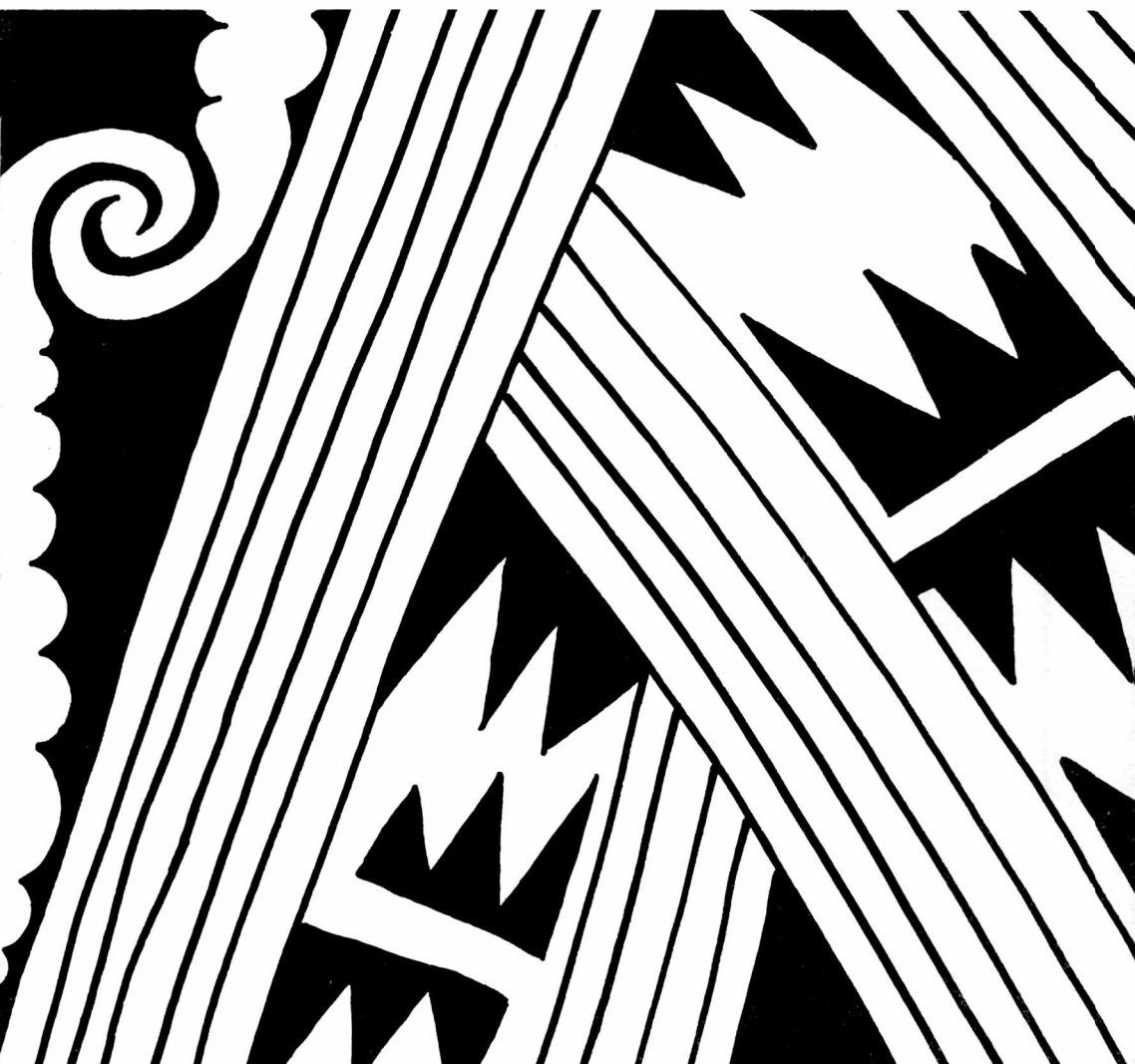




CASA RINCONADA TRAIL



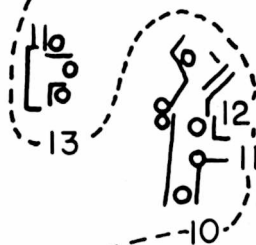
**CHACO CANYON NATIONAL MONUMENT
NEW MEXICO**



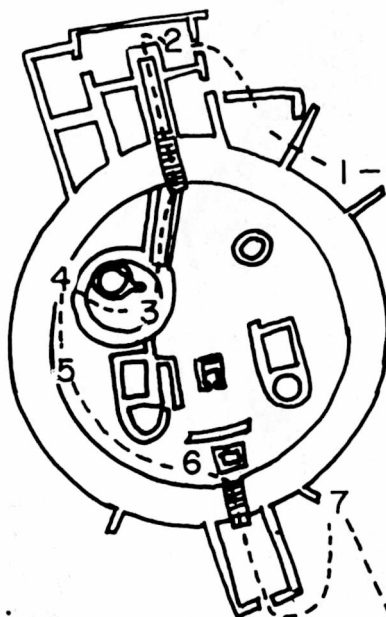
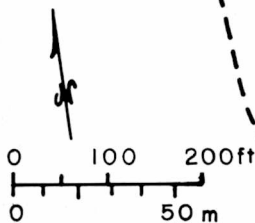


(1-7 see below)

*Start Here



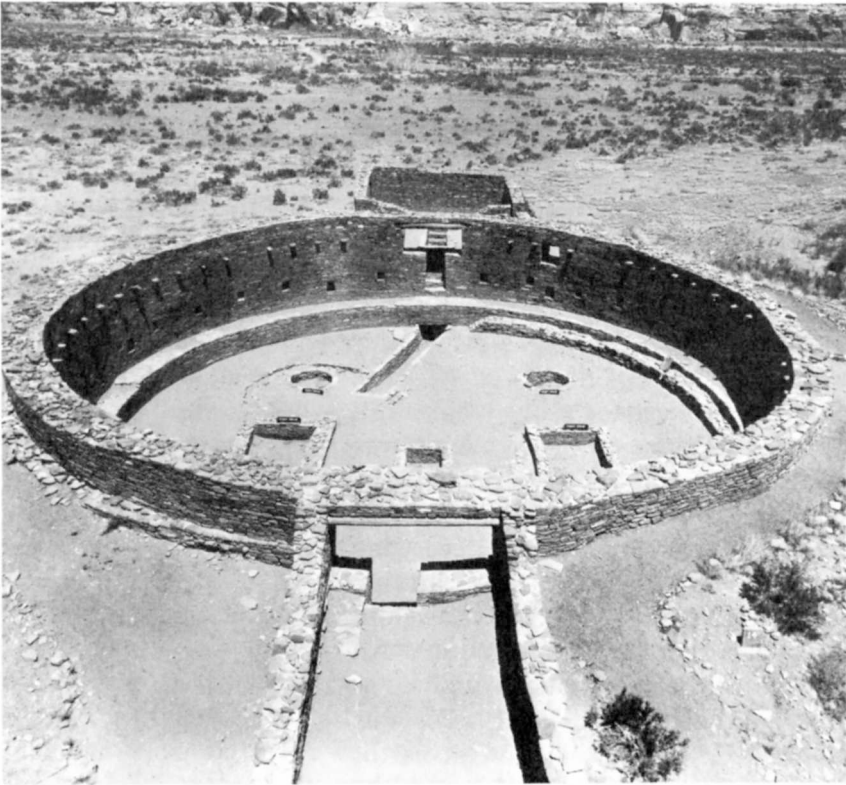
Casa
Rinconada



Great Kiva

THE CASA RINCONADA TRAIL

The Casa Rinconada Trail, in four-tenths of a mile,* will take you into Casa Rinconada, a great kiva, and to three of the ten or more small pueblos nearby that it may have served. This shallow indentation, or rincón, in the south wall of the canyon was the scene of much archeological work initiated by Edgar Lee



**For metric Conversion see table in back.*

Hewitt as a joint School of American Research and University of New Mexico project in 1931. The University here operated the country's first field school for the training of students in archeological techniques, and by 1947 - the last season it functioned in Chaco Canyon - several hundred students had received instructions and on-the-job training in the excavation of 11 or more sites. Many professional archeologists in such widely scattered fields as Micronesia, the Arctic, North Africa, South America, and Easter Island, as well as the Southwest, were schooled in Chaco dust.

The trail first takes you to Casa Rinconada, "the house in the corner, or box canyon", named by early-day archeologists at Pueblo Bonito about 1900. You will find numbered markers along the way which correspond to the numbered paragraphs in this booklet.

1 Casa Rinconada, 63½ feet across the floor level, is the largest great kiva in Chaco Canyon. The types of pottery found, and the quality of masonry indicate that it was built about A.D. 1100 during the period of the final splurge of construction at Chetro Ketl, Pueblo Bonito, and Pueblo del Arroyo. It was excavated by Gordon Vivian in 1931.

Though this great kiva is rather late in the Pueblo Indian history of Chaco Canyon, great kivas were known and used by the eastern Anasazi of northwestern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado as far back as the 6th century A.D. as religious centers. Religion was (and still is) a vital thing to Pueblo people who did not make a distinction between sacred things and everyday things. Planting corn and carrying water to the new shoots was a reverent act as well as an economic necessity. An elaborately choreographed ritual to insure rain was as practical as it was reverent. Man, the shape of the earth, the deer, the grass, the sky and the birds were seen as parts of an integrated pattern in a way that we are only now beginning to rediscover through modern ecology.



The ground plan of Casa Rinconada is typical of the more than 20 great kivas that have been excavated in the Southwest. It is below ground level set into bedrock shale and soft sandstone; it is round with a bench at the base of the encircling wall; the firebox standing a little south of the floor center, is flanked by rectangular vaults; and there are masonry-lined postholes about eight feet from the wall in four quarters of the room. All those attributes are standard, but other features are unique to Casa Rinconada.

2

These rooms built against the north side served as an ante-chamber, or entryway, and probably as dressing rooms and a storage place for religious paraphernalia. From the innermost room an open stairway leads directly onto the kiva floor. But you may take steps from this rear room through what was once a covered passage.

3

The narrow trench encloses an area 16 feet across. It may have been used as the base of a brush shelter or a woven screen concealing entry from the covered subfloor passage. Participants in a ceremony could emerge onto a kiva floor as if appearing from the earth.

The masonry-lined pit within the circle is one of four seats for massive roof support posts of Ponderosa pine. The tops of the posts were connected by horizontally laid stringers which held the ends of smaller roof timbers running back to the outer wall of the kiva, to create a ceiling 12 feet above the floor. There seems to be a disagreement on whether the central area was covered or not.

4

About three feet above the bench in the outer wall is a series of 28 evenly spaced niches which may once have held offerings of beads such as were found in Chetro Ketl's great kiva. They were empty at the time of excavation. Six more, slightly larger niches occur lower on the wall with no apparent symmetry - two on the east side of the room and four on the west. The only pattern observable is that each of the two on the east is directly across the circular floor from a niche just west of one of the two entryways. At sunrise on the day of the summer solstice the sun shines through the large window above the lower niche east of the north entry, and into the second lower niche west of the north entry.

Was this intentional? We know that the Pueblo Indians could mark and predict the solstice. But outside the northeast window are the remains of an antechamber room. If it was completely walled-in and roofed, it would have required another matching window in its outer wall to complete the alignment of the sun's rays. The northeast roof-support post may have been in the way, and further, the series of small poles 8½ feet above the bench may have secured the top of a plastered wattle-work screen, the likes of which have been found in some smaller, conventional kivas. Such a screen would have concealed the niches - unless it, too, had an opening at the right place.



Great Kiva

(photo courtesy of the School of American Research and the Museum of New Mexico)

5 The bench is a standard feature of great kivas and probably was to seat the observers of a religious rite. This one could easily accomodate 100 spectators in comfort. Perhaps you have already noticed the acoustics, and that even a lowered voice can be easily heard and understood in all parts of the chamber.

Across the room you can see that the bench was made wider by adding a veneer of rather crude masonry. The kind of stonework, and the types of broken pottery found on the floor, indicate that it was added in the mid-1100's by people from the Mesa Verde area who moved to the canyon about that time.

On each side of the raised firebox is a masonry vault - another almost universal feature of great kivas, but one also seen in some small kivas. Their purpose is unknown and the subject of

much speculation. The vaults in Casa Rinconada were open and empty, but others have been found filled with clean sand, and still others have had the remains of a sealed cover made of large planks, poles, or willow matting.

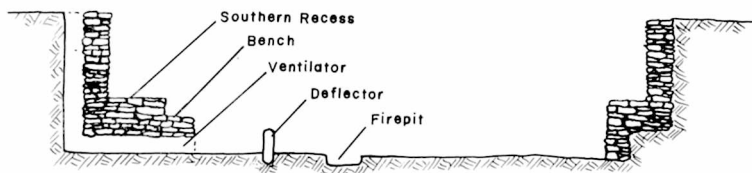
6 These steps lead into a one-room antechamber at the south side of the great kiva. When you reach the outside doorway of the antechamber, if you will turn and look back across the firebox to the steps by which you entered, you will be sighting down the axis, or middle of the structure -and also along the line of true celestial north. If this orientation was deliberate, it required a knowledge of astronomy, and engineering skills that were not demonstrated in earlier stages of Anasazi development. Casa Rinconada also lies directly under a straight line-of-sight from Pueblo Alto on the mesa across the canyon, and a peculiar east-facing, semicircular enclosure on the highest point of the mesa to the south. The unusual structure on the southern mesa is one of several similar arcs located on commanding sites on the three mesas which form Chaco Canyon's south wall. They are in view of one another and among them they command a view of all Chaco's great houses including many outlying pueblos. In fact, some of the latter seem to have been placed precisely where they are so that they could be seen from one of the high observation stations.



UNM Digs, 1936

7 From this point one can see several of the impressive great pueblos across the canyon. Closer at hand at the end of this low ridge, and in the rincon to the right, are several nondescript small pueblos that were fully contemporary with Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl, but quite different. The differences have plagued and puzzled archeologists for half a century and are still not fully explained. We will examine some of those differences down the trail.

8 This one-story house of 20 rooms and five kivas was excavated for the University of New Mexico by Thomas W. Mathews in 1947. It is typical of hundreds of little ruins of the same period. In contrast to the symmetrical great houses like Pueblo Bonito, which show evidence of long-range planning, these small pueblos merely grew - when another room was needed, it was slapped up against older walls wherever it would fit. Rooms were smaller, ceilings lower, walls were built of whatever stone was close at hand, and, without the requirement of supporting two or more stories, were thinner. Timbers were more apt to be the more easily obtained juniper and pinyon than the pine used in the bigger houses. The only evident pattern is that the houses tend to face southeast with kivas in front of a line of rooms - a continuation of a centuries-old tradition. Most of the small houses were occupied continuously for generations before the construction of the great pueblos, and were still being remodeled by the Mesa Verdeans after Pueblo Bonito was partly abandoned.



Mesa Verde type kiva

9 The kiva on the right has been remodeled twice, each time with a higher floor level. The kiva on the left, with a deep recess at the south side of the wall, with a ventilator tunnel above the floor, and a high bench, is in the Mesa Verde style.



10 This unnamed ruin was excavated in 1937 by University of New Mexico students under the supervision of Clyde Kluckhohn. With almost 50 rooms it is unusually large for a “small pueblo,” but not all the rooms were occupied at the same time. Some were in ruins before the latest were built. The average small house of this period had about 10 rooms, in contrast to an average of almost 300 in the great pueblos. But over 300 similar contemporary small ruins have been counted in the lower 15 miles of the canyon, and probably nearly half of the peak population in the late A.D. 1000’s lived in them.

11 The wall on the left of this long enclosure was first constructed as a row of columns, in a masonry styled used in the great houses. Later the spaces between the columns were filled in with cruder stonework to make a solid wall.

12 At the base of the wall of the room to your left is the slab footing of crude adobe and stone wall of an earlier room. The first structure was leveled and covered with soil and rubble before the upper room was built. Continuous razing and rebuilding was typical of the Anasazi.

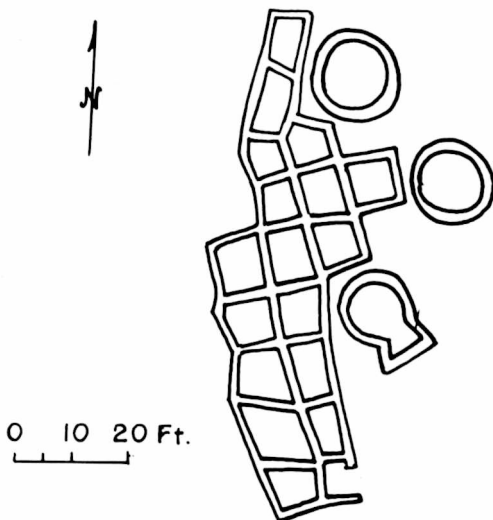


Whereas the construction of Pueblo Bonito, and the irrigation system and road network that went with it, required a complex society with some centralized control, this small house was probably the home of an extended family where one had to look no further than to one's grandfather for the ultimate authority.

13 *Tseh So* (windows) was excavated by UNM students under the direction of Donald D. Brand. Like most of the other houses like it, it has a long history. The floors



of the rooms near the center of the ruin lie five feet and three hundred years above the first construction site.



One hundred thirty-five burials have been discovered in this small rincon. The bodies were buried according to the old Anasazi custom - flexed in a fetal position and laid beneath the floors of the rooms, or in the refuse mounds in front of the houses. No burials definitely attributable to the occupants of the large houses have been found, and we don't know how they disposed of their dead.

So striking are the contrasts between the big, beautifully built communal houses, and the small, comparatively scruffy pueblos, it might appear that there were two classes of society in the canyon - the privileged elite versus the poor folks on the wrong side of the arroyo. There is, indeed, evidence of some kind of division - perhaps one involving people of two somewhat different cultural backgrounds - but it was not necessarily a division based on high or low status. Smaller artifacts recovered from both kinds of contemporary

pueblos - the bone and stone tools, the pottery and less frequently found things of wood and fiber -are essentially the same.

It should be obvious to you now, particularly if you have visited one of the sites across the canyon, that mystery still abounds in Chaco. It is in the very nature of archeology that the more one learns, the more questions arise that we didn't know enough to ask when we started. Nearly 100 years of exploration have revealed much of WHAT and WHEN, current research is beginning to throw some light on HOW, but WHY may still be a long way down the road ahead of us. There are plenty of puzzles for new generations of archeologists.

OTHER PLACES TO VISIT IN CHACO CANYON

- 1) Just across the bridge is PUEBLO BONITO, Chaco Canyon's largest ruin.**
- 2) A quarter mile west of Pueblo Bonito is PUEBLO DEL ARROYO.**
- 3) CHETRO KETL, the second largest pueblo, is three-quarters of a mile east of Pueblo Bonito.**
- 4) The VISITOR CENTER, 4 miles up the canyon, has a museum and information desk and restrooms. A campground is another mile-and-a-half beyond.**

**PLEASE RETURN THIS BOOKLET,
OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KEEP IT,
DEPOSIT 40¢ IN THE STAND AT
THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAIL**

Brief Metric Conversion Table

$\frac{1}{2}$ inch	=	12.70 millimetres
1 inch	=	25.40 millimetres
2 inches	=	50.80 millimetres
1 foot	=	30.48 centimetres
1 yard	=	0.914 metres
$\frac{1}{4}$ mile	=	400 metres
$\frac{1}{2}$ mile	=	800 metres
1 mile	=	1.6 km
$3\frac{1}{2}$ miles	=	5.6 km
$4\frac{1}{2}$ miles	=	7.2 km
15 miles	=	24 km
20 miles	=	32 km
60 miles	=	96 km
200 miles	=	320 km
1 acre	=	0.4 hectares
$2\frac{1}{2}$ acres	=	1 hectare

