



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 natu-

ral corridor across the mountains made Pecos a meeting ground for three cultures—Indian,

Spanish and Anglo—that have shaped the American Southwest. ILLUSTRATION BY LOUIS S. GLANZMAN

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."

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 spiri-

tuality. 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.

Before the Spaniards

First to settle here were the pre-pueblo people who lived in pit-houses along drainages about 800. Around 1100, the first Pueblos 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

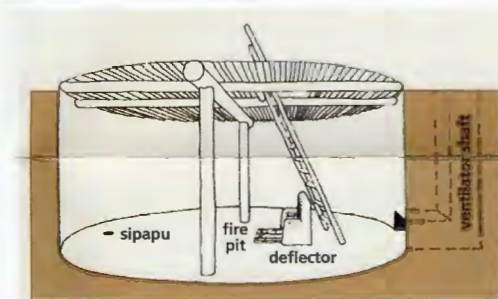
small villages were abandoned and Pecos pueblo grew larger. By 1450 it had become a well planned frontier fortress five stories high with a population of 2,000. Why this sudden growth? Perhaps they had to gather on a rocky ridge to free up land for farming. More likely they needed defense against newly 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. Staple crops were the usual trio of corn, beans, and squash

cultivated along Glorieta Creek and the area's many other 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 storerooms piled high with corn, a three-year supply by one estimate.



KIVAS are special places to Puebloan peoples—ceremonial and social spaces located between the underworld, where the people had their origin, and the world above, where they live now. Kivas are derived from semi-subterranean pit-houses that preceded the surface house-blocks of later Pueblo times. Spiritually the

kivas represent a step back toward the people's origins, allowing a 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 symbolizing the place of humans' emergence and point of access to the spirits dwelling below.

Large pueblos like Pecos have many kivas that are used, as with today's pueblos, by different clans or societies. Each performed its ceremonies and rituals attuned to a specific spirit or power that in turn granted or denied the pueblo's needs for abundant crops, plentiful rain, good hunting, health, success in war.

The kiva ceremonials, rituals, and offerings were a mosaic of the people's duties to the spirits. If they were not performed, the world would become unbalanced, and the life of the people would suffer. It is no wonder the Franciscan fathers could not stamp out the kiva.

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 tipis 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.



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Encounters with the Spaniards

The idea of a new Mexico, another land of great cities weighted with gold, appealed to latecomers who thronged Mexico City after the conquests of the Aztecs and Incas. 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—rich cities farther north, mixed with tantalizing legends of lost bishops and seven cities out in the wilds—gave the direction. In 1540 Francisco Vasquez de Coronado pursued it like a vision quest.

With 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 Zuñi pueblos, Cibola, near present-day Gallup. He attacked the Zuñi at Háwikuh, taking over that main town and its food stores for his famished soldiers. At Cicuyé—later called Pecos—150 miles east the reception was different. The Indians welcomed him with music and gifts. A Plains Indian captive at Pecos told of a rich land to the east, Quivira, and Coronado set out to find it in spring 1541.

Wandering as far as today's Kansas he found but a few villages. His Indian guide confessed that he had lured the army onto the plains to die. Coronado had him strangled. The expedition turned back. After a bleak winter spent along the Rio Grande, the broken army returned to Mexico empty-handed—and was harassed by Indians most of the way. In Coronado the Pecos Indians and their Pueblo neighbors felt the wrath of a powerful world. They saw gray-clad priests plant crosses

for their gods. But the strangers left, and the Pueblos settled back into their old ways.

Colonizers and Missionaries Spaniards did not come to New Mexico to stay for another 60 years. New Spain's frontier had slowly advanced with 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: the province held no golden cities nor ready riches. But the ability of the settlers to farm and to herd there focused the joint strategies of Cross and Crown. Pueblo Indians would be converted; their lands would be colonized.

Don Juan de Oñate was first to pursue this mixed objective, in 1598. Taking settlers, livestock, and 10 Franciscans he marched north to claim for Spain the land across the Rio Grande. Right away he assigned a friar to Pecos, richest and most powerful New Mexico pueblo. The new religion got off to a shaky start. After episodes of idol-smashing provoked Indian resentment, the Franciscans sent veteran missionary Fray Andrés Juárez to Pecos in 1621 as healer and builder. Under his direction the Pecos built an adobe church south of the pueblo, 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 from 1621–34 coincided with the most energetic mission period in New

Mexico, now a royal colony. It was a Franciscan-led time of mission building and expansion. Its success bred conflicts as church and civil officials vied for the Indians' labor, tribute, and loyalty. The Indians suffered the struggles as religious and economic repression.

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

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 him back and supplied 140 warriors to help retake Santa Fe. A smaller church built on the old one's ruins was the first mission reestablished after the Reconquest, and most Pecos sustained Spanish rule until it ended.

For their part 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 had 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 hung on 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, set up new towns to the east. Pecos was almost a ghost town when Santa Fe Trail trade began flowing past it in 1821.

The last survivors left a decaying pueblo and empty mission church in 1838. They joined their Towa-speaking relatives 80 miles west at Jémez pueblo, where their descendants still live today.

The encounter between Pueblo and Spanish cultures brought exchanges of food, clothing,

weapons, animals, and technology that were beneficial to both.

ILLUSTRATION NPS/LOUIS S. GLANZMAN



A.V. Kidder, Pecos, and Southwestern Archeology

Mysterious evidence of buildings at Pecos inspired romantic speculation by Santa Fe travelers who left the main trail to camp here: The ancient flame of Moctezuma burned in a hidden recess; the feathered serpent of the Aztecs lay coiled up here. Such stories vanished as 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. No known Southwest site "seems to have been lived in continuously for so long a period," he said. A site's bottom layers would be its oldest, he knew. As pottery and other remains changed layer by layer, sites should be datable, at least relatively if not absolutely. He could plot the general time sequence of many Southwest sites.

Kidder's 12 field seasons at Pecos formed the basis for Southwestern archeology as a new science. The great trash mound on the pueblo's east side—looking at first like a

natural part of the ridge—proved a time capsule. As he trenched into it Kidder found centuries of discards in exact chronological order. It was a treasure trove of scientific data.

With no sophisticated dating technology Kidder identified the periods of occupation at Pecos by changes in pottery styles and techniques. In 1927 he invited archeologists working at sites across 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, and the Pecos Conference still hosts Southwestern archeologists each year.

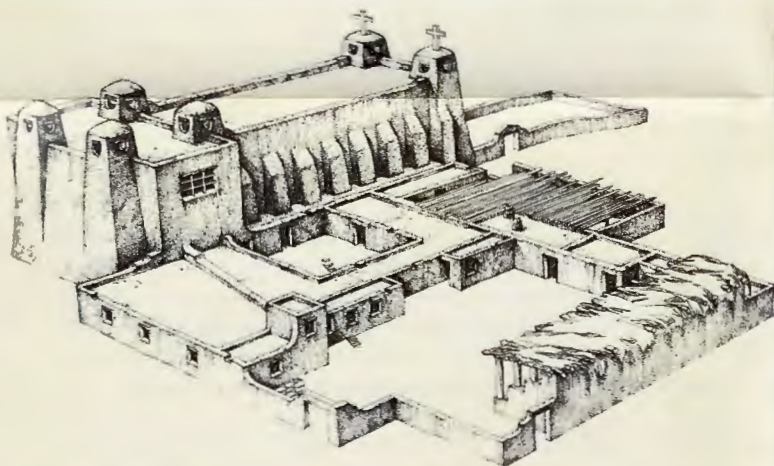
Kidder dealt in more than the site's chronology. He pieced together a picture of ancient life here. His work and work that followed help us to understand the powerful, complex people who flourished for centuries in this spacious valley.

The Way it Was

North Pueblo Pecos Pueblo's peak of power and influence spanned 1450 to 1550. A Spanish visitor in 1591 noted its 15- or 16-room houses arranged in blocks "four and five stories high" with ladders that "can be pulled up by hand." Houses were "neat and thoroughly whitewashed." We don't know precisely what either the north or south pueblo looked like, but

thanks to Kidder and to other archeologists we can speculate. The north pueblo (artist's concept below) has few outer-wall openings and may have been built for defense. The pueblo was built with shaped stone plastered over with mud. Ground floor rooms were mainly for food storage, with living spaces on upper levels.

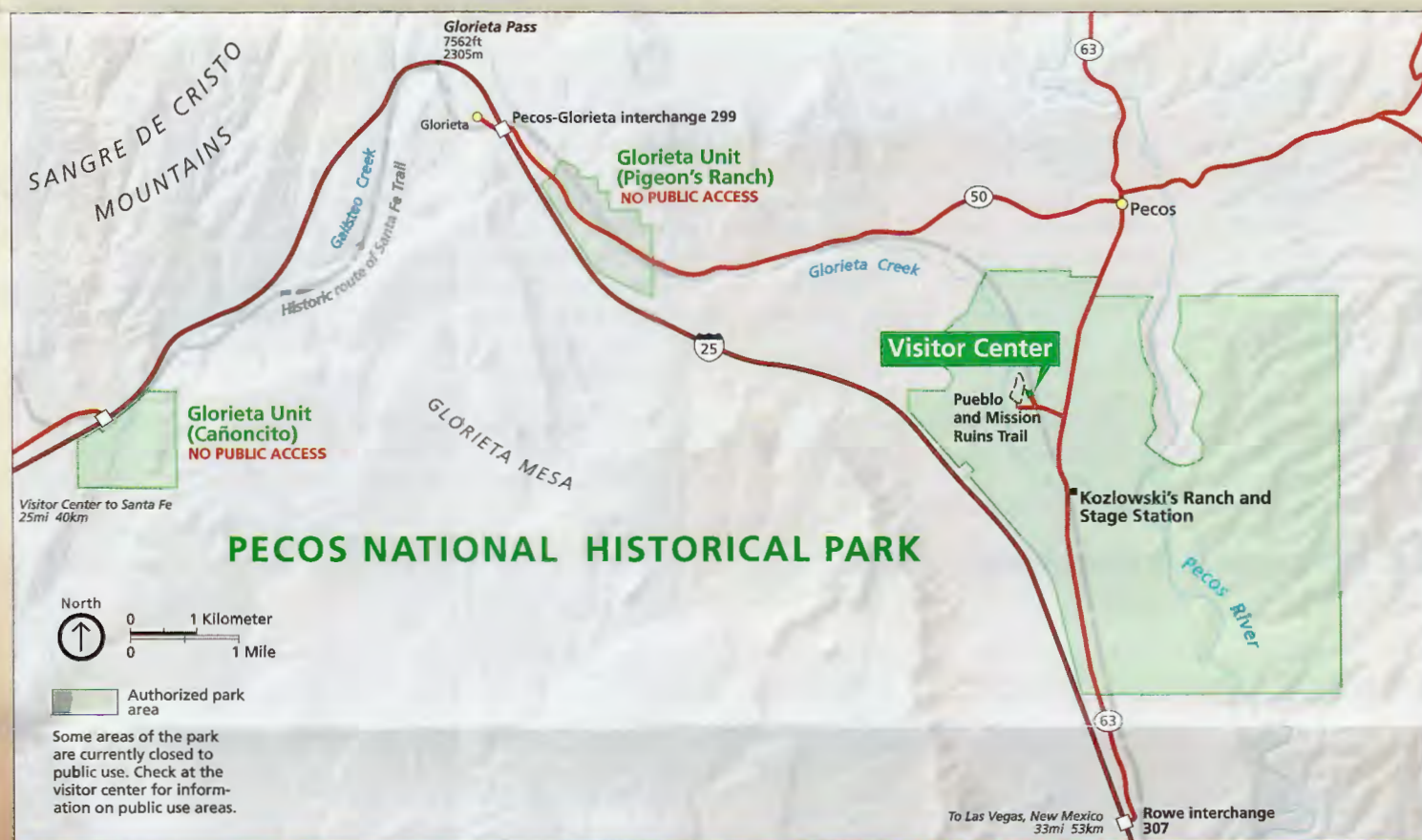
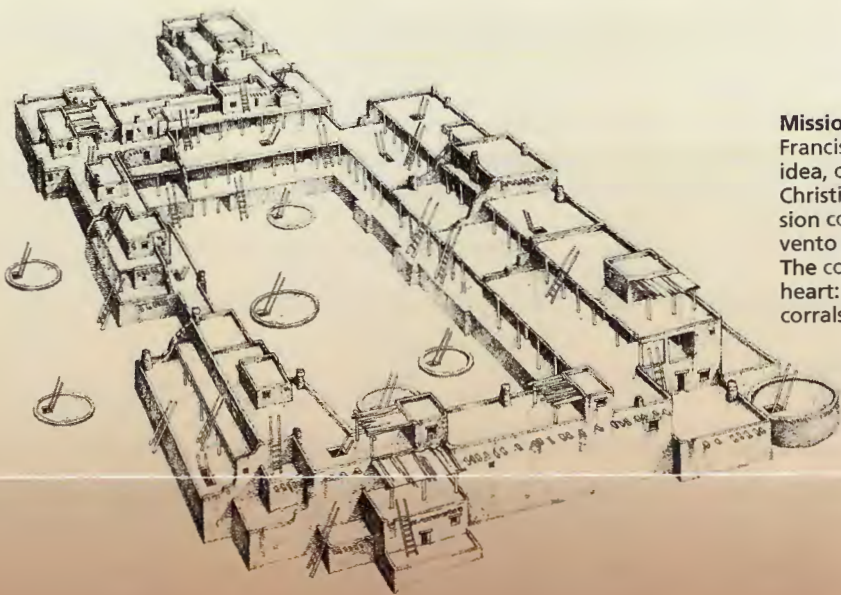
ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAWRENCE ORMSBY



Mission Complex To 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 mission's heart: priest's quarters, workshops, corals, stables, kitchen, kitchen

garden, and dining room. Here the priest taught Indians new ways of building, carpentry, and caring for livestock. There were two building periods. The first church (above) was finished in the early 1600s. It was huge—150 feet from entrance to altar—but its convento was relatively small.

The second church, finished in the early 1700s, stood within the foundations of the first but had a convento twice the size of the earlier one, showing more emphasis on teaching the Pecos trades than on converting them.



Planning Your Visit

Pecos National Historical Park, embracing 10,000 years of human history, is 25 miles southeast of Santa Fe, N. Mex., off I-25. Traveling north on I-25, exit at Pecos-Glorieta interchange 299, go east on N.Mex. 50 to the town of Pecos, and turn south on N.Mex. 63. The park is two miles south. Traveling south on I-25, exit at Rowe interchange 307 and go north on N.Mex. 63 for five miles to the park entrance. No public transportation serves the park.

Visitor Center and Ruins Trail The park is open 8 am to 6 pm from Memorial Day to Labor Day and 8 am to 5 pm Labor Day to Memorial Day. It is closed January 1 and December 25. Stop first at the visitor center to see the film and exhibits. Traditional crafts of northern New Mexico are demonstrated on summer weekends. To check on the regularly scheduled guided tours, call 505-757-7200, ext. 1. A 1½-mile self-guiding trail from the visitor center winds

through the Pecos Pueblo and Mission Church ruins. You are invited to enter the two reconstructed kivas. Get a trail guide at the visitor center. The visitor center and 80 percent of the Ruins Trail are wheelchair-accessible. A signed version of the park film is shown on request.

Lodging and Camping The park has no overnight lodging. The nearby town of Pecos has two small inns, and a guest ranch 21

miles north operates in summer. Contact the park for information. There is no camping in the park, but you can camp in the national forest just to the north. Contact: Santa Fe National Forest, Pecos District Ranger Station, Box 429, Pecos, NM 87552; 505-757-6121.

Regulations and Safety All natural and cultural features in the park are protected by law. Please do not remove or disturb artifacts. Centuries-old walls of former buildings

are fragile: do not climb, sit, or lean on them. Pets on a leash are allowed on the Ruins Trail but are prohibited in park buildings. Pecos lies at 7,000 feet of elevation; if you are not used to the altitude, be cautious. Rattlesnakes sometimes are found along park trails in summer. Please do not disturb them; report sightings to a ranger.

Park Access The park has been part of the National Park System since 1965. It was formerly Pecos

National Monument. New lands authorized by Congress in 1990 greatly expanded the park's scope and mission. Forked Lightning Ranch added 5,500 acres around the core park, including 3 miles of the Pecos River, several early Puebloan sites, Santa Fe Trail ruts, 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. The Glorieta units are

still largely privately owned. Please respect the owners' rights and do not trespass. Check with the visitor center about programs.

The park recently began a pilot fishing program along the Pecos River. Please call the park or visit our website for more information for anglers.

For More Information Pecos National Historical Park P.O. Box 418 Pecos, NM 87552-0418 505-757-7200 www.nps.gov/peco

Pecos National Historical Park is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities visit www.nps.gov.

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