



Pueblo Grande Museum and Archaeological Park

A Summary of the Pueblo Grande Village

The Hohokam ruins located on the north side of the Salt River and two miles west of the Papago Buttes were given the name Pueblo Grande, Spanish for Large Town, by Omar Turney in the 1920s. He named Pueblo Grande after its most prominent feature, a platform mound, one of the largest of over forty such structures built by the Hohokam in the Salt River Valley.

Pueblo Grande appears to have been settled sometime before A.D. 500, perhaps related to an early canal system, which the Hohokam built at the southern edge of the site in the area now, called "Park of Four Waters." By about A.D. 750, Pueblo Grande had grown into a sizable village containing domestic pithouses, cemeteries, trash mounds (middens), and possibly a ball court. The Pueblo Grande canal system had been expanded considerably by this time, and irrigated approximately 20,000 acres of farmland. In the Sedentary Period (A.D. 900-1150), a small circular platform mound may have been built at the site.

During the Classic Period (A.D. 1150-1450), the large platform mound was initially constructed and expanded on several occasions. This mound apparently was once two smaller mounds that became a single mound as each was expanded in size. The latest manifestation of the platform mound, still visible today, is approximately the size of a modern-day football field. Also during the Classic Period, coursed-adobe houses arranged in at least 20 apartment-like compounds were built, replacing many of the previously occupied pithouses. A tower-like "Big House," similar to the one still present today at Casa Grande in Coolidge, AZ, likely was built at this time. Furthermore, several large irrigation canals were constructed in the Park of Four Waters. One of these canals was over 2 meters deep, 10 meters wide, and 7 miles long. Another canal was as much as 15 miles in length, an impressive engineering feat considering that the canals were dug by hand with digging sticks, stone tools, and baskets (other than the dog, the Hohokam had no domesticated animals to perform laborious tasks).

The population of Pueblo Grande probably reached its peak in the Classic Period, with as many as 1000 people living in the village. At its largest extent it is estimated that the size of the village was approximately 500 acres or one mile in diameter. Studies of burials excavated from the site indicate that the population was suffering from malnutrition, despite their utilization of all available resources, including the intensive harvesting of fish from the Salt River and local irrigation canals.

Large floods recorded for the Salt River in A.D. 1358 and 1380-1382 probably contributed to the collapse and/or restructuring of Hohokam society at Pueblo Grande and elsewhere during the 1400's. Around A.D. 1450 the Hohokam



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abandoned Pueblo Grande as well as other villages in the Salt River Valley. For reasons still under investigation, more than 1000 years of occupation at Pueblo Grande came to an end.