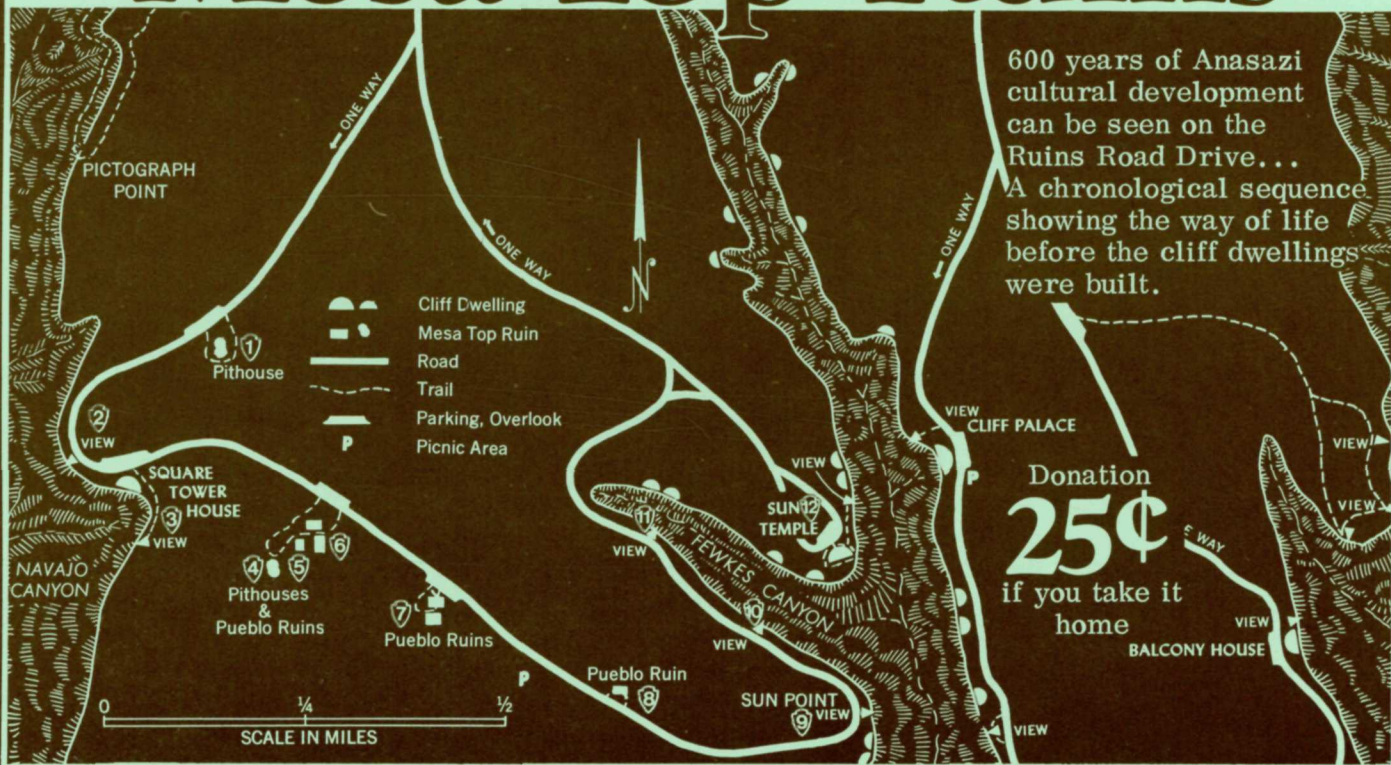


Mesa Top Ruins



The Mesa Top Drive allows you the unique opportunity to see the successive architectural development of the ancient people from Modified Basket Maker times (A.D. 600) to the Classic Pueblo cliff dwellings (A.D. 1200).

You might also visit the archaeological museum where ex-

hibits and artifacts explain more about the life of these people.

BACKGROUND DATA

The first Indians entered the *general* Mesa Verde area about the time of the birth of Christ. They lived a very simple life. Although they built no houses

as such, they did use the caves, or rock shelters, in canyons as living quarters.

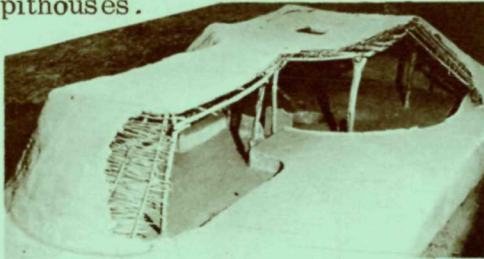
Because they had not yet learned to make pottery, these people wove baskets to use for cooking and storing things. For this reason, archeologists call these first inhabitants, Basket Makers. The Basket Makers depended upon hunting and gathering of wild foods for their survival, but there is some evidence that they did a limited amount of farming too, and brought corn and squash with them to the area. Since the bow and arrow was not introduced until a later period, the Basket Makers used a spear-thrower called an "atlatl" to add power and distance to their spears for hunting.



The earliest Basket Maker period does not occur at Mesa Verde.

MODIFIED BASKET MAKER

1 By A.D. 500 the early people had made some advancements and had entered the stage referred to as Modified Basket Makers. Farming became more important than hunting as a means of getting food. Crude pottery was also developed. An important step occurred when they began building permanent homes we call pithouses.

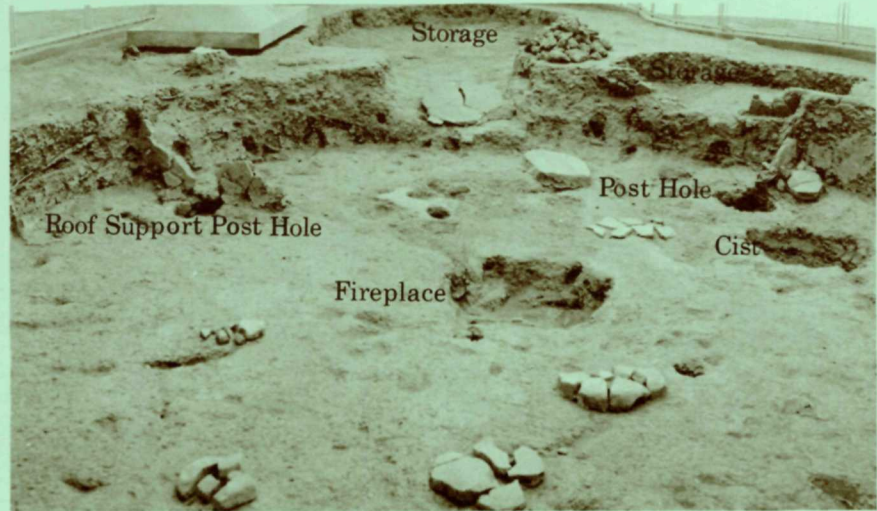


The pithouse is the earliest *Pithouse Model* type of dwelling that has been found on the Mesa Verde. The people simply dug a shallow pit in the earth, set four up-right posts into the floor to act as roof supports, and covered the structure with small poles,

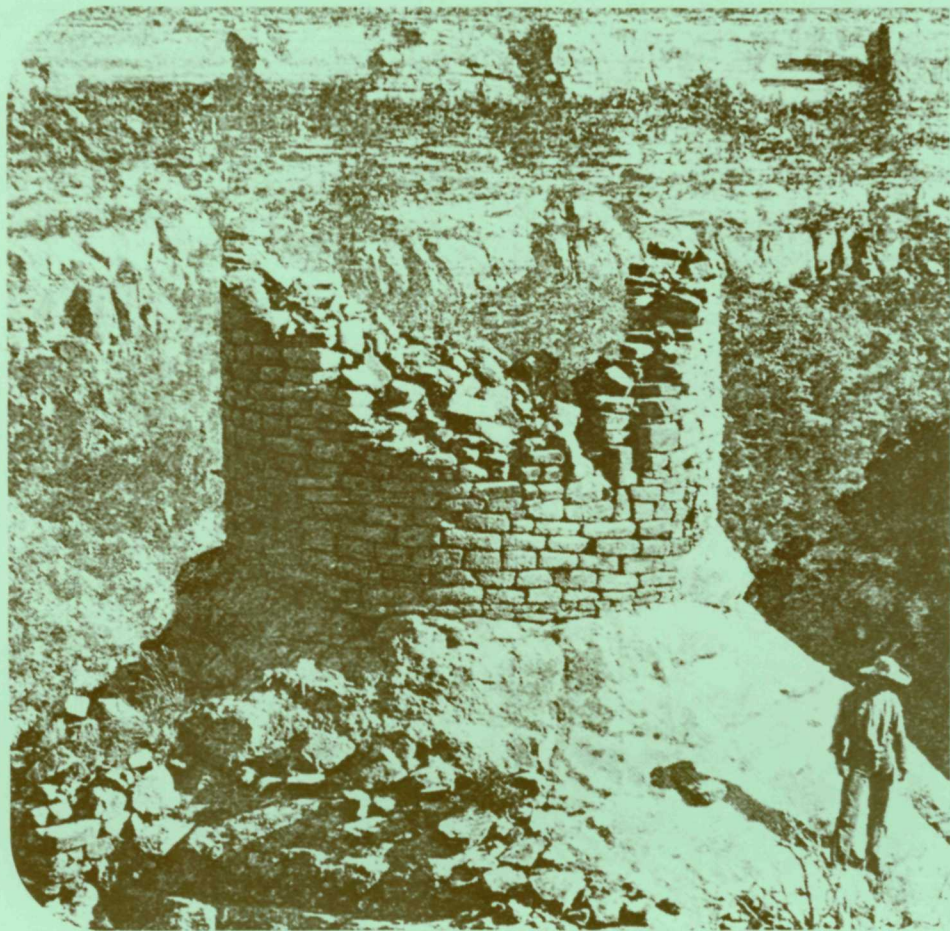
sticks, brush, and a capping of mud. Entrance to the pithouse was through a central opening in the roof which was usually located above the firepit.

The pithouse in front of you dates about A.D. 575. It consisted of two rooms--the larger room is generally considered a living area and work space, while the smaller room is

probably a storage area (called an antechamber). Before this house was excavated it was completely covered with dirt so that only a slight depression in the center marked its location. The original roof of the dwelling burned leaving only charred remains. The charcoal was used to date the pithouse using information gained from tree rings.



Modified Basketmaker House features



NAVAJO CANYON VIEWPOINT

2 Navajo Canyon offers only one of many spectacular deep canyon views from the Mesa Verde Plateau. Carved 700 feet deep by streams over the past 3 million years, it represents the erosion processes that are still active today. Below the canyon rims you can see many rock alcoves where the Anasazi built their homes during the 13th century. Navajo Canyon contains over 60 such cliff dwellings along its 15 mile length. Directly across the canyon is Echo House with 20 rooms and 2 kivas (ceremonial rooms). To the northwest (right) you can faintly see the Navajo Watch Tower.

Navajo Watch Tower

SQUARE TOWER HOUSE

3 This easy 500 foot trail leads to the overlook above Square Tower House, one of the most photogenic dwellings in Mesa Verde. On December 18, 1888, Richard Wetherill and Charles Mason, two local ranchers, discovered it along with Cliff Palace and Spruce Tree House. What appears to be a four story tower was actually part of a multistoried building unit. This tower gave the dwelling its name. After the Indians left here, other high rooms collapsed, leaving a site heavily covered with fallen stone and rubble.

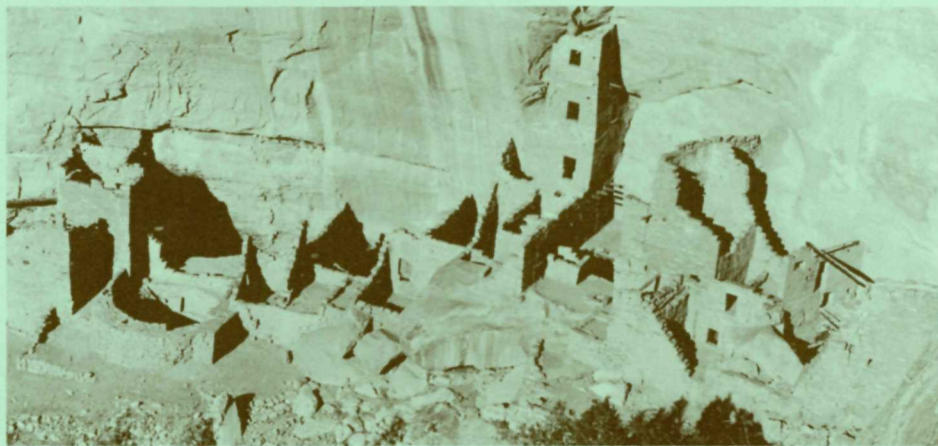
In 1919 Dr. Jesse Walter Fewkes of the Smithsonian

Institution excavated and repaired the dwelling. Few items were found in the excavation because much had been carried away by earlier explorers.

At the bottom of the draw below the ruin is an excellent spring which would have provided water for the occupants of Square Tower House. Most cliff dwellings are situated within 100 feet of the mesa

tops. Hand and toe trails carved into the sandstone provided access to water sources and to the mesa top where the fields were located.

Square Tower House was occupied between A.D. 1200 and 1300, and originally had over 80 rooms. Today, only the remains of 60 rooms and 7 kivas can be seen. Two kivas retain portions of their original roofs.

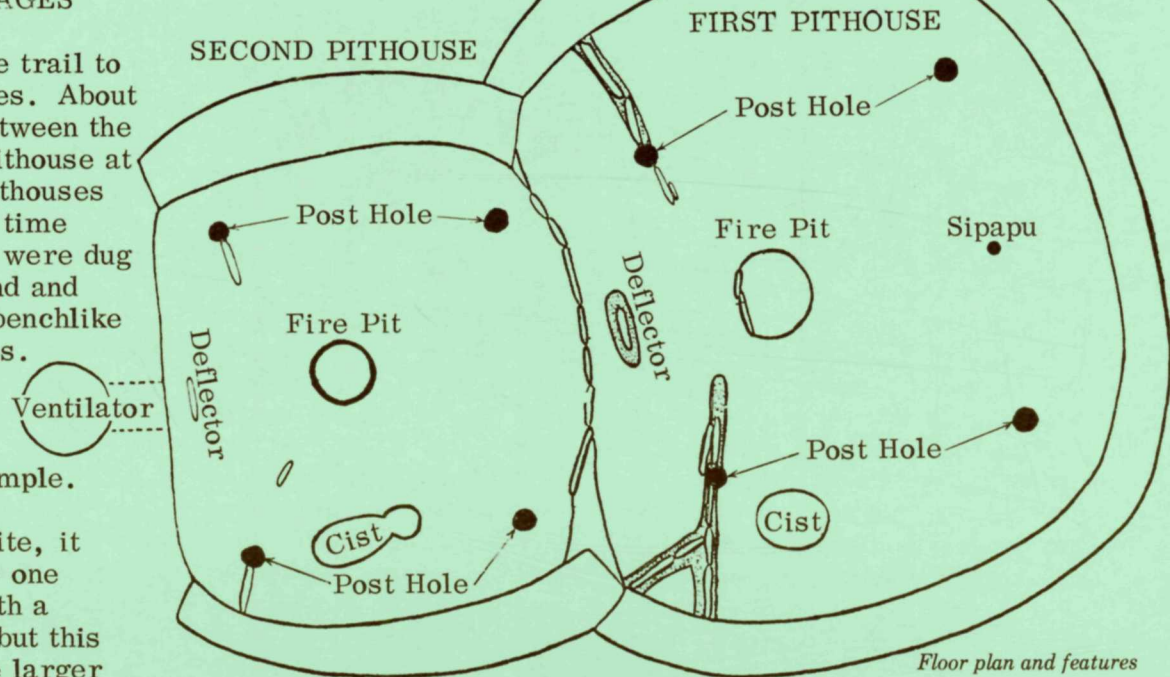


Square Tower House

PITHOUSES AND EARLY PUEBLO VILLAGES

4 Please follow the trail to the deep pithouses. About 100 years elapsed between the construction of the pithouse at Stop No. 1 and the pithouses here. Notice that as time passed the pithouses were dug deeper into the ground and contained a definite benchlike shelf around the walls. The other features of the pithouses remain the same as in the earlier example.

As you look at this site, it appears that there is one giant-sized house with a large antechamber, but this is *not* the case. The larger room is the first pithouse which was built in A.D. 674. For some reason this pithouse was destroyed by fire.



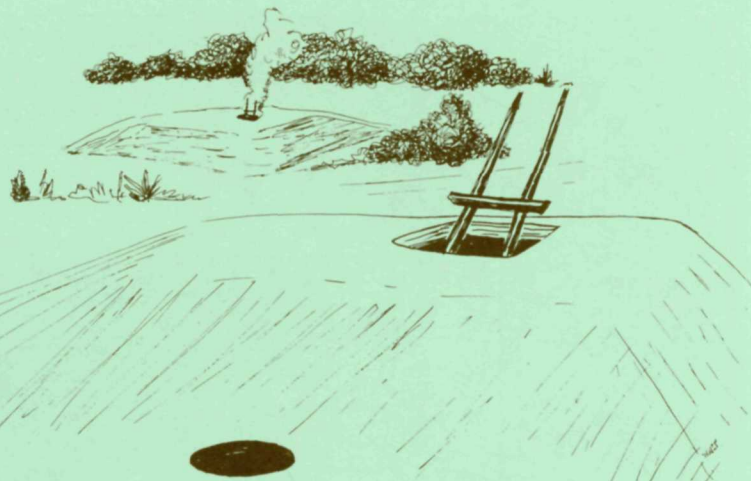
A second smaller pithouse was constructed shortly after the first one was destroyed. Dirt dug out for the new house was thrown into the depression

where the first house had been.

The curved row of sandstone slabs served as reinforcement to prevent the remains of the

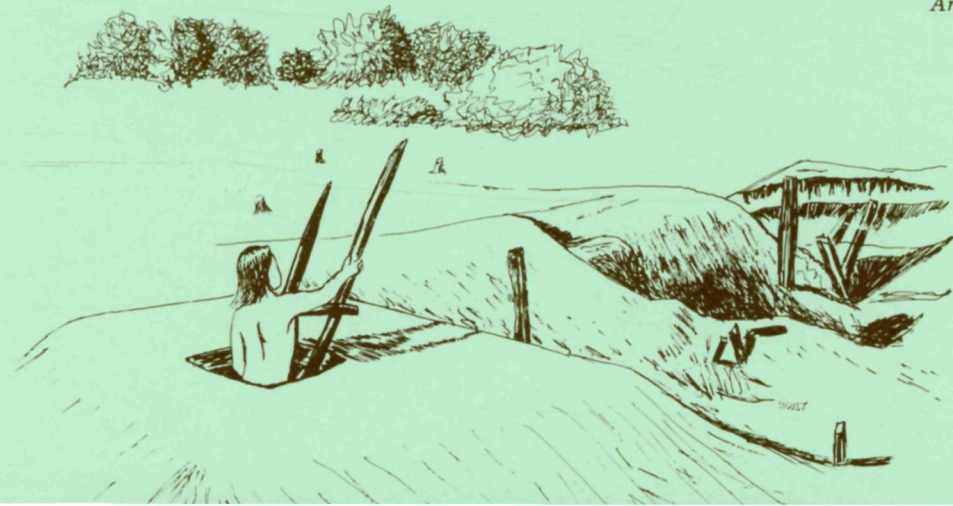
earlier house wall from collapsing into the later pit house.

At this time, one important change occurred in the pit-house construction. Instead of



The second pithouse extended into the remains of the first.

Artist's conception of the deep pithouses prior to fire.



building an antechamber to adjoin the living room, a vertical shaft was dug down to floor level. This shaft acted as a ventilator to allow air into the house. (It is a feature which appears from this time forward).

PUEBLO VILLAGE

5 As you proceed along the trail, notice the large mound of dirt removed from the semi-subterranean structures ahead. Over the course of years, dirt and vegetation had completely covered this site. Prior to excavation the area would have appeared similar to the surrounding pinyon-juniper forest.

By A.D. 850 the Indians had entered what we call the Developmental Pueblo Period during which time the pithouse evolved to a totally surface dwelling, the pueblo. Very little of the shallow slab-lined pits were beneath the ground surface. Walls consisted of poles set upright with smaller sticks and branches woven in between them and covered by a layer of mud. Rooms adjoined each other to form an arc or crescent-shaped pattern.

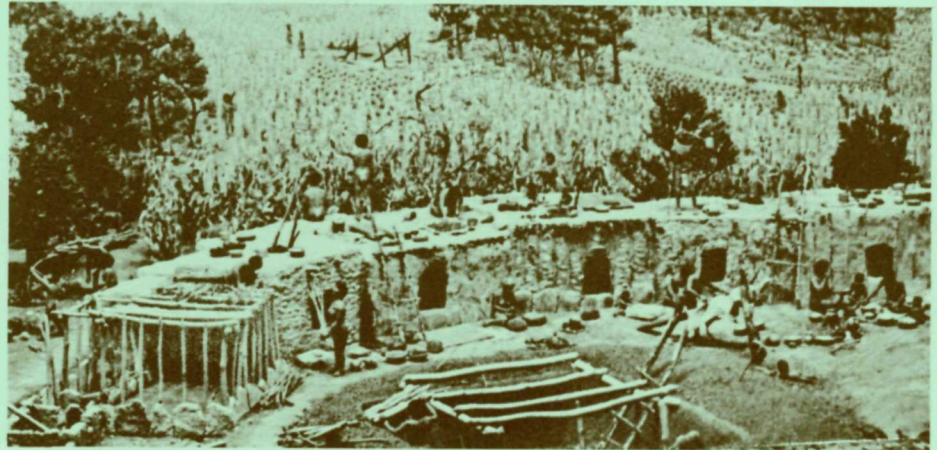
A number of such villages have been found at Mesa Verde.

These houses were heated by small fireplaces in the floor. The use of so much wood in their wall construction made these villages easily susceptible to fire, and sometime after 850 this village burned.

Archeologists cannot explain why around A.D. 800 the Anasazi turned to surface units
Developmental Pueblo village

and no longer constructed pithouses. Pithouses were easy to heat and probably provided comfortable living quarters. Perhaps their darkness fostered certain health problems.

The two deep pit rooms behind you belonged to the slab-lined village. They have many features of the pithouse but were dug much deeper and were square in shape.

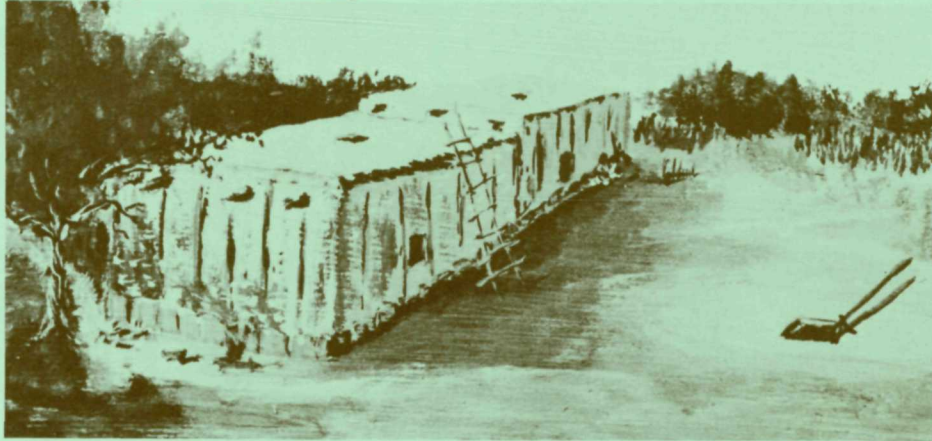


A.D. 950 VILLAGE

They would have had a ground level roof and a central rectangular opening with a ladder for entry into the room. Smoke from the fire would have escaped through this opening. Both rooms have ventilators.

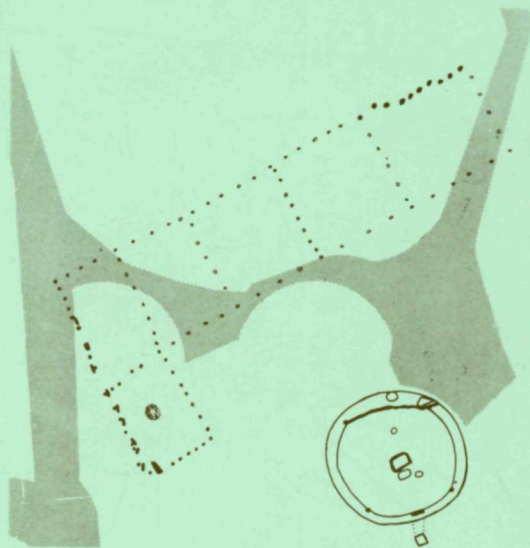
6 Beyond the deep pit rooms used for domestic purposes, you can see the remains of a small village dating about A.D. 950. By this time the houses were entirely surface structures of several rooms built together. Unshaped stone blocks replaced the slabs and were held together by mud forming poorly made houses.

Artist's conception of A.D. 950 village



The kiva, or ceremonial room, emerged in place of the pit-house. The kiva here is the earliest type. Features such as the bench, firepit, and ventilator survived from pit-house times. The four stone pillars on the kiva bench acted as supports for logs which formed the roof. The people made no attempt to use stone elsewhere in kiva construction.

As in previous sites, the Indians continued to farm on the mesa surrounding their homes. Beans were acquired during this period to supplement the crops of corn and squash. A slow but gradual process of cultural advancement had occurred over the 300 years since the Indians built the pit-house you saw at Stop No. 1. By now the bow and arrow was replacing the atlatl as a major hunting weapon.



FIRST VILLAGE

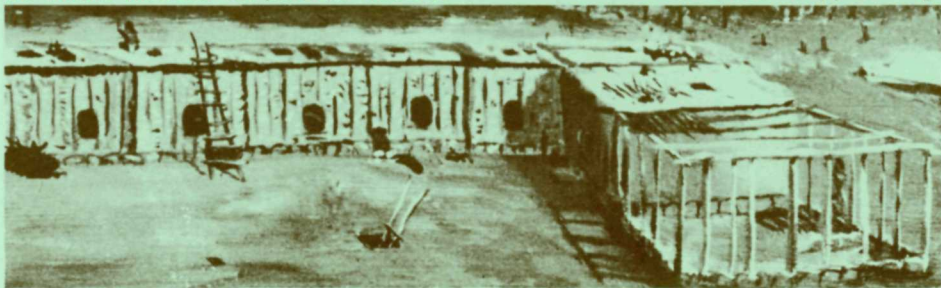


It is common practice around the world for people to build homes in places where

other people have lived earlier. This is exactly what happened at this site. Three different villages and time periods are represented here making it a difficult site to interpret. Please follow the trail in sequence to fully appreciate the course of events.

The first village consisted of a post and adobe walled structure. The only visual indications of this village are the row of charred posts sticking out of the ground to the right, and the kiva to the far left. The village was "L" shaped with the kiva located in front of it.

Artist's rendition of first village



Notice that instead of stone roof supports, four posts anchored the roof of this kiva. Because the village burned there is little evidence of this first village left on the surface.

SAME SITE A.D. 1000

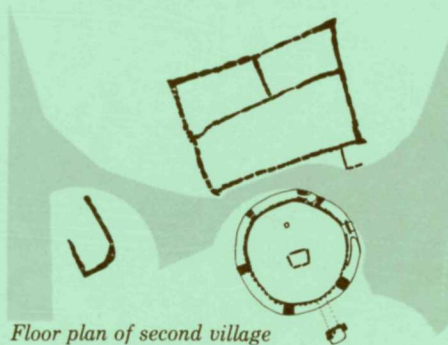
The second village was a small, single course masonry walled unit which partially covered the old post and adobe pueblo. (Single course masonry consists of a single row of stones cemented together with mud. Double course masonry involved two rows of stones placed next to each other). Three attached rooms, a separate room to the left, and a kiva in front comprised this village. Notice that there is some rough shaping of stones in these rooms indicating an improvement in masonry techniques.



Artist's rendition of second village

The kiva just to the left of the masonry rooms was associated with this second village. Six stone supports (pilasters) and some masonry facing around the bench (banquette) represent advancements over the earlier kivas. You can see that the ventilator is located within the earlier abandoned kiva.

Bottom soil in the more recent kiva is whitish in color whereas in the older kiva, you can see red soil along the bottom with whitish dirt on top of it. The people who built the second kiva dumped most of their soil into the earlier abandoned kiva.



Floor plan of second village

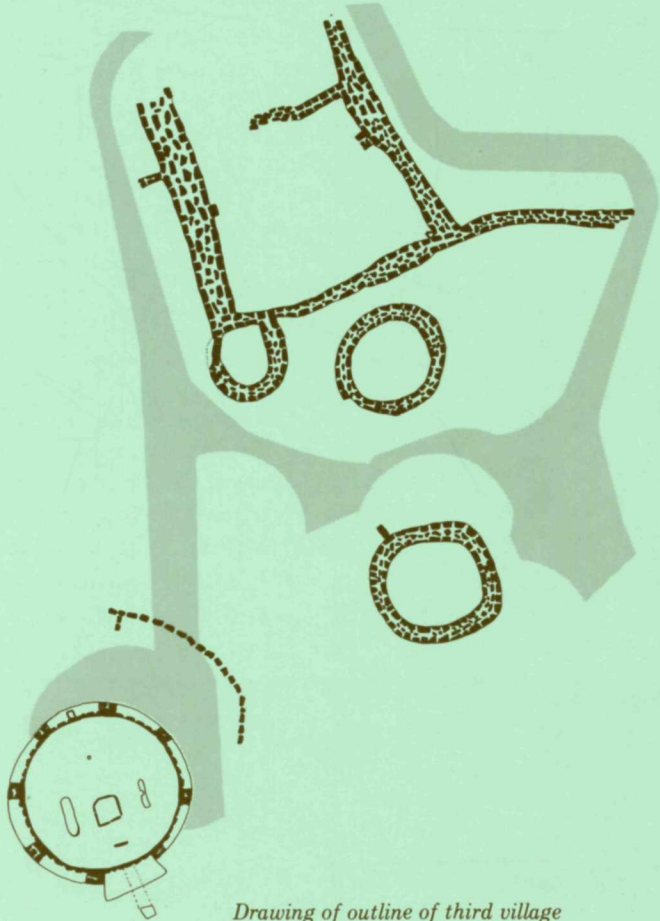
SAME SITE A.D. 1075

The double coursed stone foundations, the circular room above the single course walls of the second village, and the circular rooms above the two kivas form part of the

third village of this site. The round structures are towers which served as lookouts for the inhabitants. When these people lived here much of the pinyon/juniper forest had been cleared for farm lands as well as for timber for construction purposes. Visibility would have been much greater than it is today. Only one tree ring date of A.D. 1074 was found here, but pottery analysis from this village helps to confirm that date.

The significant change in architecture from single to double course masonry and the appearance of towers in this third village indicate to the archeologist that this was probably the beginning of a time of tension and trouble. The thicker walls and lookout towers both illustrate definite defensive characteristics.

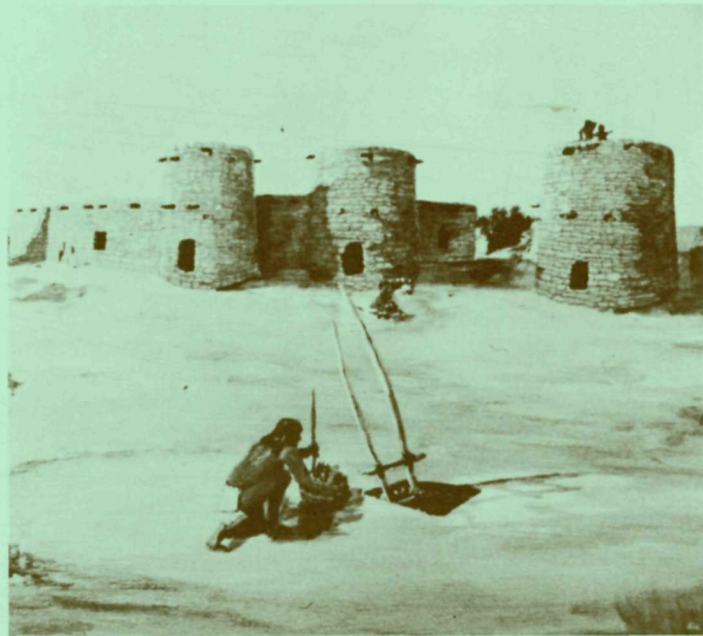
Please proceed to the large



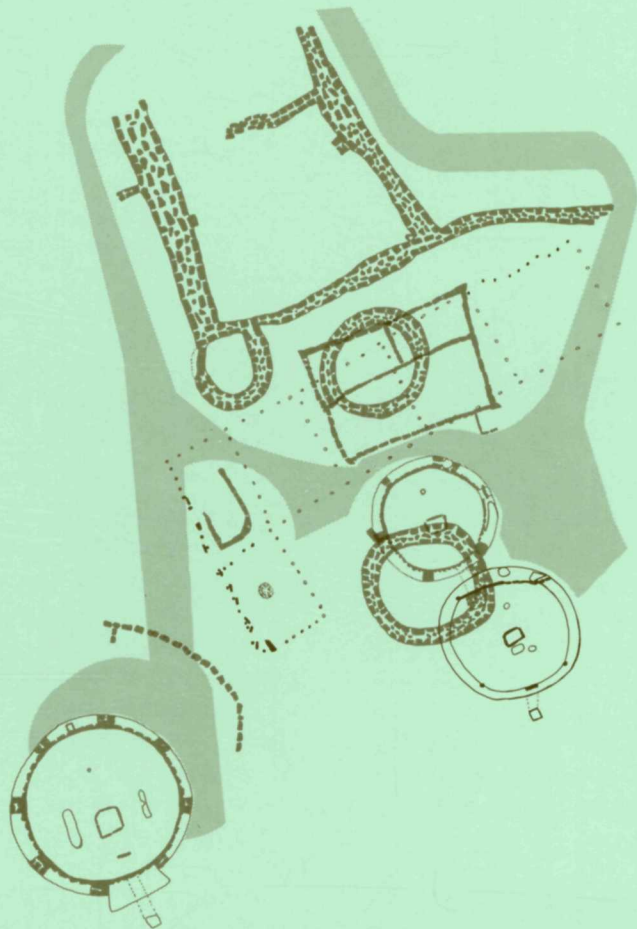
Drawing of outline of third village

kiva under the last room shelter. This kiva was associated with the third village. It differs from many Mesa Verde kivas in its larger size and has 8 pilasters instead of the usual six. The extra pilasters were necessary to

The third and last village of this complex site.



help support the large roof.
Two oblong pits on each side
of the fireplace may have had
animal skins stretched over
them for use as a foot drum.
More stone was used around
the kiva walls to keep the soil
from sloughing into the kiva.



Drawing showing all three sites as they overlap.

SUN POINT PUEBLO

8 Sun Point Pueblo, dating about A.D. 1200, is representative of the last stage of mesa top development. At one time this village may have had as many as 30 rooms although only about 15 room outlines are visible today. Perhaps 50 people lived in this village.

This site is important because for the first time the kiva occupied the central plaza area within the village. The kiva is connected to the round tower by a small tunnel. This tower probably served as a lookout. The kiva location supports the idea that peaceful farmers were worried about possible enemies. Placing the kiva within the village meant that there was less chance of enemies surprising the men inside.

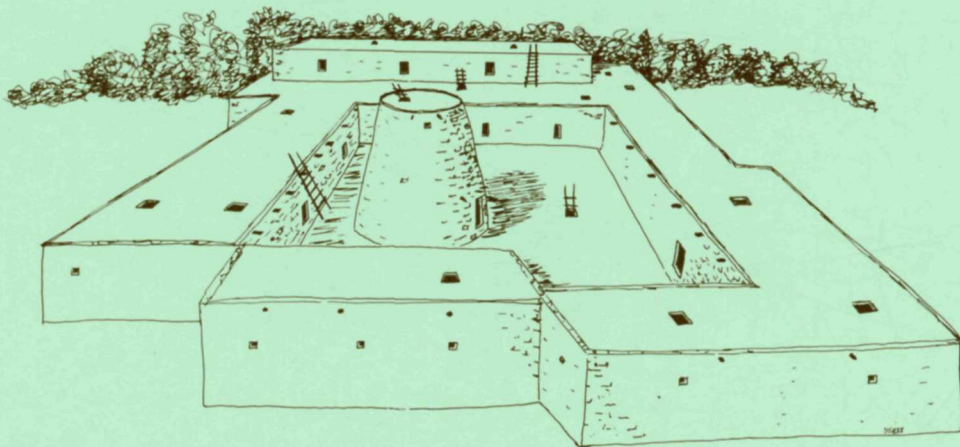
Sun Point Pueblo was not occupied for any great period of time. In the late 1100's and early 1200's the Indians began moving off the mesa top into the stone alcoves to construct cliff dwellings. You might wonder what became of the stones used in the construction of this house. The Indians carried stones as well as the wooden timbers of the roofs down into the caves to

Artist's rendition of Sun Point Pueblo

be used in building their new homes.

The tower section is the highest standing wall left in the village. Apparently it was the last section of the village to be dismantled. As the stones were removed the falling mortar covered the lower foundation of the tower.

This site marks the last period of construction on the mesa-tops.



SUN POINT OVERLOOK

9 Sun Point is one of the best viewpoints in Mesa Verde due to its central location in a concentration of ruins that was a focal point of Anasazi activity during the 13th century. To the left is Fewkes Canyon which contains four major ruins. The canyon was named after Dr. Jesse Walter Fewkes who did much of the early excavation work for the Smithsonian Institution. Across the canyon is Sun Temple, and to the distant right is Cliff Palace, largest of the Mesa Verde cliff dwellings. To the right, high above the bottom of Cliff Canyon, is Sunset House.

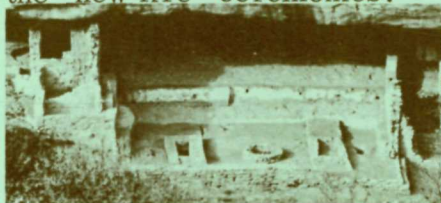
OAK TREE HOUSE

10 Oak Tree House overlook offers a good view of this house with its 50 rooms and 6 kivas. Dr. Fewkes found few artifacts during its excavation

because early relic hunters had removed many objects.

FIRE TEMPLE AND NEW FIRE HOUSE

11 Fire Temple and New Fire House overlook is of special interest. Fire Temple's oblong plaza originally had more light brown and cream colored plaster upon which pictures of men, plants, animals and geometric designs were painted. Such elements are found in present day Hopi ceremonial rooms related to the "new fire" ceremonies.



Fire Temple

At nearby New Fire House the upper level could only be reached by a ladder and a hand and toe hold trail.

SUN TEMPLE A.D. 1200

12 According to modern Pueblo Indians, Sun Temple's features classify it as a ceremonial structure. The symetrically planned "D" shaped building was never completed, yet its size alone points to the amount of labor which went into its construction. Based upon the amount of fallen stone removed during excavation, the walls probably were between 11 and 14 feet high. Notice the excellent masonry. The stones were shaped and given a "dimpled" flat surface by the Indian masons. Work on the structure apparently stopped when the Anasazi began abandoning Mesa Verde around A.D. 1276. The purpose of the concrete on top of the walls is to prevent moisture from going into the rubble that had been placed between the walls.

At the southwest corner of Sun Temple there is an eroded stone next to the wall with three small indentations that may have served as a form of sun dial to mark the change of seasons. Although never completed Sun Temple reflects a very great construction effort by the prehistoric Anasazi, its location in a beautiful setting.

Sun Temple Courtesy Mesa Verde Company

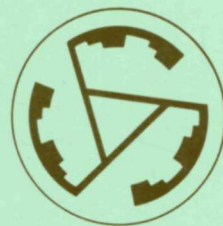


OTHER PLACES TO VISIT:

The various cliff dwellings represent the Classic Period of Pueblo development at Mesa Verde. The east loop of the Ruins Road leads to Cliff Palace and along a scenic drive to Balcony House. These ruins and others may be visited according to tour schedules in effect at the time of your visit.

CEDAR TREE TOWER (1/2 mile north of Museum contains a small tower and kiva. FAR VIEW RUINS (4 miles north of museum) A series of mesa-top villages and a large prehistoric reservoir.

PLEASE HELP PRESERVE
THE RUINS AT MESA VERDE
SO FUTURE GENERATIONS
MAY ENJOY THEM TOO.



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