

From: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
TO THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR FOR THE YEAR ENDING
August 31, 1882.
Excerpt from Letter of J. H. Fleming, U. S. Agent,
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Ident. Adm.

MOQUIS PUEBLO AGENCY, ARIZONA,
August 31, 1882.

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SIR: In compliance with instructions received from your office of July 15, I have the honor to submit this my first annual report of affairs at this agency, for the year ending August 31, 1882.

LOCATION.

This agency is located in Northeastern Arizona, about 90 miles west of Fort Defiance and 70 miles north-northeast of Winslow, a station on the A. and P. Railroad. Its immediate location is in what is known as "Kearn's cañon," famous for its springs of pure water. With the high and rugged walls of the cañon on either side, one is reminded of some mediæval prison-house. We are not trammelled by over civilization and the restraints of fashion. Our nearest post-office (except one at a Mormon settlement) is Fort Wingate, one hundred and twenty miles distant. The surrounding country is an elevated plain, interspersed with barren mountains in the South and furrowed here and there with deep cañons.

THE MOQUIS PUEBLOS.

This interesting people, unlike most of our aboriginal tribes, dwell in pueblos or villages. There are seven of these villages, all of which are built upon high mesas, from 300 feet to 500 above the plains; and only two of these, Oribi and Ci-mok-pi-vi, are accessible by wagon road. Tewa, Ci-teum-ivi, and Walapi are 14 miles west-north-west from this agency. Me-cañ-ni-vi, Ci-pol-i-vi, and Ci-mok-pi-vi occupy the brow of a mesa 8 and 10 miles further west, and Oribi is situated still west of these about 12 miles.

On the 25th day of this month, with my teamster, I visited the latter place, having made the entire journey by wagons, over a very difficult and circuitous route. Our arrival created quite a sensation; such an event, I am told, had never been known in the history of the town; a span of mules and wagon on the streets of Oribi was indeed a novelty! Oribi is much the largest village, and contains about 700 inhabitants. The streets are narrow but more regular than those of the other pueblos. The houses are all built of stone, many of them three and four stories high, with flat dirt roofs, cement floor, and small windows and doors. But little lumber is used, and then only for doors when the builder can afford that luxury.

The furniture of these houses is a very simple affair. A sheep skin serves for a chair, the floor for a table, and a few blankets, baskets, and pieces of home-made pottery constitute the household goods. Nearly every family has a corn mill. This is made in the form of a long, low box, inclosing two or more large flat stones, which form an inclined plane. The grinding is done as follows: A small quantity of corn is first placed in the box, which has been partitioned off into sections corresponding to the number of stones, then the miller (who is usually a young woman or a girl) with one hand covers the surface of the stone with corn, then taking a long narrow stone, well adapted for the purpose, she crushes it until it is reduced to meal.

AGRICULTURE, ETC.

The Moquis are a pastoral and an agricultural people. Nearly all keep a few sheep and burros, and some have large flocks of sheep, besides horses and burros. All cultivate the soil; some go fifteen miles or more to plant their wheat and corn. Onions, beans, and melons are their favorite vegetables, which they raise in considerable quantities. They usually do not plant the same ground two years in succession. Peaches and apricots are raised to advantage, especially in the vicinity of Oribi. One important branch of industry with them is the manufacture of pottery, in which they show some skill. They weave their own blankets and belts, and a coarse, but very fair, kind of cloth worn by the women and girls. Their work-houses are all underground, where the carding, spinning, and weaving is done, and where they prepare their costumes for the dances.

LANGUAGE.

The great difficulty at present in the way of effectually reaching this people is the want of a suitable interpreter. No one of the tribe has learned enough of English to fill that position satisfactorily, and no white man, so far as I know, has mastered the Moqui language sufficiently for ordinary intercourse. In all the councils held since my arrival here it has been necessary to employ interpreters who speak the Spanish or Navajo or both; and as many of the Moquis understand the Navajo and a few the Spanish, we have been able to comprehend each other tolerably well.

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