

TABLE 2. Adjusted mean ring-widths of pinyon (*Pinus edulis*) specimens from the Site 1060 pithouse, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. Unit .01 mm.

A.D.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
490									44	82
500	39	31	54	66	109	81	135	94	70	98
510	114	54	42	5	38	10	17	57	57	48
520	133	78	68	76	35	36	0	35	70	63
530	92	52	80	54	67	35	19	67	61	46
540	40	74	27	14	63	30	59	95	68	102
550	75	118	98	84	37	95	103	87	58	66
560	56	14	54	9	37	12	64	64	23	22
570	32	64	56	69	69	52	44	42	33	41
580	44	68	75	74	29	54	36	45	28	43
590	18	3	58	51	79	21	35	0	22	17
600	26	23	17	5	16					

Specimen MV-1008, the only piece of juniper from the group with an interpretable ring record, crossdated exceptionally well with the pinyon master chronology (Fig. 2). It is possible that a centuries-long juniper chronology eventually will be established for the Mesa Verde area.

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University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

SITE 1060, A BASKET MAKER III PITHOUSE ON CHAPIN MESA, MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK

ALDEN C. HAYES and JAMES A. LANCASTER

ABSTRACT

A Basket Maker III pithouse excavated in 1959 provides a cluster of tree-ring dates which terminate at A.D. 608. Features in the structure are typical of pithouses from the same time period in the area, with a north-south orientation and a large southern antechamber having an inclined entranceway. Atypical features include a low bench encircling the main room and the presence of small adobe pellets at the bottom of each of the four post holes.

In September, 1959, an unsuspected archaeological site on Chapin Mesa, in Mesa Verde National Park was revealed by a pipeline trench. Immediate salvage operations by Lancaster and his stabilization crew indicated a shallow pithouse with the wall above the bench along the entire west side destroyed by the ditcher. Excavation help was requested from the Wetherill Mesa Archaeological Project and Hayes and part of his survey group were assigned to the undertaking.

Site 1060 falls into the general pattern of Basket Maker pithouses of the San Juan area in that it consists of a roughly rectangular chamber with rounded corners, large post-holes near the corners, remnants of a partition south of the firepit, and a short passageway into a smaller, raised anteroom (Fig. 1). In outline, it closely resembles Pit House Number 1

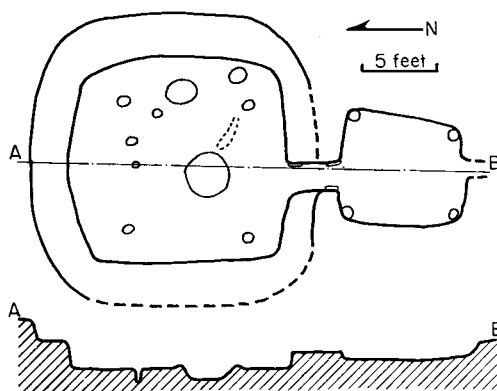


FIG. 1. Plan of Site 1060 pithouse.

(Smiley 1949), roughly one and one-half miles to the north, and Pit House B (Lancaster and Watson 1942), also nearby. The house had burned, and from the dearth of furniture, one would assume that it had been abandoned prior to the fire.

The main chamber was a little over 13 ft. in width and averaged 3 ft. in depth below the level of the ground at the occupational period. The walls were unplastered but were apparently packed and smoothed. A bench 1.7 ft. above the floor circled the room. Benches are the exception in early pithouses and when they do occur are usually narrow. This one was unusual in that it had an average width of 2.4 ft. No traces of sidewall post-holes were found but a charred pinyon pole sloped from the bench to the floor just south of the large southeast post-hole, suggestive of a pole from bench to roof timbers that had fallen to that position with the collapse of the roof.

The floor was hard-packed earth and contained the usual features. A circular firepit, a trifle southwest of room center, had a rounded collar of adobe approximately .2 ft. high. A small sipapu midway between the firepit and north wall was filled with clear sand. Four post-holes, averaging .7 ft. in diameter and 2 ft. in depth, were set in from the rounded corners of the room by a distance of 1.8 to 2.3 ft. Four small pits or cists on the east side of the room contained room fill and were otherwise undistinguished. A wing-wall or partition separating the south end of the room from the remainder was indicated by a barely perceptible ridge of slumped adobe running from the firepit toward the southeast post-hole. No slabs or traces of jacal were present and although no deflector was found, it may have been removed for reuse when the house was abandoned.

The passageway to the anteroom entering the south wall just west of center was 1 ft. above the floor level, 3.5 ft. long and 1.7 ft. in width. A sandstone slab reinforced the wall at three corners. Broken pieces of burned rock on the floor of the main room indicated the existence of the fourth reinforcement. The floor of the passage was plastered and smoothed throughout its length and was continued over a rounded step down into the anteroom.

The anteroom itself was spacious, measuring 7 by 9 ft. A post-hole in each corner was flush with the wall and contained the charred remains of a large post. The holes, from 1.5 ft. to 1.6 ft. deep, had a slight incline toward the center of the room. The floor, .85 ft. above the level of the main room, was hard-packed clay covered with a skiff of yellow sand. The amount of charcoal near the floor and the red-baked adobe of the walls indicated a substantial structure. Charcoal specimens of this roofing debris yielded seven tree-ring dates, including a cutting date of A.D. 608 (see

preceding article by R. F. Nichols). In the center of the south wall of the anteroom was an opening 1 ft. wide with a floor sloping up sharply toward the surface. On the floor in front of the opening lay a thin sandstone slab which may have been used as a door stop.

The question of whether a pithouse antechamber was a foyer or a storage room and ventilator has sometimes been raised. The feeling among most workers in the field has apparently been that it served the purpose the word indicates and probably had a hatchway onto the roof. Roberts (1929) postulated a ground floor entrance on the southwest side of the antechamber of House A at Shabik'eschee, and in Pit House B at Site 13 on Alkali Ridge, Brew (1946) found what appeared to be a door slab in the same relative position. It is interesting to note that this is the one structure at Alkali Ridge with post-holes in the antechamber. The antechamber at Pit House C, Site 2 in the Ackmen-Lowry area (Martin 1939) consisted of a passageway 5 m. long with a bulge or swelling near the middle. There was no step up from the main room to a raised floor but rather a gradual slope up to the south end of the passage to within 30 cm. of the old ground level. This "antechamber-entrance-way", to use Martin's term, suggests an entrance at the south end at ground level, with a short step down to the sloping floor. Site 1060 then provides additional evidence of ground level entry to early pithouses.

Another interesting feature of Site 1060 was the presence of four to six small pellets of adobe at the bottom of each of the four post-holes in the antechamber. In size they ranged from 1 to 1.75 in. in length and from 1 to 1.25 in. in width and were roughly spherical or cylindrical in shape. Several were formed by fusing two or three rolls of adobe. Finger impressions were apparent on two of them. They could have been dropped in after the post was in place but before the earth was tamped around it.

Pottery definitely associated with the floor was plain gray and La Plata Black-on-white. Some sherds of both types had a fugitive red exterior. The only other artifacts in the floor fill were two hammerstones and an awl made of the split cannon bone of a mule deer. On the floor of the main chamber were found the left femur, tibiotarsus, and tarso-metatarsus of a turkey (identified by Lyndon L. Hargrave, Southwest Archeological Center, Globe, Arizona).

The date, the pottery and the general structure of the house would place it in the Basket Maker III or Modified Basket Maker period.

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Wetherill Mesa Archeological Project
Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado