

Ancient Indian Civilization Found in New Mexico



THE EARLY PUEBLO LEARNED how to pile up rock into standing walls and built such community dwellings as this on the top of Puye mesa.

On the eastern shore of America the Plymouth Rock stands witness to the arrival of the English settlers come to make their home in the new world. Along the California coast runs the chain of mission churches erected by the colonizing Spanish priests. To the average American these are the oldest tangible relics of the early history of his country.

The Pueblo Indian who sells pinyons and pottery to curious tourists along New Mexico and Arizona highways takes small stock of such newcomers as the Pilgrim Fathers and the Franciscan Missionaries. "My people," he says with pride, "have been living in this country for more than four thousand years. See. There are the houses my ancestors built. The walls are still standing. We came up from under the earth to this spot which is the center of the world."

The Indian has it from the priests of his clan about his origin. The legend has been handed down to him by word of mouth for centuries and he believes it. Students of ethnology are able to tell him nothing more certain about where his ancients came from but his boast of long residence in the southwestern corner of the United States is a proven fact. Archæologists who have excavated the ruins of pre-historic villages have assured the Pueblo of the present day that the people from whom he descended were living on these sites at least two thousand years before the coming of Christ, perhaps thousands of years previous to that date.

From the ruins which are found scattered extensively over nearly the entire area of the four southwestern

states it is evident that a primitive race at one time occupied the high plateaus with an enormous population. From the similarity of the bones, pottery and implements unearthed in the graves and ruins of houses it is found that the Pueblo culture spread to all parts of this great area in the same general periods. The direct descendants of the aborigines, numbering now not more than eleven thousand, are living today in a score or so mud villages strung through northern New Mexico and Arizona.

The historic period in the lives of the Pueblos began with the coming of the Spaniards up from Mexico in 1540. The chroniclers of the various expeditions reported the Indian tribes living in great communal villages struggling to protect their food supplies from their nomadic enemies and with none of the gold which the Span-

iards sought. The invaders learned little of the earlier history of the natives they found for they had no written language with which to record events. Nor have students today anything to work upon but the legendary tales which have come down the succeeding generations and the remains of the early cultures to be found in buried cities.

It is possible that there may have been older civilizations in America than that of the Indians of the Southwest but nowhere in the country are to be found relics which seem to date back so far. The dry climate of the high plateaus the aborigines occupied is most favorable for the preservation of their remains. Excavations of the prehistoric village sites reveal whole skeletons surrounded by articles of food, pottery and ceremonial objects which had been placed in the grave at the time of burial. From these objects the student can estimate the age, stature, habits, occupation and culture of the earlier peoples.

The pottery found in the excavations at the pueblo of Pecos, New Mexico, has proved that site to be a valuable stratigraphical key to the culture development of the Pueblos through a long period of prehistoric times. The village, of which only a few walls are still standing, covers a low tableland that has been occupied in the various quarters for hundreds of years, successive layers of houses having been built upon the ruins of older ones. In the rubbish heaps which border the mesa have been found pottery representing all stages in the development of ceramics from

(Just turn the page)



TWO KIVAS, or underground ceremonial chambers of the prehistoric cave dwellers at the Mesa Verde ruins partially restored by archæologists.

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the earliest corrugated ware to the high glazes and intricate design of the historic period. These fragments were found in clearly definable strata, the earliest types in the lowest depths of excavation and the later types at higher levels in the mounds of debris.

The first Southwesterners of whom no traces have been found as yet, are thought to have been nomadic people who wandered in bands over the country living on such small game as they could kill with their primitive weapons and upon the wild plants and berries they found. They apparently did not know how to farm or to manufacture pottery for their domestic uses.

As long ago as 2000 B.C. farming was begun in the Southwest, according to the beliefs of Dr. Alfred V. Kidder, eminent archæologist of the Phillips Andover Academy. The Basket Makers, as he calls the first agriculturists, learned to cultivate a heavy seeded grass that resembled corn. Discovering that this crop could be harvested and stored as a reserve food supply, the former nomads gave up wandering to some extent and settled down near their fields. It is doubtful if they built permanent homes, for their first concern in the way of

shelter was a safe storage place for their grain.

The Basket Makers built temporary shelters for themselves somewhere near their food supply which they usually hid in holes in the floors of caves. With their increased leisure from hunting they were able to devote more time to their domestic handicrafts, perfecting crude stone and wood implements and weaving baskets and sandals of dried grasses. They apparently raised no beans or cotton and were ignorant of pottery making.

As the people depended more and more upon their cultivated food they became more sedentary in habit. From the protective walls of slabs which they built about their storage cists for grain, they conceived the idea of enlarging them into homes for themselves. They raised higher walls of stone around the pits and provided them with roofs of poles and brush. These crude, half underground shelters from the weather marked the beginning of domestic architecture in America. Then began the making of pottery. Whether the Indians discovered for themselves that clay dried in the sun upon their baskets resulted in a more useful receptacle, or whether they were taught the craft by more advanced tribes from Mexico is unknown.

A still more extensive spreading of a later culture covered almost the whole of Utah into southern Nevada, the southwestern corner of Colorado, practically all upper New Mexico and the northeastern corner of Arizona. In this great area are found ruins of horizontally coursed masonry or adobe with the closely grouped rectangular rooms in which are found corrugated and black-on-white pottery. It is believed by Dr. Kidder that this early Pueblo culture was diffused from the San Juan basin, where it reached its highest development, and spread rapidly among other tribes which had not previously been agricultural.

The evolution of houses from the first pit dwellings into units of rectangular rooms grouped together with the round chambers segregated for ceremonial purposes, and the banding together into villages were important developments of the Pueblo period. The first villages were small and located in sites not easily defended from enemies. In time there was a gradual abandonment of the unprotected settlements on the outposts of the great area. The increasing inroads of the nomadic tribes in search of easily gained food resulted in a concentration of the farming people into larger

settlements toward the center of the area and the building of the great communal houses in cliffs, caves and canyon heads.

Today the Pueblo Indian lives in the same type of adobe communal dwelling which his ancestors developed out of their necessity. He pursues the same peaceful occupation in the corn fields, worships his gods with the same ceremonies, and with the exception of tin pans and sewing machines, orders his domestic routine in much the same way as did his primitive forebears. The European occupation of the Southwest has merely continued the crowding-in process begun by his nomadic enemies millenniums ago.

Science News-Letter, January 8, 1927

Fleas have very poor eyesight.

About one person in 3,000 in India has leprosy.

A new European automobile has a transparent top.

American women patent over 500 inventions a year.

The egg of California condor is valued at about \$1,500.

Oil of catnip is used as bait in catching bobcats and lynxes.

Wooden helmets for miners are being manufactured in England.

Some Indians of the North have believed for centuries that a bear will come out of its lair to be killed if plead with courteously.

Only about one-half per cent. of the coal reserves of Missouri have been exhausted, leaving some 78 billion tons to be mined.

A wind tunnel to be installed at New York University is said to represent the most up-to-date equipment for testing airplane models.

Depth finding apparatus has been used to trace more exactly the boundaries of the continent which sank in the Atlantic millions of years ago.

A long continued spell of dry weather in Victoria allowed films of dust to collect on power lines, and "flash-overs" or short circuits resulted.

A photograph taken at Panama from an altitude of 12,000 feet shows both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and the entire width of the Canal Zone between.

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