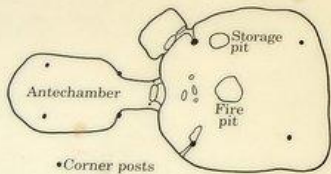


Western Road Trip Newsletter

Episode II: The Mesa Top Loop Drive

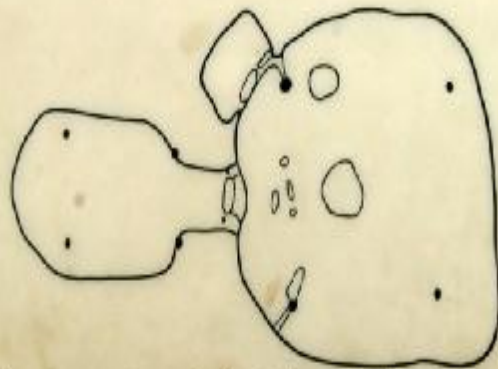
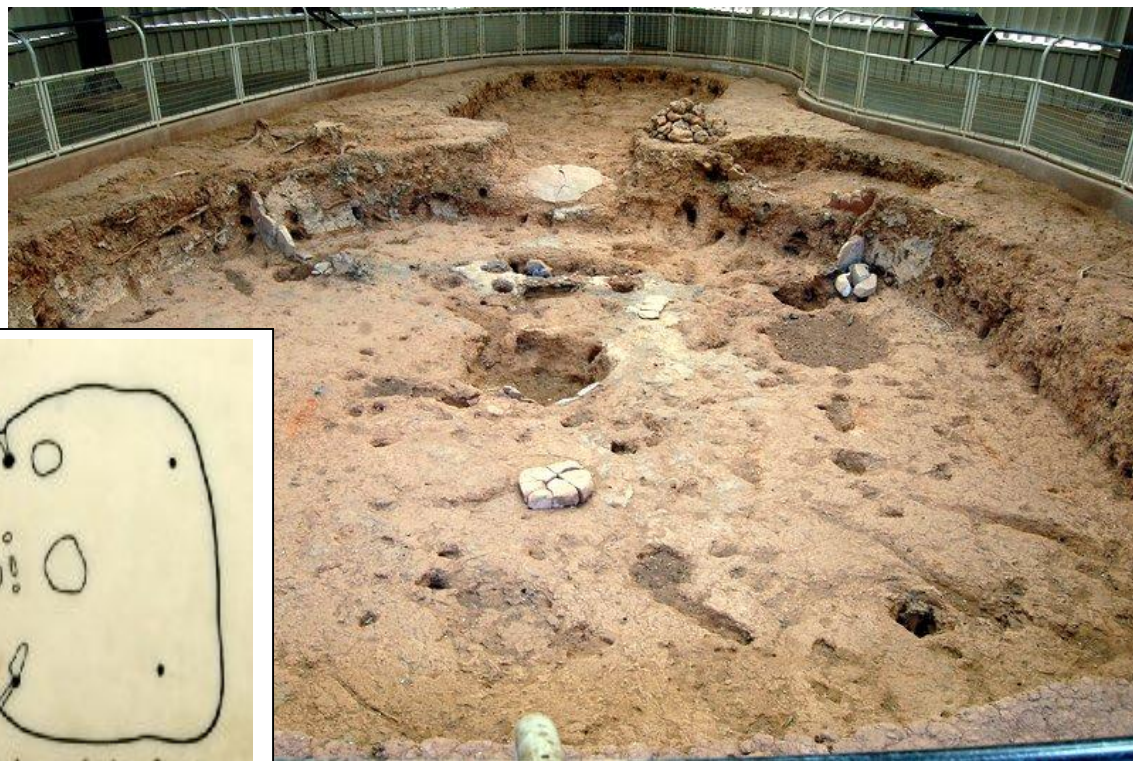
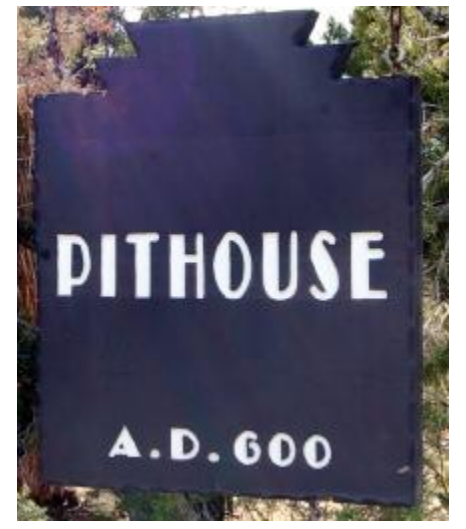
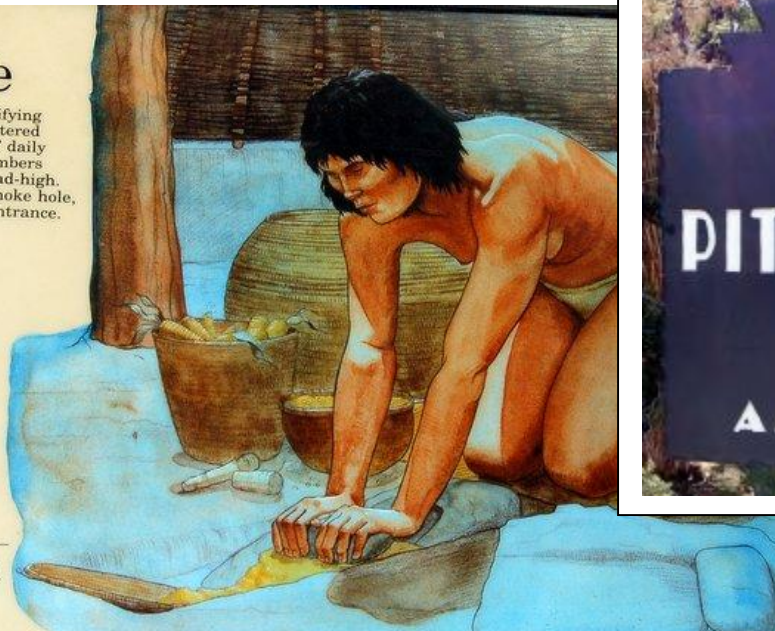
Pithouse Life

There is an enormous gap between identifying pithouse features — the hollows and scattered stones — and visualizing the inhabitants' daily lives. Set in the four corner post holes, timbers supported a ceiling that was probably head-high. Above the firepit there was probably a smoke hole, which also may have been the pithouse entrance. Some features are more revealing.



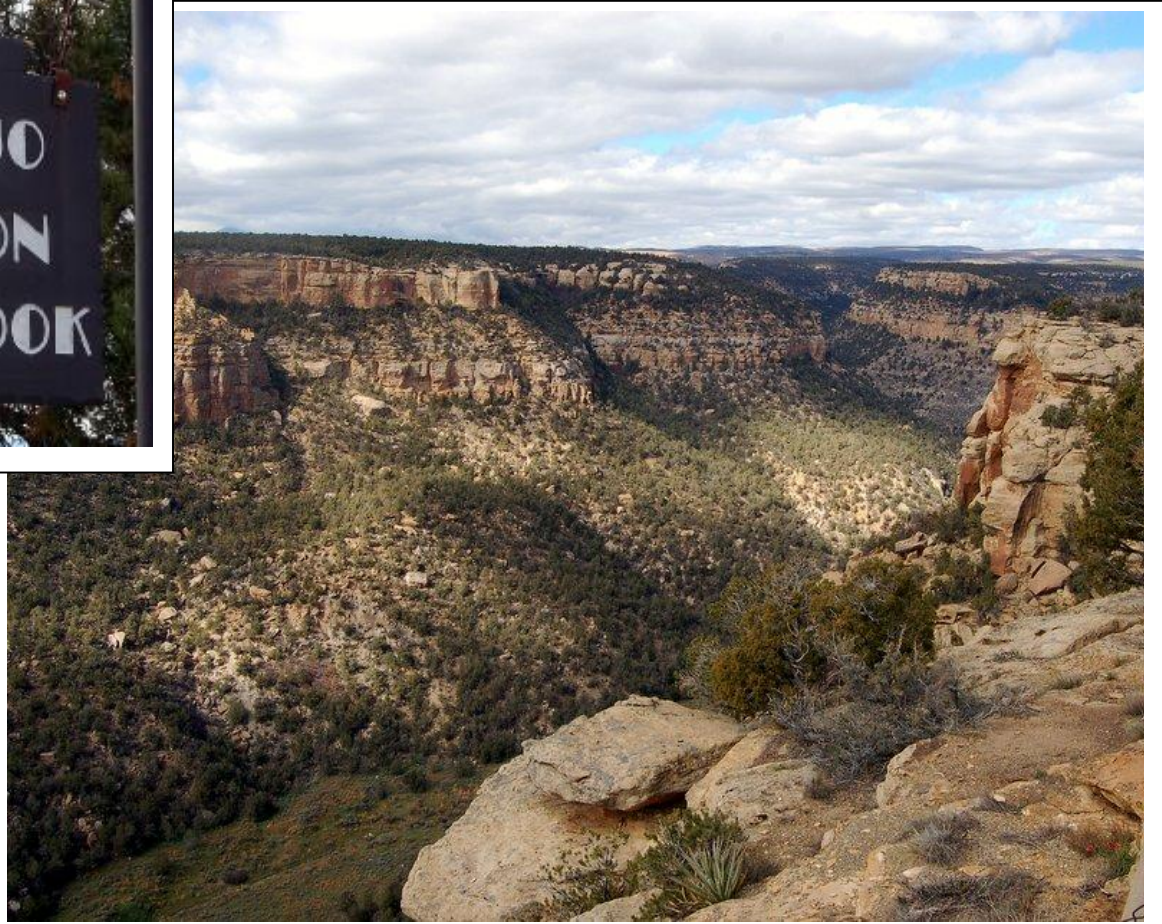
Grinding Corn

The grinding stone and slab — *mano* and *metate* — symbolize the Anasazi's new ties to the mesa top. Grinding corn into corn meal was a constant chore. Dried or parched corn could be stored in pottery vessels for years in the dry, Southwest climate. The stored corn enabled the Anasazi to survive long, cold winters.



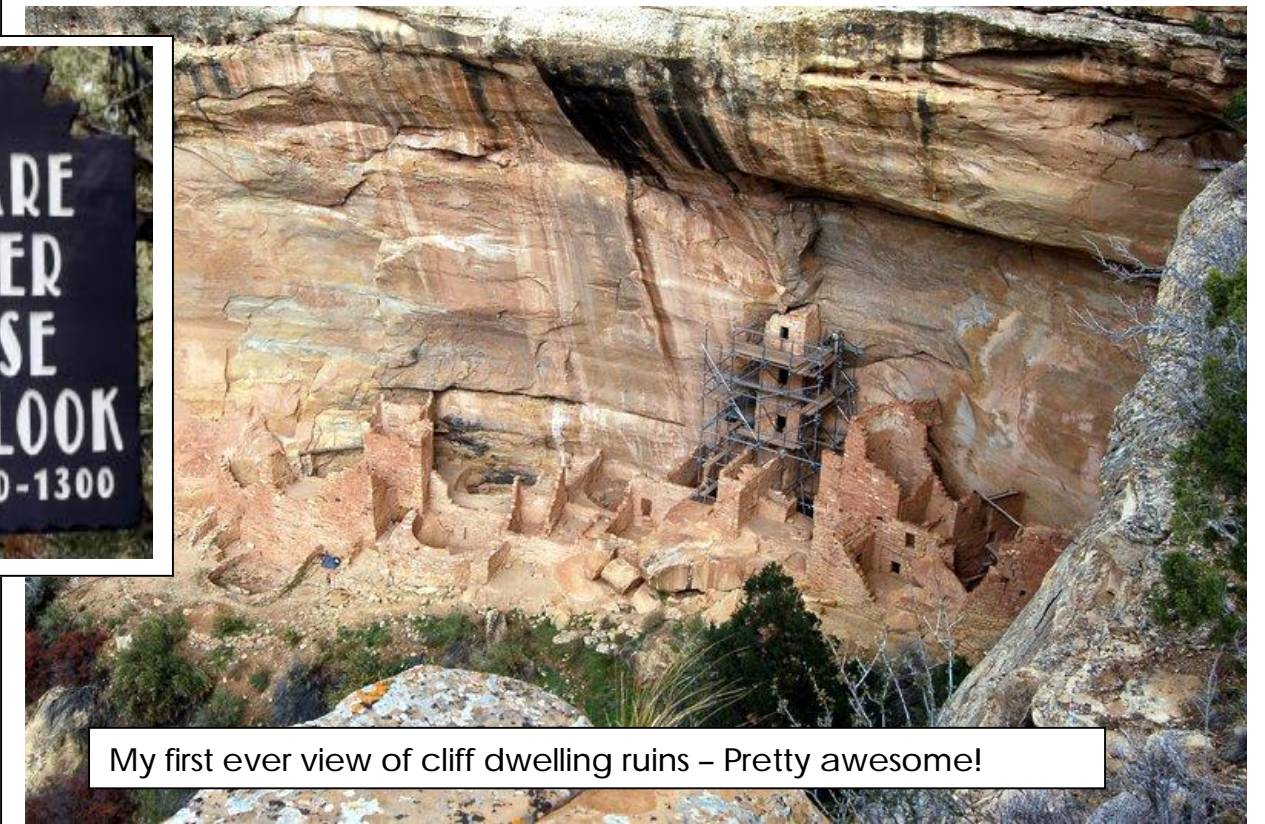
The pithouse was not some isolated, chance design. It was repeated again and again across the more fertile stretches of this area of the Southwest.

This pithouse was built in A.D. 575.



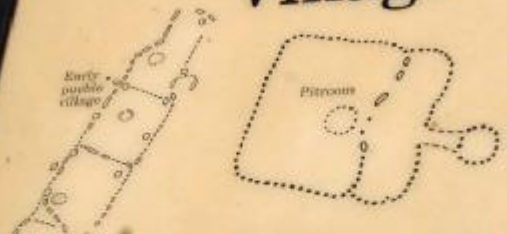


**SQUARE
TOWER
HOUSE
OVERLOOK**
A.D. 1200-1300



My first ever view of cliff dwelling ruins – Pretty awesome!

**Crescent-Shaped
Village**



Early pueblo village *Pitroom*

You are standing in the courtyard of an early pueblo village. To your left curved a row of rooms. To your right the deep pitroom's roof was near ground level. Beyond the pitroom are ruins of a second village built 100 years later.

By A.D. 850 most Mesa Verde people were living in surface dwellings instead of pithouses. Adjoining rooms may reflect a greater degree of cooperation required by an expanding population.

The foundations of these houses on the left were built of upright stone slabs. The walls were constructed by setting poles upright and weaving small sticks between them, then plastering the walls with mud — a technique called "wattle and daub." Compare this pueblo with the later village.

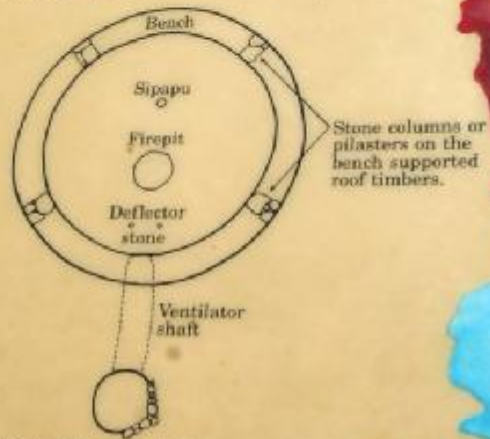
**PITHOUSES
AND
PUEBLOS**
A.D. 700-950



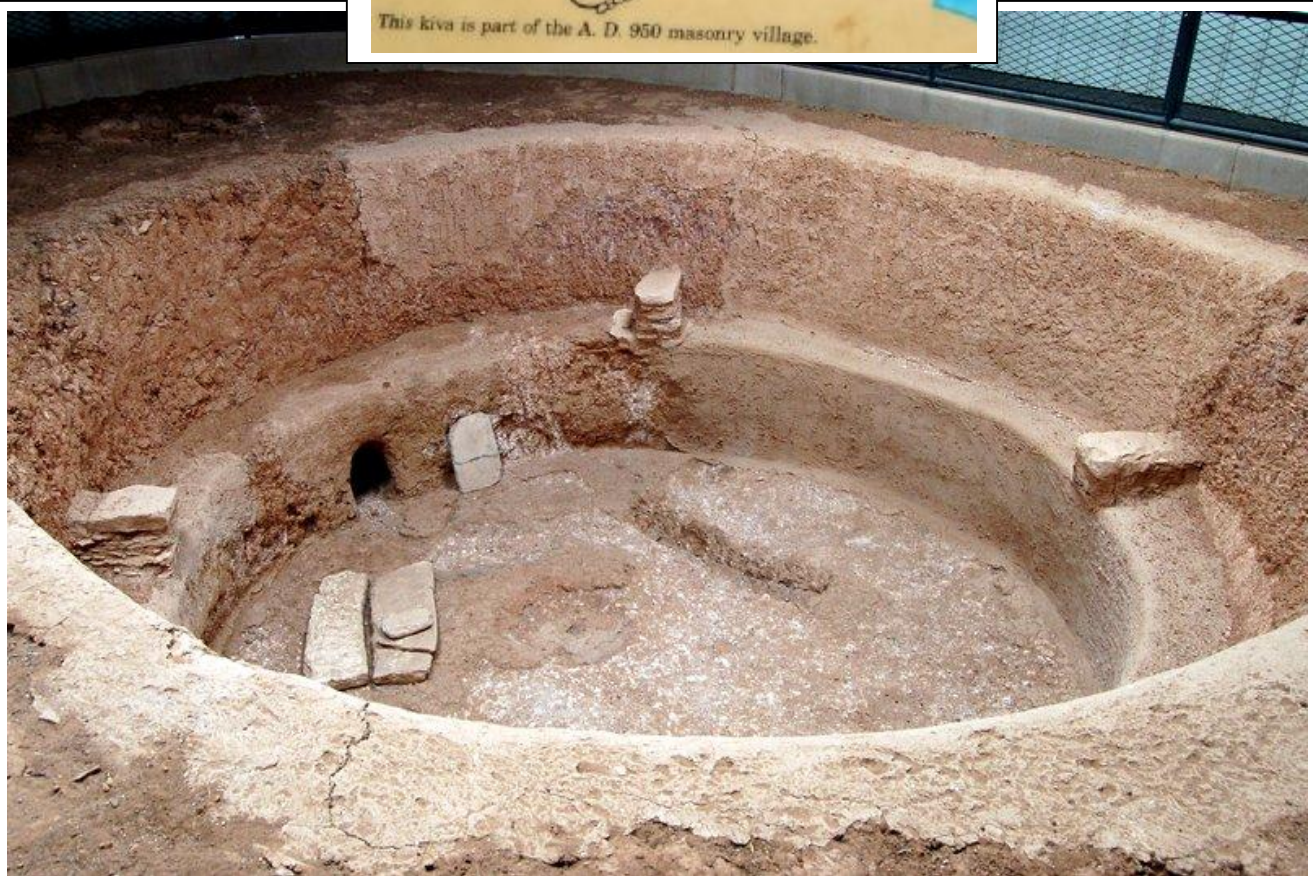
Ceremonial Chamber

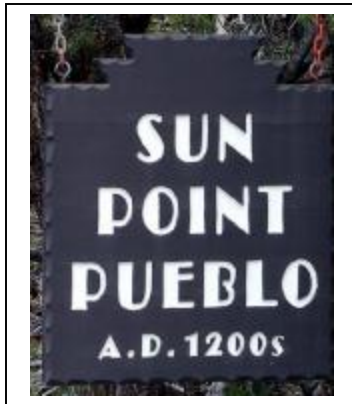
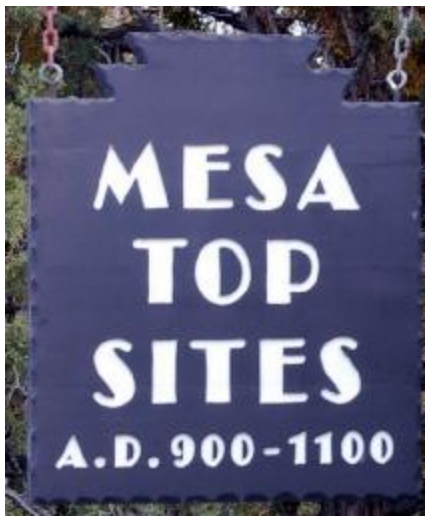
This is an Anasazi **kiva**, an underground religious room. To picture what occurred here, archeologists rely on comparisons with modern Pueblo Indian kivas and beliefs. The small, circular hole in the floor is a **sipapu**, a symbolic entrance into the underworld — the Pueblo place of origin.

By this time in their development, pitrooms had evolved into more formalized religious structures — **kivas**. This early kiva design was continued in Mesa Verde villages. Identify these same features in other kivas, and also look for significant variations in design.



This kiva is part of the A. D. 950 masonry village.





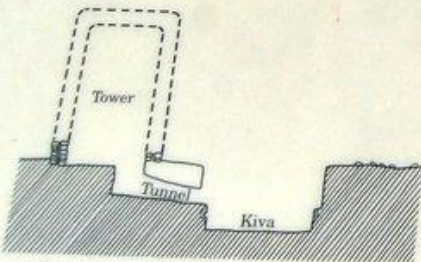
Sun Point Pueblo

You are standing in the middle of what remains of a medium-sized pueblo village. Blocks of rooms completely surrounded the tower and kiva. Unlike earlier villages with open courtyards, this community focused inward — possibly for religious reasons or in reaction to an outside threat.

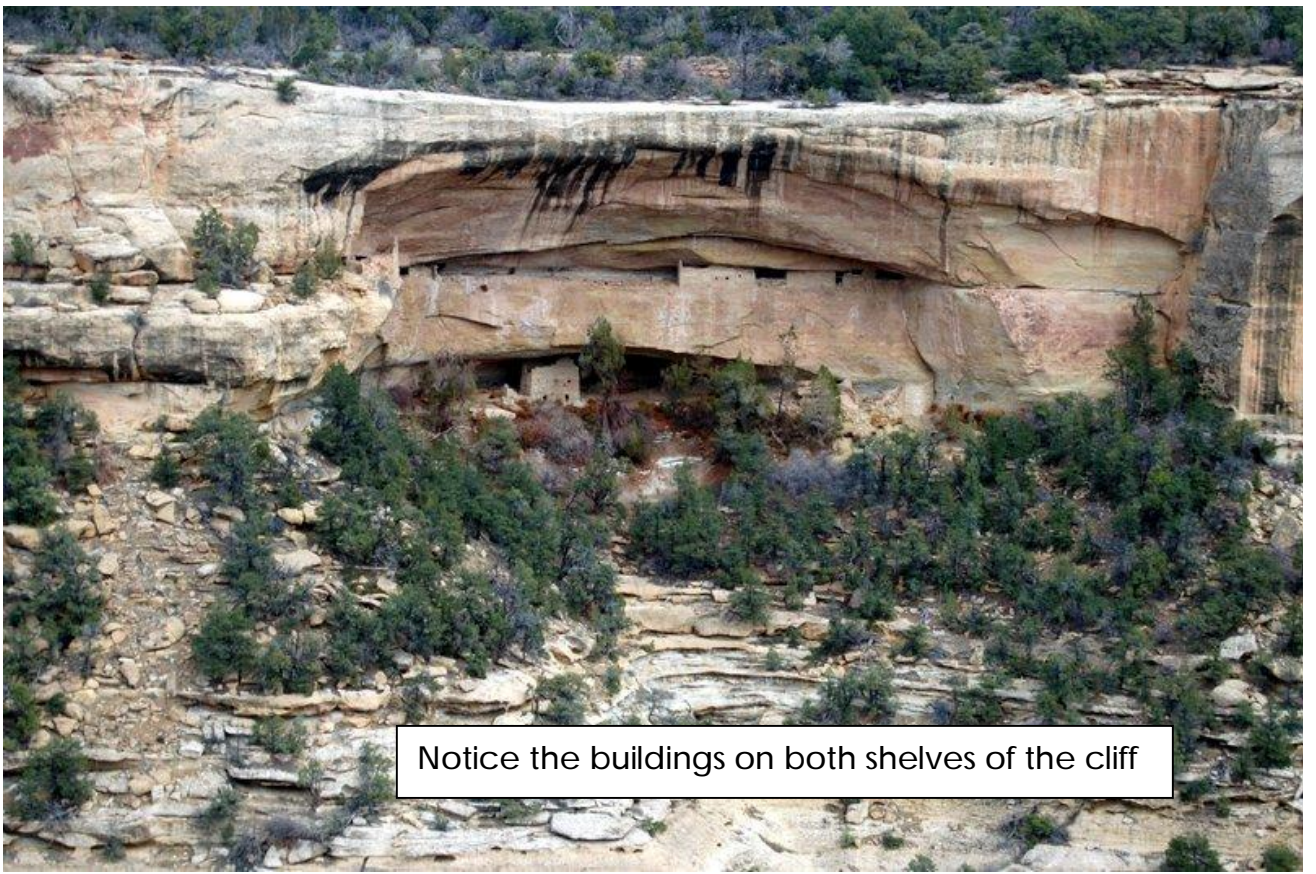
People lived here for only a short time. About the year 1200 there was a general movement from mesa-top villages to cliff alcoves. Few walls are left standing, possibly because the Anasazi salvaged the stones and timbers for reuse in cliff dwellings.

The Tower-Tunnel-Kiva Connection

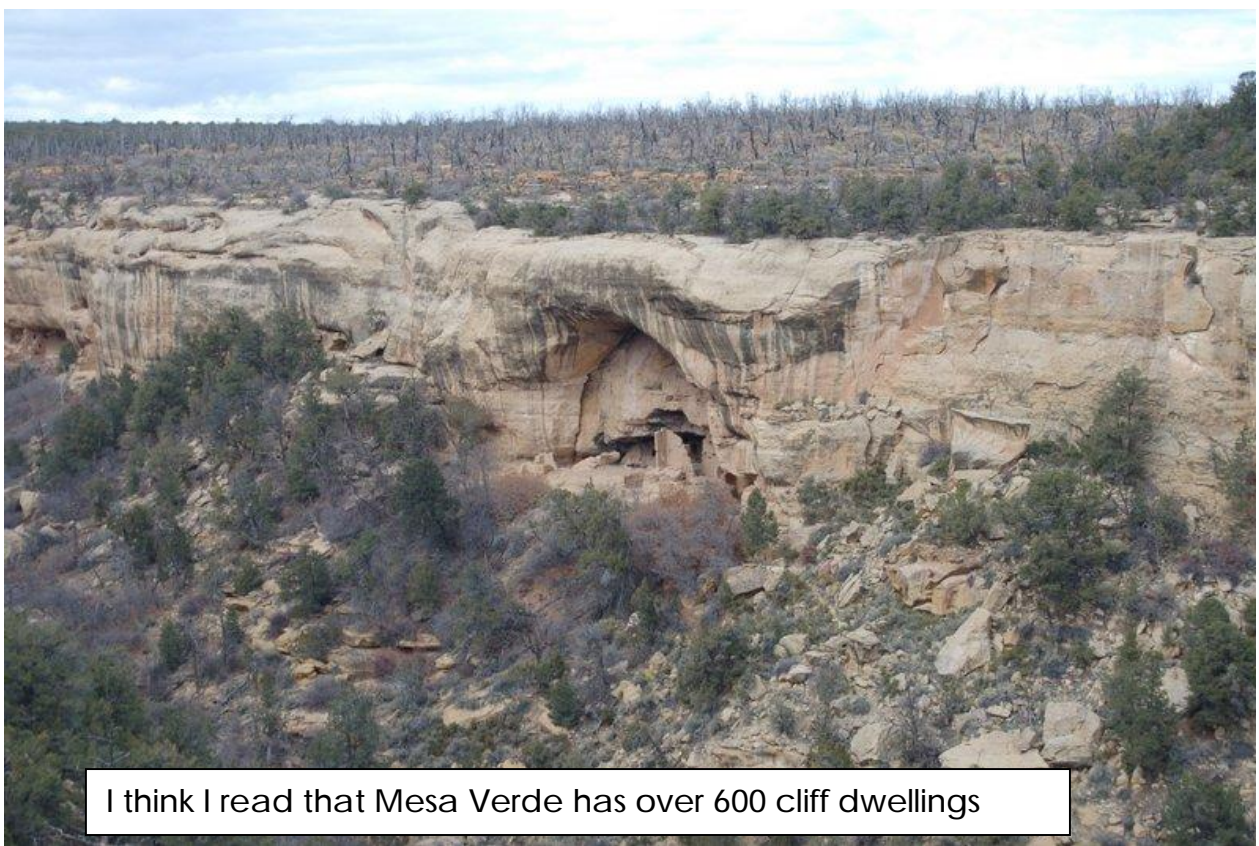
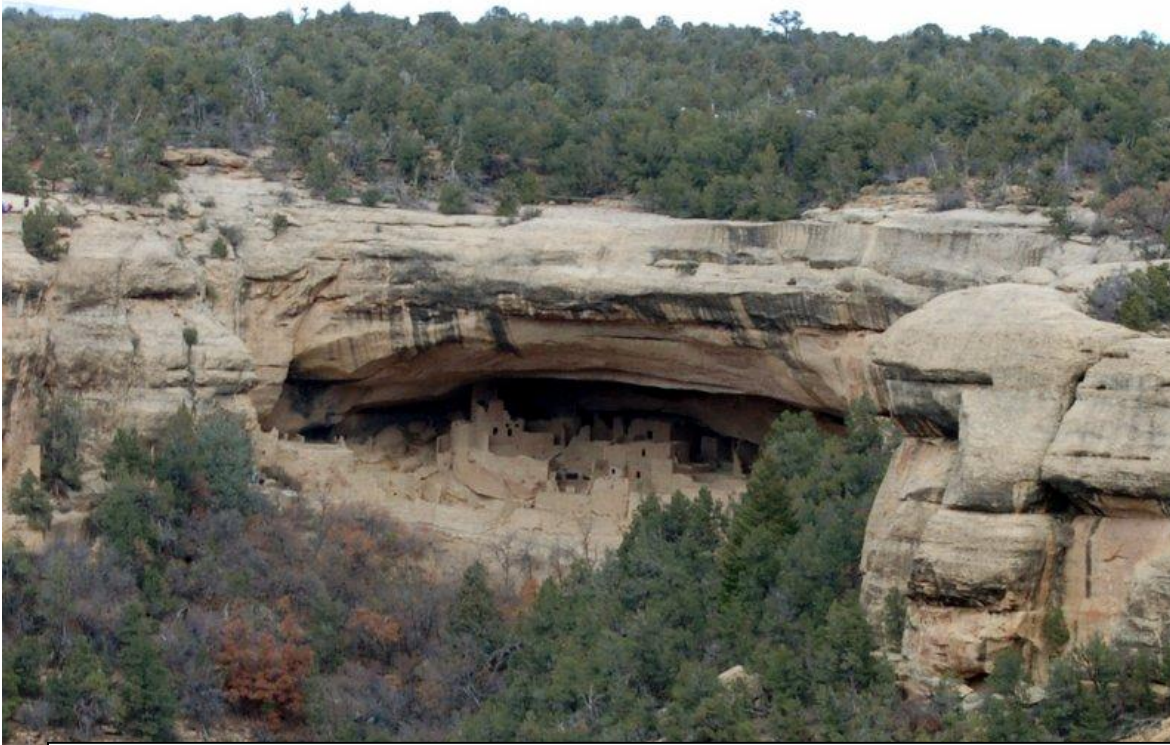
The kiva has become the village's central focus. In Mesa Verde it is common to find a tunnel connecting tower to kiva. Possibly the tunnel would allow sudden, dramatic entrances during kiva ceremonies.



Nearby you can trace foundations of only fifteen rooms. The pueblo had as many as thirty, with a population of maybe fifty people. Masonry was sophisticated enough to support multi-storied buildings.

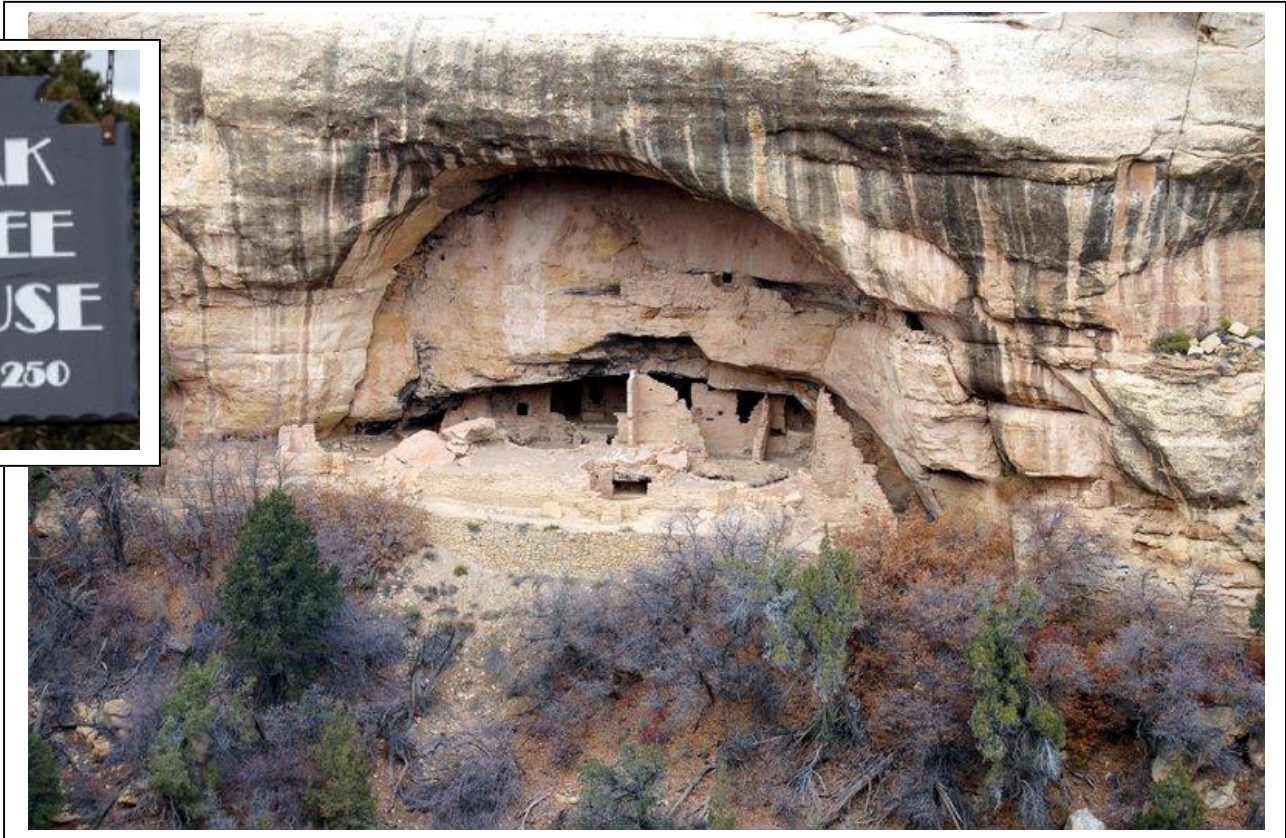


Notice the buildings on both shelves of the cliff



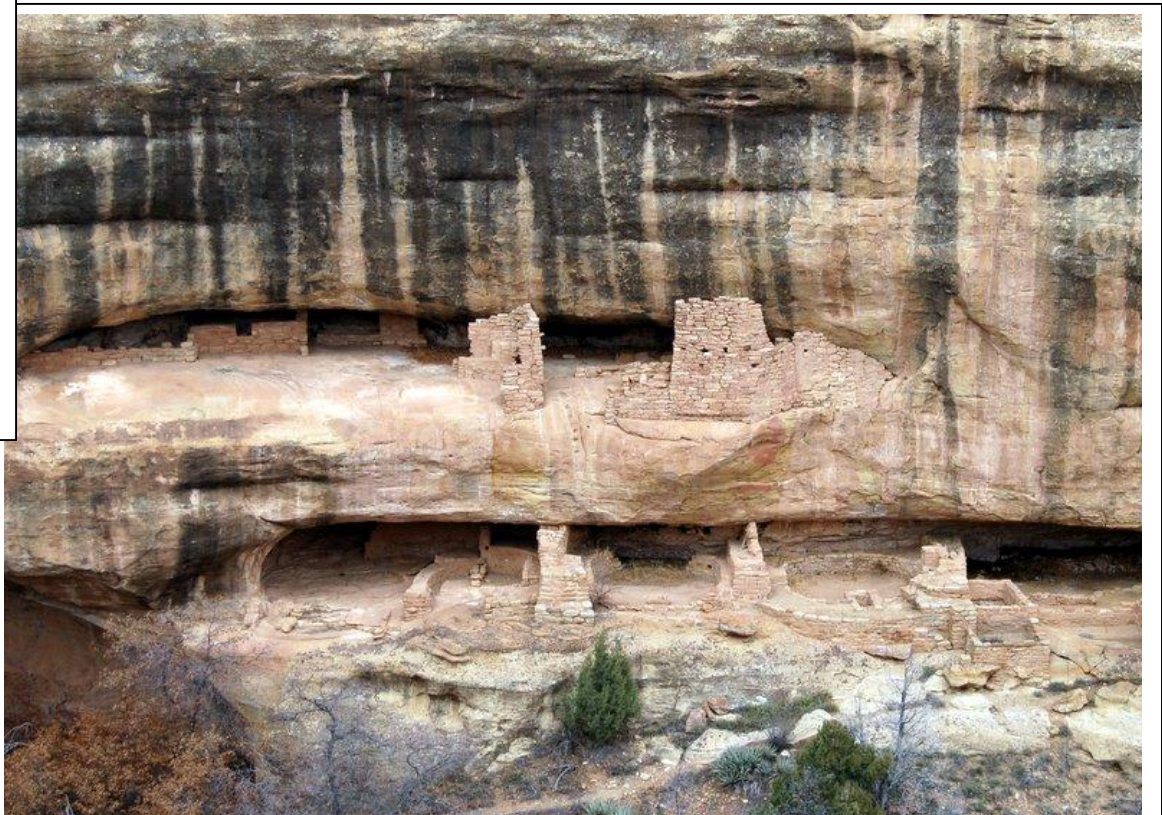
I think I read that Mesa Verde has over 600 cliff dwellings

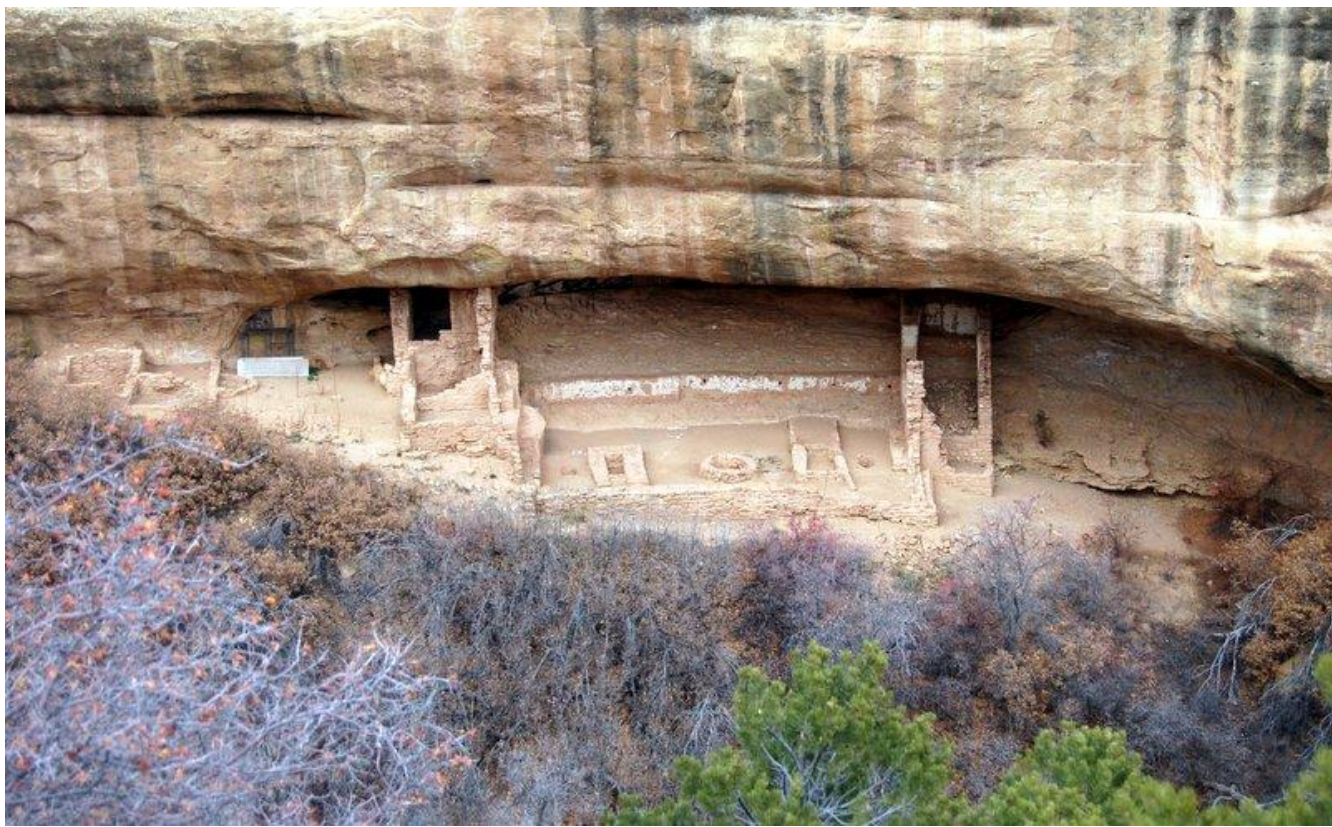
**OAK
TREE
HOUSE**
A.D. 1250

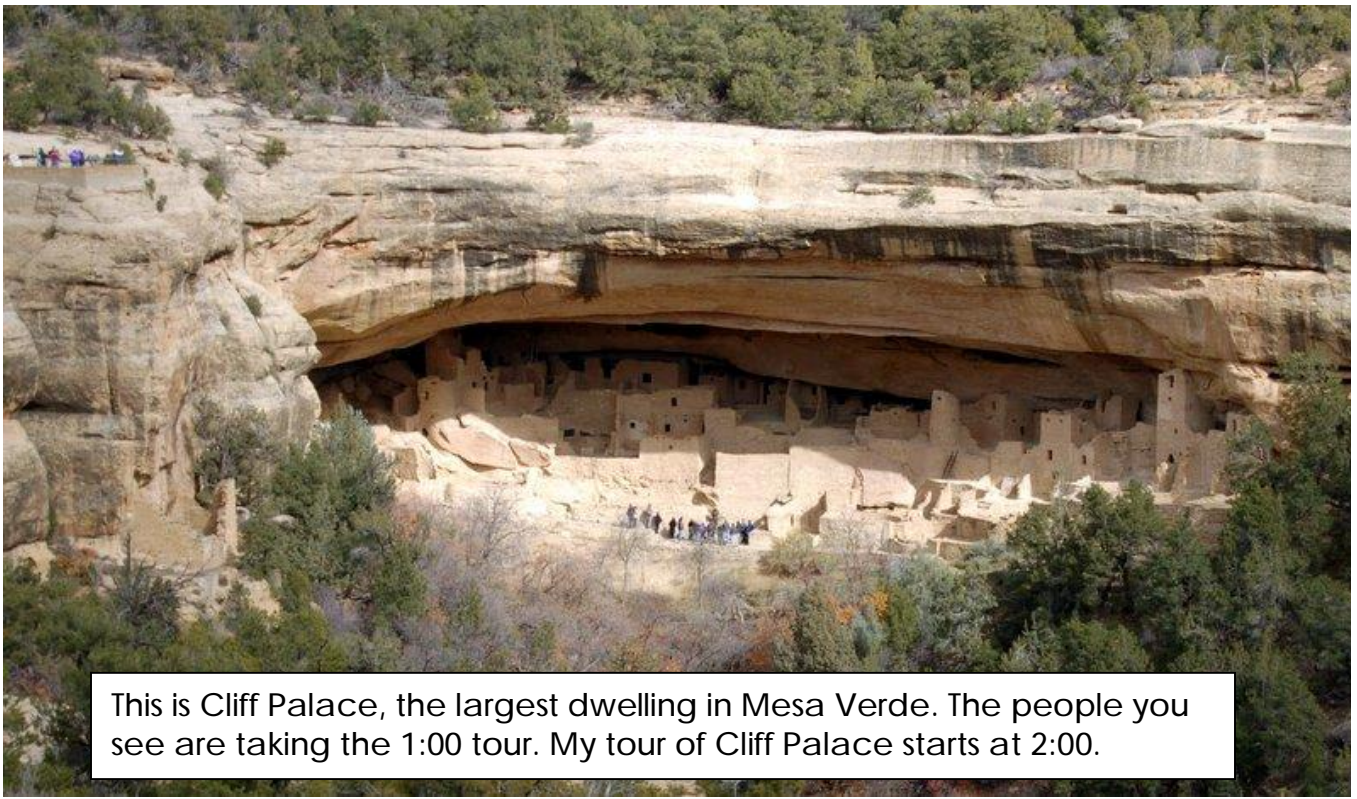


**FIRE
TEMPLE**

**NEW FIRE
HOUSE**
A.D. 1250







This is Cliff Palace, the largest dwelling in Mesa Verde. The people you see are taking the 1:00 tour. My tour of Cliff Palace starts at 2:00.

This is the end of episode II: The Mesa Top Loop Drive

Check your in box for episode III: The Cliff Palace Tour