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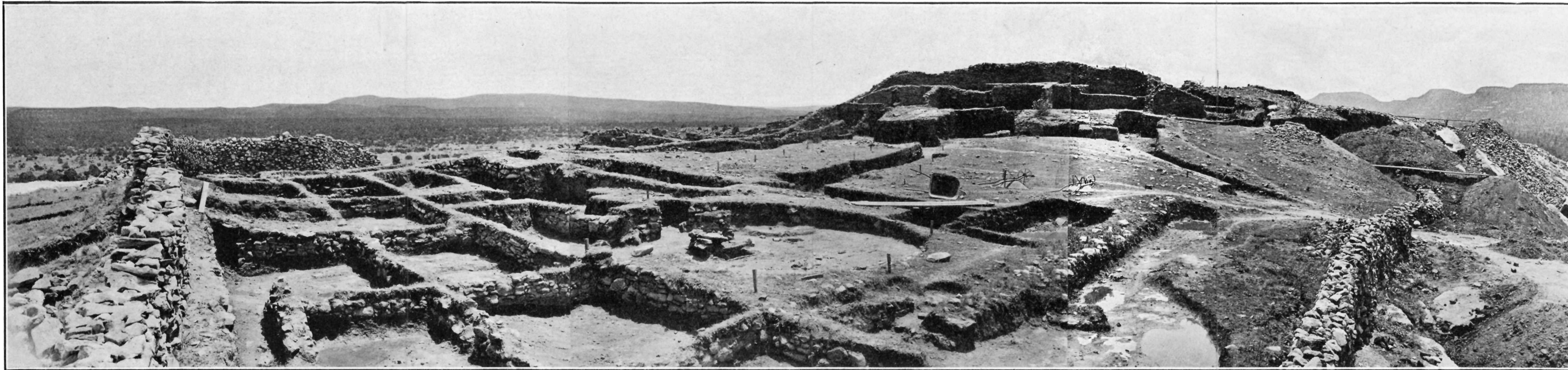
Number Thirty-Eight

OLD NORTH PUEBLO OF PECOS
THE CONDITION OF THE MAIN PECOS RUIN

BY

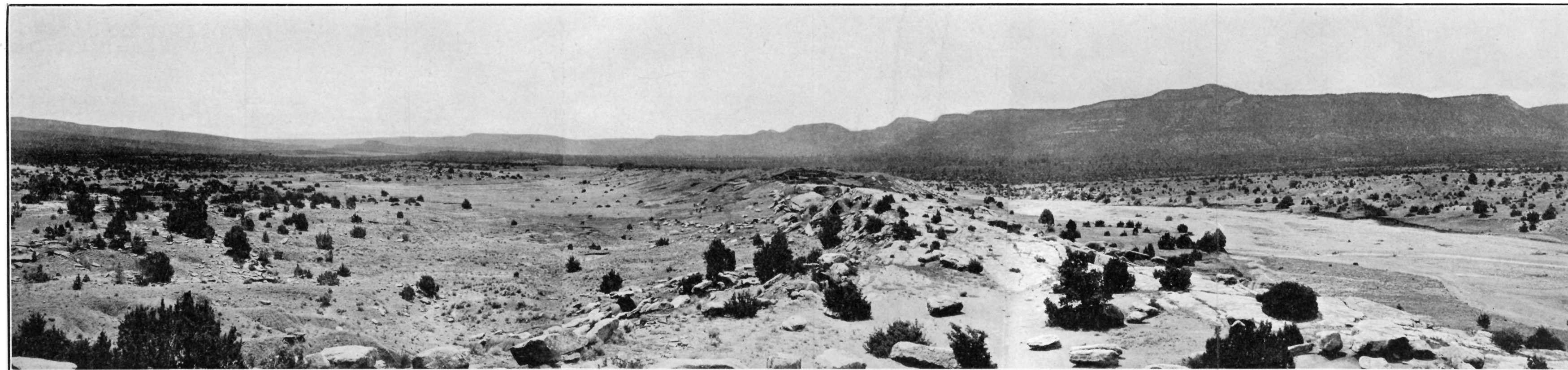
A. V. KIDDER

1917



EXCAVATIONS ON THE NORTH TERRACE OF PECOS

Pueblo in left foreground. The outer wall of the late historic quadrangle may be seen in the center behind the wall with two doorways.



PECOS FROM THE NORTH



SOUTHERN ROOMS OF NORTH TERRACE OF PECOS
Showing walls of five periods.

THE OLD NORTH PUEBLO OF PECOS

BY A. V. KIDDER

THE pueblo of Pecos was discovered by Coronado in 1540 and was described by his chroniclers as a large and powerful village of two thousand to twenty-five hundred souls. Until about 1700 the town continued prosperous but sickness and the merciless raids of the Comanche began, apparently soon after that date, to reduce the number of its people; by 1797 the population had shrunk to one hundred and eighty-nine, and in 1838 the dozen or so survivors abandoned their homes to take refuge with their kindred at Jemez. Since that time the once great pueblo and its massive mission church have been gradually falling into decay.

The ruins today consist of two large stone-covered mounds and the battered and roofless walls of the church. The Department of Archaeology of Phillip's And over Academy has undertaken, with the very generous permission of the New Mexico State Museum, to excavate this most interesting site. The second year's field-work has recently been brought to a close. In its first season the Expedition confined itself to investigating the enormous rubbish deposits that lie all about the edge of the mesa; a brief summary of the results was published in "El Palacio" for April, 1916.

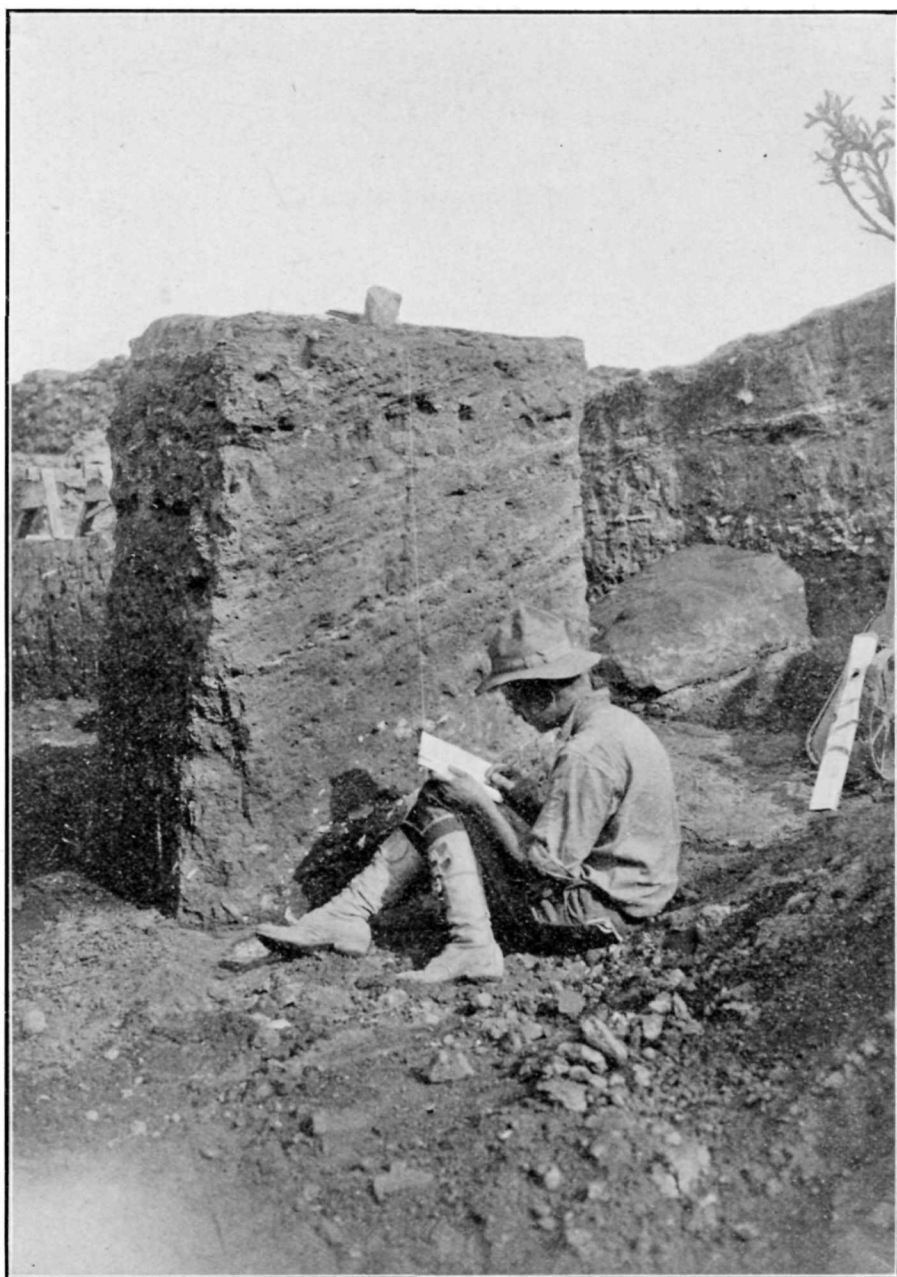
During the past summer work was continued in the almost inexhaustible rubbish, and a number of more or less uncorrelated diggings were carried on in the pueblo itself. As these were in the nature of explorations, designed to give us an idea of what would have to be done in future years and of the best means of doing it, they were none of them carried to completion and so cannot as yet be adequately pre-

sented. One small section of the site was, however, almost entirely cleared; and, as it brought out several very interesting features as to the growth of the pueblo, it may not be amiss to describe it in the present paper.

The pueblo ruin, as distinguished from that of the church, consists of two separate buildings: a long narrow one to the south, and a much larger one of hollow quadrangular form to the north. The appearance of the latter in 1540 is thus reported by Castañeda:

"It is square, situated on a rock, with a large court or yard in the middle, containing the estufas. The houses are all alike, four stories high. One can go over the top of the whole village without there being a street to hinder. There are corridors going all around it at the first two stories, by which one can go around the whole village. These are like outside balconies, and they are able to protect themselves under these. The houses do not have doors below, but they use ladders, which can be lifted up like a draw-bridge, and so go up to the corridors which are on the inside of the village. As the doors of the houses open on the corridor of that story, the corridor serves as a street. The houses that open on the plain are right back of those that open on the court, and in time of war they go through those behind them. The village is enclosed by a low wall of stone."

At the present time this building is a huge tumbled heap of stones with bits of wall protruding from it here and there. One of the most distinctly traceable of these is the heavy outer wall that once formed the northern end of the historic building. (x-x1 on plan).



PART OF THE OLD BLACK-AND-WHITE RUBBISH HEAP AT PECOS.

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removed from the electronic edition.

SKELETON OF AGUA FRIA PERIOD AT PECOS.

From this to the low defense wall, which cuts across the mesa some 150 feet farther north, there was, at the time of the beginning of our excavations, no sign whatever of house-structures beyond a low mound which Mr. Adams in his excellent model of "Pecos in later time" restored correctly as an insignificant out-building. Aside from this mound, the surface of the north terrace was a smooth slope, running from the defense wall gently up toward the main quadrangle; it was made up, apparently, of nothing but rubbish and of material that had washed down from the slowly decaying pueblo.

Trenches were dug in this open space merely as a matter of routine and with no expectation of finding anything beyond, perhaps, a few burials. Our surprise was great, therefore, when we brought to light the whole series of rooms shown in the accompanying map. Although the actual excavation progressed in the opposite direction, it will be simpler to describe the buildings from north to south.

Just within the defense wall, but obviously erected at a much earlier date than it, is a series of rooms ("North Wing" on plan). These chambers, whose walls stand only about eighteen inches high, date from the earliest period of the occupation of the Pecos Mesa, a fact that was proved by the finding piled *against* their walls of rubbish containing only Black-and-white pottery fragments, the oldest ware so far recognized in the Rio Grande. This old dwelling, which we may for convenience call the Black-and-white house, extended from the western edge of the mesa across to the eastern; it there turns south and traces of it may be made out here and there under the later structures, (see black walls on plan) as far as the main North building, where it disappears under the as yet undug mound. Near the western end of the x-1 wall, however,

there was found at "y" a large Black-and-white rubbish heap and cemetery, so that we are led to suspect that the Black-and-white houses turned somewhere near "x-1" and ran out to the western edge, thus forming a three-sided pueblo open to the west and partly surrounding a large courtyard or plaza.

As debris of the Black-and-white period is scanty or even absent at the bottom of most parts of the rubbish deposits along the rest of the Pecos Mesa, and as it is comparatively heavy here, both on the west side (just mentioned) and on the east side as well, we seem to have good grounds for believing that on this northern end lay the nucleus of the Pecos Pueblo. As to the date of its founding or of the length of its occupation we can say little or nothing as yet, but from the fact that at Rowe, and across the Arroyo de Pecos at "Bandelier Bend" and at "Loma Lothrop," there are ruins of what were larger and, in some respects, apparently earlier Black-and-white villages, we hazard the guess that this mesa settlement was erected toward the close of the Black-and-white period and soon before the beginning of the next or Agua Fria stage. At all events the northern wing of our oldest pueblo was abandoned and presumably in ruins during Agua Fria times, for skeletons accompanied by Agua Fria pottery were found buried above the floor levels in several of its rooms.

The bulk of the Agua Fria pueblo seems to have been to the south, where it still lies unexcavated below the mass of the great quadrangle; its approximate position may nevertheless be guessed at from the quantities of Agua Fria rubbish that cumber the eastern mesa slopes below the quadrangle and which are also heaped along the southern part of the north terrace itself. The eastern wing of the old pueblo may have been used, however, to some

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SKELETON OF FRIJOLITO PERIOD AT PECOS.

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SKELETON OF PAJARITAN PERIOD AT PECOS.

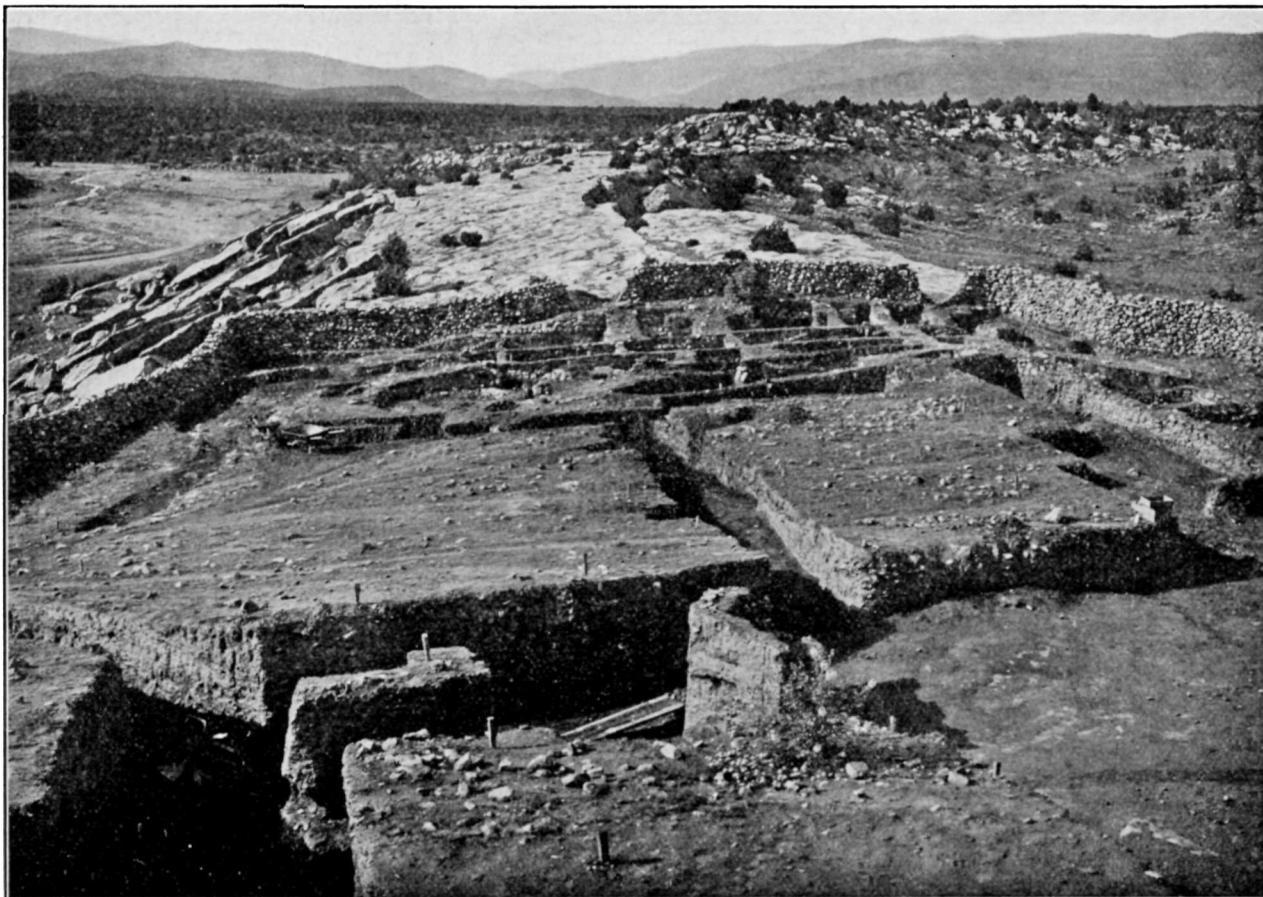
extent, for there are evidences of repair and rehabilitation of many walls. Whether this was done at the very close of the Black-and-white times or during the Agua Fria stage could not be determined, but in either case the east wing lay abandoned and probably partly covered up through the whole long stretch of the next two periods, the Frijolito and the Pajaritan. This is proved by the presence of burials of these epochs in its rooms and actually above some of its broken-down walls, while the courtyard, usually kept free of rubbish in an inhabited pueblo, is choked with Frijolito and Pajaritan debris and burials.

We must infer, then, that during these periods the Pecos Pueblo was extending itself to the south and that the great quadrangle, and perhaps also the long narrow south house, were gradually assuming their final forms. Not until this growth was completed, or at least well under way, did the inhabitants turn again to the north terrace, the neglected site of what we suppose to have been their earliest homes. Here, in the Pecos White period, which began apparently some time before the Conquest and lasted until nearly 1680, were presumably built and surely used the rooms of the south wing near the main north wall (marked on plan with zig-zag lines.) The floors of these lie well above rubbish of earlier times, and they themselves contained on excavation nothing but the light colored pottery that gives the Pecos White period its name. There seems also to have been at this time some repair of the central apartments of the east series, and the wall (a-a1), probably a defensive structure and perhaps the forerunner of the pres-

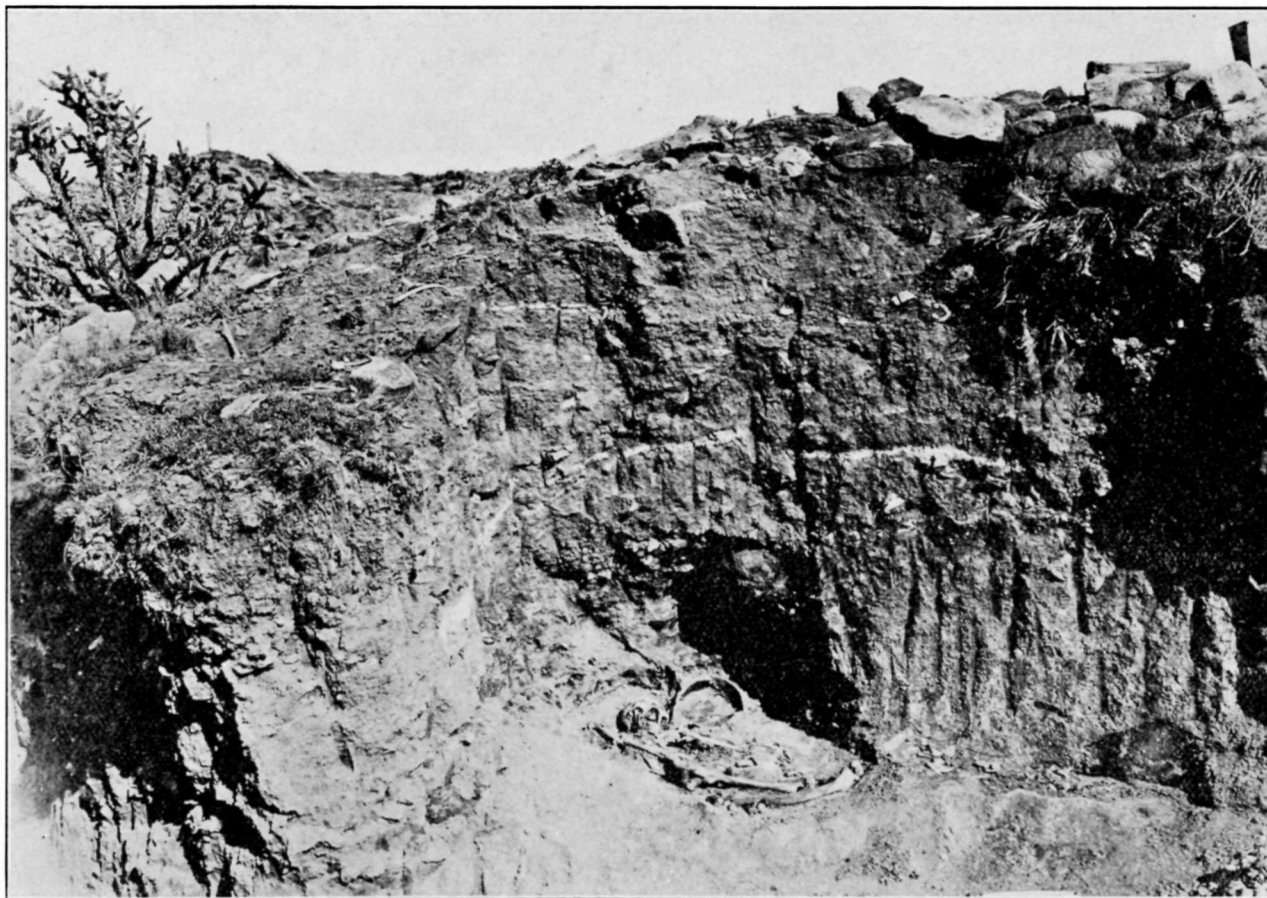
ent defense wall, was run out across the long-buried rooms of the north series.

The Pecos White period appears to have been the Augustan age, so to speak, of the town, for the houses then reached their maximum size and the layers of its debris are the heaviest of all. Towards its close the pueblo began to draw in on itself again, the south wing rooms were deliberately filled up with stone and served as the foundation for the last addition to the heavy outside wall (x-x1) of the historic quadrangle. In this drawing in and strengthening we may perhaps see the effects of the ever-increasing menace of the Comanche raids. Even then the old north building was not entirely deserted, for the little group of rooms in the middle of the eastern wing was used well into the historic period as is shown by the finding in them of crockery of Spanish make, bones of domestic animals, and copper implements. The rooms served as a sort of cook-house annex and contained many manos and metates, while all about them are the remains of ovens sunk through the Pecos White rubbish.

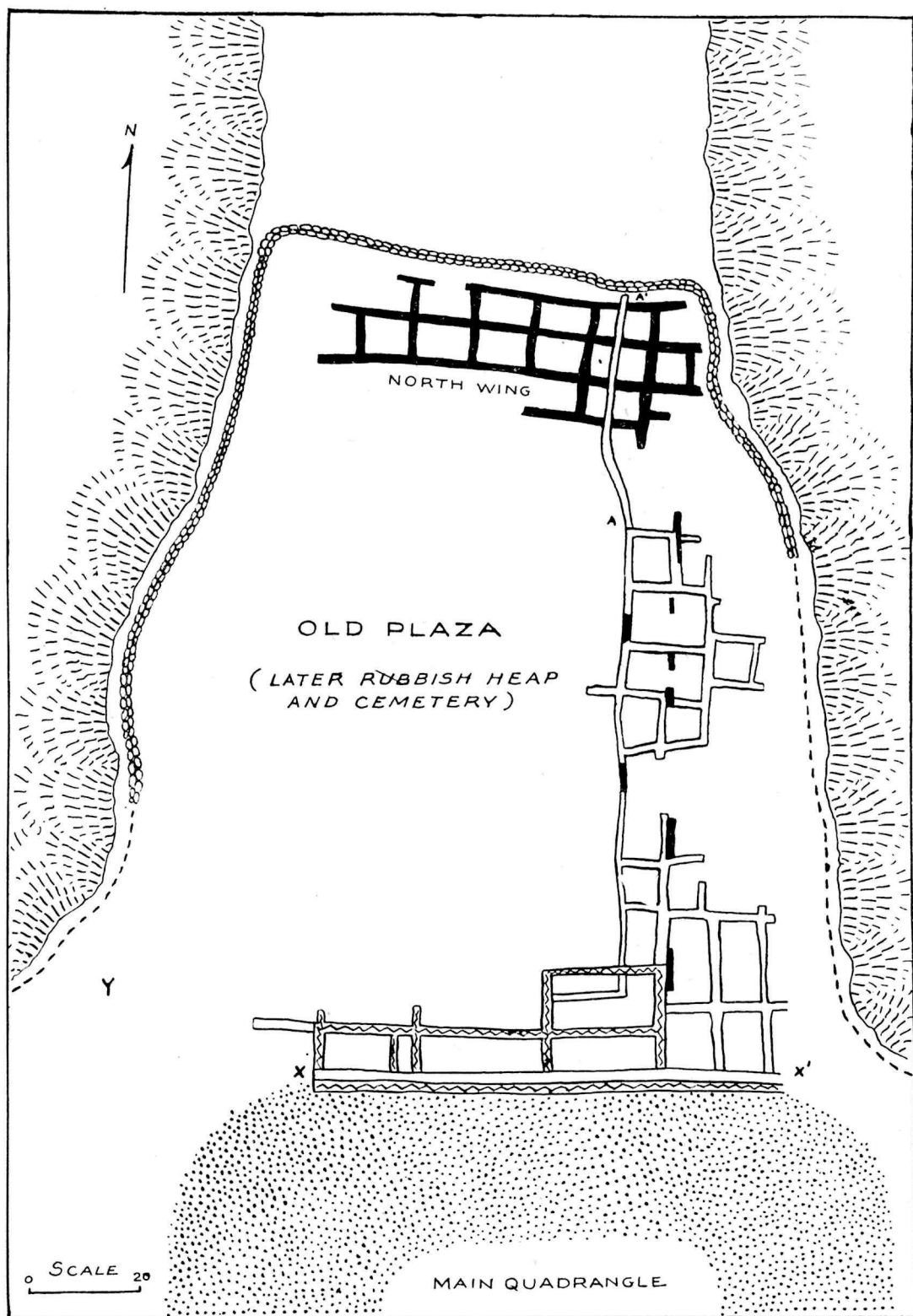
In the final dreary years, when the handful of survivors lived huddled together in the few still habitable rooms of the quadrangle, the old north house was evidently given over to decay, for its mound contains none of the latest pottery at all. On its surface, however, we found lying broken a fine large water jar of the very last period, forgotten perhaps, or perhaps deliberately abandoned by the last of the Pecos when they set out on their final migration to the homes of their kindred at Jemez.



NORTH TERRACE AND DEFENSE WALL FROM THE TOP OF THE MAIN QUADRANGLE AT PECOS.



SKELETON OF LATE BLACK-AND-WHITE PERIOD BURIED IN EARLIER DEBRIS AT PECOS.



SKETCH MAP OF NORTH END OF PECOS PUEBLO.

THE CONDITION OF THE MAIN PECOS RUINS

By A. V. KIDDER

IN this number of "El Palacio" is described the old pueblo that was discovered to the north of the main quadrangular building. Some digging was also done in the main structure. As this was largely exploratory and the excavations were nowhere carried to completion, we are not able to give any final results; there was gained, however, a clear and, it must be confessed, a very disturbing insight into the condition of the ruin. This has forced us to change our general plan of excavation rather radically.

We had hoped to be able to empty the pueblo of its debris, leave the walls standing clear, and so cap them with concrete that they would be preserved from the disintegrating effects of rain. All the rooms would thus have been visible to their floors and visitors would have been able to walk over the tops of the walls on wooden gangways and get a very clear idea of the size, architecture and arrangement of the various apartments of the pueblo. When the rooms which we dug out, however, were emptied of their contents of earth and stone, we found that the historic pueblo was founded on the broken and tumbled walls of earlier houses, and that these again had been built on still earlier ones. The later houses were not constructed on the same ground-plan as their predecessors, so that the walls criss-cross over each other in an irregular and most confusing way.

This condition is, of course, exceedingly favorable for the recovery of that data on pueblo growth and culture development, the gathering of which was the principal object of the Andover Pecos Expedition, for

had the same houses been used from beginning to end, periodical cleanings would have kept them clear of rubbish and we would have found in them only the relics of the latest period of occupation. As it is, however, we will probably be able to trace fairly accurately, as was done on the north terrace building, the growth and culture history of the pueblo. On the other hand this rebuilding and alteration, so valuable from the scientific standpoint, renders the task of leaving the pueblo in its entirety open and clear for inspection practically impossible. In the first place, to get at and study the older buried structures it is often necessary to remove parts of walls which lie above them; and, secondly, the old broken down early houses have formed so irregular and unsteady a foundation that the upper walls are in a most precarious condition. Made of crude and badly laid masonry, uncoursed, with unbroken joints and with the corners not tied by binding stones, such walls would be hard to save intact even if built on solid level rock; founded, as they were, on disintegrated walls of the same type as themselves, they have become, especially since the rotting away of their roof beams, so shaky that, the supporting debris once removed, they fall almost of their own weight.

The preservation of walls such as these could only be accomplished by taking them down and relaying them stone by stone in mortar. As there are doubtless several miles of wall all told in the two mounds, this is naturally out of the question. Capping the wall-tops with concrete and shoring them up with timbers would serve to keep them intact for

THE CONDITION OF THE MAIN PECOS RUIN

a few years, but water would surely undermine their bases, and visitors, whom no amount of exhortation by signs can seem to keep from clambering about on walls, would soon break them down and the Pecos ruin would degenerate into tumbled heaps of building stones.

It is proposed, therefore, to carry on the excavation by what is known as the "dig and fill" method, clearing the rooms for careful observation and the recovery of specimens, and then filling them in again with the original debris to save them from destruction. The exterior walls of the pueblo will be so strengthened as to allow them to stand clear, giving a good idea of the outline and general appearance of the building. The tops of the inner walls will be left standing two feet or so above the fill in order that one can see the size and arrangement of the chambers. Finally, some small, well preserved and solid portion of the pueblo will be roofed over or otherwise so protected that it can safely be left clear for the inspection of visitors.

An important point brought out by the past season's excavations has already been mentioned, namely: that below the upper late walls lie

remains of at least one, probably two or three, earlier settlements. This condition renders Pecos of prime importance archaeologically, and is not to be found at any other southwestern site that we know of, hence it seems wrong for any one investigator to exhaust entirely so valuable a ruin. We have concluded, therefore, to leave unexcavated a section of each of the two pueblos (the main north quadrangle and the long south house) in order that future archaeologists, in the light of their cumulatively greater knowledge, and with the aid of improvements in field technique which are bound to be developed, may be able to complete our excavations, check up our results, and gain data which we, in spite of the greatest care, may through ignorance have overlooked. By filling up what we have dug we will also preserve those parts of the ruin from the destruction which their exposure would certainly entail and if, in future years, new methods or larger means shall permit of its being cleared and safely left cleared, the site will, as a whole, be none the worse for the investigations that we are carrying on at the present time.



