



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**America's Cities
Native American Cities**

**Where have all the People Gone?
(Native American Cities)
Report One**

May 10, 2005

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. A change of pace in our lives can be helpful to our perspectives. A visit to an oceanside resort; to a mountain cabin; a farm house; even a gambling casino. Whatever the interruption to one's habits may be, only an indifferent personality could fail to experience rejuvenation because of a change in scenery.

I suspect I am not the only citizen who is growing tired of the preponderance of McDonald's and Walmarts that dot America's landscape. Growing weary of their crowding-out the Lot-a-Burgers and K- Marts along the streets where I prowl, I have taken to the countryside---if only for a short while--- to visit old Indian cities.

I will be reporting on the trails forged by the original human inhabitants of America, the Native American (Also called the American Indian, Indian, and in our nation's capital, at least for a while, the Redskin).

Where is Everyone?

The Indians' trails and their towns are characterized by one principal attribute: they have no inhabitants. Their once vibrant cities are vacant. Unlike say, Rome, Paris, or Peking, the Indians' cities and their citizens had no staying power. Granted, if you travel to Rome, you will encounter ruins, similar to those of the Indians (foundations of buildings). But the Roman ruins are surrounded by a city and people. The Indian ruins I visited were surrounded by space.

I did encounter a few people in these areas. Hollywood stars and dot com refugees lived nearby. They have purchased several thousand acres of land in order to commune with nature and the nearby Nobel Savage Indian spirit. Otherwise, the landscape around the Indians ruins is populated by tourists and personnel from the National Park Service.

Bandelier National Monument

I was impressed by the houses at some of the sites, especially the Bandelier National Monument--former home of the famous Anasazi culture. Many members of this society lived in caves, as shown in Figure 1. Their homes were located in a dry harsh habitat consisting of dirt, rocks, and scrub bushes. With little water around, I wondered how they managed to survive. Yet we know from history books that the Indians used the floor of this valley to grow squash, beans, and corn. Thus, they must have had access to much water; the soil must have been fertile. For their protein, they hunted rabbit, coyote, antelope, and quail, creatures that also needed a fecund landscape to thrive.



Figure 1. Bandelier National Monument.

The Park Service Guides stated the former residents also herded turkey around this area. I was unable to determine how or why the Indians herded turkey, and I was curious about this activity. As a child, I was around a lot of turkeys, and I never got the knack of herding them.

I also thought, *Who would want to live in a cave?* But upon reflection, the caves were cool in the summer, warm in the winter (no wind), and were more secure than the houses on the valley floor. The cave homes were difficult to reach, and some of them were difficult to enter, as seen in Figure 2, but they were secure and comfortable places in which to live.



Figure 2. The caves at Bandelier.

The caves were even harder to exit. As demonstrated in Figure 3, one of my traveling companions found herself in straits as she looked for a way to return to the Bandelier Park valley. Her husband was of little assistance, “You got yourself in....get yourself out!”



Figure 3. Trapped in a cave.



Figure 4. A View of Bandelier National Monument.

Just kidding. My friend was actually taking-in the view of the valley, as shown in Figure 4. If you are in the area (North of Santa Fe, near Los Alamos), I recommend you also take-in the Bandelier National Monument.

The “user-friendly” cave dwellings were not the reason the Anasazi left Bandelier. According to the National Park Service Guide’s presentation, researchers think they ran out of water. A drought forced them to move on to (somewhat) greener pastures.



Figure 5. Stairways.

Many people are under the impression the Anasazi were primitive. Sure, they had no elevators, as Otis himself had not yet made his appearance on Earth, and escalators were waiting for Ben to discover electricity. Nonetheless, take a look at Figure 5 and the yellow arrow. ... Yes, stair rails; banisters to assist the walkers as they make their way up-to and down-from their dwellings. Who said these ancient folks had ancient ideas?

I climbed up and entered several of these caves. My companions and I spent a couple hours digging-up heretofore undisturbed Indian ruins. Old pots; bones; what fun grave robbing can be!

You there...with the National Park Service patch on your shirt....put away those handcuffs! Just joking.

In our next piece, I’ll report on another National Monument in a beautiful part of New Mexico, the Pecos.

Where have all the People Gone? (Native American Cities) Report Two

May 11, 2005

I am once again reporting on the trails of Northern New Mexico. Before launching into our report, let me say that any light taken of the Indian monuments or their former inhabitants is undertaken to focus on the light side of life. I mean no disrespect to anyone. If you take offense, lighten-up.

Pecos National Monument

Had I been an ancient Indian, I would have preferred the Pecos area to Bandelier. First, the apartments would have been easier to enter and exit. Second, the Pecos River is nearby. Bandelier does have a stream running through it, but it is not as voluminous as the Pecos River. Nonetheless, both sites were wisely chosen. They had water; crops could be grown; game was available for hunting; both offered good views from their bedroom windows.

Figure 6 provides two views of this site. The walls shown in the top picture are the remnants of high walls that surrounded the Pecos Pueblo. Except on special occasions, only Pecos citizens were allowed to be inside the walls. Interlopers during off-hours were rounded-up, then evicted or jailed---similar to our modern urban curfew.

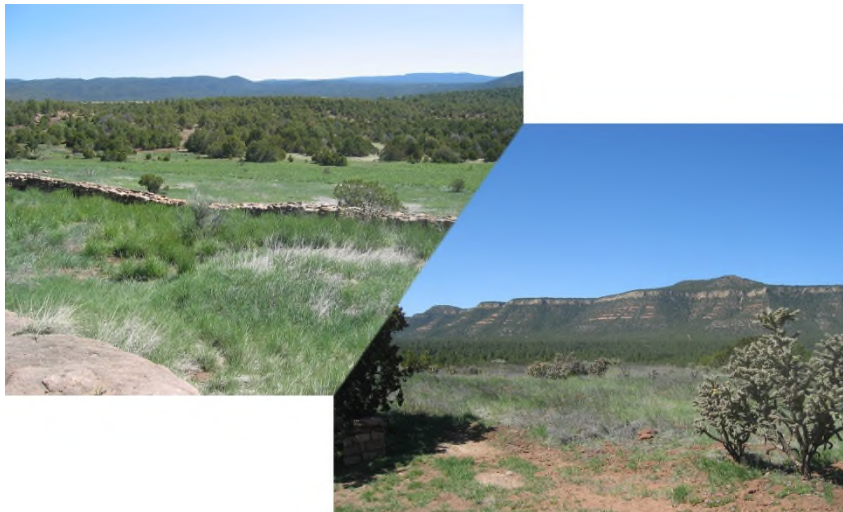


Figure 6. Pecos landscape.

Today, anyone can settle in the town of Pecos and visit the Pecos Pueblo. Near the Pecos National Monument, several movie stars have set up their own lodges. Greer Garson was an early Pecos citizen (and a benefactor, donating land around the area). I understand Jane Fonda, Julia Roberts, and Robert Redford are recent Pecos citizens.

The walk through the Pecos ruins was fascinating. Even though most of the ancient pueblos were gone, the Park Service had reconstructed some of the sites, such as Kivas (religious buildings

dug into the earth). Also, the Spanish Missionary Church had been partially restored, as shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7. A Kiva and the Spanish Mission.

Encounter, yet Avoid Rattlesnakes

I was intrigued by a sign posted along the trails. It read, “You may encounter Rattlesnakes. Avoid and Report.”

- Upon returning to the Visitors Center, I asked a Guide, “Say, your snake sign appears to offer hindsight advice. If I encounter a snake, I have already failed to avoid it.”
- The Guide looked at me as if I were a pain in the ass, which I was. I continued, “What if I told you I encountered a Rattlesnake?”
- Guide, who wanted to ignore me, “I’d ignore you. Too cold for Rattlesnakes.”
- Reporter, “OK. Let’s say it’s July and hot.”
- Guide, “I’d say, ‘Stay on the trail.’ If the snake is on the trail, I’d say, ‘Turn around and head back to the Visitor’s Center.’ ”
- Reporter, “So, the Park Service wouldn’t try to get rid of the snake?”
- Guide, “Ha! ...That’s like trying to rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic.”
- Reporter, “Good one. Then, why report the encounter to you?”
- Guide, “Oh, we might try to spook-off the snake. But we mostly advise you to stay clear of it.”
- Reporter, “Good advice. And thanks for the conversation.”
- Guide, “No problem, don’t get folks like you around here much.”

I headed-out with my travel companions, Holly and my mom-in-law Jeanne, to find some Tex-Mex food at a local Pecos Café. But before leaving Pecos, let’s slide into a bit of conjecture about the subject matter of the last part of this report: kivas and missions.

How Did the Spanish Build Churches in Pecos and Why Didn’t the Pecos Indians Build Kivas in Rome?

Do you ever wonder why there are no Indian Kivas in say, Rome? And why there are Spanish missions in the Pecos? Do you ever wonder why some of the humans on earth are destined to be missionaries and others missioned?

Without question, the missionaries are the preferred religious tribes. If you don't believe me, just read the history of many of the missioned. For example, the American Indian. I have begun to wonder about these matters, especially now that I am retired and have nothing much left to wonder about.

I should say I did wonder until Jared Diamond came to my assistance with his book, *Germ, Guns, and Steel*. His view is controversial. Please read on, even if you might disagree with the opinion.

It's pretty simple: If the missionaries had *not* been sufficiently powerful and wealthy (as well as acquisitive) they would have been the missioned's. In turn, the missioned's---the American Indians--- if they had possessed the proper tools, horses, ships, and firearms, would have been the missionaries. It's all about the humans' pecking orders, and the position a culture has in the pecking orders. In the old days, the Spanish were high in the pecking orders. The Pecos Indians were toward the bottom.

Therefore, the scenario of millions of humans paying respects inside a cathedral in Rome instead of lighting a pipe inside a Kiva in Taos was not determined by who practiced the correct or best religion. It was who had the power and wealth to dictate the religion that was to be practiced. This idea is shown in Figure 8: The figure illustrates that the powerful and wealthy become the missionaries; the powerless and poor become the missioned.

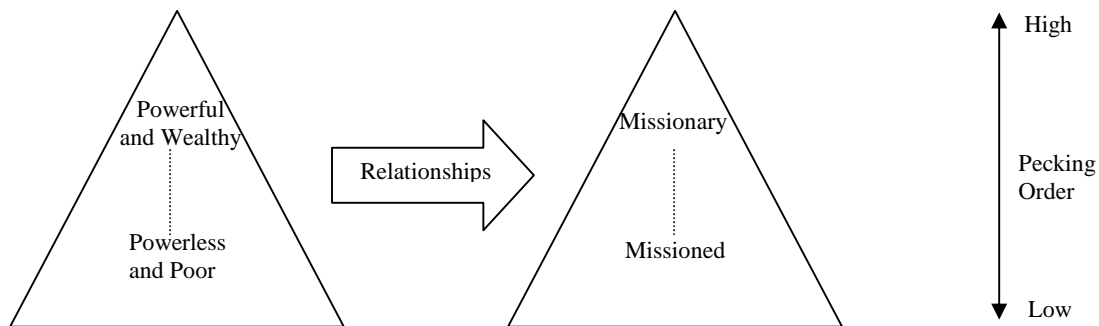


Figure 8. The religion pecking orders.

This figure is of my making, not Mr. Diamond, and I recognize it might not be welcome to some of the readers of this report. I only ask you to consider it as a possibility. And I am casting no aspersions on anyone's religion. I am merely suggesting a rationale for the scarcity of kivas in the Vatican.

The skeptic of my figure could ask me, "Uyless, why were the Spanish (and others) more powerful in the first place? How did they come to possess the wealth and knowledge to cross the oceans. Why didn't the Indian Medicine Man have the means to convert the Catholic senora in Spain to Animalism, instead of the Spanish Priest converting the squaw in Pecos to Christianity?"

Good questions, and too serious for these fun-filled reports.¹ Anyway, it turned out that some of the Indians did not want to be converted or subjugated, so they rioted and kicked the Spanish out of New Mexico---as least for a few years.

That's it for now. The third report will be another essay about the trails of Northern New Mexico.

¹ For the curious reader, it was subject to who was lucky enough to be born in accommodating climates to allow the growing of ample food (not New Mexico!). In other regions of the world, it was subject to being populated with horses (and other large rideable mammals) in order to provide transport for commerce and war. New Mexicans had the buffalo, but until the Spaniards introduced the horse, the Indians never developed a knack for riding a buffalo over to their neighbors for the exchange of victuals, wampum, and scalps.

**Where have all the People Gone?
(Native American Cities)
Report Three**

May 11, 2005

Your on the Street Reporter is once again reporting on the trails of Northern New Mexico. I am at the Pecos National Monument, home to no one just now. Just across the way, scores of movie stars have migrated into the area. They are coming to New Mexico and the Pecos to avoid the crowds and smog of Southern California.

I can relate. When I was writing (and lecturing) for a living, and after I had been in Los Angeles for a while, my introduction to my audience in, for example, Kansas City was, "Good morning to you all. Forgive me if I am coughing now and then. I just arrived from Los Angeles, and I can't get used to the fresh air in Kansas City."

Good Property: Location, Location, Location

The guide at the Pecos National Monument told us the Indians eventually left their pueblo because their role as traders between the Plains Indians and the Northern New Mexico tribes diminished, and also because the Spanish irradiated many of the natives with European diseases and guns.

Yes, but Pecos is fine property---witness the Hollywood carpetbaggers. Bandelier is also attractive, and it too has water running through its area. At first glance, one would wonder, why did they not return? Historians, geologists, and anthropologists claim some tribes *simply ceased to exist as a viable, productive group of people* because they did not manage their land and water resources well.

They claim this fate befell the Anasazi tribes in New Mexico. They stripped their land of piñon and juniper trees, which led to the flushing-out of nutrients in the soil. Eventually, the unfertile soil rejected the Anasazi's farming efforts. Without a means to feed an increasingly large population, the Anasazis' societies collapsed. Eventually, they ceased to exist in that part of the world.

Jarad Diamond has a book on the best seller list (*Collapse*) whose central thesis is: If a culture does not take care of the land on which it lives, if it does not husband its water, it is likely headed for "Anasazi Heaven." Some writers are subtly disparaging of these ancient people. So, permit me to be serious for one moment.

I think an historian must occupy a very difficult profession. In writing about the past, it must be quite a challenge not to interpret that past with a present frame of mind. I do not know how to accomplish this feat.

Nonetheless, my point is simple. The Future Farmers of America (FFA) had not yet founded a local chapter among the Anasazi. Nor were there colleges---nestled among the caves---teaching

horticulture. The Department of Agriculture was not yet populated with tillage-oriented PhDs. Consequently, these tribes had no knowledge of...yes, fertilizers.

Why is this fact important? I asked my brother Ross (who operates a successful pecan orchard in southeast New Mexico), “How long would your land remain fertile without the use of nutrients?”

Ross, “About one year...Then, the orchard’s productivity would decline.” He could not stay in business without using fertilizers.

Given their ignorance of agronomy, I suspect the Indians of yesteryear did a pretty good job of eking out an existence on their land. So, I say, let’s cut them some slack in the history books.

The Local Pecos Café

My travel companions and I ate at Frankie’s Casa Nueva (New House) in the town of Pecos. A misnomer, as the house was over 100 years old. Also, I have decided to cease my survey of Hennessy XO prices while I am in the Southwest. Instead, my analysis (and therefore, my tax-deductible meals) will focus on Green Chile Stew. A bowl of spicy Green Chile Stew---with fresh tortillas, maybe a side order of beans---is as close to culinary nirvana as one can experience. That is, unless one does not like spicy food, or the taste of green chili stew. This being the case, Green Chile Stew is culinary torture. Not for me, I love the stuff.

But, unfortunately, I must report that Frankie’s Casa Nueva Green Chile Stew rates about a 2 on a scale of 10 in the Culinary Nirvana Department. Even worse, the pinto beans were tasteless. Southwest sacrilege.

Not a good start for my new research. Walking out the door, I thought of asking Frankie if he had an XO handy to chase down his below average meal. But I suspected Cognac might not be part of his menu, and I satisfied myself with a Dairy Queen ice cream cone as we made our way out of Pecos.

The Taos Pueblo

To wrap up this report, if you are traveling in Northern New Mexico, don’t miss visiting the Taos Pueblo. See Figure 9. It has people! In fact, it is said to be the oldest, continually inhabited town in North America. The Taos Indians live as their ancestors did...with the exception of the screen door. (Well, it’s turquoise...) Their water is taken from a nearby stream. They have no electricity inside their homes.

Trails: Enjoy Them While You Can

I am not much for trails. I prefer streets. After all, I just moved from the mountains into the city--admittedly a migration that is counter to the trend in America, a trend that is urbanizing our country-side.



Figure 9. The Taos Pueblo.

As I travel across this country, I am left with the impression that my son's children will not have the pleasure of viewing a landscape without a housing subdivision as part of the horizon. Granted, parts of Montana and North Dakota will likely remain somewhat sparse...maybe.

I watched a TV program last week about the state of Florida---which is in a sad state. Other than tourism, it's only major industry is growth! That's right. The building industry (not factories, or research labs, or dot com programmers) is the main industry. The economy depends on building more houses and stores for more people---those coming across America's porous borders. Why are they coming? To build more houses for the people who have come because of the building industry.

It's a circuitous path to nowhere. Building buildings should be undertaken because people are coming to town to work for a new automobile plant, or a new solar panel factory; not because people are coming to town to build houses for the people building houses. It's a surreal deck of cards that is going to tumble down when the cycle can no longer feed on itself.

If the building stops, the TV commentator opined the Florida economy would stagnate. People might move out of the state to find jobs. Vacant houses would further collapse the building industry.

The Orlando National Monument

A few generations from now, the National Park Service might sponsor the Orlando National Monument. The guides will tell the tourists the natives were forced to abandon the Orlando site because they ran out of places to build the millionth amusement park, the zillionth housing development, and the quadrillionth Wal-Mart. They also ran out of water.

Or ran out of something...vitality, spirit, employment---whatever. Maybe even water. Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Las Vegas, Nevada, come to mind.

Think I'm kidding? Take a look at the Detroits and Buffalos of our country, as well as many other downtowns of our North American cities. Just like the original Americans, we modern

Americans pack-up and go when things get tough. Trouble is, we are running out of space to pack-up and go to.

I'll wrap-up these reports by recommending you visit Bandelier and Pecos. As one guide put it, "You can wonder and wander in solitude, and reflect on another people."