

# PECOS

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 park 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.

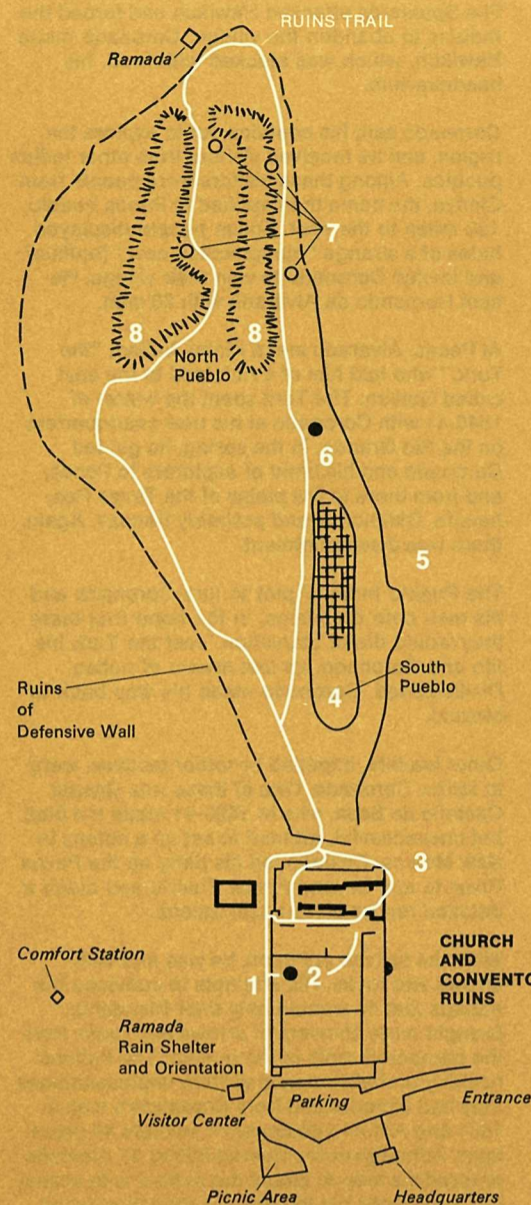
## Pecos Ruins Trail

To see what the archeologists have uncovered and to gain an understanding of how the Indians and Spaniards lived here, take the Pecos Ruins Trail. It begins at the visitor center and winds through the ruins. A diagram of the entire trail is to the right; an enlargement of the church and convento ruins is below. The numbers are keyed to features along the trail.

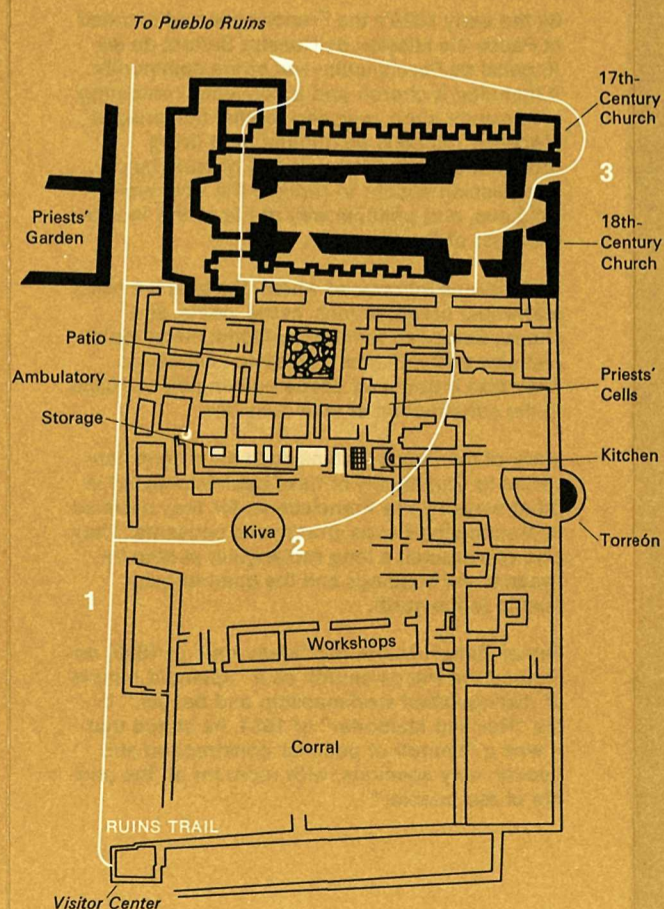
**1** The mission fathers lived in the **convento**, the Spanish word for monastery. Ruins of the convento include the large area of low adobe walls located between the visitor center and the church. Attached to the church was a series of sleeping rooms or cells arranged around a walkway and patio. It was here that the padres carried on their daily religious routine. Around and beyond this cloistered area were storerooms, weaving rooms, tanneries, carpenter shop, garden area, and a livestock corral—all necessary to support life at the mission.

**2** Climb down the ladder into this restored **kiva**, one of the many underground religious ceremonial rooms found at Pecos. The kiva was built by the Indians in the convento courtyard shortly after the first church was destroyed. It is constructed of adobe bricks apparently salvaged from the early mission church.

**3** The Spaniards built two **mission churches** at Pecos, and you can walk along the path between



## ENLARGEMENT OF CHURCH AND CONVENTO RUINS



the remnants of the two. The excavated foundations of the earlier 17th-century church indicate an impressive structure almost 170 feet long and 90 feet wide at the transept. The walls of the nave were 9 feet thick. The walls of the 18th-century church, a good portion of which still stands, were also built of adobe brick, a technique introduced by the Spaniards. The later church was much smaller.

**4** Close to the mission church is the partially excavated **south pueblo**. It was built by Pecos Indians, possibly after the Spaniards came to this area.

**5** The **defensive wall**, restored in part, was used by the Indians as a village boundary.

**6** Here is another completely restored **kiva**. The Indians held meetings and secret ceremonies in the kivas as part of their complex religious rituals.

**7** Partially excavated **kivas** are found along the trail.

**8** The **north pueblo**, now visible only as large, unexcavated mounds, was a massive, five-story rectangular village that housed some 2,500 Pueblo Indians.

## For Your Safety

Do not let your visit become spoiled by an accident. Although efforts have been made to provide for your safety, there are natural conditions that could be hazardous to you. Please exercise common sense and caution.

## 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 none of these characteristics. Other mission churches in New Mexico had obviously been much grander. Most historians had thought that the early accounts were exaggerated 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.

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

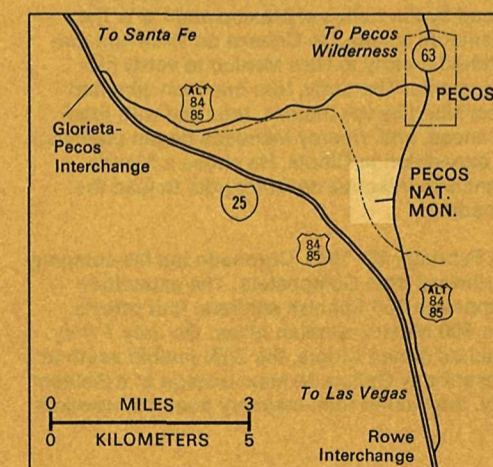
The church was typical of the style of southern France. It had bastioned nave walls and subsidiary chapels in thick-walled, cruciformlike arms near the sanctuary. Only 18 such structures were known in the Americas until the Pecos find, and none of them was north of Mexico City.

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.

"Locating the 'old' church," according to the preliminary report of the archeologist, "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."

## About Your Visit

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



Santa Fe is served by 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 park. There are no facilities for camping, 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, NM 87552, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

### 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.

Besides 660 rooms that were used as living quarters and for storage, the pueblo contained numerous kivas. (Such 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.



This 1784 Spanish real, a coin the size of a dime, was found during excavation of the church and convento area in 1966.

### 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 ship-wrecked 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 with 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 fabled Cibola, the Zuñi pueblo south of present-day Gallup, N. Mex. Instead of a Golden City, they found rock-masonry pueblos, Hawikuh

and others, defended by Indians ready to fight. The Spaniards attacked Hawikuh and forced the Indians to abandon the village. Coronado made Hawikuh, which was stocked with food, his headquarters.

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 east. 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



Sunlight filters into this subterranean ceremonial chamber. Similar kivas are used by Pueblo Indians of today.

Clay pipes were used in religious rituals of the Pueblo Indians. The complete pipe on the left shows a typical "fishtail" mouthpiece, which is missing from the fragments of two pipes on the right.



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 houseblocks. 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 hatchways. 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 white-washed.**

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 Porciuncula—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. After the massive church at Pecos was destroyed, the Indians built a kiva in the courtyard of the convento. It was constructed of adobe bricks apparently salvaged from the burned church.

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

The 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. According to legend, the final abandonment of the pueblo was the result of witchcraft in the village and nearby town.

The adobe walls of the mission church were a landmark for travelers on the Santa Fe Trail. Ruts of this historic trail still exist in the vicinity.



Patterns formed by adobe blocks harmonize with the arched doorways in the 18th-century church wall (top). Many of these walls still stand. Here they rise above the ruins of the south pueblo as seen from the rim of a restored Indian kiva.