



## Wukoki Pueblo



An architect today might win an award for designing Wukoki Pueblo. The corners, angles, and lines of masonry are meticulous. From its base, the eye is drawn skyward to a height that inspires awe of this ancient craftsmanship.

The architecture blends so well with the environment that the building seems to grow out of the rock, disguising where nature's work ends and handcrafted walls begin. Today these walls stand as a silent tribute to prehistoric people.

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### The People of Wukoki



Because the people of Wukoki left no written records of their life here, architecture and artifacts are important sources of information. Using the pottery types found here, archeologists can date the occupation of Wukoki from approximately 1120 through 1210. The inhabitants were most likely a cultural group known today as Ancestral Puebloans.

A partial excavation done by archeologist Jesse Walter Fewkes in 1896 revealed not only superb architecture but also the work of skilled artisans. He recovered beautifully designed pottery, a bracelet of shells, and ear pendants of stone with turquoise mosaic inlay. These artifacts have provided clues to who lived here and when.

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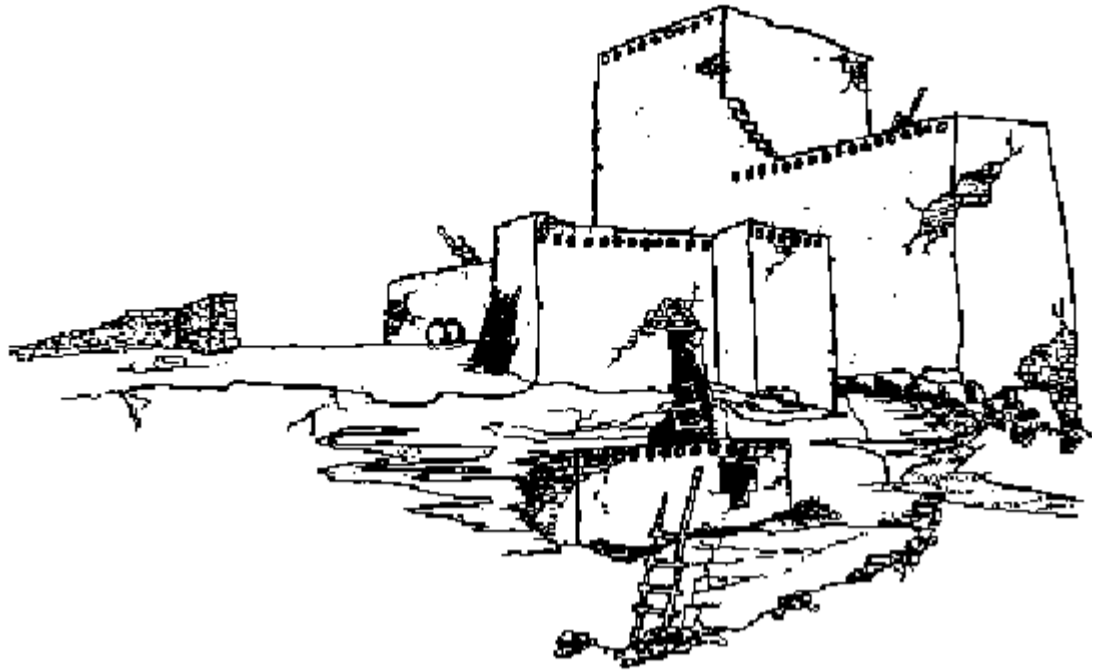
### The "Real" Wukoki

In 1891 and 1893, Fewkes visited Walpi pueblo on the present-day Hopi reservation. On one of his visits he heard the origin of the Snake Clan. According to legend, the clan migrated from Tokonave near Navajo Mountain to the great house Wukoki before moving on to Walpi. Wukoki was said to have been located 50 miles west of Walpi by the Little Colorado River, but its exact location was uncertain.

Fewkes did locate dwellings, within what is now Wupatki National Monument, that he believed to be

the Wukoki of the Snake Clan legend. Initially he referred to the entire area as Wukoki. As he grew more familiar with the individual pueblos, Fewkes specifically applied the name Wukoki to the largest pueblo—Wukoki means "Big House" in Hopi.

Over time, the pueblo Fewkes called Wukoki became widely known as Wupatki instead. This also became the name of the national monument established in 1924. The name Wukoki was assigned to the nearby pueblo we know by that name today.



The original grandeur of Wukoki is still evident. There were three stories in what seems to be a tower. A total of six or seven rooms may have been home for two or three families. The open area adjacent to the tower was a plaza used for daily activities, pottery making, basket weaving, and other chores. The plaza was enclosed by a semicircular parapet wall.

Roof beams are no longer present, but were probably made from spruce and fir trees hand carried for miles from the higher elevations around the San Francisco Peaks. The pueblo walls were built of sandstone slabs, stacked and mortared using soil from the area.

Mud was used to plaster the surface of the walls inside and out. This insulated and waterproofed the pueblo, but made invisible the beauty of the

stonework we marvel at today. Because of the nature of these materials, they must have required seasonal upkeep.

Fewkes described Wukoki as "...visible for many miles, and from a distance resembles an old castle as it looms...above the plain." The tower is nearly 20 feet high and with the rock base measures over 30 feet.

The encompassing view may have been the motive for building on the sandstone outcrop. We don't know exactly why they chose to build where they did, but the height and location of Wukoki are extraordinary.

### Modern Reinforcements



Wukoki is one of the best preserved prehistoric structures within Wupatki National Monument, but it has not been reconstructed. The National Park Service partially reinforced the pueblo in 1941 by installing wood braces, props, and wedges. Cement and mud mortars were used to further stabilize the walls. Later a stabilization survey was conducted and the walls again remortared with mud. Test trenches were dug in two of the rooms. This is the only modern excavation of the site.

By 1954 more extensive stabilization was required. Workers used Portland cement covered with clay mortar made from local soils. They also braced the walls internally, using half-inch reinforcing steel, flat steel bars and concrete. Hidden within the masonry, these reinforcements help ensure the stability of this 800-year-old home.

### Wukoki Today



Wukoki is a monument to people of the past. With ever increasing visitation to this site, ensuring future preservation requires your help.

Although it appears invincible, Wukoki is fragile. Climbing and walking on the walls accelerates erosion and can lead to collapse. Even stepping or sitting on them can cause damage over time and the repair bill ultimately falls to you.

Please leave pottery sherds and other artifacts where they are. There is still so much to learn and, left here, such objects are valuable clues; on your living room table they mean nothing.