



The People of Pecos

At midpoint in a passage through the southern end of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the ruins of a Pecos pueblo and Spanish mission share a small ridge. Long before Spaniards entered this country this village commanded the trade path between Pueblo farmers of the Rio Grande and hunting tribes of the buffalo plains. Its 2,000 inhabitants could marshal 500 fighting men. Its frontier location brought both war and trade. At trade fairs here Plains tribes—mostly nomadic Apaches—brought slaves, buffalo hides, flint, and shells to exchange for pottery, crops, textiles, and turquoise of the river Pueblos. The Pecos Indians were middlemen, transmitters and partakers of the goods and cultures of the very different people on either side of the mountains. They became economically powerful and practiced in the arts and customs of two worlds.

Cultural blendings did not change the essence of their life. The Pecos Indians remained Puebloan in culture, practicing an ancient agricultural tradition borne north from Mexico by the

seeds of sacred corn. By the late Pueblo period—the last few centuries before the Spaniards arrived in the Southwest—people in this valley had congregated in multi-storied towns overlooking the streams and fields that nourished their crops. In the 1400s these groups gathered into Pecos pueblo, which became a regional power.

A Spanish conquistador described the pueblo in 1584: on a "high and narrow hill, enclosed on both sides by two streams and many trees. The hill itself is cleared of trees . . . It has the greatest and best buildings of these provinces and is most thickly settled. . . . They possess quantities of maize, cotton, beans, and squash. [The pueblo] is enclosed and protected by a wall and large houses, and by tiers of walkways which look out on the countryside. On these they keep their offensive and defensive arms: bows, arrows, shields, spears, and war clubs."

Before the Spaniards

First to settle here were pre-pueblo people who lived in pithouses about 800. Around 1100, the first Puebloans began building their rock-and-mud villages in the valley. Two dozen villages rose here over the next two centuries, including one where Pecos pueblo stands today. Sometime in the 14th century the settlement patterns changed dramatically. Within one generation small villages were abandoned and

Pecos pueblo grew larger. By 1450 it had become a well planned frontier fortress five stories high with a population of 2,000. Why this sudden growth? Perhaps they had to gather on a rocky ridge to free up land for farming. More likely they needed defense against newly arrived Plains Indians. Whatever the reason, Pecos soon became a force to be reckoned with.

Land and Life

The land around the pueblo was a storehouse of natural products the Pecos knew intimately. They used virtually every plant for food, clothing, shelter, or medicine and turned every part of the game they hunted into something useful.

Farming supplied most of their diet. The staple crops were the usual trio of corn, beans, and squash cultivated along Glorieta Creek and the

area's many drainages. Water was as important to the Pecos as to us. They built check dams to slow the runoff of rain and grew their crops where topsoil collected. Yields were apparently considerable. In 1541 Coronado found the pueblo store-rooms piled high with corn, a three-year supply by one estimate.



▲ Pueblos, Plains Indians, and Spaniards swap goods during an autumn trade fair in this view of Pecos pueblo about 1625

by artist Louis S. Glanzman. Its location beside a natural corridor across the mountains made Pecos a meeting ground

for three cultures—Indian, Spanish and Anglo—that have shaped the American Southwest.

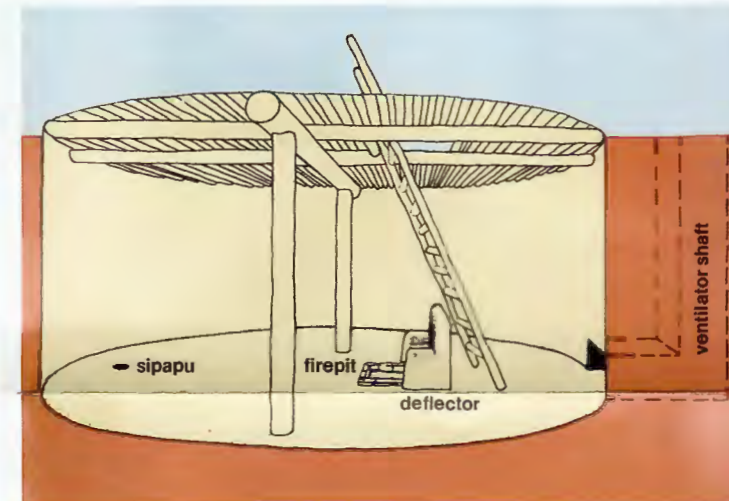
Like other Pueblo groups the Pecos enjoyed a rich cultural tradition with inventive architecture and beautiful crafts. Their elaborate religious life, evidenced by many ceremonial kivas, reached out to the nurturing spirits of all things, animate and inanimate. Their finely tuned adjustments to their natural and cultivated world rested on a practical science infused with spirituality. By story and dance tradition-bearers conveyed the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of centuries past. Regulation of individual, family, and social life stemmed from a religion that bound all things together and counseled balance, harmony, and fitness as the highest ideals.

Ideals did not always prevail. Warfare between Pueblo groups was fairly common. The frontier people of Pecos had to be vigilant with nomadic Plains Indians, whose intent—trade or war—could be unpredictable. Neighboring pueblos viewed the Pecos as dominant. The Spaniards soon learned that the Pecos could be determined enemies or powerful allies.

Trade

Location, power, and the ability to supply needed goods made Pecos a major trade center on the eastern flank of the Puebloan world. Pecos Indians bartered crops, clothing, and pottery with Apaches and later with Spaniards and Comanches for buffalo products, alibates flint for cutting tools, and slaves. These Plains goods were in turn swapped west to other pueblos for pottery, parrot feathers, turquoise, and other items. Trading could go

quickly or take weeks. Rings left by tips set up for long spells of bartering are still visible in the area. Uneasy relationships between Pueblos and the Plains tribes made hostilities a continual threat. The rock wall circling the pueblo, a relic from trading days, was too low to serve a defensive purpose. It was probably a boundary other tribes were not allowed to cross.



Kiva

Kivas are special places to Puebloan people. These ceremonial and social spaces are located between the underground, where the people originated, and the world above, where they live now. Architecturally kivas derive from semi-subterranean pithouses that preceded the surface houseblocks of later Pueblo times. Spiritually the kivas represent a step back toward the people's origins, allowing closer communion with the spirits of the underworld.

Shapes and sizes of kivas vary. Common to most are the ventilator shaft, deflector, firepit, and sipapu, the hole in the floor that symbolizes the place of humans' emergence and point of access to spirits dwelling below.

Large pueblos such as Pecos have many kivas used, as in the modern pueblos, by different clans or societies. Each performed ceremonies and rituals attuned to a specific spirit or power that in turn granted or denied the needs of the pueblo's life: for abun-

dant crops, plentiful rain, good hunting, health, success in war. Kiva ceremonies, rituals, and offerings formed a mosaic of duties by the people to the spirits. If the duties were not performed the world would become unbalanced, and the life of the people would suffer. No wonder the Franciscan fathers could not stamp out the kiva.



George H. H. Huey photos

Encounters with the Spaniards

The idea of a "new" Mexico, another land of great cities weighted with gold, appealed to the latecomers who thronged Mexico City after the conquests of the Aztecs and Incas. These ambitious seekers needed only direction. Shipwrecked Cabeza de Vaca stumbled back into Mexico in 1536 after wandering over New Spain's northern frontier. His tales of rich cities farther north combined with tantalizing legends—of lost bishops and their seven cities out somewhere in the wilds—to provide that direction. This was the vision quest Francisco Vasquez de Coronado pursued in 1540.

Leading an army of 1,200 Coronado made his way into the country north of Mexico. Six months into the march he rode into a cluster of Zuni pueblos, Cibola, near present-day Gallup. He attacked the Zuni at Hawikuh, taking over that principal town and its food stores for his famished soldiers. At Cicuyé—later called Pecos—150 miles east the reception was different. The Indians welcomed the Spaniards with music and gifts. A Plains Indian captive at Pecos told of a rich land to the east, Quivira, and Coronado set out in spring 1541 to find it. Wandering as far as Kansas he found only a few villages. His Indian guide confessed he lured the army onto the plains to die, and Coronado had him strangled. The expedition turned back. After a bleak winter along the Rio Grande the broken army went back to Mexico empty-handed, harassed by Indians most

of the way. In Coronado's sojourn the Pecos Indians and their Pueblo neighbors had felt the wrath of a powerful world. They had seen the gray-clad priests plant crosses for their gods. But the strangers went away, and the Pueblos settled back into their old ways.

Colonizers and Missionaries Nearly 60 years now passed before Spaniards came to New Mexico to stay. New Spain's frontier had slowly advanced with the discovery of silver in northern Mexico. In 1581 explorers began prospecting for silver in the land of the Pueblos. Their failures foreshadowed a truth that determined much of Spanish New Mexico's history: that province held neither golden cities nor ready riches. But the fact that settlers could farm and herd there focused the joint strategies of Cross and Crown: Pueblo Indians would be converted and their lands colonized.

First to pursue this mixed objective was Don Juan de Oñate in 1598. Taking settlers, livestock, and 10 Franciscans he marched north to claim for Spain the land across the Rio Grande. He assigned a friar immediately to Pecos, richest and most powerful New Mexico pueblo. The new religion got off to a shaky start. After episodes of idol-smashing and consequent Indian resentment, the Franciscans in 1621 assigned veteran missionary Fray Andrés Juárez to Pecos. He came as a healer and builder. Under his direction the Pecos built an adobe

church south of the pueblo. It was the most imposing of New Mexico's mission churches, with towers, buttresses, and great pine-log beams hauled from the mountains.

The ministry of Fray Juárez (1621-34) coincided with the most energetic mission period in New Mexico, now a royal colony. It marked a time of mission building and expansion under Franciscan leadership. This success bred conflict between church and civil officials vying for the Pueblo Indians' labor, tribute, and loyalty. Their struggles came down on Indian heads as religious and economic repression.

War and Reconquest Decades of Spanish demands and Indian resentments climaxed in the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Indians in the scattered pueblos united to drive the Spaniards back into Mexico. At Pecos loyal Indians warned the local priest, but most followed a tribal elder in revolt. They killed the priest and destroyed the church. In a gesture central to their discontent, the Pecos Indians built a forbidden kiva in the very convento of the mission.

Twelve years later, led by Diego de Vargas the Spaniards came back to their lost province—peacefully in some places but with the sword in others. Vargas expected fighting at Pecos, but opinion had shifted. The Indians welcomed Vargas back and supplied 140 warriors to help him retake Santa Fe. A smaller church

built on the ruins of the old was the first mission reestablished after the Reconquest, and most Pecos sustained Spanish rule until it ended.

In return the Franciscans moderated their zeal. Tribute was abolished. As allies and traders the Pecos became partners in a relaxed Spanish-Pueblo community. But by the 1780s disease, Comanche raids, and migration reduced the population of Pecos to fewer than 300. Long-standing internal divisions—between those loyal to the Church and things Spanish and those who clung to the old ways—may have contributed to this once powerful city-state's decline. The function of Pecos as a trade center faded as Spanish colonists, now protected from the Comanches by treaties, established new towns to the east. Pecos was almost a ghost town when the Santa Fe Trail trade began flowing past in 1821. The last survivors left a decaying pueblo and empty mission church in 1838 to join Towa-speaking relatives 80 miles west at Jemez pueblo, where their descendants live today.

The encounter between Pueblo and Spanish cultures brought exchanges of food, clothing, weapons, animals, and technology that were beneficial to both. Illustration by Louis S. Glanzman.



A.V. Kidder, Pecos, and Southwestern Archeology

The mysterious ruins of Pecos inspired much romantic speculation by Santa Fe travelers, who veered from the main trail to camp here. The "ancient flame of Moctezuma" burned in a hidden recess. Somewhere the "feathered serpent of the Aztecs" was coiled. These stories vanished when archeologist Alfred Vincent Kidder began to excavate the site in 1915.

Kidder came to Pecos to test his theory of dating by stratigraphy against its great trash mounds. "There is . . . no known ruin in the Southwest," he said, "which seems to have been lived in continuously for so long a period." Kidder knew that a site's bottom layers would naturally be its oldest. From changes

in pottery and the other remains layer by layer, he should be able to date sites, relatively if not absolutely, and to work out the general time sequence of many Southwestern sites.

Kidder spent 12 field seasons at Pecos that laid the groundwork for Southwestern archeology as a new science. The great trash mound on the pueblo's east side, which seemed to be a natural part of the ridge at first, proved a time capsule. Trenching into it Kidder found centuries of discards in exact chronological order, a trove of scientific data.

With no sophisticated dating technology Kidder identified the periods of occupation at Pecos through changes

in pottery styles and techniques. In 1927 he invited archeologists who were working at sites throughout the Southwest to Pecos to develop a classification system to help identify the cultural development of Southwestern peoples. Their system, Basketmaker and Pueblo, is still used. The Pecos Conference remains an important annual meeting for Southwestern archeologists.

Kidder dealt in more than the chronology. He pieced together a picture of ancient life here. His work and the work that followed help us to understand the powerful, complex people who flourished for centuries in this spacious valley.

Visiting the Park



Pecos National Historical Park is 25 miles southeast of Santa Fe, N. Mex., off I-25. If traveling north on I-25, exit at Pecos-Glorieta interchange 299, go east on N.M. 50 to the town of Pecos, and turn south on N.M. 63. The park is two miles south. If traveling south on I-25, exit at Rowe interchange 307 and go north on N.M. 63 for five miles to the park entrance. No public transportation serves the park.

The Pecos site embraces 1,000 years of human history. For an introduction make your first stop the visitor center and see the film and exhibits. In summer American Indians and Hispanics demonstrate traditional crafts.

Tours Guided tours are not regularly scheduled, but groups can arrange in advance for a guided tour by calling 505-757-6032.

Ruins Trail A 1¼-mile self-guiding trail starts at the visitor center and winds through the ruins of Pecos Pueblo and the Mission Church. You are invited to enter the two reconstructed kivas. Get a trail guide at the visitor center.

Accommodations The park has no overnight lodging, but the town of Pecos, two miles north of the park, has two small inns, and a guest ranch 21 miles north operates in summer. Write for information.

Camping No camping is permitted in the park. The nearest camping is in Santa Fe National Forest, just north of the park. For information, write to: Santa Fe National Forest, Pecos District Ranger Station, Box 429, Pecos, NM 87552 or call 505-757-6121.

Access The visitor center and 80 percent of the Ruins Trail are accessible by wheelchair. A signed version of the park film is shown on request.

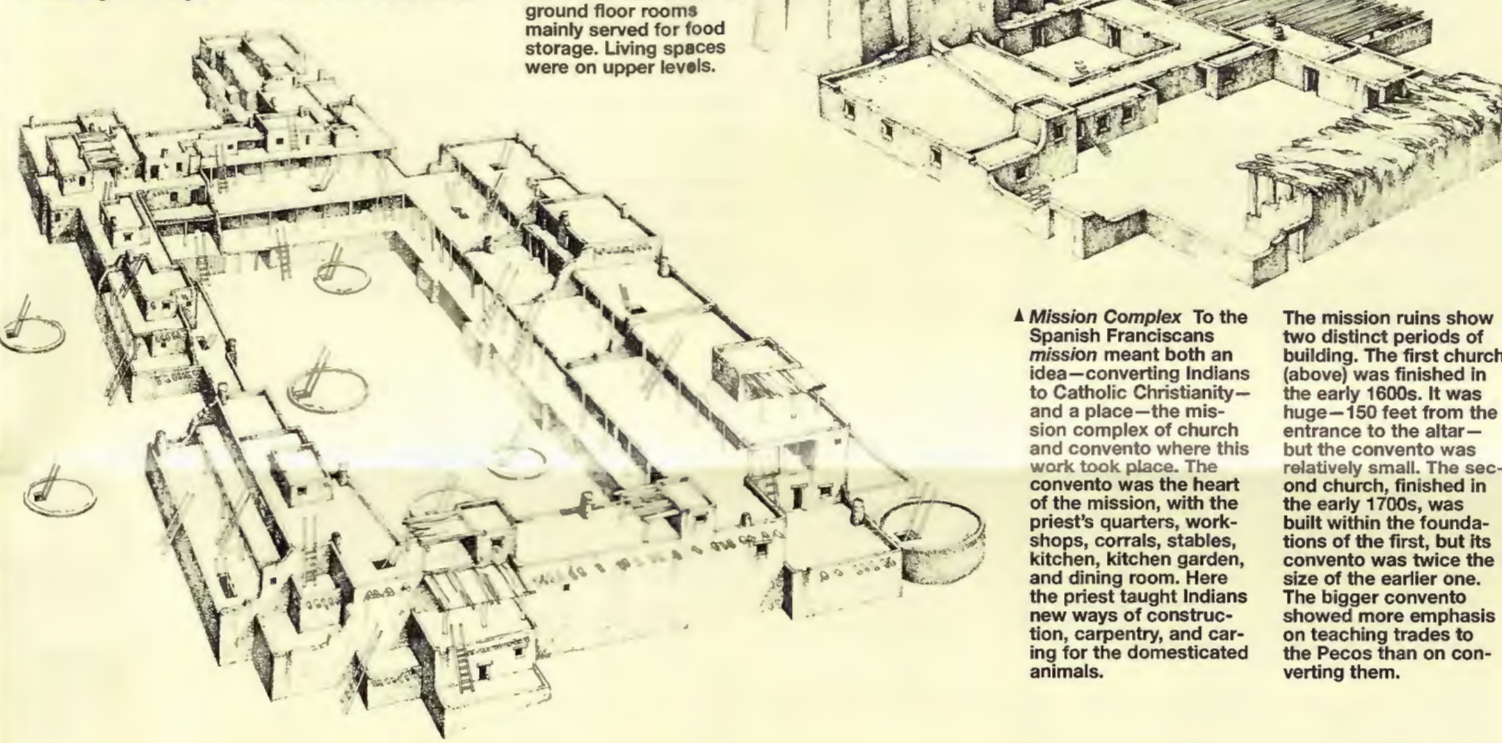
The Way it Was

North Pueblo Pecos Pueblo enjoyed its peak of power and influence from 1450 to 1550. In 1591 a Spanish visitor wrote: "The houses of this pueblo are arranged in the form of house blocks . . . four and five stories high. . . . They use

light ladders that can be pulled up by hand. Every house has . . . 15 or 16 rooms. . . . neat and thoroughly whitewashed." No one knows precisely what either the north or south pueblo looked like, but thanks to Kidder and to other arche-

ologists we can speculate on their form and extent. This conception of the north pueblo with its few openings in the outer wall suggests that it was built for defense. The pueblo was built with shaped stone plastered over with mud. The ground floor rooms mainly served for food storage. Living spaces were on upper levels.

Drawings by Lawrence Ormsby



Mission Complex To the Spanish Franciscans mission meant both an idea—converting Indians to Catholic Christianity—and a place—the mission complex of church and convento where this work took place. The convento was the heart of the mission, with the priest's quarters, workshops, corrals, stables, kitchen, kitchen garden, and dining room. Here the priest taught Indians new ways of construction, carpentry, and caring for the domesticated animals.

The mission ruins show two distinct periods of building. The first church (above) was finished in the early 1600s. It was huge—150 feet from the entrance to the altar—but the convento was relatively small. The second church, finished in the early 1700s, was built within the foundations of the first, but its convento was twice the size of the earlier one. The bigger convento showed more emphasis on teaching trades to the Pecos than on converting them.

Administration

For more information contact: Superintendent, Pecos National Historical Park, P.O. Box 418, Pecos, NM 87552-0418; 505-757-6032 or visit www.nps.gov/peco on the Internet. The park is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except January 1 and December 25.

Regulations All natural and cultural features in the park are protected by law. Please do not remove or disturb any artifact. Centuries-old ruins walls are fragile: do not climb, sit, or lean on them.

Pets are allowed on the Ruins Trail if on a leash but are prohibited in park buildings.

For your safety The elevation at Pecos is 7,000 feet; use caution if you are not used to the altitude. Rattlesnakes are sometimes found along park trails in summer. Please do not disturb them; report sightings to a ranger.

The Park of the Future

The park has been part of the National Park System since 1965. It was formerly Pecos National Monument. New lands Congress authorized in 1990 greatly expand the park's scope and mission. Forked Lightning Ranch adds 5,500 acres around the core park, including 1½ miles of the Pecos River, several early Puebloan sites, a 19th-century Spanish

frontier settlement, Santa Fe Trail ruins, and the old Kozlowski's Stage Station, a tavern and watering stop on the Trail. Two nearby 300-acre tracts preserve the sites of the Civil War action at Glorieta Pass in March 1862. Some parts of the expanded park area will not be open for public use for several years. The Glorieta units are still largely

privately owned. Please respect owners' rights and do not trespass. Check with a park ranger about facilities and programs open to the public.

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