

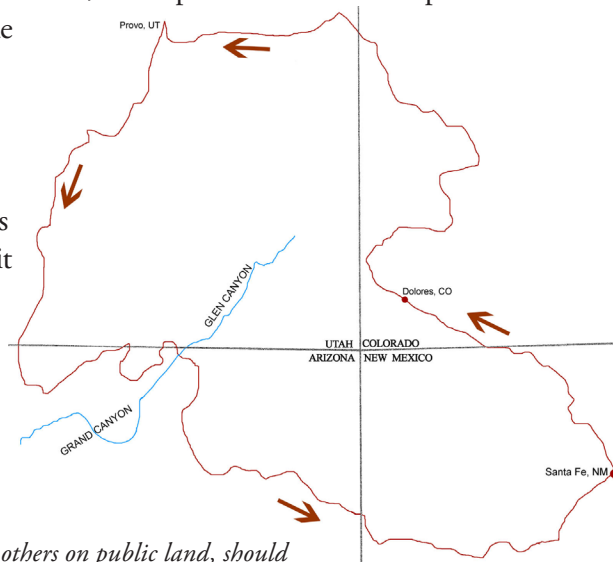
THE DOMINGUEZ-ESCALANTE EXPEDITION

In July 1776 a party of Spanish explorers—Father Silvestre Velez de Escalante with his superior Francisco Dominguez and eight others—set out from Santa Fe, New Mexico to find a safe route to California and avoid the Mohave Desert and the Grand Canyon.

After several weeks they camped by a river called *El Rio de Nuestra Señora de Los Dolores* (The River of Our Lady of Sorrows). Father Escalante found the remains of a village overlooking the river, and remarked in his journal that it resembled the living Pueblo villages of New Mexico. As the first record of an archaeological site in present-day Colorado, it was later named Escalante Pueblo. The Dominguez Pueblo was excavated and named 200 years later.

In the Dolores area the Spaniards first encountered Ute hunters, who fed them and guided the party onward for several months. Due to lack of food and the approach of winter, the explorers eventually abandoned their goal and returned to Santa Fe. Though unsuccessful, the expedition established part of the Old Spanish Trail for later trade between the United States and Mexican territories.

To learn more about the later history of the Dolores River valley, see the exhibit *River of Sorrows* located at the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum.



These archaeological sites, like others on public land, should be enjoyed by everyone as part of our nation's heritage. Please leave them as you found them so that others may enjoy them. Laws prohibit anyone from destroying or removing artifacts or from digging without legal authorization. For more information, visit our website at <https://www.blm.gov/learn/interpretive-centers/CANM-visitor-center-museum>

Please report any vandalism or damage to historic or archaeological sites to the Tres Rios Field Office and Canyons of the Ancients Law Enforcement Tip Line: 833-660-5771 (toll free) or email TRFOtpline@blm.gov. In the event of an emergency, always call 911 or the local sheriff's office at 970-565-8441.

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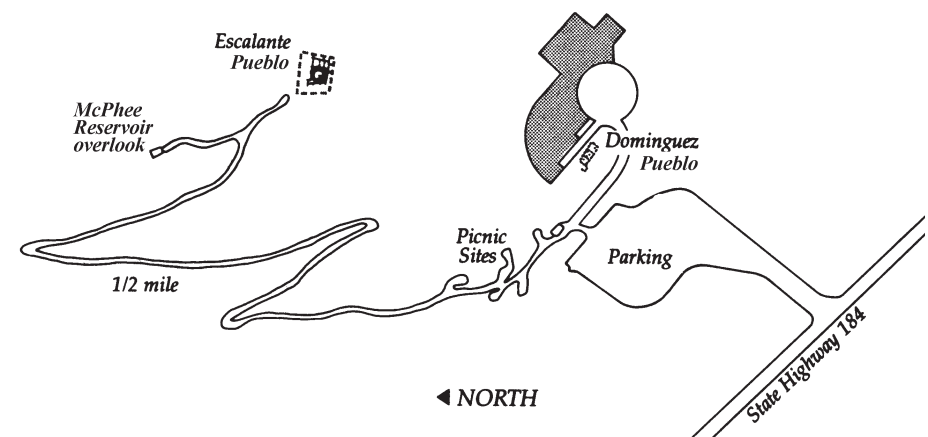


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Escalante & Dominguez Pueblos Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center & Museum

Dominguez Pueblo and Escalante Pueblo were both built and occupied by the Ancestral Pueblo people during the AD 1120s. Imagine their world as they saw and understood it during this era as some communities grew while others declined. Note the details of each settlement, and consider these questions:

- Why did the builders choose these locations?
- How were their lives similar to and different from ours today?
- Why and how were they influenced by other cultural areas, such as the Chacoan culture of northwest New Mexico?
- What role did migration play in the three occupations of Escalante Pueblo and the building of smaller settlements around it?



DOMINGUEZ PUEBLO

As you begin the half-mile (1 km) journey to Escalante Pueblo at the top of the hill, take time to study Dominguez Pueblo on your right. This four-room structure was a typical family unit for four to eight people. The low stone walls you see would have supported *jacal* (hə-'käl) walls made of poles, brush, and earth, with a roof of similar construction. Traces of 18 similar household sites have been found on this hill surrounding the Escalante Pueblo.

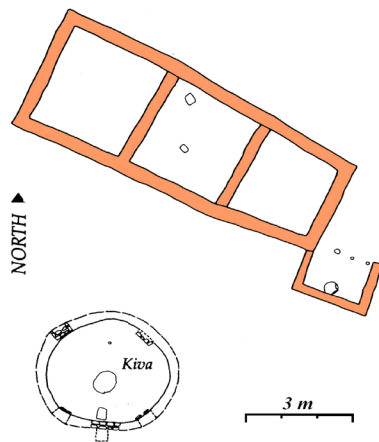
Archaeologists learned through *dendrochronology* (dating the tree-rings in wood from the site) that this home was built about AD 1123—close to the same time as Escalante Pueblo, so this family probably had some connection with the larger, nearby village.

Dominguez Pueblo is an example of the common household style of the Northern San Juan Tradition: a row of small rooms facing a *kiva* or circular underground chamber. (Archaeologists call such rooms kivas after similar rooms in modern Pueblo villages.)

This kiva, no longer visible, was about 11 feet (3.3 m) in diameter and probably had a roof with a ladder entrance. It may have served as a place for family members to sleep, eat, and/or retreat from bad weather.

It was not possible to stabilize the earthen walls of the kiva, so it was backfilled after excavation in the 1970s. Replacing the dirt is often the best way to preserve ancient structures.

Envision this place as your home, and the other nearby households as your neighbors. Visualize grinding corn with stone tools and molding pottery from clay you pulled from the earth. Imagine the sights and sounds you experience every day while working in the fields, traveling down to the river for water, or meeting neighbors and travelers in the village on the hilltop. The lives of the Ancestral Pueblo people, while difficult by today's standards, must have been filled with some of the same joys and concerns we experience today.



ESCALANTE PUEBLO

Escalante Pueblo is much larger than Dominguez Pueblo. It is more than a simple family dwelling. The original construction reflects the architectural style of Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. Try to locate the following examples of Chacoan influence:

- The village has a planned, rectangular layout surrounding a kiva.
- The kiva contains eight *pilasters* or roof supports, a sub-floor shaft for fresh air, and an oblong chamber set into the kiva floor.
- The pueblo's rooms are generally larger than local-style rooms.
- Thick, double-faced walls with rubble cores made the structure stronger and able to support a second level. Some wall faces also alternate block stones with smaller *spalls* or chinking stones.
- Some doorways are T-shaped.

Archaeologists from the University of Colorado excavated about one-third of Escalante pueblo in 1975-1976. Based on the age of wood used in its construction, they believe that groups of people built or remodeled the pueblo in three episodes.

The pueblo's founders built the original structure in AD 1129, at a time when Chaco itself was in decline and its regional influence was waning. Curiously, most of the pottery found here is not Chaco-style but Northern San Juan (local) types—implying that the potters, at least, were not immigrants. This first occupation ended about nine years later.

Another group of Northern San Juan people briefly reoccupied the empty pueblo around AD 1150.

A third and final occupation, involving only a few rooms, took place around AD 1200.

