

# pecos

## Pecos Ruins Trail

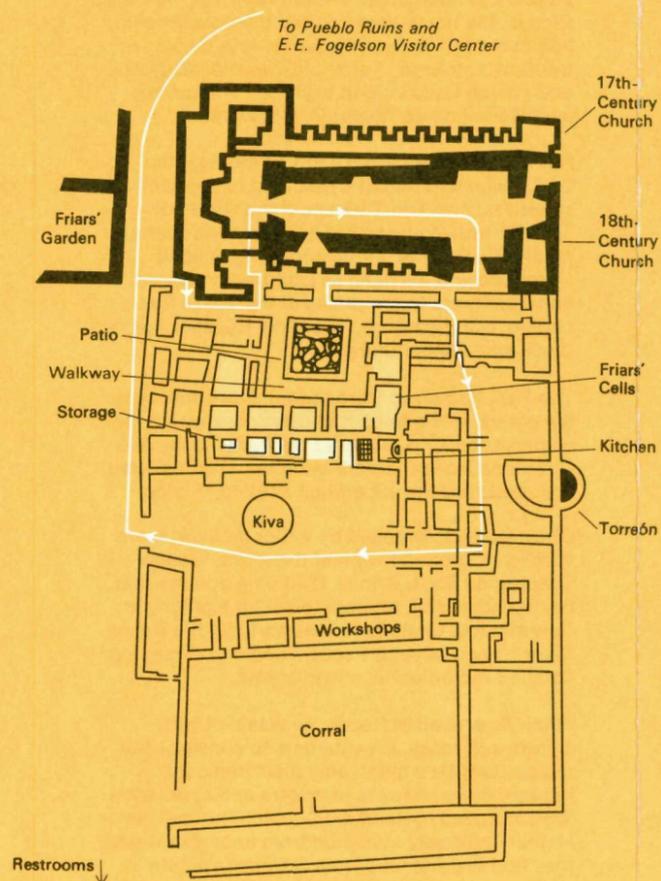
The ruins trail, 1¼ miles round trip, begins at the visitor center. A diagram of the entire route is shown below; at right is a detail of the church and convento ruins.

The ruins of **Pecos Pueblo** and the Spanish **Misión de Nuestra Señora de Los Ángeles de Porciúncula** rest on a small, rocky ridge surrounded by the broad valley of the upper Pecos River. Pecos Pueblo, once home to some 2,000 Pueblo Indians, is visible now only as large, grass-covered mounds. The site comprises **North Pueblo**, the largest group of rooms, and the partially excavated **South Pueblo**. Along the trail between North and South Pueblos is a restored **kiva**. Pueblo people still use these traditional structures, primarily as ceremonial rooms. A low stone **boundary wall** surrounds the complex.

Beginning in the early 1600s, and continuing for the next 200 years, Spanish Franciscan priests brought their culture and religion to the area's native peoples. During their stay two major **mission churches** were built. The first, completed by 1620, was one of the largest in New Mexico. It was destroyed during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680; today only the foundation remains. After they returned the Franciscans built a smaller church atop the ruins of the old. The high adobe walls are part of this second church, which dates from the early 1700s. Attached to the church was the **convento**, a large communal dwelling where the priests carried on day-to-day life at the mission. Originally one to two stories high, the convento is reduced to a maze of low adobe walls south of the church. A patio surrounded by a walkway lay at the center of the complex. Beyond were a kitchen and dining room, the friars' cells, storerooms, workrooms, and corrals—each with a role in mission life.

The **kiva** within the convento walls was built after the Pueblo Revolt by Pecos Indians intending to return to their traditional ways. It was constructed of adobes salvaged from the ruins of the first Spanish church.

## ENLARGEMENT OF CHURCH AND CONVENTO RUINS



## Two Mission Churches

In 1965, Congress passed the act, signed by the President, that authorized establishment of Pecos National Monument, and in the summer of 1966, National Park Service archeologists began excavation of the church and convento.

They made an exciting discovery. Their findings cast new light on the history of the Southwest and substantiated reports of 17th-century writers whose words had been held suspect.

Both the church and the convento were puzzling. The 17th-century ecclesiastics had described the church as being large, splendid, magnificent, and of unusual design, but the remaining adobe walls are of a church that had none of these characteristics. Other mission churches in New Mexico had obviously been much grander. Most historians had thought that the early accounts were exaggerated to gain added civil and religious support of missionary efforts in the remote and impoverished frontier province of New Mexico. But the convento was much larger than those usually associated with a church of modest size.

In the summer of 1967, the project archeologist discovered stone foundations resting on bedrock and fragments of burned adobe walls. Under and around the ruins of the known church, further excavations uncovered the foundations of an earlier church that was nearly 170 feet long, 90 feet wide at the transept, and 39 feet wide inside the nave.

The building was typical of the fortress churches of Mexico. It had bastioned nave walls and subsidiary chapels in thick-walled, cruciformlike arms near the sanctuary. Only 18 such structures were known in the Americas until the Pecos find, and none of them was north of Mexico City.

Now it is clear that the large church and convento were constructed in the 1620's and destroyed during the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680. The convento was reconstructed and a new church built following the Reconquest, probably in the early 1700's.

## Pecos Revisited: Recent Studies

The archeological survey now in progress is designed to locate small sites showing evidence of activities on which the Pecos livelihood was based. Evidence of agricultural field systems, including check dams, farming terraces, and overnight houses has been uncovered. Rock art and hunting camps have also been identified, as have Apache *tipi* ring sites—verifying the historical reports of Apache encampments for trade with the Pecos people. Some evidence suggests that the Pecos area may have been at least a marginal site for human occupation for several thousand years.

Recent excavations uncovered two large semi-subterranean houses on the grassy flats south and west of monument headquarters. These pithouses, the first to be reported from the Upper Pecos River area, were built in the ninth century. They were probably part of a village that may have been occupied on a seasonal basis. The architecture is similar to that of both the Anasazi people of the Rio Grande valley and the Mogollon of southern New Mexico.

## Regulations

Under the 1906 Federal Antiquities Act, it is unlawful to appropriate, excavate, injure, or destroy "any historic or prehistoric ruin or monument, or any object of antiquity" on Federal lands.

Please leave plants, animals, rocks, and other natural and manmade features undisturbed. Since ruin walls are fragile, do not climb or stand upon them. Pets are allowed if they are kept on a leash or in your car and out of public buildings. The use or display of firearms is not permitted.

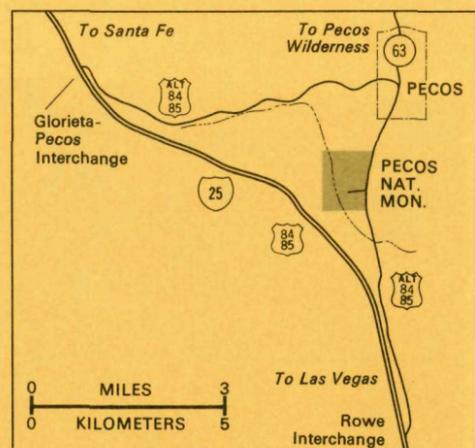
## For Your Safety

Do not let an accident spoil your visit. Although efforts have been made to help ensure your safety, certain natural conditions could prove hazardous. Please exercise caution. Parts of the Ruins Trail are not accessible to persons in wheelchairs.

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## About Your Visit

The park, 25 miles southeast of Santa Fe by way of Int. 25, may be reached from the interchanges at Glorieta, 8 miles west of the park via the town of Pecos, and Rowe, 3 miles south of the park.



Santa Fe is served by buslines. Rail passengers disembark at Lamy for the 18-mile shuttle-bus trip to Santa Fe. Rental cars may be obtained in Santa Fe.

There is no public transportation to the park. There are no facilities for camping, but food and lodging can be obtained in nearby towns.

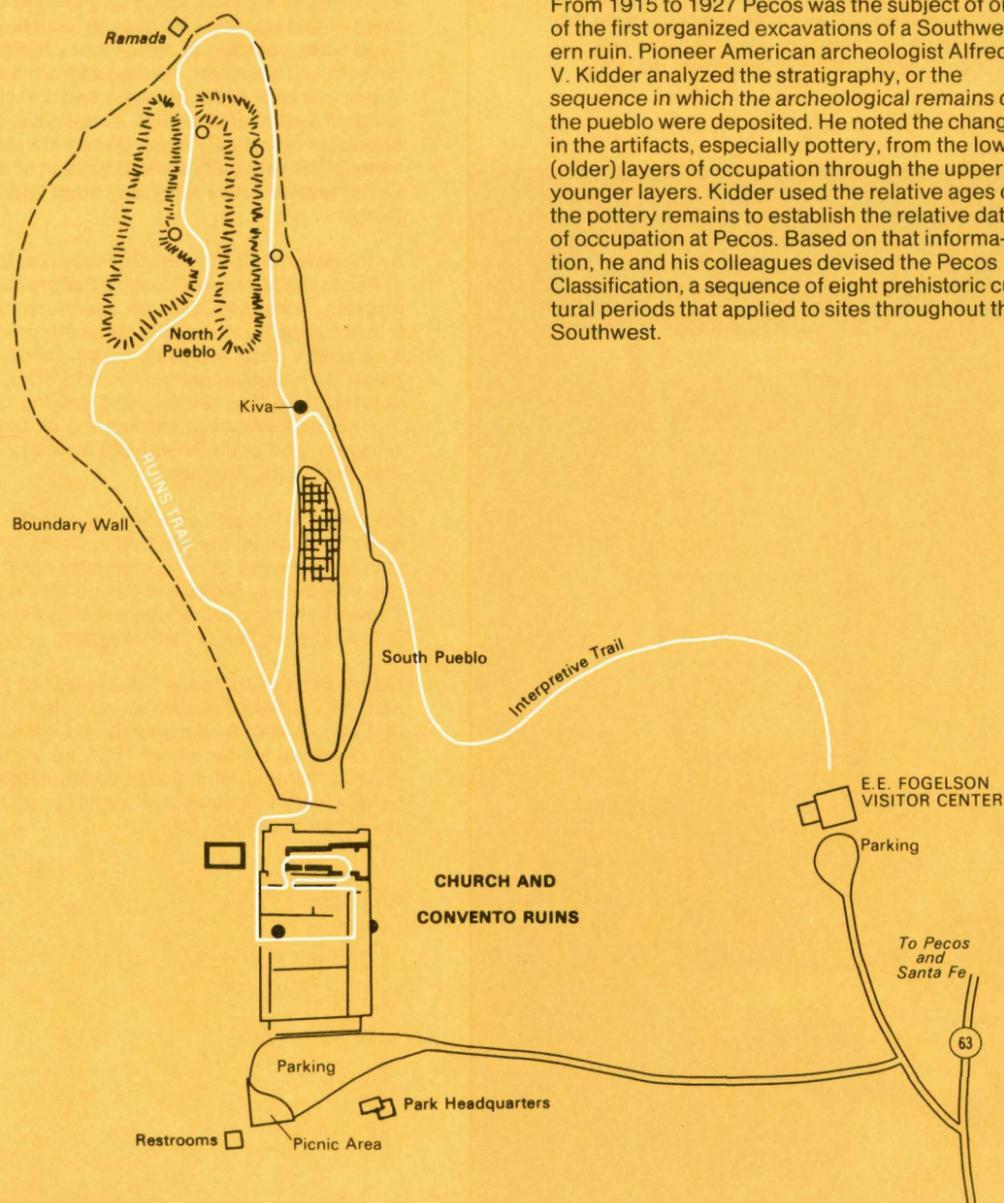
## Administration

Pecos National Monument, containing 365 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. For further information write to: Superintendent, P.O. Drawer 418, Pecos, NM 87552-0418.

National Park Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## Early Excavations

From 1915 to 1927 Pecos was the subject of one of the first organized excavations of a Southwestern ruin. Pioneer American archeologist Alfred V. Kidder analyzed the stratigraphy, or the sequence in which the archeological remains of the pueblo were deposited. He noted the changes in the artifacts, especially pottery, from the lower (older) layers of occupation through the upper, younger layers. Kidder used the relative ages of the pottery remains to establish the relative dates of occupation at Pecos. Based on that information, he and his colleagues devised the Pecos Classification, a sequence of eight prehistoric cultural periods that applied to sites throughout the Southwest.



### Pecos Pueblo in Prehistoric Times

About A.D. 1100, Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande drainage spread eastward over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and settled in scattered villages along the streams. Two centuries later, they began moving into compact pueblos of one or two stories. By 1450, the Pecos Valley Indians had congregated in a multistoried, quadrangular pueblo built around a central plaza on a rocky ridge.

Besides 660 rooms that were used as living quarters and for storage, the pueblo contained numerous kivas. (Such subterranean ceremonial chambers are still used by present-day Pueblo Indians.)

These Pueblo people were slight of build yet muscular; they had dark hair and eyes and brown skin. The women averaged just under 5 feet in height; the men were a few inches taller.

The Indians of the Pecos Valley were farmers, raising corn, beans, and squash in their irrigated river-bottom fields. They also gathered wild plants and hunted game. Since they lived in a high river valley, which had a short growing season, they were not able to grow cotton to make clothing. They therefore traded with Indians who lived along the Rio Grande for cotton fibers or cloth.

But it was the location of their village that brought prosperity to the Pecos Indians. They lived between the nomadic buffalo hunters of the Plains and the village-dwelling farmers of the Rio Grande. Skilled in trade and war, stimulated by wide-ranging contacts with other groups, they thrived in their impregnable four- or five-story pueblo.



This 1784 Spanish real, a coin the size of a dime, was found during excavation of the church and convento area in 1966.

### Pecos, 1540-1838

In other parts of the New World, events were occurring that would alter the lives of the Pecos Indians. Columbus made his voyages of discovery. Spain established a rich colonial empire scattered from Mexico to Peru; gold poured into her coffers, and wide areas were opened for settlement. Cabeza de Vaca and his three weary companions, survivors of the ship-wrecked Narváez expedition, arrived in Mexico City after 8 years of wandering through the Southeast, Texas, and northern Mexico. They brought tales of Cibola, a land to the north of Mexico where there were large cities with streets lined with goldsmiths' shops, houses of many stories, and doorways studded with emeralds and turquoise. Anticipating the kind of riches found in Mexico and Peru, the Spaniards dispatched a party to New Mexico to verify these stories. The party, less one man who had been killed by the Indians, returned with reassurances, and Viceroy Mendoza began planning an expedition to Cibola. He chose a friend, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, to lead the expedition.

On February 23, 1540, Coronado led his company northward from Compostela. The expedition comprised 300 Spanish soldiers, three Franciscan priests, two lay brothers, and 800 Mexican-Indian allies. On July 7 they reached fabled Cibola, but instead of Golden Cities, they found, south of present-day Gallup, New Mexico, Hawikuh and other rock-masonry Zuñi pueblos.

They were defended by Indians who were ready to fight. The Spaniards attacked Hawikuh and forced the Indians to abandon the village. Coronado made Hawikuh, which was stocked with food, his headquarters.

Coronado sent his captains out to explore the region, and he received visitors from other Indian pueblos. Among these visitors were people from Cicuyé, the name then applied to Pecos Pueblo, 150 miles to the east. These people displayed hides of a strange "humpbacked cow" (buffalo) and invited Coronado to visit their village. He sent Hernando de Alvarado with 20 men.

At Pecos, Alvarado met a Plains Indian, "the Turk," who told him of a rich land to the east called Quivira. The Turk spent the winter of 1540-41 with Coronado at his new headquarters on the Rio Grande. In the spring, he guided Coronado and his band of explorers to Pecos, and from there to the plains of the Texas Panhandle, Oklahoma, and probably Kansas. Again, there was disappointment.

The Turk had lured Coronado and his men onto the plains, in the hope that there they would die of starvation. The plot cost the Turk his life and Coronado his last dream of riches. Disillusioned, Coronado led the expedition back to Mexico.

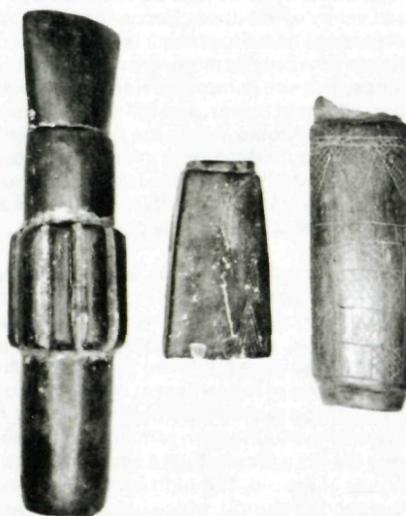
Other leaders, impelled by loftier motives, were to follow Coronado. One of these was Gaspar Castaño de Sosa, who in 1590-91 made the first, but unsuccessful, attempt to set up a colony in New Mexico. Castaño led his party up the Pecos River to and beyond Pecos Pueblo and made a detailed record of his observations.

When he arrived at Pecos, he was met with arrows and rocks. His attempts to convince the Indians that he wanted only their friendship brought more showers of arrows and rocks from the parapeted roofs of the pueblo. The Indians' hostility probably stemmed from unpleasantness they had experienced from Coronado's men in 1541 and Antonio de Espejo's soldiers 42 years later. Although outnumbered 500 to 37, Castaño ordered his men to attack the pueblo with arquebus and sword but to cause as little bloodshed as possible. After a brief skirmish, the Indians gave up the fight. There was then some show of friendliness. But one night all the Indians stole out of the pueblo. They had not returned 4 days later when Castaño and his company left the village and moved to the northwest. Before the Spaniards left, however, they captured two Indians and tried to convince them that they



Sunlight filters into this subterranean ceremonial chamber. Similar kivas are used by Pueblo Indians of today.

Clay pipes were used in religious rituals of the Pueblo Indians. The complete pipe on the left shows a typical "fishtail" mouthpiece, which is missing from the fragments of two pipes on the right.



should persuade their fellow villagers to return, for the weather was cold and snowy.

Castaño described Pecos Pueblo thus:

**The houses in this pueblo are in the manner of houseblocks. They have doors to the outside all around, and the houses are back to back. The houses are four and five stories. In the galleries [covered porches] there are no doors to the streets [on the ground-floor level]. They go up little ladders that can be pulled up by hand through the hatchways. Every house has 3 or 4 apartments [on each story] so that from top to bottom each house has 15 or 16 rooms. The rooms are worthy of note, being well white-washed.**

He also described the clothing of the Pecos Indians:

**The dress of the men, according to what we saw there—as it was the cold season—most or all of them wore a blanket of cotton and a buffalo hide over it. . . . The women [dress] with a blanket drawn in a knot at the shoulder and a sash the width of a palm at the waist. At one side, the blanket is completely open. Over it are placed some other very gaily worked blanket or some turkey feather robes and many other curious things. . .**

By the early 1620's the Franciscans had founded at Pecos the Misión de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles de Porciúncula—an entire community. It included a church and a convento containing a carpenter shop, weaving rooms, tanneries, a place for religious instruction, and living quarters, and also farming and grazing lands. The mission sought to replace the economic, religious, and political way of life of the Indian with that of the Spaniard.

Franciscans introduced wheat, the beehive oven, and wheat bread; horses, cattle, goats, and sheep; European farming methods; metal tools; and new pottery forms and design elements. They also introduced adobe building blocks used in the construction of their missions.

Father Benavides, in his "Memorial" of 1630, described the Pecos church as a "splendid temple of distinguished workmanship and beauty." In his "Revised Memorial" of 1634, he stated that it was a "church of peculiar construction and beauty, very spacious, with room for all the people of the pueblo."

In 1697, Father Vetancurt, reporting on the state of the mission churches following the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and the Reconquest of 1692-93, described the Pecos church as having been a "magnificent temple, adorned with six towers, three on each side, its walls so wide that services were held in their thickness." He further remarked that it had been burned.

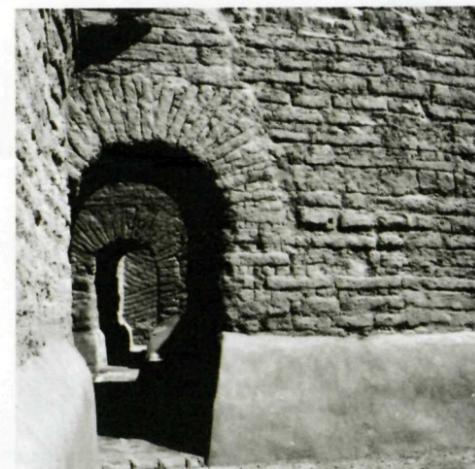
The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was an uprising of the Pueblo Indians against the Spaniards. Spanish clergy and settlers were killed or driven off and missions destroyed. After the massive church at Pecos was destroyed, the Indians built a kiva in the courtyard of the convento. It was constructed of adobe bricks apparently salvaged from the burned church and the convento.

Twelve years later, Don Diego de Vargas led the difficult reconquest of the province. Many of the missions, including Pecos, were reestablished.

The decline of Pecos Pueblo began in the 17th century. The population was reduced by European-introduced diseases and by warfare with mounted Comanches of the Plains. By the 1770's, the mission no longer had a resident priest.

Then in 1838, the survivors—less than 20 people—left their Pecos homes and moved westward across the Rio Grande to live with their kinsmen at Jemez, leaving the pueblo and mission deserted.

The adobe walls of the mission church were a landmark for travelers on the Santa Fe Trail. Ruts of this historic trail still exist in the vicinity.



Patterns formed by adobe blocks harmonize with the arched doorways in the 18th-century church wall (top). Many of these walls still stand. Here they rise above the ruins of the south pueblo as seen from the rim of a restored Indian kiva.