

Another early Native American tribe in what is now the southwestern part of the United States was the Anasazi.

By A.D.

800 the Anasazi Indians were constructing multistory pueblos-massive, stone apartment compounds.

Each one was virtually a Line stone town, which is why the Spanish would later call them pueblos, the Spanish word for towns.

These pueblos represent one of the Anasazis' supreme achievements.

At least a dozen large stone houses took shape below the bluffs of Chaco Canyon in northwest New Mexico.

They were built with masonry walls more than a meter thick and adjoining apartments to accommodate dozens, even hundreds, of families.

The largest, later named Pueblo Bonito (Pretty Town) by the Spanish, rose in five terraced stories, contained more than 800 rooms, and could have housed a population of 1,000 or more.

Besides living quarters, each pueblo included one or more kivas-circular underground chambers faced with stone.

They functioned as sanctuaries where the elders met to plan festivals, perform ritual dances, settle pueblo affairs, and impart tribal lore to the younger generation.

Some kivas were enormous.

Of the 30 or so at pueblo Bonito, two measured 20 meters across.

They contained niches for ceremonial objects, a central fire pit, and holes in the floor for communicating with the spirits of tribal ancestors.

Each pueblo represented an astonishing amount of well-organized labor.

Using only stone and wood tools, and without benefit of wheels or draft animals, the builders quarried ton upon ton of sandstone from the canyon walls, cut it into small blocks, hauled the blocks to the construction site, and fitted them together with mud mortar.

Roof beams of pine or fir had to be carried from logging areas in the mountain forests many kilometers away.

Then, to connect the pueblos and to give access to the surrounding tableland, the architects laid out a system of public roads with stone staircases for ascending cliff faces.

In time, the roads reached out to more than 80 satellite villages within a 60-kilometer radius.