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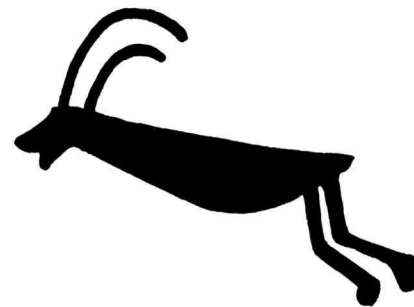
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the Mesa Verde Story

FROM MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK — SOUTHWEST COLORADO

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EARLY MAN IN NORTH AMERICA

This diorama pictures a hunt such as may have taken place 10 or 12 thousand years ago in what is now northeastern New Mexico. In 1926, 1927 and 1928, the bones of 30 bison of an extinct species were dug out of the bed of an arroyo near the little town of Folsom, New Mexico. Associated with the bison bones were 19 spear points of an unusual type. The place where the bones and spear points were found had once been a water hole or marsh and men probably killed the bison when they came to drink or to wallow. They skinned the animals, cut off what flesh they wanted and left the carcasses in the mud. Sometimes spear points were lost or were left in the bodies and these points, preserved with the bones, tell the story of the early hunts.

The unusual spear points are now called Folsom Points and the men who made and used them are often referred to as Folsom Men. Other spear points of distinctive types have also been found with the bones of extinct animals and it indicates that there were many different groups of early men in America.

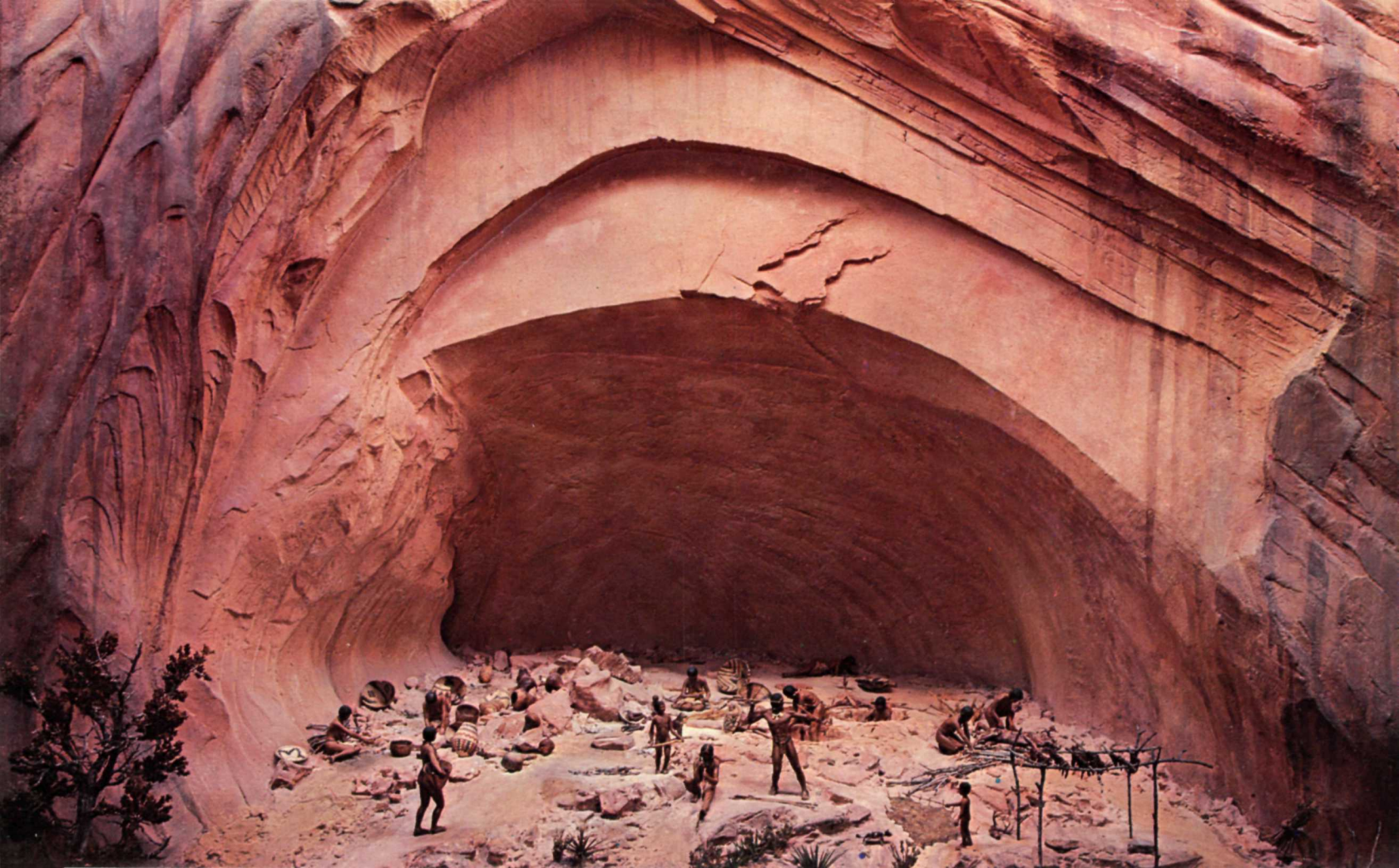
Men began to drift into America at least 15,000 years ago. They came from the north, crossing from Asia to Alaska, then moved to the south. These early men were hunters and

their spear points, knives, scrapers and other stone tools have been found associated with the bones of elephants, mammoths, camels, horses and certain types of bison which have been extinct in America many thousands of years.

Little is known about these early inhabitants of North America. They lived by hunting and by gathering seeds, fruit and roots of wild plants. They had no permanent dwellings and moved about, following the game on which they lived. Pottery was unknown and their utensils and containers were made of animal skins. Cooking must have been done over the open fire although they may have been able to cook some foods by dropping hot stones into skin containers. Many primitive people have cooked in this manner.

Few human bones have been found, so little is known about the appearance or race of these early men. It can be presumed that they were the ancestors of some of our present-day Indians.

The migrations of people from Asia to America which began thousands of years ago continued until only a few centuries ago. When the white man finally arrived, there were hundreds of tribes and many millions of Indians in the New World.



THE BASKETMAKERS — 1 to 450 A. D.

Pictured here is a cave occupied by early farming Indians whom we call the Basketmakers. Having no houses, they used the caves for shelter and since the caves were dry the remains of these people are often found in a remarkable state of preservation. These first farmers of the Mesa Verde region came into the area almost 2,000 years ago, bringing corn and squash with them.

The corn and squash were raised in small mesa-top fields and the people also hunted game animals and gathered wild plant foods. Corn was the most important food. It could be stored for the winter and when ground on the milling stones, the mano and metate, could be used in many ways. The area is excellent for dry farming as the rainfall averages 19 inches per year.

Pottery was unknown and baskets served as all-purpose containers. It is because of the beautifully woven baskets, bags, sandals and sashes that the people are called the Basketmakers. Dogs were present and their hair was sometimes used in weaving.

In most of the area around the Mesa Verde, houses were not in use but in the Durango area the remains of crude, hogan-like structures have been found. Since most of the people did not have houses, caves were used for shelter and

most of the remains of these people have been found in caves where they have been protected from the elements. In the floors of the caves, small slab-lined pits were constructed for the storage of food. They were also used for burials.

The bow and arrow were not used by the Basketmakers. Instead, they used a weapon called the atlatl, a throwing stick with which they threw long arrow-like darts. The atlatl served to lengthen the arm and a quick overhand thrust imparted great force to the dart.

The Basketmaker cradle was woven of reeds and withes and a soft pillow was placed under the baby's head. As a result, the head developed normally and was not deformed.

Clothing was scanty. Small string aprons were worn by the women and loin cloths may have been used. Large blankets were woven from thin strips of fur and these as well as animal skins served as robes during the colder seasons. Jewelry made from stones, sea shells, bones and seeds was common. Turquoise came into use at this time.

The Basketmakers were highly intelligent, progressive people with great ability to develop new ideas and to borrow things from other people. Although they lived in a simple, rather primitive way, they laid the foundation for the great developments which were to follow.



THE MODIFIED BASKETMAKER PERIOD — 450 to 750 A. D.

When Step House Cave, three miles west of the park museum, was excavated in 1926, the ruins of three Modified Basketmaker pithouses were found. They were built about 600 A. D.

This diorama shows Step House Cave at the time of its occupation. Two of the pithouses are shown, one complete, the other being constructed. The men are doing the heavier construction work while a woman applies adobe to the roof. Another woman is cooking, two are making pottery and still another is threshing beans. A father is showing his two small sons how to use the bow and arrow and coming through the trees are two men carrying a mountain sheep.

The people of this period were direct descendants of the Basketmakers shown in Diorama No. 2. Several new developments such as pithouses, pottery and the bow and arrow had appeared, and the way of life had changed. This change is indicated by the new name, Modified Basketmaker Period.

Pithouses, the idea borrowed from other people, came into general use early in the period. Some were built in the caves but now that they had good houses the people began to move to the mesa tops. By 700 A. D., most, perhaps all,

were living in small pithouse villages near their fields. The pithouses provided shelter and comfort during the colder seasons.

Pottery appeared early in the period and basketry became less important. The secret of pottery making was learned from people to the south and soon the women were making water jars, bowls, pitchers, ladles and cooking pots of good quality. Beans came into use, now that there were pots in which to cook them, and added an excellent protein food to the diet.

About 550 A. D., the bow and arrow, borrowed from other people, came into use. The bow was superior to the atlatl and made hunting and defense of the home easier. Stone axes and mauls and other tools of stone and bone appeared during this period. Turkeys were domesticated and they and the dogs were the only domesticated animals the Mesa Verde people ever had.

The Modified Basketmaker was a time of development and progress. With houses, pottery and the bow and arrow, and the addition of beans to their diet, the people seemed to gain vigor and the population began to grow. By the end of the period, there were hundreds of pithouse villages in the Mesa Verde and a great area around it.



THE DEVELOPMENTAL PUEBLO PERIOD — 750 to 1100 A. D.

Pictured here is a typical Mesa Verde pueblo of about 850 A. D. The houses are joined together in a long curving row, facing south. In front are two underground ceremonial rooms, one complete, the other under construction. Around the village are the fields and in the head of a small draw at the left is a spring which provides water. The people are engaged in the activities of a September day: gathering the crops, drying food, building houses, carrying water, cooking, dressing hides, making pottery and, in some cases, doing nothing at all.

In the two preceding dioramas, the people were called Basketmakers. From this time on, they will be called Pueblos. Pueblo is a Spanish word meaning village. This period saw the beginning of true pueblo architecture so the new name, Pueblo Indians, is used.

During the preceding period, individual pithouses were built but near the end, the builders began to join the houses together in compact groups. Early in the Developmental Pueblo Period, individual pithouses, used as dwellings, disappeared. The houses became rectangular with vertical walls built of posts and adobe. The rooms were joined together, end-to-end, in long, curving rows. In front were one or more deep pitrooms which served as ceremonial rooms.

Later in the period, stone masonry appeared and houses

were built of stones laid in adobe mortar. These villages usually contained from 4 to 15 rooms built in a single compact group. In front were one or more ceremonial rooms, now completely underground. These rooms, now called kivas, served as ceremonial rooms, clubrooms and workrooms and were used chiefly by the men.

About 750 A. D., the people began to use a wooden cradleboard and the baby's head rested on the hard board without a pillow. This caused the back of the skull to flatten and the head appeared much broader. From this time on, almost every head was noticeably deformed.

During the Developmental Pueblo Period, there was general improvement in everything except basketry which declined as pottery grew in favor. Pottery improved in quality, designs became more common and corrugated pottery appeared. Minor arts and crafts improved and cotton cloth appeared about 900 A. D. Evidently the cotton was imported from warmer regions to the south for it will not grow in the Mesa Verde.

From all appearances, this was a peaceful period, for the population grew rapidly and the people spread over a wide area. Hundreds of small farming villages dotted the Mesa Verde area.



THE GREAT PUEBLO PERIOD — 1100 to 1300 A. D.

Spruce Tree House, shown in this diorama, is the best preserved large cliff dwelling in the Mesa Verde. It contains 8 kivas and well over 100 rooms and may have had as many as 200 inhabitants. The diorama shows it as it was when occupied during the thirteenth century.

The rooms, which were small, served as sleeping and storage rooms. Most of the activities of the people were carried on in the open courts and on the house roofs. Pictured here is a September afternoon and the people are busy with their many activities. Corn, beans and squash are being carried down from the mesa-top fields and spread on roofs to dry. Women are grinding corn, cooking, carrying water and caring for the babies. Some of the men are building a kiva roof and a new house is also being built. In the center of the village, old men sit in the sun and talk about bygone days when things were better.

The Great Pueblo Period of 1100 to 1300 A. D. was the climax of Pueblo development in the Mesa Verde. From 1100 to about 1200, the people lived on the mesa tops in well-built masonry pueblos. The plan of the villages, however, began to change. Kivas, which formerly had been outside the village proper, were now placed inside and were surrounded by houses. Tall, round towers, which may have been lookout

towers, became common. The villages also grew larger and were concentrated in the most favorable areas. All of this indicates a need for defense and it is probable that nomadic Indians were beginning to harass the Pueblo farmers.

About 1200 A. D., the Mesa Verde people began to move to the caves. Soon most, if not all, were living in cliff dwellings which were simply pueblos built in caves. This abrupt change evidently resulted from a need for defense against increasing enemy pressure.

During this last century, the people reached their highest level of development. Houses, pottery and all other arts and crafts except basketry were of the finest quality produced in the Mesa Verde. After thirteen centuries of steady development, the culture reached its peak.

In 1276 A. D., a drouth began which lasted through 1299 A. D. Because of the drouth and probably, also, because of increasing enemy trouble, the people moved to the south. Some of our modern Pueblo Indians living in New Mexico and Arizona are their descendants. The Mesa Verde was never again occupied by farming Indians. After many silent, empty centuries, the cliff dwellings were discovered by the white man in 1874.