

## The Anasazi or Ancestral Puebloans

This large group lived along the San Juan River where the corners of present-day Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona meet. Part of this region on the high plateaus is called the Four Corners region.

The people grew cotton, which they wove into belts and shirts. They grew and ate mostly corn, but they also grew and ate squash and beans. They gathered seeds, berries, pine nuts, sego lily bulbs, and wild onion bulbs in baskets. They dried the food and stored it for winter. Among their ruins archaeologists have found entire rooms where food was stored. Growing most of their own food meant the people could stay in one place for a long time.

Because the people learned how to use the bow and arrow (about A.D. 1100), they could kill larger animals than they could by using spears with the *atlatl*. They hunted deer, mountain sheep, bison, antelope, rabbit, and whatever else they could find. Some families also raised turkeys to eat.

What do you know about the region where these people lived? You probably know that it was very dry. There was not enough rainfall to grow crops. The people built small dams and reservoirs to catch rain when it did fall. Then they saved it to water their crops.

### Baskets, Pottery, and Tools

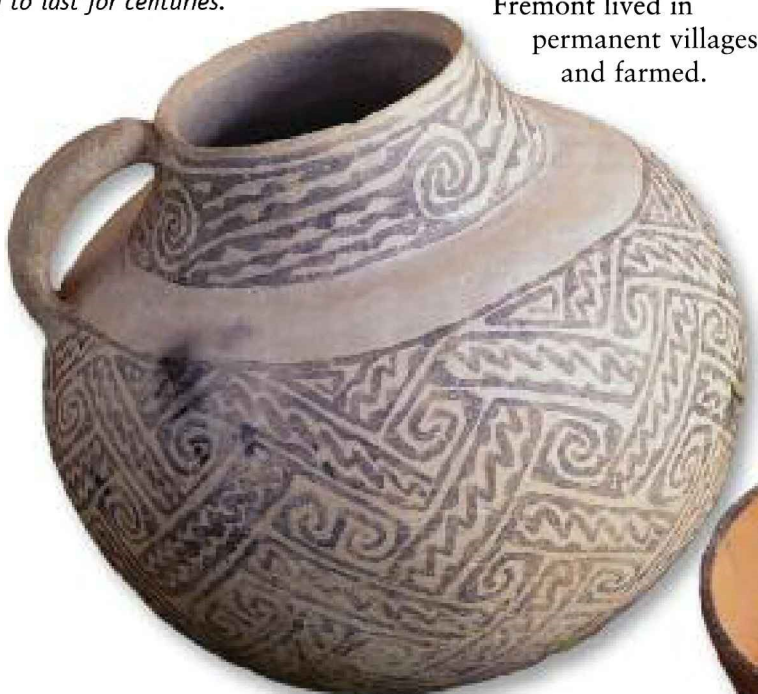
The people made baskets, and in later time periods they made beautiful pottery and painted it with black zigzag designs. Like the earlier people, they wove yucca fibers into mats, sandals, straps, and headbands. They made bags out of the skins of small animals. They formed cradle boards for carrying babies. They carved whistles out of bone and carved stone knives with wooden handles.

## Later Groups of Native People

After many, many years, some groups of Archaic Desert Gatherers left Utah. Those who stayed mixed with two new groups of people who moved to the region. Historians call the first of these new groups “Anasazi” (ah nuh SAH zee). Anasazi means “ancient ones” or “ancient enemies.” Another term for these people is “Ancestral Puebloans.”

The other group we call “Fremont.” We don’t know what the people called themselves, so archaeologists named them after the Fremont River where some of their artifacts were found. Unlike the Desert Gatherers, both the Anasazi and Fremont lived in permanent villages and farmed.

*The style of Anasazi pottery varied according to the location of the group and the time period. One style was painted with black designs before it was fired in a pit. Successful firing made the pottery hard, strong, and waterproof enough to last for centuries.*



## Dwellings

Mesa Verde (now in Colorado) was occupied by the Anasazi. They lived on top of the mesas in stone, adobe, or pit houses. A pit house had an almost circular shape. The people built them partly underground so the earth formed all or part of the walls.

To make a pit house, men dug a large hole in the ground. Then they cut poles from straight trees to hold up the roof. They covered the poles with thick mud plaster. Near the center of the floor was a fire pit, paved with thin stone slabs. A ladder led down into the pit house. The homes were dark but well-insulated from outside heat and cold. You can see a drawing of a pit house on the next page.

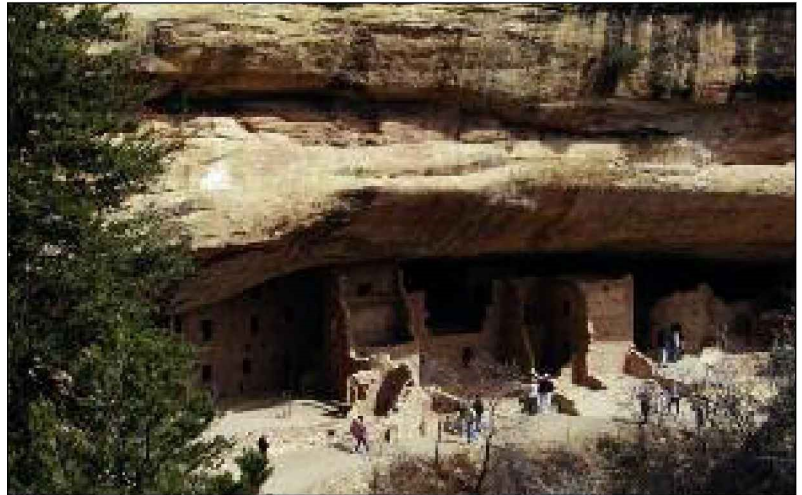
Hundreds of years later, apartment dwellings were built into the sides of cliffs. Smaller cliff dwellings have been found in many places in Utah. Some of the cliff dwellings were five stories high and had hundreds of rooms. Most were much smaller.

To build the cliff houses, people cut and hauled strong pine logs to the village and placed them across the tops of stone or adobe walls. They left openings for small doors and windows. Then they built another layer on top of the first. They sometimes painted the walls with beautiful designs in red, yellow, black, and white colors with paint they made from plants and minerals.

*Hovenweep National Monument, now visited in a remote location on the Utah/Colorado border by a few tourists, was once a thriving community. The six villages were built of stone during the mid-1200s. Most were at the head of steep canyons. Hovenweep is a Paiute word meaning "deserted valley."*

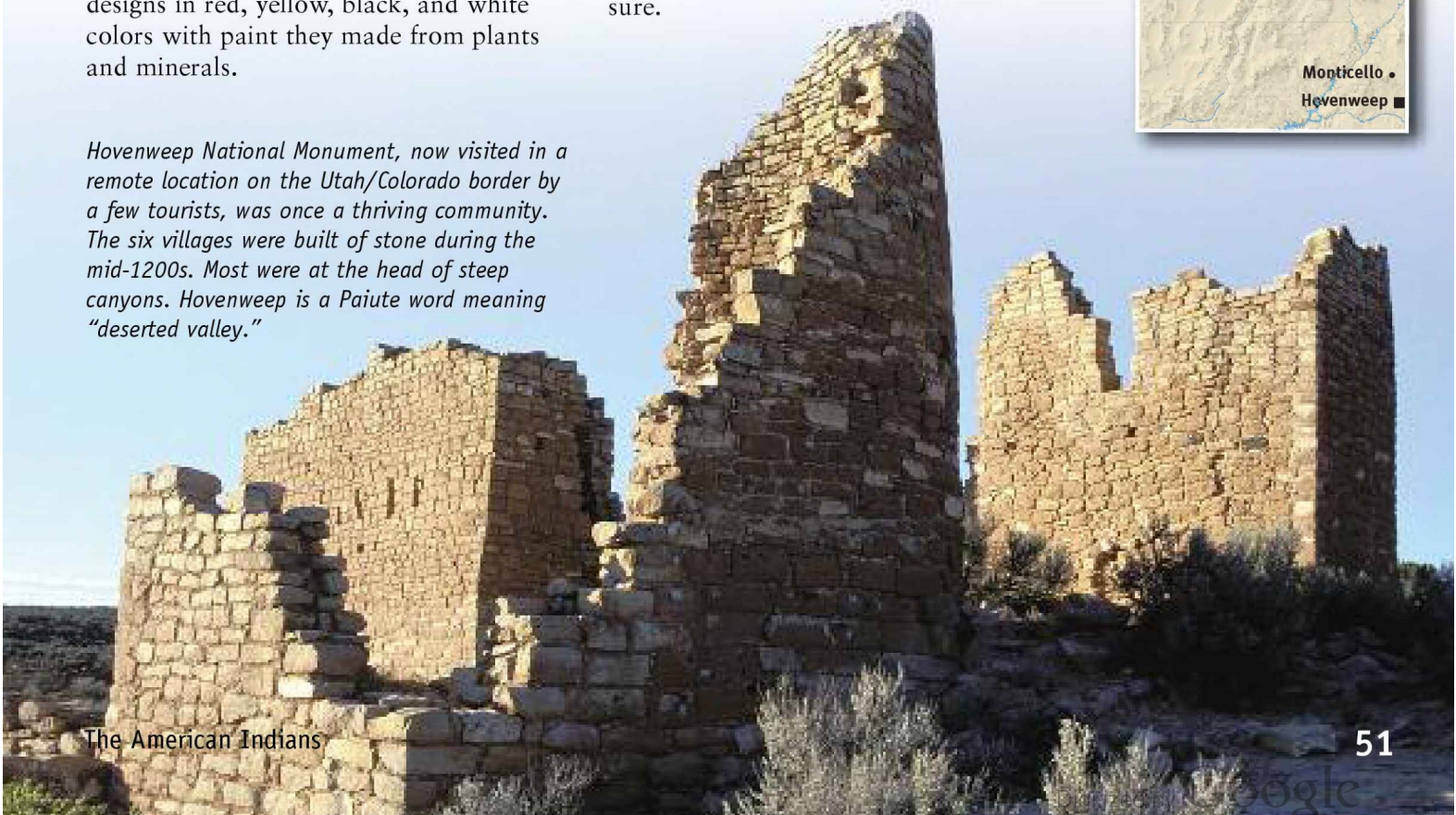
## Linking the Past to the Present

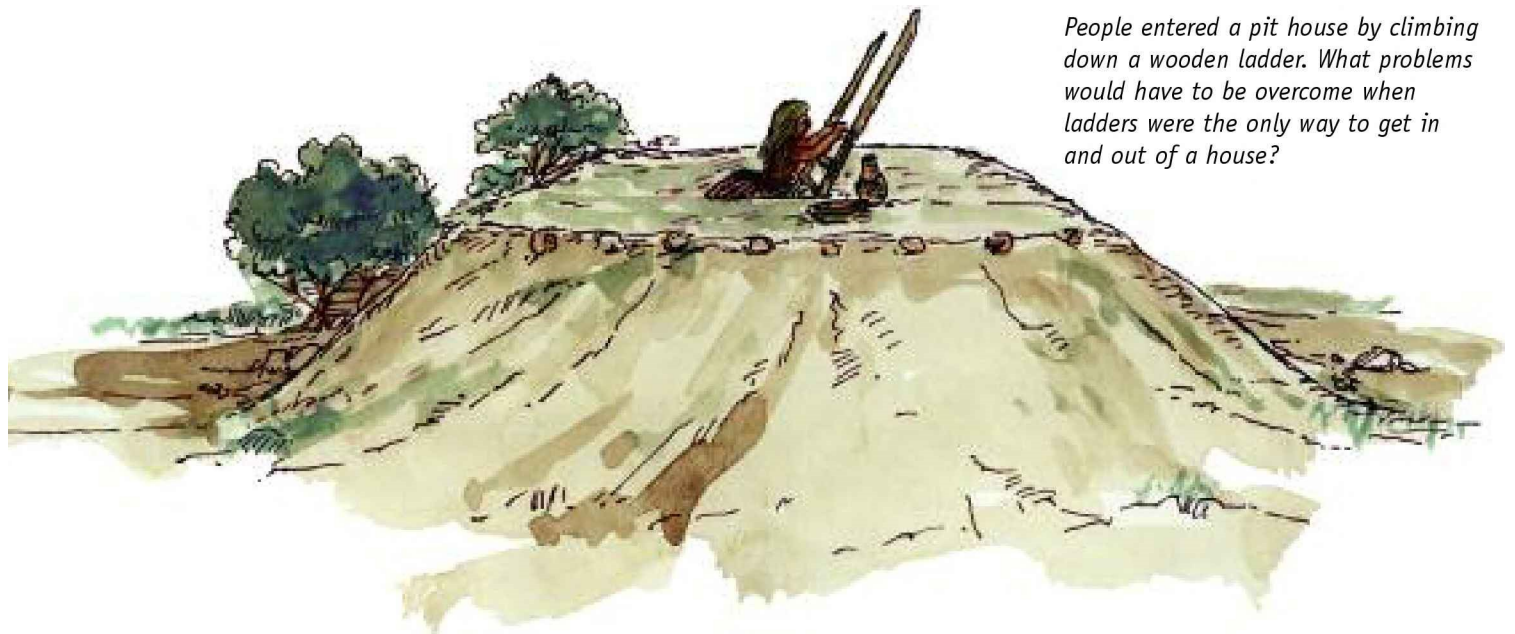
Today, you can see fascinating Anasazi villages at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, not far from Monticello, Utah. Where else can you see Anasazi artifacts, pit houses, and cliff dwellings?



## The People Leave Their Homes

Eventually, after over a thousand years of living in the Plateau Region, the group left their homes and moved on. Historians don't know why. Were their enemies too numerous? Did a drought make it too difficult to grow food? Did they hear of better land southward? No one knows for sure.





People entered a pit house by climbing down a wooden ladder. What problems would have to be overcome when ladders were the only way to get in and out of a house?

## The Fremont

*What would be some advantages to a home that was partly underground and had earth walls? Would there be disadvantages?*

About the same time as the Anasazi lived in the plateau regions, the Fremont people and their culture was spreading over much of the dry valleys and mountains in the Great Basin. The land and climate were different in different parts of the region, and a variety of cultures developed. Historians call all of them Fremont. The Fremont learned and borrowed ideas from the Anasazi and traded with them.

Most Fremont people were full-time farmers. They grew corn, beans, and squash in small plots along the river. Other groups were full-time hunter-gatherers like their ancestors, and shifted between these lifestyles. Village farmers might grow crops one year and break up into small bands of hunters and collectors of wild plants the next year.



*Small human figures were formed from clay.*



*Both men and women wore ceramic, turquoise, alabaster, fluorite, and claystone pendants such as these. The people often decorated figurines and rock art with examples of necklaces and earrings.*

## Villages

The people built their villages near small streams or at the mouths of canyons where the water and soil were good. They dug irrigation ditches and brought water from streams to water their crops. A community consisted of many pit houses. Men made rooms lined with rock to store food until the next crop was harvested.

## Baskets, Pottery, and Other Art

The people made coiled gray pottery, baskets, and clay figurines that looked like people. They decorated the figurines with necklaces and painted their faces. Modern archaeologists have found figures of the same style in rock art.

*Fremont artifacts often include thin-walled pottery such as these found at Five Finger Ridge, now part of Fremont Indian State Park.*



## Fremont Indian State Park

A teacher in southern Utah showed her class where some American Indians had left rock art. A young boy in the class didn't think the site was very impressive and said his father knew where there was an Indian burial ground.

The next morning the boy's father took him to Five Finger Ridge, where his teacher had taken him twenty-five years earlier. He was dismayed to see that Utah road crews were using the hill to get fill dirt for road construction.

The digging was stopped until archaeologists from Brigham Young

University could carefully examine the site. It turned out to be the largest village of the prehistoric Fremont culture yet discovered. More than 103 pit houses and granaries and many artifacts were found. To preserve the discovery, Fremont Indian State Park was created in 1987.

### What do you think?

Why is it important to balance modern needs for roads, tracks, and buildings with the preservation of historical sites?



*Fremont artists painted human figures wearing jewelry.*



## Migration and Change

Scientists believe that both the Anasazi and Fremont cultures disappeared sometime after A.D. 1300. The Anasazi may have moved from the Four Corners region to New Mexico and Arizona, leaving their old homes empty. For reasons we don't know, the Fremont people slowly gave up farming and abandoned many of their villages. After a few hundred years, the advanced forms of farming and building permanent cities were gone from Utah.

What caused these changes? A change in climate may have made farming less successful. Soil erosion may have been part of the answer. Some archaeologists suggest that a whole new group of people from what is now southern California and Nevada invaded the region. Other answers have been suggested, and each one has been challenged. What we do know is that it was a slow, complex process. It did not happen everywhere at once.

# Utah's Amazing ROCK ART

**T**oday, people from all over the world come to see Utah's amazing rock art. From the tall mummy-shaped human figures in the Great Gallery of Horseshoe Canyon to the stones from Hogup Cave, Utah's rock art is unmatched anywhere in North America.

Much of Utah's rock art has been credited to the Fremont and Anasazi, but later groups—the Ute, Paiute, Shoshone, and Goshute—also created rock art.

*So I was taught that these are our legal documents, our books. They explain who we are as a people, who we are as clans. When people destroy rock art, they are destroying our ... documented history.*

—Wilfred Numkena, Ute, 1997



*Petroglyphs are carved into rock walls.  
Pictographs are painted on rock.*

*Newspaper Rock can be seen  
in Canyonlands National Park.*

