When the Pueblo Indians moved away from the area we now call Mesa Verde, about A.D. 1300, they abandoned forever a place in which they had lived for at least 700 years. They left behind everything that they could not carry with them. That included not only the houses they lived in, but thousands of everyday objects, such as blankets and baskets, axes and corn, bracelets and pottery.

For the next 600 years, these things lay exposed to the ravages of time and the elements, and as a result, many decayed and disappeared. But, fortunately, a few survived; and when these artifacts were found in later years by archeologists, they were taken to the museum for preservation, study, and display. Additional items, especially those relating to the modern Pueblo descendents of the Mesa Verde people, and neighboring tribes, have been donated by friends of the museum.

The Mesa Verde Museum, then, presents a story about people—how they lived, what they wore, how they looked, what they ate. And this book tells a small part of that story.

As you look at the countless artifacts displayed, we hope you will notice one thing: many of the objects made by the Mesa Verde people show not only great skill of manufacture, but considerable beauty as well. A cooking pot or a burden basket need not be beautiful to serve its purpose. An ugly pot will cook beans just as well as a pretty one.

But the Indians did not merely “exist” in the often harsh environment of Mesa Verde. They were keenly aware of the natural beauty that surrounded them and, in fact, considered themselves an integral part of it. They saw beauty not only in the spectacular canyons and marvelous vistas that thrill visitors today, but in simple things, like a summer rainstorm, or the birth of a child.

And they incorporated some of that beauty in their cooking pots, and burden baskets, . . . and almost everything they did.
For about 2,000 years, Pueblo Indians have lived in the Southwest. The earliest remains that can be definitely identified as Pueblo belong to what archeologists call the Basketmaker Period. No evidence of this earliest period has yet been found in Mesa Verde, but a number of finds have been made nearby.

In the scene pictured here, from one of the museum dioramas, a profusion of baskets can be seen. These people had no pottery, and baskets were made to serve a variety of purposes—storage, cooking and carrying.

Already they had learned how to plant and cultivate crops, and realized that their small plots of corn and squash were a dependable source of food. One of the women shown here is grinding corn into meal, on a stone slab called a metate. The hand stone is called a mano. Another woman is building a fire on which the corn will be cooked.
The Basketmakers were, as the name suggests, excellent weavers of baskets, bags, sandals, and other articles. This exhibit shows their versatility. At the top of the case are three finely woven bags. To the left of the bags is an animal snare made of yucca fiber, and in the left corner of the case, a net bag. Below the bag is a burial wrapped in a rabbit fur blanket. Toward the right of the case can be seen four types of woven sandals; and directly above them, a belt and a rope, both made of human hair.

The circular basket in the center of the case, from a slightly later period, is made from strips of yucca leaves. Present-day Pueblo Indians still make baskets that are almost identical to these.
In 1937, Mr. I. F. Flora discovered 19 burials in a shallow cave about 7 miles north of Durango, Colorado. Through a fortunate accident of nature, several of the burials had, instead of decaying, merely “dried out”, so that not only the bones were preserved, but skin, hair, and internal organs as well. The most famous and best preserved of these natural “mummies” is this one, who, in recent years, has come to be known as “Esther”. She was a young woman of 22 or so when she died, of unknown causes, about 1600 years ago.
The earliest remains found in Mesa Verde date about A.D. 600. By this time, the Indians had made considerable progress over their ancestors, the early Basketmakers. Not only did they perfect their weaving ability, but they acquired several very important new things, including pottery, and the bow and arrow.

In this diorama scene, one of their houses can be seen at the right—a pithouse, in which the floor of the house is about 3 feet below the outside ground level. The upper part of the house consists of a strong framework of poles, covered with a layer of mud. (See model on p. 16.)

The two women in the foreground are getting ready to fire (bake) some pots. This is the final step in pottery-making, and the process by which the pots are made waterproof.
These seven beautiful sashes are braided of dog hair, and show the peak of excellence to which the Indians had developed their weaving skills during the Modified Basketmaker Period. The white sash on the right is made of 119 vertical strands, and is nine feet long. They were found in "brand new" condition by Earl H. Morris, in a cave in northeastern Arizona.

To the right is a matched set, necklace and bracelet of stone and bone, that was found on a Basketmaker burial in Southern Utah. Below that is a black bead necklace, consisting of 1,242 beads made from juniper berry seeds.
One of the finest prehistoric coiled baskets ever found in the Southwest is this 1500 year old specimen, found by Earl Morris in northeastern Arizona. The design, in red and black, consists of 28 birds and 10 crosses.

Baskets were often used for carrying big loads. This conical basket was strapped on a person’s back so that the wide circular opening was at the top. It was found by Earl Morris in a cave in Canyon del Muerto, now a part of Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona.
One of the most important innovations during the Modified Basketmaker Period was pottery. Prior to its introduction, the Indians had used hollow gourds as utensils. It is not surprising, then, that the earliest pottery the Indians made imitated the gourd shapes which were already familiar to them.

Much of the early pottery was undecorated; and that which was painted usually had the simple angular designs that the Indians had been using for many years in their weaving.
Earl Morris found this woman’s apron in the same cave in which he found the seven dog hair sashes. The colors of the design are white, yellow, red and black. Hanging from the upper portion of the apron are 241 yucca fiber strings.
In a cave several miles west of Mesa Verde, Mr. John Voelter found what is undoubtedly an ancient doctor’s “little black bag.” All of the objects displayed were originally inside of the small basket and wooden box at the top of the picture.

There is such a variety of items—six points wrapped in weasel skin, a serpentine pipe in a skin bag, porcupine teeth, and (not on display) a dried human thumb—that we can only conclude that these were things necessary to the successful practice of a medicine man about 1300 years ago.

From left to right, the objects are:

**Top row:** buckskin bag containing three garnets; porcupine teeth; basket and wooden box; galena (lead ore); buckskin wrapper containing ten pieces of obsidian

**Second row:** weasel skin containing six points; five galena crystals in skin wrapper; five shell and four stone beads in leather wrapper; weasel skin bag (with hawk’s claw attached) containing pipe made of serpentine; buckskin wrapper containing eleven pieces of turquoise; leather wrapper containing two rolls of skin each decorated with beads and parrot feathers; leather wrapper containing disk of abalone shell

**Third row:** three pieces of root, three pieces of sinew; bundle of fine yarn, probably apocynum (Indian hemp); three skeins of fine cord, probably apocynum; bundle of human hair cords

**Fourth row:** bundle of yucca fibers; four pieces of yucca cord; well-tanned skin of small mammal; yucca cord wrapped with skin; bundle of plant fibers, probably apocynum

**Bottom row:** two small pieces of feather cord; strip of buckskin (55 inches in length); four pads of yucca fiber; ten pieces of soft, well-tanned buckskin; bundle of willow splints
Developmental Pueblo Period

Through the years, the Indians continued to make improvements in their way of life. In this diorama scene, about A.D. 850, several families have built houses adjoining each other. Thus it is easy to see why archeologists refer to this, and succeeding periods, as "pueblo", the Spanish word for town or village.

A family is enjoying a corn-on-the-cob dinner outdoors. A bowl of beans has also been prepared for the meal. Their home is an above-ground room made of strong poles and adobe mud. Next door, on the right, is a house with walls of adobe and stone—a definite improvement over the earlier pithouse of their ancestors.

The time is late summer, for part of the harvest from their fields is drying on the rooftops, before being put into storage for the winter. The woman on the left is tanning a deer hide, perhaps to use for warmth during the cold winter that lies ahead.
Pottery improved in quality and increased in quantity. This apparently was a time of experimentation, too, for many unusual pottery shapes have been found. Were the miniature pots on the upper row for children? And what were the unusual forms on the bottom row used for?

Over a period of 300 years, architecture changed in an interesting way. The upper row shows the development of living or dwelling rooms, beginning with the simple, semi-subterranean pithouse of about A.D. 600, at the far left. Gradually, over a period of 200 to 300 years, the living rooms lost their subterranean features, and were built entirely above ground. At first they were built of poles and mud, like the pithouses, but an increasing amount of stone was used over the years, until eventually the Indians perfected fine stone masonry.

The pithouse was not abandoned entirely, however. The idea of a subterranean room persisted, and the pithouse gradually evolved into the distinctive “kiva”, the subterranean ceremonial room. The kiva development is illustrated on the bottom row.
The crude rock-and-mud-walled houses that first appeared during the preceding period changed considerably over the years. The Indians improved in their skill as stone masons, and by 1100 were building large villages of fine masonry.

The flat roof of the kiva, the underground ceremonial room, helped form an open courtyard within the village, and that is where many of the everyday activities took place. In this courtyard, two women are grinding corn. A third woman, having completed her grinding task, is preparing one of her family's favorite corn meal recipes, and is almost ready to begin cooking on the hot stone griddle.

Again, the season is late summer, and part of the corn and squash harvest has already been carried from the fields to the village.
What did the Indians wear in the winter? The question is frequently asked by visitors to Mesa Verde, especially after viewing the museum dioramas, all of which depict warm weather scenes and scanty clothing. Actually, while the Indians had no tailored clothing like trousers or sleeved shirts, they did have ways of fending off wintry blasts. The man on the left has wrapped a buckskin blanket around his shoulders, and is wearing feather cloth leggings. His sandals are stuffed with soft juniper bark. His companion is wearing a feather blanket and leggings, with other garments of buckskin. The two people on the right are wearing sleeveless cotton shirts under their blankets.
What kind of tools did the Indians use to make the clothing pictured on the preceding page?

Animal hides must be scraped and tanned in order to make them soft and flexible. These well-made scrapers, fashioned from leg bones (humerus) of deer and bighorn, were found in a cliff dwelling in the western section of the park.

Sections of hide or buckskin could be sewn together with sinew or strips of rawhide, using bone needles like those below.

The Indians of Mesa Verde, like most Indians of North America during prehistoric times, had no metal. Most of their tools were made of stone or bone.

This stone hammer was found, still hafted with its original wooden handle, in the same cliff dwelling in which the bone scrapers were found.
During the Classic Period, the Mesa Verde people reached their peak as skilled craftsmen and artists. And nowhere is their skill better exemplified than in pottery.

In these examples, the black design is a paint made from boiled plant juices, and is light brown in color when first put on the dried clay vessel. This same kind of organic paint is still used on certain types of Pueblo pottery made today (see p. 36).

The design is painted with a yucca brush, which is made by cutting a 5 or 6-inch length of a slender yucca leaf. One end of the leaf is then chewed in order to separate the fibers, and bristles are thus formed. The design is painted freehand, often without any preliminary sketching. After the decoration has been applied, the pots are baked in an outdoor fire to make them waterproof, and in the process, the painted design turns black.
Not all of their pottery was decorated with painted designs, though. Perhaps even more common than the black on white pottery was “corrugated” ware—a type that was used for storage and for cooking. Because the rope-like coils of clay that were used to build up the sides of the pot were not smoothed, the outside of the jar has a rough, or “corrugated” appearance. Hundreds of these pots have been found, many still blackened by the smoke of countless cooking fires.
For over 1,000 years, corn has been the most important single food item to the Pueblo Indians. This large pottery storage jar was found west of Mesa Verde by Robert and Eugene Ismay. When discovered, the jar was filled with the 22 quarts of corn shown in the photo, and the mouth of the jar was covered by the small bowl which had been placed upside down over it. The corn is over 700 years old, and will not grow if planted today.
Other important crops which the Pueblo Indian farmers raised were squash and beans. The bundle of bean vines shown here was found in Cliff Palace.

Beans were particularly important in the diet of the Mesa Verde people because they are a good source of protein. Although corn, their primary crop, is a good food in many ways, it lacks certain essential protein ingredients. Thus beans were a useful supplement to the menu, especially during periods when meat may not have been easily obtainable.
The Mesa Verde Indians supplemented their diet of corn, beans, and squash with meat obtained by hunting. They also gathered various wild foods, such as cactus fruit and pinyon nuts.

The most commonly hunted food animal was deer, though smaller animals, especially rodents, were also caught. As we have already seen, all parts of the deer were used—meat, hide, and bones.

These arrowpoints are typical of those used by the Indians who lived in the cliff dwellings. Each point was hafted to a wooden shaft; perhaps somewhat similar to this stone drill, which was found recently, still attached to its wooden shaft.
For countless thousands of years, people have been concerned with their personal appearance. Both men and women have been relentless in their pursuit of ways of making themselves more attractive—or at least more noticeable. Even the Mesa Verde Indians seemed to have displayed a little vanity now and then.

The very fine necklace on the left is on its original stringing, and was found in a cliff dwelling across the canyon from Balcony House. It is made of 5,715 tiny stone beads, and each of the 20 individual strands is terminated with a white shell bead.

Other pendants and carvings, mostly of stone, can be seen in the exhibit. The tubes of the necklace on the right are made from bird bones.

At the upper right is one of the most interesting finds: a collection of 2,969 beads, pendants, and assorted pieces, all found in a pottery jar. There is such variation in size, color, and material, as to suggest that it may once have belonged to some ancient trader or jewelry maker.
By studying bones of skeletons that have been recovered from the ruins, archaeologists have been able to determine some of the health problems these people had, such as arthritis and cavities. The size of the Indians can also be determined: the average height of the women was about 5 feet; men, about 5 feet 4 inches.

This skull, which was found in a small cave on the west side of the park, shows one of several dental problems that plagued the Indians. Notice the impacted teeth on each side of the nose.

It takes no expert to see what this young lady died from. She was only about 20 years of age when someone drove an arrow or spear into her forehead. Death must have swiftly followed.
Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, 1879
After Abandonment

When the Indians left Mesa Verde, about A.D. 1300, they moved toward the south, joining with other Pueblo Indians who were already living in what is now New Mexico and Arizona. When the Spaniards first arrived in the Southwest in the 1500’s, they found approximately 70 Pueblo villages in existence. That number has since dwindled, and there are now about 20 different Pueblo Indian groups still living in the Southwest. But in spite of more than 400 years of contact with Europeans, the Pueblos have managed to retain many of their traditions and customs.

Their architecture, for example, has changed little, as these photographs show. The terraced Mesa Verde mesa-top villages and cliff dwellings must have greatly resembled these pueblos of the late 1800’s.
Oraibi Pueblo (Hopi), Arizona, 1879  Kiva entrance in foreground  Smithsonian Institution Photograph
Pueblo Indians still practice their traditional religious ceremonies in kivas and other special rooms that have changed little since prehistoric times. In this 1888 photograph, a curing society of Zia Pueblo, New Mexico, is treating a sick boy inside a rectangular ceremonial chamber.
What did the ruins look like when they were first discovered? These two photographs of Cliff Palace, and Balcony House (top right) were taken about 1896, only a few years after the large cliff dwellings were discovered, and show the ruins before they were excavated and stabilized in the early 1900's.
The story of the discovery and early exploration of the Mesa Verde cliff dwellings cannot be told without frequent mention of the name “Wetherill”. The Wetherill family owned a ranch near Mancos, just east of Mesa Verde. Five brothers in the family, (left to right, Al, Win, Richard, Clayton, John) accomplished much early exploration in Mesa Verde and, in fact, discovered many of the major cliff dwellings, including Cliff Palace, Spruce Tree House, and Square Tower House in 1888.

Establishment of Mesa Verde as a national park was still many years away, but the Wetherills quickly recognized the importance of their discoveries. And they made every effort to place their carefully excavated finds in established museums where they could receive proper care. It is largely through their intelligence and foresight that hundreds of irreplaceable items, which might otherwise have been lost, have been preserved in museums in such places as Denver, Philadelphia, and Berkeley.
Pueblo Indians have been making pottery for about 1500 years. Even today, most of the modern Pueblo villages in New Mexico and Arizona continue this traditional craft. Surprisingly, Pueblo pottery today shows very little influence from Europeans, with whom the Pueblo Indians have been in constant contact for about 400 years.

This exhibit was prepared in 1936 by Maria and Julian Martinez, famous potters from San Ildefonso Pueblo. It shows different stages in the making of various kinds of Pueblo pottery. No potter's wheel is ever used; no glaze is ever applied. The shiny appearance of some pots is entirely the result of laborious polishing by hand, with a smooth pebble. The black paint used on the pottery in rows "B" and "C" is an organic paint very much like that used prehistorically at Mesa Verde (see p. 23). The other paints used on the pottery shown here are mineral paints made from clay.
Although the Pueblo Indians have been painting designs on pottery, and on cliffs, for hundreds of years, the practice of painting on paper is a relatively recent innovation. The art has gained popularity only since 1900.

Shown above is a painting of two eagle dancers, done in 1917 by Crescencio Martinez of San Ildefonso Pueblo, who is sometimes referred to as the "father" of modern Pueblo Indian painting.

The painting below was done by Patricio Toya of Jemez Pueblo in the 1920's, and depicts a Corn Dance.
Southwestern Indians have been making jewelry for hundreds of years, as we have already seen. But they have known metalworking only since its introduction by Europeans. The development of silver jewelry has taken place within the last 100 years or so.

The items shown here were acquired over a period of about 70 years, beginning in the 1880's, by the late Mary E. J. Colter. Most of the pieces are silver or turquoise, or a combination of the two. On each side of the exhibit can be seen silver and leather concho belts. Between them are several silver and turquoise necklaces. In the center of the case is a leather pouch, with silver trim, used in the old days for carrying tobacco or other objects. At the bottom are four ketohs, or bow-guards, originally worn to protect the wearer's wrist from the snap of the bow-string. All of the pieces in this case were made by Navajo Indians.
These two necklaces were made by Pueblo Indians about 1900. The one below, from Isleta Pueblo, is of silver and coral.

The necklace above is entirely of silver, and was made at Laguna Pueblo.
Perhaps it is fitting to conclude this book with mention of a few of the American Indian contributions to our civilization. Only a few of these things were known to Mesa Verde Indians, but various Indian groups throughout the New World knew and used each of these, and all were unknown in the Old World before 1492.

### FOODS

| Corn (all varieties, including popcorn) | Strawberry |
| Beans (most varieties except soy beans) | Cranberry |
| Squash and Pumpkin | Chili pepper |
| Tomato | Maple sugar |
| White Potato | Peanuts |
| Sweet potato | Pecans |
| Cocoa | Cashews |
| Vanilla | Black walnuts |
| Tapioca (manioc) | Turkey |
| Pineapple | Muscovy Duck and many more |

### INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS

| Cotton, long staple (short staple, seldom used industrially, is an Old World plant) | Rubber |
| | Copal (varnish base) |
| | Indigo and cochineal (dyes) |

### MEDICINES

| Quinine | Cascara segrada |
| Cocaine | Ipecac |
| Curare |

### MISCELLANEOUS PLANT ITEMS

| Tobacco (Indians used cigars, cigarettes, pipes, snuff, and chewing tobacco) | Chicle (the base for chewing gum) |

### SPORTS

| Lacrosse | Canoeing |
| Tobogganing | Snowshoeing |