

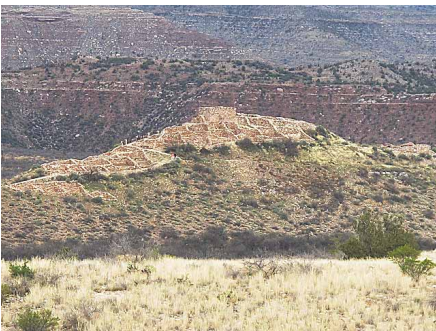
Earl's Diary - Wednesday - March 5, 2014

Hello to all my Loyal Readers;

My diary pages have been focused on the history of the last century, or two. Today and tomorrow I plan to visit the land of the ancients - Tuzigoot and Montezuma Castle.

I am returning to these sites almost 60 years after I was first here. Back then, I was just a youngster in Boy Scouts. We had a Scoutmaster, and adults, who loved the Southwest. We were escorted on a 6 day *moving tour* of this area. I remember, vaguely, some of the highlights of that trip. Today I will be refreshing some of those memories of 60 years ago as I travel to these sites.

Here is your history lesson for today: The Verde Valley is regarded as an aboriginal melting pot where at least four Native American cultures are believed to have intermingled. Sinagua, from the Spanish words *sin* (without) and *agua* (water), is a name given to these pre-Columbian people by archaeologists who first studied them in the dry area north and east of Flagstaff. It is thought that a number of Sinagua moved into the Verde Valley area between 600 and 1425 A.D. They gradually displaced a small population of pit-house Hohokam people, but not before learning irrigation farming from their predecessors.



I took these photos from a bluff in Dead Horse Ranch State Park looking toward the west. The day was slightly overcast in the top picture. The sun tried to peek out in the bottom photo.





Tuzigoot (Apache for “crooked water”) is the remnant of a southern Sinagua village built between 1000 and 1400. It crowns the summit of a long ridge rising 120 feet above the Verde Valley. The original pueblo was two stories high in places, with 87 ground-floor rooms. There were few exterior doors; entry was by ladders through roof openings. The village began as a small cluster of rooms inhabited by some 50 persons for 100 years. In the 1200s the population doubled and then doubled again.

By the time the people of Tuzigoot left the region around 1400 B.C., the citadel had housed perhaps 250 people in its 110 rooms. Before the Great Depression, the collapsed pueblo was covered in debris. Archeologists with a Civil Works Administration crew excavated and stabilized the ancestral village in 1933.

Archeologists were able to collect the most artifacts from Tuzigoot because they were originally covered over by debris and looters were not able to get at them. The museum in the park has a wonderful exhibit of some of these artifacts recovered from the area.



Ruins located at the base of the ridge

Q: When did the Native Americans abandon Tuzigoot?

A: They didn't. Though they did move to other villages by 1425, their descendants still come back here. To them, these places are alive and important even after all this time.



Q: Where did they go?

A: Many people in the Verde Valley migrated to other places. They became some of the ancestors of today's Hopi and Zuni people. A few stayed and lived as hunters and gatherers. Their descendants are today's Yavapai.



Details of room structure



This appears to be the only door in the complex. It was probably used for storage. Access for other rooms was through holes in the roof.



The pueblo's ridge is aligned north-to-south. In that direction, one can see a series of steep, highly eroded limestone ridges. These are remnants of a primeval time, 2-8 million years ago, when the Verde Valley was covered by shallow lakes and dried-up, sandy playas. Over eons, the lakes and playas deposited material that was compacted into limestone. As the land drained, the Verde River carved the new stone into the ridges we see now -- including the ridge Tuzigoot was built on.



Looking south and west from Tuzigoot now, much of what you see has been altered over the last century by the mining and processing of rich metal ores. Modern communities now surround Tuzigoot: Jerome on the nearby mountain slope, Clarkdale with its cement plant and old smelter buildings, and Cottonwood with its glittering lights.



The flat expanse west of the pueblo's base is where tailings from a copper smelter were deposited during this area's mining days. In 2007, the land was rehabilitated with new soil and seeded with native vegetation. With time, mesquite and catclaw forests will flourish again.



Just to prove I was here





Water was probably fundamental to the selection of Tuzigoot's ridge for a permanent dwelling by 1100 BC. Several small springs near by produce 9-12 gallons every second. A shallow basin east of the springs impounds millions of gallons of water in Tavasci Marsh. The marsh was critical to Tuzigoot's people. They wove reeds into baskets and mats. Trees became roof beams, and mud was used for mortar in pueblo walls. The people hunted marsh animals and used marsh water to grow their crops.



A view from the roof at Tuzigoot provides a perspective of time from ancient prehistory to today. From a single perch atop the pueblo, we see evidence of the ages at work on land, water, people, and cultures.



My memory is now refreshed from my trip here 60 years. I wonder how much work has been done since then to help preserve the site. Were there concrete walkways back then? I'm sure the museum had its priceless artifacts displayed. Perhaps the museum building might be new. Were we able to climb to the highest point? The only thing I do remember is that Tuzigoot was built on a hill and we were able to walk among the ruins. It was just as interesting today as it was all those many years ago.



Thanks for walking along with me today. Bye for