



P E C O S



Thuds of shovel-tossed dirt and whispers of brush strokes against clay, stone, and brick have been heard from Egypt to Easter Island. They are the sounds of archeologists at work, seeking knowledge of early people. They were heard recently at Pecos National Monument, in north-central New Mexico.

In the summer of 1967, National Park Service archeologists excavating at the monument made an exciting discovery. Their findings cast new light on the history of the Southwest and substantiated reports of 17th-Century writers whose words had been held suspect.

From the work of archeologists and historians, much has been learned of the Indians and Spaniards at Pecos.

PECOS PUEBLO IN PREHISTORIC TIMES

About A.D. 1100, Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande drainage spread eastward over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and settled in scattered villages along the streams. Two centuries later, they began moving into compact pueblos of one or two stories. By 1450, the Pecos Valley Indians had congregated in a multistoried, quadrangular pueblo built around a central plaza on a rocky ridge.

In addition to 660 rooms that were used as living quarters and for storage, the pueblo contained at least 22 kivas. (Kivas, subterranean ceremonial chambers, are still used by present-day Pueblo Indians.)



These Pueblo people were slight of build yet muscular; they had dark hair and eyes and brown skin. The women averaged just under 5 feet in height; the men were a few inches taller.

The Indians of the Pecos Valley were farmers, raising corn, beans, and squash in their irrigated river-bottom fields. They also gathered wild plants and hunted game. Since they lived in a high river valley, which had a short growing season, they were not able to grow cotton to make clothing. They therefore traded with Indians who lived along the Rio Grande for cotton fibers or cloth.

But it was the location of their village that brought prosperity to the Pecos Indians. They lived between the nomadic buffalo hunters of the Plains and the village-dwelling farmers of the Rio Grande. Skilled in trade and war, stimulated by wide-ranging contacts with other groups, they thrived in their impregnable four- or five-story pueblo.

PECOS, 1540-1838

In other parts of the New World, events were occurring that would alter the lives of the Pecos Indians. Columbus made his voyages of discovery. Spain established a rich colonial empire scattered from Mexico to Peru; gold poured into her coffers, and wide areas were opened for settlement. Cabeza de Vaca and his three weary companions, survivors of the shipwrecked Narvaez Expedition, arrived in Mexico City after 8 years of wandering through the Southeast, Texas, and northern Mexico. They brought tales of a land to the north of Mexico where there were large cities with streets lined by goldsmiths' shops, houses of many stories, and doorways studded with emeralds and turquoise. Conditioned by the riches of Mexico and Peru, the Spaniards listened to Cabeza de Vaca and dispatched a party to New Mexico to verify his statements. The party, less one man who had been killed by the Indians, returned with reassurances, and Viceroy Mendoza began planning an expedition to Cibola. He chose a friend, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, to lead the expedition.

On February 23, 1540, Coronado led his company northward from Compostela. The expedition comprised 300 Spanish soldiers, four priests, and 800 Mexican-Indian

allies. On July 7 they reached the fabled Cibola, near present-day Gallup, N. Mex. Instead of a Golden City, they found only a rock-masonry pueblo, Hawikuh, defended by Indians who were ready to fight. The Spaniards attacked and forced the Indians to abandon the village. Coronado made Hawikuh, stocked with food, his headquarters.

While at Hawikuh, Coronado sent his captains out to explore the region, and he received visitors from other Indian pueblos. Among these visitors, were people from Cicúye, the name then applied to Pecos Pueblo, 150 miles to the northeast. These people displayed hides of a strange "humpbacked cow" (buffalo) and invited Coronado to visit their village. He sent Hernando de Alvarado with 20 men.

At Pecos, Alvarado met a Plains Indian, "the Turk," who told him of a rich land to the east called Quivira. The Turk spent the winter of 1540-41 with Coronado at his new headquarters on the Rio Grande. In the spring, he guided Coronado and his band of explorers to Pecos, and from there to the plains of the Texas Panhandle, Oklahoma, and probably Kansas. Again, there was disappointment.

The Pueblo Indians' plot to lure Coronado and his men onto the plains, in the hope that there they would die of starvation, cost the Turk his life and Coronado his last dream of riches. Disillusioned, Coronado made his way back to Mexico.

Other leaders, impelled by loftier motives, were to follow Coronado. One of these was Gaspar Castaño de Sosa, who in 1590-91 made the first, but unsuccessful, attempt to set up a colony in New Mexico. Castaño led his party up the Pecos River to and beyond Pecos Pueblo and made a detailed record of his observations.

When he arrived at Pecos, he was met with arrows and rocks. His attempts to convince the Indians that he wanted only their friendship brought more showers of arrows and rocks from the parapeted roofs of the pueblo. The Indians' hostility probably stemmed from unpleasantness they had experienced from Coronado's men in 1541 and Antonio de Espejo's soldiers 40 years later. Although outnumbered 500 to 37, Castaño ordered his men to attack the pueblo with arquebus and sword but to cause as little bloodshed as possible. After a brief skirmish, the Indians gave up the fight. There was then some show of friendliness. But one night all the Indians stole out of the pueblo. They had not returned 4 days later when Castaño and his company left the village and moved to the northwest. Before the Spaniards left, however, they captured two Indians and tried to convince them that they should persuade their fellow villagers to return, for the weather was cold and snowy.

Castaño described Pecos Pueblo thus:

The houses in this pueblo are in the manner of house-blocks. They have doors to the outside all around, and the houses are back to back. The houses are four and five stories. In the galleries [covered porches] there are no doors to the streets [on the ground-floor level]. They go up little ladders that can be pulled up by hand through the hatch-

ways. Every house has 3 or 4 apartments [on each story] so that from top to bottom each house has 15 or 16 rooms. The rooms are worthy of note, being well whitewashed.

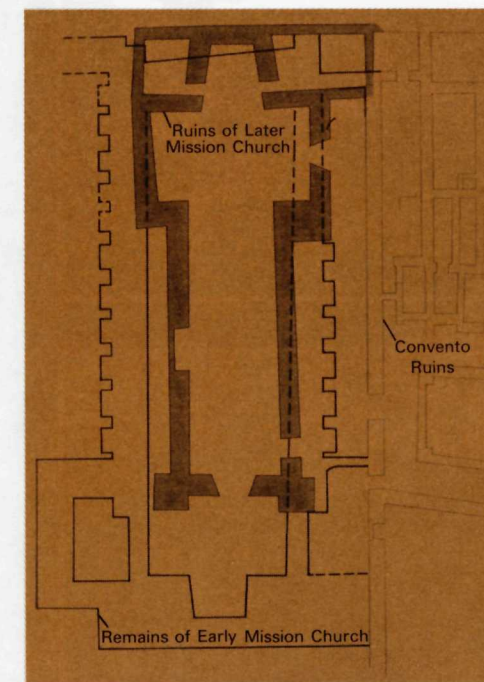
He also described the clothing of the Pecos Indians:

The dress of the men, according to what we saw there—as it was the cold season—most or all of them wore a blanket of cotton and a buffalo hide over it. . . . The women [dress] with a blanket drawn in a knot at the shoulder and a sash the width of a palm at the waist. At one side, the blanket is completely open. Over it are placed some other very gaily worked blanket or some turkey feather robes and many other curious things, which is remarkable for savages.

By the early 1620's the Franciscans had founded at Pecos the Mission de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles de Porciúncula—an entire community. It included a church and a convento containing a carpenter shop, weaving rooms, tanneries, a place for religious instruction, and living quarters, and also farming and grazing lands. The mission sought to replace the economic, religious, and political way of life of the Indian with that of the Spaniard.

Franciscans introduced wheat, the beehive oven, and wheat bread; horses, cattle, goats, and sheep; European farming methods; metal tools; and new pottery forms and design elements. They also introduced adobe building blocks used in the construction of their missions.

Many of the Pecos Indians must have been converted to Christianity or have been impressed in other ways by the Franciscans, for they assisted in erecting the Pecos church and convento. They also constructed a long rectangular pueblo between these buildings and the quadrangular pueblo to the north.



Father Benavides, in his "Memorial" of 1630, described the Pecos church as a "splendid temple of distinguished workmanship and beauty." In his "Revised Memorial" of 1634, he stated that it was a "church of peculiar construction and beauty, very spacious, with room for all the people of the pueblo."

In 1697, Father Vetancurt, reporting on the state of the mission churches following the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680 and the Reconquest of 1692-93, described the Pecos church as having been a "magnificent temple, adorned with six towers, three on each side, its walls so wide that services were held in their thickness." He further remarked that it had been burned.

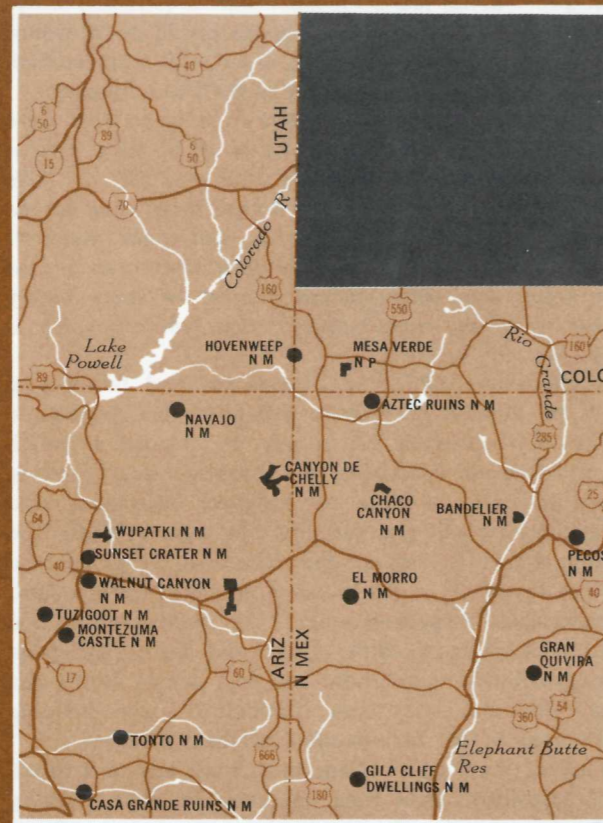
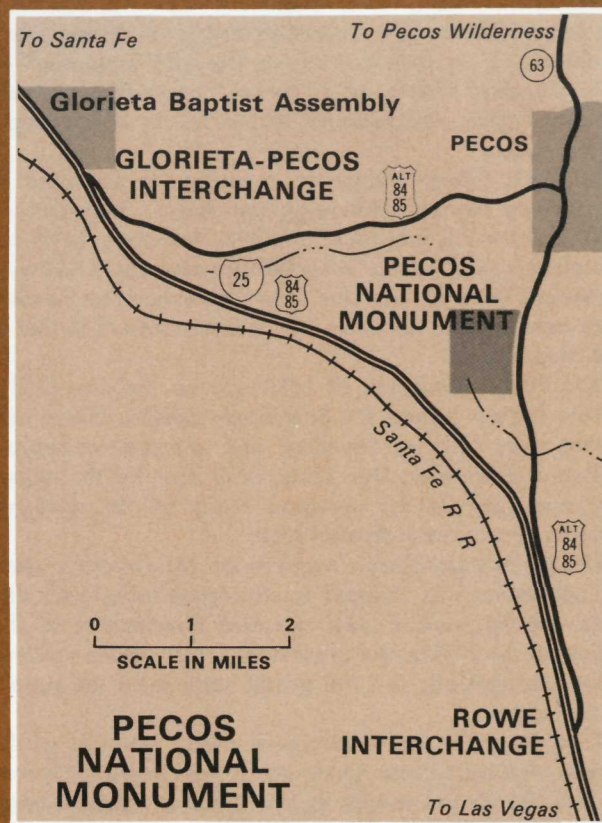
The Pueblo Rebellion of 1680 was an uprising of the Pueblo Indians against the Spaniards—Spanish clergy and settlers were killed or driven off and missions destroyed.

Twelve years later, Don Diego de Vargas led the bloodless reconquest of the province. Many of the missions, including Pecos, were reestablished.

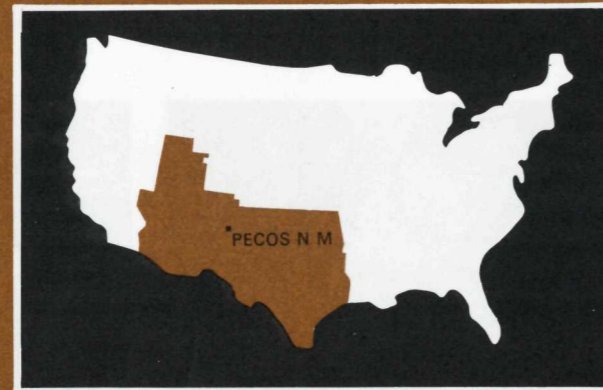
Decline of Pecos Pueblo began in the 18th century, when the population was reduced by European-introduced diseases and by warfare with mounted Comanches of the Plains. In the 1770's, the mission no longer had a resident priest. An epidemic in 1788 nearly annihilated the people of the pueblo.

Then in 1838, the survivors—a pitiful remnant of 17 people—left their Pecos homes and moved westward across the Rio Grande to live with their kinsmen at Jemez, leaving the pueblo and mission deserted.

The adobe walls of the mission church were a landmark for travelers on the Santa Fe Trail. Ruts of this historic trail can still be seen near the remains of the mission.



SOUTHWEST ARCHEOLOGICAL AREAS



SOUTHWEST REGION



ARCHEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY, 1967

The impressive ruins at Pecos have attracted many archeologists, notably the late Alfred Vincent Kidder, who conducted excavations at the site, except for the war years, between 1915 and 1929. While most of Dr. Kidder's work was devoted to excavating the Indian pueblos, attention was also given to clearing and stabilizing the walls of the church and the convento.

In 1965, Congress passed the act, signed by the President, that authorized establishment of Pecos National Monument; and in the summer of 1966, National Park Service archeologists began excavation of the church and convento.

Both the church and the convento were puzzling. The 17th-century ecclesiastics had described the church as being large, splendid, magnificent, and of unusual design. But the remaining adobe walls are of a church that had been none of these. Other mission churches in New Mexico had obviously been much grander. Most historians have thought that the early accounts were exaggerated in order to gain added civil and religious support of missionary effort in the remote and impoverished frontier province of New Mexico. But the convento was much larger than those usually associated with a church of modest size.

In the summer of 1967, the project archeologist discovered stone foundations resting on bedrock and fragments of burned adobe walls. Under and around the ruins of the known church, further excavations uncovered the foundations of an earlier church that was nearly 170 feet long, 90 feet wide at the transept, and 39 feet wide inside the nave. The nave walls were 9 feet thick.

Here were the remains of the imposing church that Benavides and Vetancurt had described, no doubt justifiably, as "splendid" and "magnificent."

The church was typical of the style of southern France. It had bastioned nave walls and subsidiary chapels in thick-walled, cruciformlike arms near the sanctuary. The latter features explain Father Vetancurt's remark about holding services in the walls. Only 18 such structures were known in the Americas until the Pecos find, and none of them was north of Mexico City.

Now it is clear that the large church and convento were constructed in the 1620's and destroyed during the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680. The convento was reconstructed and a new church built following the Reconquest, probably in the early 1700's.

An indication of the significance of the discovery is contained in the archeologist's preliminary report:

Locating the "old" church is a breakthrough of major historical importance. It calls for careful reappraisal of the early reports and the combined efforts of historians, ethnologists, and archeologists to try and separate fact from fiction, if the latter exists. Translations should be critically examined to make certain the original meaning is arrived at, if possible. It is hoped that this "find" will engender interest in a thorough search of archival material in Spain, Mexico, and elsewhere in the New World. It

certainly calls for archeological investigations at other mission sites where there is any doubt concerning the structures, or sequence of structures, and dates.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The monument, 25 miles southeast of Santa Fe by way of Int. 25, may be reached from the interchanges at Glorieta, 8 miles west of the monument via the town of Pecos, and Rowe, 3 miles south of the monument.

Santa Fe is served by airlines and buslines. Rail passengers disembark at Lamy for the 18-mile shuttle-bus trip to Santa Fe. Rental cars may be obtained in Santa Fe.

There is no public transportation to the monument.

The Pecos Ruins Trail leads to the convento, mission church and site of recent excavations, remains of the two major pueblo structures, a restored kiva, and other points of interest. Trailside signs give descriptions of things to be seen along the way.

There are no facilities for camping in the monument, but food and lodging can be obtained in nearby towns.

REGULATIONS

Under the 1906 Federal Antiquities Act, it is unlawful to appropriate, excavate, injure, or destroy "any historic or prehistoric ruin or monument, or any object of antiquity" on Federal lands.

Please leave plants, animals, rocks, and other natural and manmade features undisturbed. Since ruin walls are fragile, do not climb or stand upon them. Pets are allowed if they are kept on a leash or in your car and out of public buildings. The use or display of firearms is not permitted.

ADMINISTRATION

Pecos National Monument, containing 340 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Drawer 11, Pecos, N. Mex. 87552, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Cover: a 1784 Spanish real, the size of a dime, found during the excavations of the church and convento in 1966.



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NATIONAL MONUMENT • NEW MEXICO