

## NATIONAL MONUMENTS IN NEW MEXICO

Gran Quivera. One of the Cities That Died of Fear.

MISSION churches built by the Franciscans. New Mexico had years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Authorities are not agreed when the first was built, but it was more than 300 years ago. None of the original structures survive, although here and there one of the present churches is built on the site and perhaps, on the walls, of those first Christian sanctuaries in what is now the United States. Nor is it quite certain that the walls of the Pecos mission, that are still standing, are those constructed in the days of Benavidez. In fact, the evidence is rather the other way. Nor is the San Miguel chapel in Santa Fe, the temple built by the Franciscans in the early days of Santa Fe, nor is it the oldest church in the United States. One must go to the Saline pueblos in the Manzano mountains, to Abo, Cuernavaca and Tabira to find the picturesque ruins of the Franciscan missions built and abandoned prior to the Pueblo Revolution of 1680. With them one finds the mounds of "The Cities That Died of Fear," or "The Cities That Were Forgotten," recalling one of the strangest romances of American history.

The most extensive of these missions and pueblo ruins in this country of mystery that stretches south of Santa Fe and east of the Manzanos to the weird alkali and salt lakes, is Tabira, or as it is better, though less correctly known, "Gran Quivera." The church and one half of the pueblo ruins as well as several prehistoric sites nearby have been set apart by presidential proclamation as a National Monument. One half of the main community house mound adjoining, is the property of the School of American Research and the Museum of New Mexico.

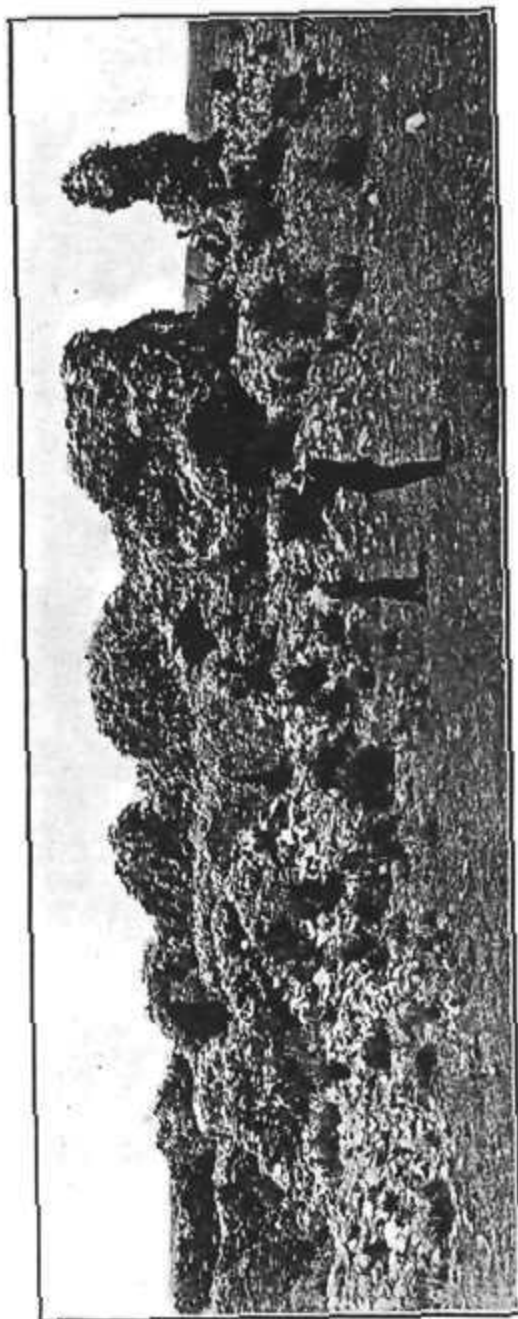
The site is an imposing one, and whether one approaches over the Abo highway or on the road from Santa Fe, the impression of the ruins is one of ghostliness. They lie on a hill that dominates a vast expanse of country. The walls that project above the surface are

of blue-gray limestone, while the country round about has a peculiarly forsaken, isolated appearance, heightened by a broad river of fine sand in which there is no vegetation. Except for a well or two that have been sunk nearby, no water is to be found for many miles although, it is almost certain, that when Tabira was occupied by its hundreds of busy people, that there was a bounteous spring, which was plugged and buried when the people abandoned the great community house.

A more interesting trip could hardly be planned anywhere in the United States than a visit to "The Cities that Died of Fear." In addition to the pueblo and mission ruins, each with a character of its own, there are beautiful mountain and forest scenery, villages like Manzano with its ancient orchard and sky-covered lake, the Giant Spring nestled in a small vale under immense pine trees, Punta de Agua, Mountainair, the Estancia Valley and the grim salt and alkali lakes, are but a few of the points of interest. Starting from Santa Fe, or from Albuquerque, one should allow three days for the round trip; from Mountainair or Belen, two days.

No excavations have been as yet conducted on a large scale at Gran Quivera, but treasure hunters, lured by myths of buried gold and gems, have turned over every part of the ground and opened caverns and pits. It was at Gran Quivera, that the old Pueblo culture was thrust farthest eastward in this region for any length of time, and it was there that it was in constant contact with the Plains Indians of the Southwest.

Tabira was not the Gran Quivera sought by Coronado. Colonel Ralph E. Twitchell in his "Leading Facts of New Mexican History," tells how Tabira was first given the name of Gran Quivera, which has clung to it so tenaciously and has now been officially confirmed by the United States government in naming the National Monument.



From Twitchell's Leading Facts of New Mexican History.

## THE CONVENTO AT TABIRA

One of many illustrations from "The Cities That Died of Fear"

THE MISSION RUIN OF GRAN QUIVERA



Photographed by Jesse Nusbaum.

**MAJESTIC RED SANDSTONE RUINS OF ABO MISSION**  
From "The Cities That Died of Fear"

Tabira is thought to be one of the eleven inhabited Saline pueblos seen by Chamuscado in 1581. Onate in 1598 visited the pueblos and Fray Francisco de San Miguel, chaplain of Onate's armed force, began missionary labors among them in the same year, although, according to F. W. Hodge, it was 1629 before the first actual missions were established by Francisco de Acevedo. It is doubtlessly true of these massive-walled churches and monasteries, that they were actually built by the Pueblo women under the direction of the Franciscans, as is related so quaintly by Benavides.

The story of the "Cities That Died of Fear," as far as known, is summed up in one of the monographs of the School of American Research. The sources are fully cited, including Bandeller, Harrington,

Hodge, Benavides, Albert, Willison, who together relate a fascinating story. Lummis in his "The Land of Poco Tiempo," gives his impression of Tabira, saying:

"Mid-ocean is not more lonesome than the plains nor night so gloomy as that dumb sunlight. It is barren of sound. The brown grass is knee-deep—and even that trifle gives a shock in this hoof-obliterated land. The bands of antelope that drift, like cloud shadows, across the dun landscape suggest less of life than of the supernatural. The spell of the plains is a wondrous thing. At first it fascinates. Then it bewilders. At last it crushes. It is sure as the grave and worse. It is intangible but resistless; stronger than humanity. When one cannot otherwise escape the plains, one takes refuge in madness. But on a sudden,

the tension is relieved. A mile to the south, where a whaleback ridge noses into the uncanny valley, stands out a strange ashen bulk that brings us back to earth. Wan and weird as it is, it bespeaks the one-time presence of man, for Nature has no such squareness. I do not believe that the whole world can show elsewhere, nor that a Dore could dream into canvas a ghostliness so apropos. Stand upon the higher ridges to the east, and it is all spread before you, a wraith in pallid stone—the absolute ghost of a city. Its ashen hues which seem to hover above the dead grass, foiled by the sombre blotches of the junipers; its indeterminate gray hints, outspoken at last in the huge, vague shape that looms in its center; its strange dim outlines rimmed with a flat, round world of silence—but why try to tell that which has no telling? Who shall wreak expression of that spectral city? Come nearer, and the spell dwindles but it is never broken. Even as we pass our hands over that forgotten masonry of pale limestone, or clamber over fallen walls with tangible stubbing of material toes, the unearthliness of the haggard scene does not wholly cease to assert itself. Only, we know now that it is not a ghost-city, which the next breeze may waft away. It is a ruined pueblo again—but such a pueblo! Not in size nor in architecture—there are several others as large, and some as imposing—but in color and in setting it is alone. \* \* \* And in the western terminus of the village, just on the brow of the slope that falls away to the strange valley that looks across to the sombre Mesa de los Jumanos, is another and a gigantic ruin, whose like is not in all our North America. Its walls, thirty feet high and six feet thick, roofless and ragged at the top, 202 feet front and 131 feet in greatest depth, are of the same spectral bluish-gray limestone, broken into irregular but flat-faced prisms and firmly laid in adobe mortar.

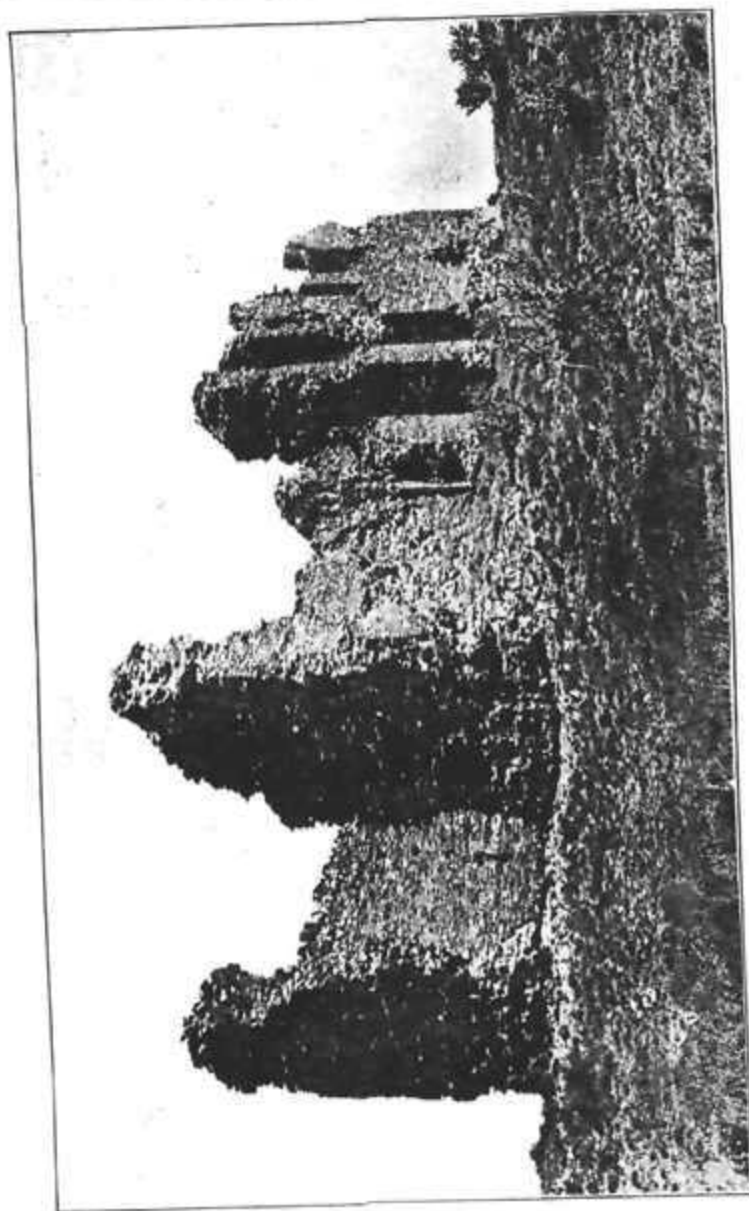
"Of the three great churches that of Cuaraí is largest, having a floor area of 5,020 square feet. That of Tabira comes next, with 4,978 square feet; and then Abo with 4,830. These figures are for the auditoriums alone and do not include the extensive convents, attached

to each, of which that at Tabira is most extensive, covering 13,377 square feet. The walls of Abo are much the noblest and most massive, and those of Tabira the crudest, though no less solid. The pueblos of Abo and Cuaraí had each a tiny but sufficient rill; but Tabira is absolutely dry. There is neither spring nor stream in thirty miles. But this is hardly a rare thing among Pueblo ruins; and it is well known that the aborigines were wont to kill their water when forced to abandon a town, lest it give comfort to the enemy. We know, not only by record, but by eyesight, of several cases where, with infinite labor, the Pueblos actually obliterated a spring to keep it from their savage neighbors."

Citing Bandeller:

"I have already said the Quivira was situated near the southern apex of the triangle formed by the Mesa de los Jumanos. From Manzano the distance is about thirty-five miles, and it is seventeen from the northern rim of the mesa. The space between that rim and the ruins is a gradual slope, covered with grass and without permanent water. At the foot of the ruins, on the west, lies the Medano, a sandy gulch, above which rises a hill of gray limestone, a promontory of the ridges bordering the Medano on the east. On this hill, which is quite narrow and dotted with the usual scrubby conifers, lie the ruins, the larger church occupying its westerly brow and overlooking a vast expanse of singular bleakness. In the west, the summits of the Socorro and Magdalena mountains peep over the wooded border of the Jumanos plateau; in the south, an undulating level dotted with black shrubs stretches towards the dim mass of the Sierra Blanca; in the east, over dreary ridges and hills, rise the mountains of Carrizozo, the Sierra Capitana, and the Gallina, rugged, dark, forbidding; while the north is occupied by the sloping surface of the plateau. Not a trace of a spring has been discovered near the ruins; not a brook trickles down from the heights in their vicinity.

"In this arid solitude the massive edifice of the church, with the mounds of the pueblo, look strangely impressive.



THE MISSION RUIN AT TABIRA.  
From "The Cities That Died of Fear."  
Photographed by Jesse Nusbaum.

From the west the church can be seen miles away, a clumsy parallelopiped of gray stone; from the northeast, through

vistas of dark cedars and junipers, the ruins shine in pallid light, like some phantom city in the desert."

## OLD AS THE HILLS

By Elizabeth Hayes.

"OH, SEE! This one must have belonged to a genius. Isn't it a queerly shaped head?" The girl held up a skull and twirled it gently, like a modish hat on a pivot.

"Careful, young lady!" said her companion in some alarm. "If you should drop it, the Doctor would never smile on you again. Why, these old codgers are supposed to have lived two thousand years ago. Who knows what important theory that very skull may confirm or destroy?" And he looked at the bone he was dusting, with a quizzical reverence. "Two thousand years old! Can you sense it?"

They were sitting on a mound strewn with shards of pottery, beside a fresh excavation in the Indian pueblo, whose ruined remains were vaguely outlined in the ridges and huge pits about them. Not far away were scattered trees, but where they sat there was no shade. Before them lay little heaps of bones, each the poor remnant of what had once been human. These they were dusting carefully with whisks of sagebrush. Tomorrow these precious bundles would be shipped to the National Museum. Near by, in other little heaps, was pottery, more or less dilapidated, that had been buried with the dead.

"This," said Crittenden, pausing in his dusting to eye critically the skull in his hand, "reminds me of the cartoon we were looking at yesterday—in my letter from home—do you remember it?—of a soldier musing over the helmet he has picked up. 'This man was born, loved, drank and died'—was that it—one way of summing up a life. But for myself, I have run but half the gamut. Drink I abhor; death—I defy it, till I have seen what birth and love have brought me!"

His face was aglow. When finally he raised his eyes to look at her, her broad hat brim drooped between them.

"A most worthy sentiment, Sir Knight, and well pronounced!" came in mock applause from behind the barrier of straw.

As if feeling that her banter somehow nettled him, she cocked her saucy head, and hummed a tune to relieve the tension:

"In days of old when knights were bold—"

He would have interrupted her, but suddenly she changed the subject.

"What a glorious expedition this has been! Two perfect weeks! 'Tis a pity it must end so soon. Tomorrow we scatter to the four quarters of the earth, some of us never to meet again. Three months hence, Professor Janowski may be lying dead on a Polish battle field; you will be in Alaska; I, in New York. This queer, queer thing called life!"

"But now," she went on before Crittenden could answer, "since we are in sober mood—Don't interrupt me, sir!" and she shook her whisk at him menacingly—"on this last day suppose you entertain me by restoring this ancient village. In the form of a story, please, to fit my frivolous mind. Shall I start you? Then we'll begin by rebuilding the great pueblo of terraced adobes and re-people it with its various clans—the Water clan there, the Bear clan yonder, the Serpent and the Sun clans back of you, and so on. You see, my giddy head has caught a few ideas. Here we see a woman crushing corn; there, a pottery maker. In the valley—how far below us?—a mile?—the men are tilling the fields.

"Among the men is a young brave, lithe and handsome—handsome as a matter of course, for this is romantic—who