

FAR VIEW

An Ancient Farming Community



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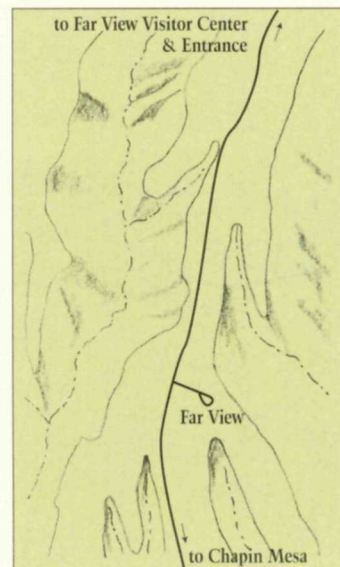
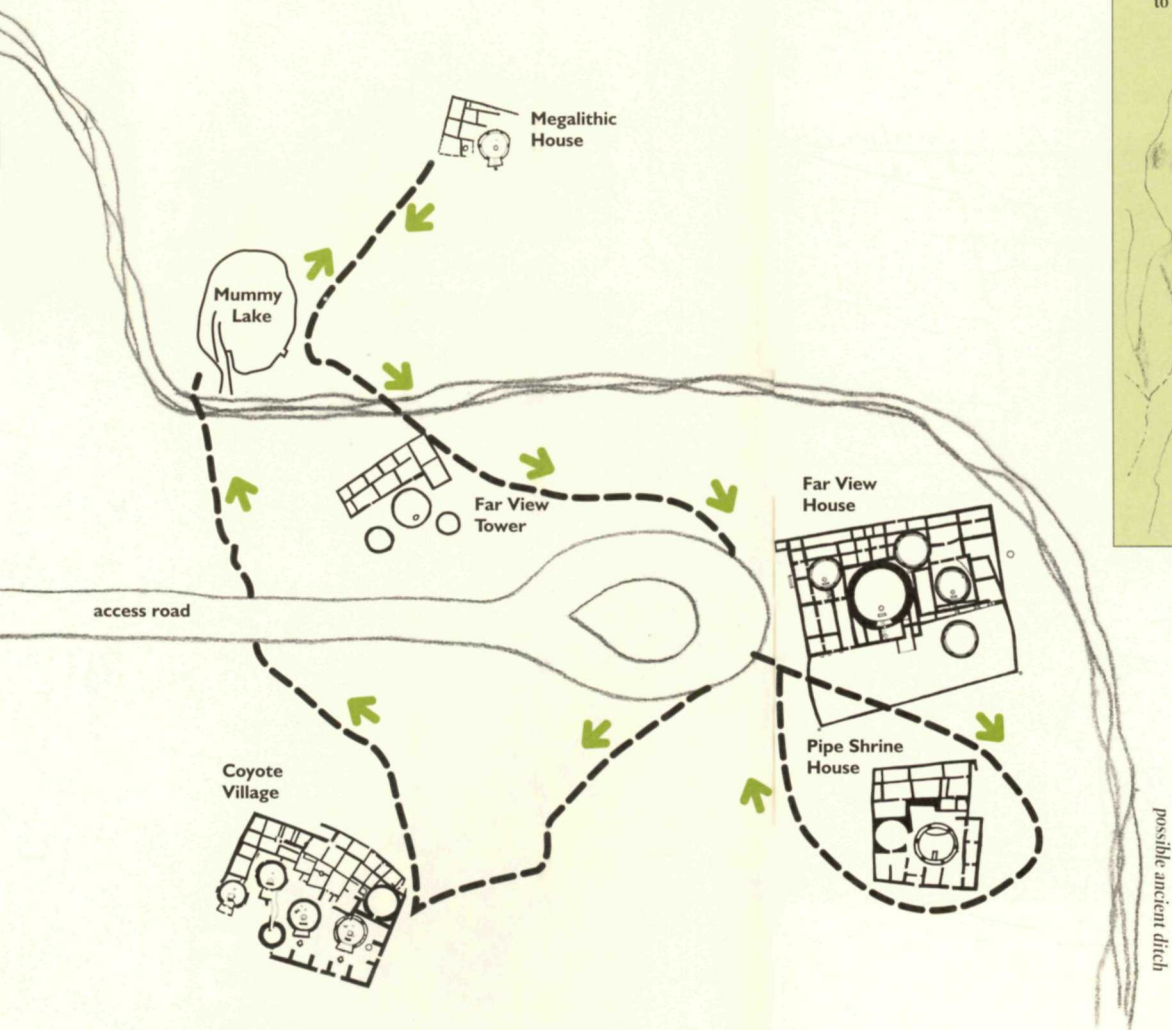
Far View Trail

An Ancient Farming Community

Far View was a popular place in the early days at Mesa Verde. From A.D. 900 to about 1300, it was one of the most densely populated parts of the mesa. Nearly 50 villages have been identified within a half square mile area, home to hundreds of people. The attraction may have been the greater moisture received at this higher elevation of about 7,700 feet. The growing season was probably slightly

shorter here than at lower places, but the additional water supply may have supported crop yields to feed the burgeoning population. The resourceful residents of this farming community also applied their know-how to enhance available water and soil. Corn, or maize, was the staple crop, complemented by squash and beans.

Within a short walking distance, you can see several major excavated sites, including Far View House and Pipe Shrine House, Coyote Village, Mummy Lake, Megalithic House, and Far View Tower. Please do not walk or climb on the fragile walls or enter the circular rooms called kivas.



Far View Community

A.D. 1250

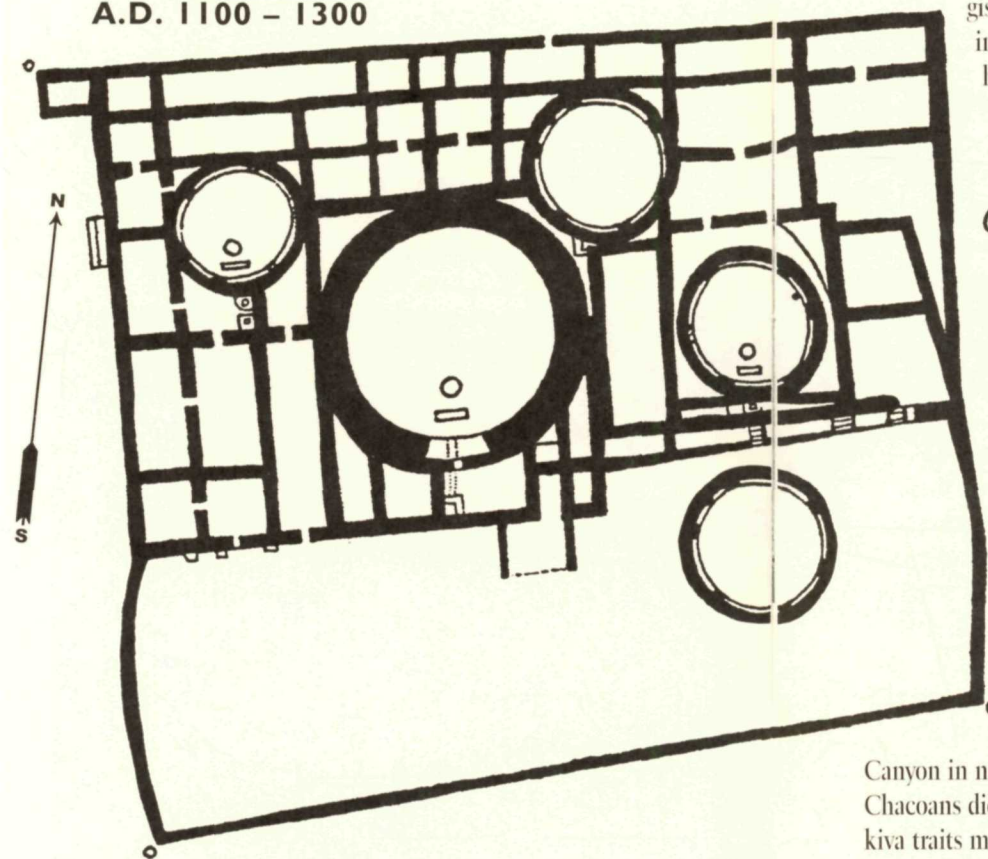
This is an artist's rendition of what the Far View community may have looked like 700 to 800 years ago. Included in this populated farming area was a reservoir and system of ditches to collect and deliver water to the residents. Archeologists are still trying to trace out the extent of the ditches.



Painting by Peter V. Bianchi for *National Geographic* magazine.

Far View House

A.D. 1100 – 1300



Far View House commands a stunning view of the countryside, including the canyons of Mesa Verde, Ute Mountain, the La Plata Mountains, Shiprock, and other Four Corners features. This expansive vista inspired the name for Far View House when Dr. Jesse Walter Fewkes of the Smithsonian Institution excavated it in the summer of 1916.

This open pueblo is unlike the cliff dwellings most people associate with Mesa Verde. Fewkes uncovered and restored the walls of the large rectangular structure, which stood two stories high. It was likely built and occupied between A.D. 1100 and 1300.

There are 40 rooms on the ground floor and an unknown number of rooms in the second story. Some

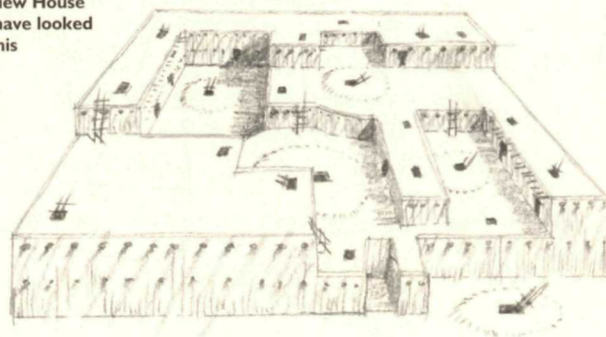
rooms, and doorways, are larger than those in the cliff dwellings. Along with room size, archeologists pay attention to doorways because they indicate linkages between rooms and hint at how families and clans may have shared the living spaces. Archeologists also look closely at how walls are joined at the corners. Are the stones tied into one another, suggesting they were part of the original room, or do the corner stones abut each other, indicating a later addition?

Although a few people probably lived at Far View House, its location and unusually large size suggest it may have served as a “public” building, where leaders addressed the needs of the larger Far View community.

Four circular kivas, or ceremonial structures, are enclosed within the walls of Far View House, and a fifth is outside the walls. The pueblo’s central kiva is especially large and might have been a place where several clans assembled. Tall walls, low roof supports, and two vaults in the floor are features seen in kivas at Chaco Canyon in northwest New Mexico. Mesa Verdeans and Chacoans did trade with each other, and such “imported” kiva traits may represent a transfer of ideas from Chaco to Mesa Verde.

The other kivas in Far View House show signs of burning and remodeling. One has nearly 20 coats of plaster on the interior walls, suggesting long use.

Far View House may have looked like this



Pipe Shrine House

A.D. 900 – 1300

Just beyond Far View House stands Pipe Shrine House, another pueblo excavated by Jesse Walter Fewkes. Though smaller than Far View House, it is so close by that some sort of relationship may have existed between the two buildings.

There are 20 rooms on the ground floor of Pipe Shrine House, and it may have had a second story too. Note two architectural styles: single-coursed masonry on the north side, and double-coursed on the south. The earlier, single-coursed masonry here is distinct — stone masons chipped off the edges of long, thick blocks to make them more uniform in size. The chips were then used as chinking, to fill the spaces between the blocks.

The two masonry styles indicate Pipe Shrine House dates at least from A.D. 900 to 1300; an older

site is located beneath the visible site. As population increased in the Far View area, the pueblo may have been

remodeled and added onto, or the original villagers may have

left and newcomers moved in.

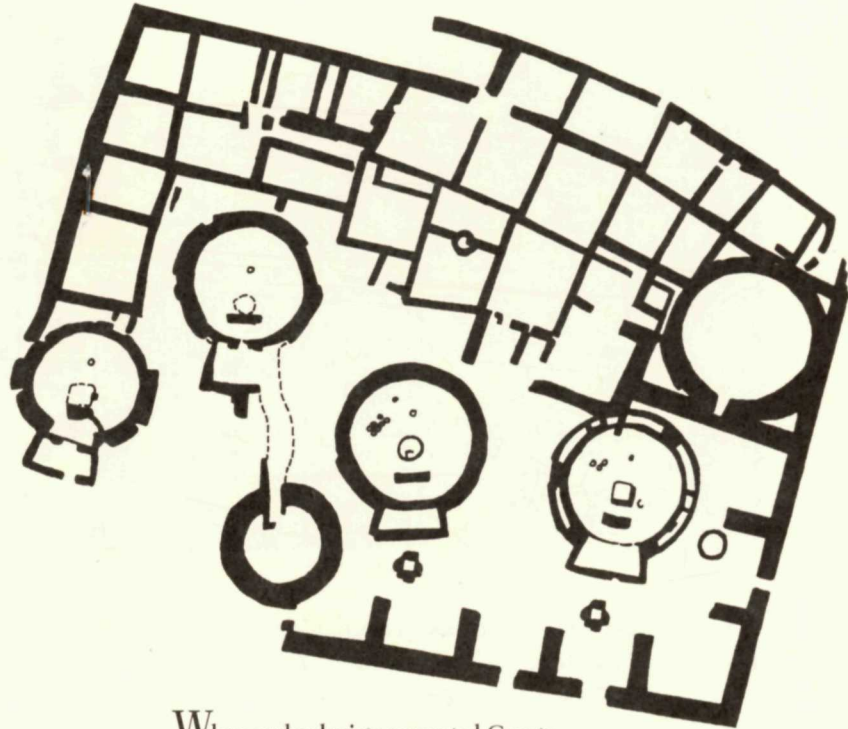
Enclosed in the courtyard is a fairly large kiva with one entryway. What looks like the foundation of a circular room may instead have been the base of a tower that stood beside the kiva.

Pipe Shrine House was named for a dozen decorated clay pipes that Fewkes found on the floor of the large kiva when he excavated in 1922. Today, Native Americans smoke a ceremonial tobacco in such pipes. In the south retaining wall, Fewkes made another intriguing find — the fragment of a stone figure in the shape of a mountain lion.

Return to the parking area and take the short path to Coyote Village.

Coyote Village

A.D. 800 – 1000s



When archeologists excavated Coyote Village in 1968 and 1969, they found 30 ground-floor rooms, five kivas, and a circular tower. Like Pipe Shrine House, this pueblo incorporates both single- and double-course masonry.

Perhaps 40 or 50 people lived at Coyote Village in the A.D. 1000s, but other people lived here at least as early as A.D. 800 or 900. Beneath the tower is a pithouse that belonged to earlier occupants.

One kiva was never finished, another was abandoned and filled with trash.

Several of the kivas are connected by tunnels, and beside one is a row of mealing bins where women knelt and ground corn with manos and metates. Wood beams extending between the upright pilasters of another kiva may have been drying racks or “shelves.”

From Coyote Village, head up the trail to Mummy Lake, Megalithic House, and Far View Tower.

Mummy Lake

A.D. 900 – 1300

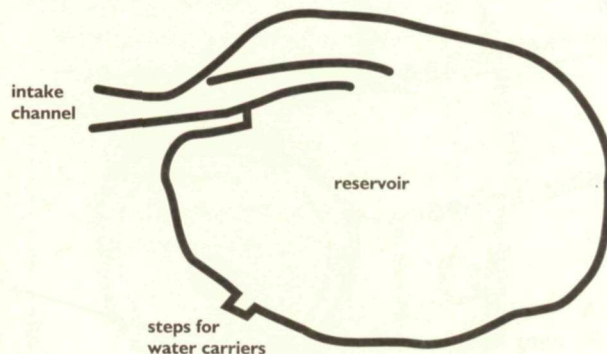


Mummy Lake is one of the most fascinating structures at Mesa Verde. Most believe it was an artificial reservoir built to collect and store water for Far View villagers.

Here are the statistics on Mummy Lake: a circular depression 90 feet in diameter and 12 feet deep, surrounded by a stone wall built in two phases, between A.D. 900-1100 and between A.D. 1100-1300. There are artificial embankments on the south and east sides, and steps go up to a ramp that slopes down into the depression. The catchment area is 25 acres.

Archeologists have found evidence of ditches and an intake channel that would have brought snowmelt and rain into the reservoir. The ramp and steps possibly indicate a “walk-in” well where people filled vessels with water. Early archeologists noted a shallow, linear depression running several miles toward the south, which could have been a ditch that shared water with other sites, such as Spruce Tree House. But any evidence of such a “ditch” is now missing from the landscape.

After serving as a domestic water source for about three centuries, Mummy Lake fell into disuse. It may have clogged with sediment, or drought left it without enough water. In the 1200s, at least some of the Far View area residents who had counted on it relocated to cliff dwellings, where springs and canyon bottom streams could meet their daily needs. Others, however, chose to remain nearby until A.D. 1300.



Continue north about 100 yards to Megalithic House.

Megalithic House

A.D. 1200s

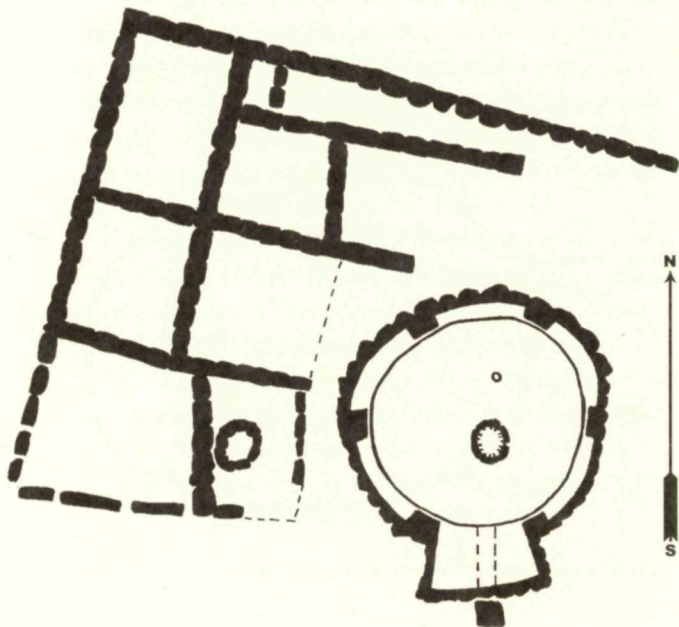


Two large stones, or “megaliths,” were set on edge as part of the foundation of this small house. When Jesse Walter Fewkes excavated the site in 1922, he called them “Cyclopean walls,” and reported villages of similar construction in the valley north of Mesa Verde.

Megalithic House consists of eight or nine rooms and a kiva. Notice the excellent stonework of the kiva walls, and consider the determination of the builders who dug the floor of the kiva down into bedrock.

This is a classic example of a “unit” pueblo, consisting of living and storage rooms, with a pithouse/kiva in the courtyard. It became the basic blueprint that was repeated over and over again as pueblos grew larger.

Return to Mummy Lake and continue on the trail to Far View Tower and back to the parking area.



Far View Tower

A.D. 1200s



North of Far View House, Jesse Walter Fewkes found a mound of fallen stones and sagebrush. Upon excavation, he discovered a “fine circular tower” surrounded by low-walled rooms at the base. In addition, there were three kivas on the south side, along with 16 small, one-story rooms.

Two of the three kivas were the same age as the rooms. One of these original kivas was abandoned and filled with refuse, and the tower and the third kiva were later built on top of it.

Again, masonry techniques supply clues to the age of the structures. The 16 rooms of the village are of single-course masonry, indicating early construction. The tower is two courses thick, a construction method used in later times at Mesa Verde.

Nearly 60 such round towers have been found at Mesa Verde, and some are connected to kivas by tunnels. What function might they have served in the farming community of Far View?

Checkdams/Farming Terraces

To gain more soil and water for farming, the people at Mesa Verde built many small dams on drainages. Rough stones were laid perpendicular across a ravine, in a series down a drainage creating a terraced effect. The dams slowed water runoff from the mesa tops and captured pockets of soil that could then be planted. More than 900 checkdams have been counted on Chapin Mesa alone, providing perhaps 20 or 30 acres of good farmland.



With the dams and terraces were fieldhouses of one or two rooms where a farmer stayed during the growing season to work his fields and to scare away animals that came to munch young seedlings.

The growing season on Mesa Verde and the average 18 inches of precipitation are sufficient to grow corn, which requires 120 days to mature. Around the first or second week of May, a farmer went out to his fields. With a wooden planting stick, he poked holes deep into the soil, dropped in a dozen kernels of corn, and gently tamped down the dirt. Though the corn variety was adapted to drought, the soil still had to hold enough moisture to sustain the emerging plant through the dry season in June. Summer rains in July and August, if they came, would assure a good harvest. Early farmers probably rotated their plantings from year to year, and they may have cultivated beans with their corn, to add nitrogen to the soil.

A few miles south, on the road to Cedar Tree Tower, a short trail leads down into a ravine where you can get a firsthand look at a typical checkdam and terrace system.

To Our Visitors

Please help respect and protect archeological sites at Mesa Verde National Park and everywhere else. Climbing, sitting, or standing on rock walls can harm or destroy them. Please stay off. To make sense of a site, archeologists need to see everything in context, so please do not touch or disturb any artifacts. Don't leave any modern artifacts either. Throw litter and trash in the cans. Smoking is prohibited in all sites. Pets must be on a leash, and are not allowed on trails or in sites. Hiking is restricted to the seven marked trails in the park.

Do not throw rocks or any other objects into the canyons — there may be people below. Parents, please be alert to your children's whereabouts at canyon overlooks. And remember that the park is at a high elevation; activity can be strenuous for those with heart or respiratory conditions.

The Navajo word *Anasazi*, long used to refer to the early people of Mesa Verde and the Southwest, is no longer favored. The term now preferred is "Ancestral Puebloan," indicating these people were the ancestors of the modern Pueblo people of the Southwest.



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