southward into what is now New Mexico, and that some of the Pueblo Indians living there today may be the descendants of the Mesa Verde People.



Printed by Mesa Verde Museum Association  
as aid to National Park Service



National Parks Centennial 1872-1972



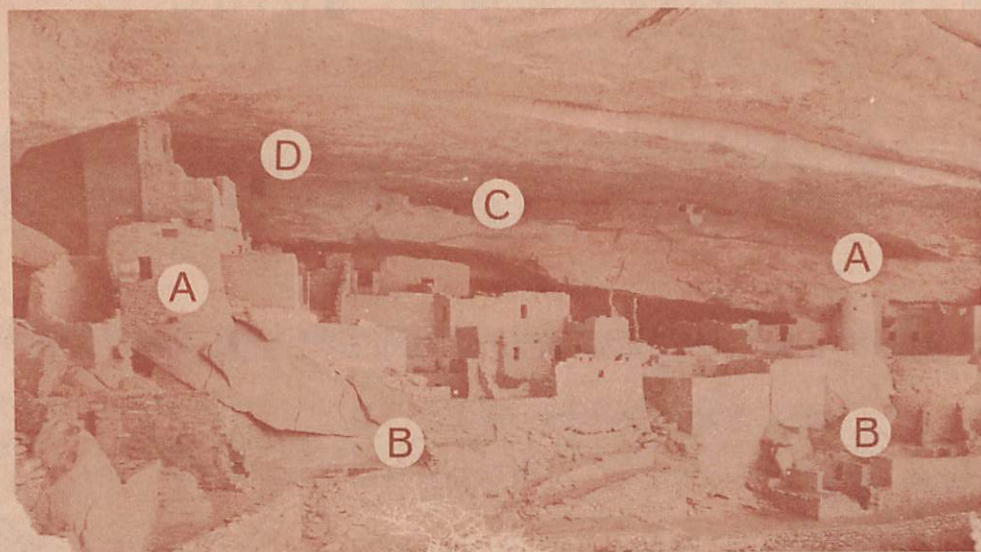
CLIFF PALACE: Discovered December 18, 1888

This picture was taken prior to excavation and stabilization

*Your trip through Cliff Palace will require some exertion as you must go down 110 steps to reach the dwelling. The exit trail climbs gradually, climaxed by a narrow passageway and 3 short ladders. If anyone in your party has heart condition or respiratory problem, they should not attempt the trip.*

**PLEASE WATCH YOUR CHILDREN.**

Cliff Palace is the largest American cliff dwelling. In the thirteenth century it was a village of 200 to 250 Pueblo Indians, farmers who cultivated their crops of corn, beans, and squash on the mesa top. The remains of this long-abandoned building were discovered by two cowboys from the nearby town of Mancos, Richard Wetherill and Charlie Mason, in December of 1888.



This Picture was taken prior to excavation and stabilization

STOP No. 1 From this point one gets one of the best overall views of Cliff Palace. The Indians' skill as stone masons is clearly evident. No special use is known for the few above-ground round buildings (A). When found on the mesa tops, these are considered to have been ceremonial. Perhaps they served a similar purpose in cliff dwellings. The underground round structures are kivas (B).

On the high ledge above Cliff Palace are the remains of 14 storage rooms, which average only 3½ to 4 ft. in height (C). Access was by means of a ladder to the doorway on the left (D). Imagine the difficulty of getting to items stored in the fourteenth room.

The closest good spring which could have supplied the Indians' domestic water needs is across the canyon, more or less below Sun Temple. The natural springs may not have been enough, for there is evidence that the Indians built small dams downslope from Cliff Palace in order to catch runoff water from rainstorms.

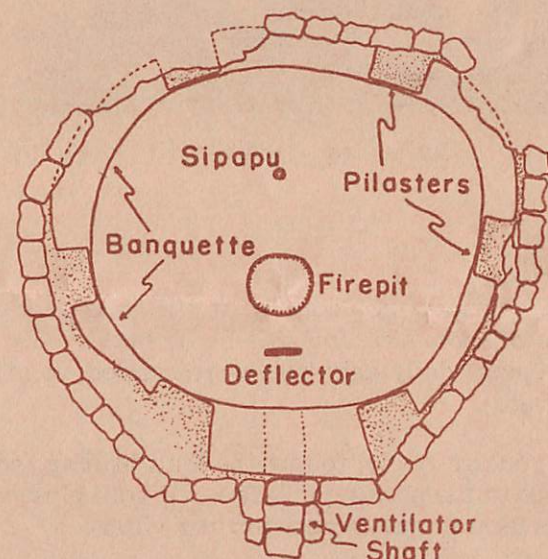
STOP No. 2 The path in this area rests on a large refuse pile which, perhaps because of its softness, was used as a burial area. Do not think that the Indians had no regard for their dead, however. They buried their dead with great care, having first wrapped the body in a yucca fiber mat, rabbit fur robe, or turkey feather blanket. The refuse consisted of fire ashes, broken stone and bone tools, old yucca sandals, broken pottery, etc. These people did not have the trouble we would have should we choose to toss our trash out our front door.



Original timbers; trash area

The row of wooden beams protruding from the base of the wall is original (A). The white dots on the beams are plugs, filling holes left after archeologists took core samples in order to study the tree-rings. It is by means of the tree-ring method that archeologists are able to date the ruins. If you would like additional information on tree-ring dating, you may want to see the tree-ring exhibit in the museum.

STOP No. 3 The underground ceremonial room, kiva (KEE-vah), was originally covered by a flat roof which rested on the six pilasters. The bench, or *banquette* on which the six pilasters are built, was not used for seating, but as a storage shelf. The chimney-like shaft on the southwest side of the kiva is NOT a chimney, but is instead a ventilator shaft which brought fresh air into the kiva. The large hole in the floor is the *firepit*; smoke escaped through a hatchway in the roof. The hatchway also served as the entrance to the kiva; access was by ladder. The short masonry wall between the firepit and the ventilator opening is a *deflector*, which prevented the incoming air from blowing directly across the firepit.



Ground plan of a kiva.

The small hole in the floor is the sipapu (SEE-pah-poo), symbolic opening into the spirit underworld.

Probably only men were members of kiva societies which performed religious ceremonies for the benefit of the village. Women undoubtedly participated in some of these ceremonies. The kivas probably were used as clubrooms and workrooms by the men when no rituals were being held.