

Caves in the Upper Pecos Watershed



Dennis McQuillan

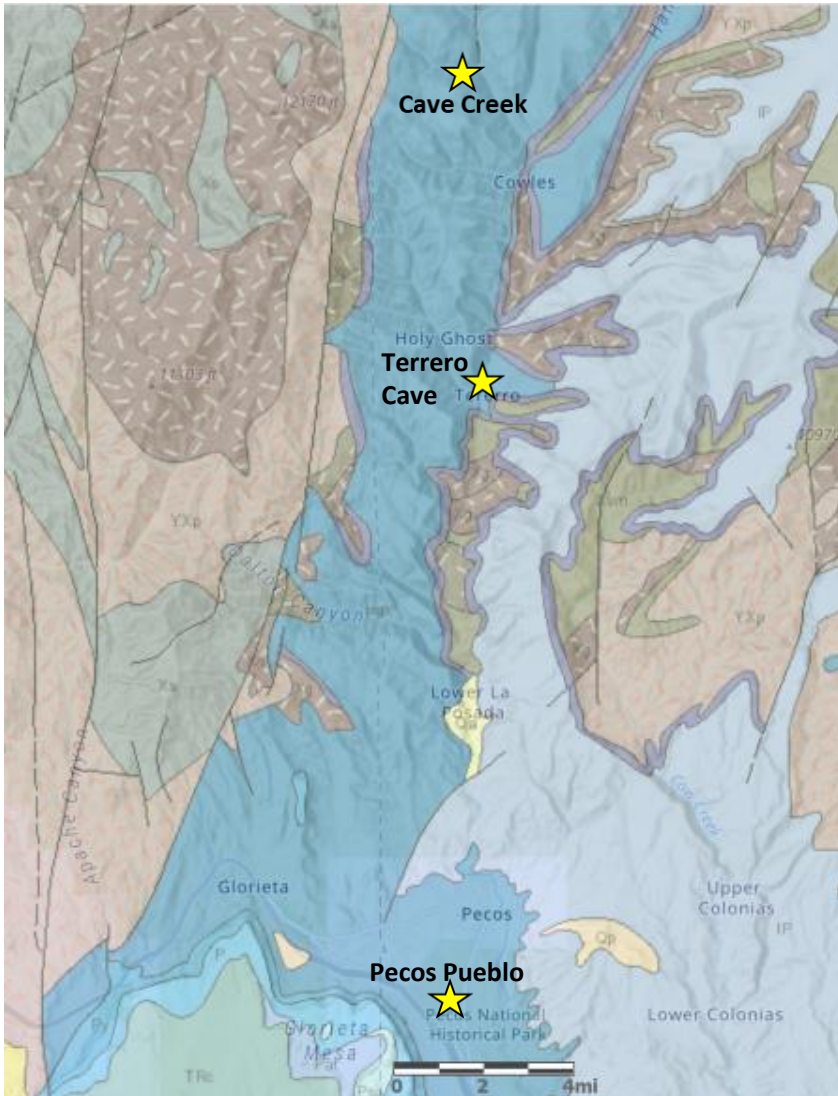
High Desert Science

geologist@highdesertsience.net

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Cave Creek, 1979

Upper Pecos Watershed



The Cave Creek Caves and Terrero Cave are located in Paleozoic limestone where dissolution occurred along permeability structures.

■ Permian and Pennsylvanian rocks, undivided

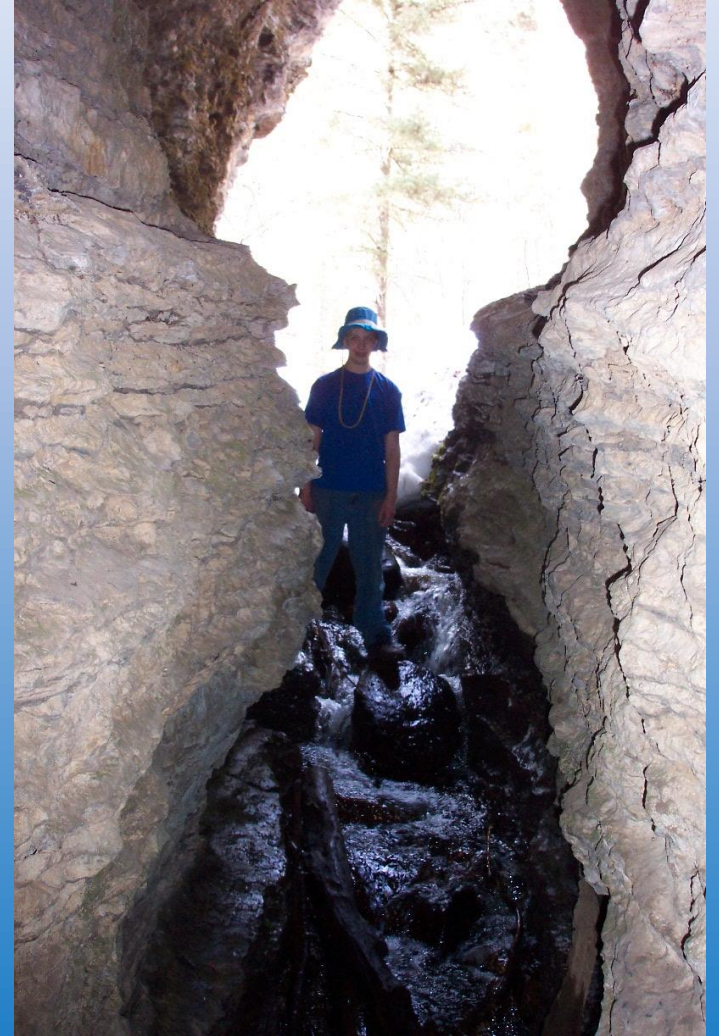
Pecos Pueblo descendants, who live at Jemez Pueblo, make pilgrimages to the Pueblo ruins and to Terrero Cave.

Base Map - <https://maps.nmt.edu/>

Cave Creek Caves



**Cave Entrances
Shannon and Aiden McQuillan, 2007**



Water Flowing Down Cave Tunnel

Terrero Cave



Gated Cave Entrance



Water Flowing out of Cave Tunnel



**Water Inside
Cave Tunnel**

Terrero Cave



Main Cave Passageway, 1984



**Narrow Passageway Deeper Inside Cavern
Dennis McQuillan, 1984**

Terrero Cave Arachnids

- Terrero Cave is the type locality of the lampshade spider species *Hypochilus jemez*, and the harvestman species *Sclerobunus jemez*.
- These arachnids are named in honor of the Pueblo of Jemez for whom Terrero Cave has profound spiritual significance.



Lampshade Spider¹
(*Hypochilus* from North Carolina)



Lampshade Spider Web²
(*Hypochilus* web from Appalachia)



Harvestman from Terrero Cave³
(*Sclerobunus jemez*)

¹ Kaldari, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

² Marshal Hedin Derived: Peter Coxhead, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

³ Creative Commons by Derkarabetian and Hedin (2014)

Pecos Pueblo Timeline

- Pecos Pueblo was continuously inhabited from the 1200s until 1838.
- Spanish colonization and establishment of a Franciscan mission began in 1598.
- After famine, raids and disease¹ decimated the Pueblo population, remaining residents migrated to Jemez Pueblo in 1838.
- During Kidder's 1924-29 Pecos archaeology expedition and excavation, thousands of human remains and funerary objects were removed and taken to Harvard's Peabody Museum.
- Pecos Pueblo became a state monument in 1935 and a national monument in 1965.
- Congress passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in 1990.
- Excavated human remains and artifacts were repatriated at Pecos Pueblo in 1999.



Pecos National Historical Park

(Mosamiazaz at English Wikipedia, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

¹ Both Hewitt (1904) and Toya (2022) discuss pollution of drinking water in the context of disease outbreaks that ravaged Pecos Pueblo. Hewitt explains that one of the springs used by the Pueblo for drinking water, locally described as the “poisoned spring,” received drainage from Pueblo burial grounds and the Mission cemetery.

Ceremonial Cave Timeline

1776 – Spanish Franciscan Church sought to prevent native Pueblo residents from using caves “for idolatrous purposes.”

1904 – Archaeologist Edgar Hewitt noted that Jemez Pueblo residents of Pecos ancestry made pilgrimages to Pecos Pueblo ruins and to a ceremonial cave in the vicinity.

1924-29 – Archaeologist Alfred Kidder confirmed existence of, and pilgrimages to, the Pecos Pueblo ceremonial cave. Kidder’s description of the ceremonial cave closely matches Terrero Cave. Kidder discovered the tip of stalactite in a Pecos kiva.

1925-27 – Author Willa Cather was in the Santa Fe area in 1925 when she began writing her 1927 history-based novel “*Death Comes for the Archbishop*” that included a sacred cave used by Pecos Pueblo. Cather described the cave as containing an “underground river, flowing through a resounding cavern.” Cather’s novel was mentioned in Kidder’s Pecos Pueblo Archaeology Notes.

1980s – Terrero Cave was gated and locked by the state at the request of Jemez Pueblo to protect the sacred cave for use by Pecos Eagle Society.

Terrero Cave



**Rock Shelter
with Metal Oxides
in Cliff Above Above
Terrero Cave**

**Kidder described the roof of the Pecos Pueblo Ceremonial Cave as being
“smoked clear to the end.”**

However, what his men observed was likely metal oxides.

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