

Fig. 1. Martin Apodaca Homestead, Canyon Largo, Lindriith Vicinity, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, 2003. HABS No. NM-201.

Uninhabited landscapes in arid environments reveal signatures that may reflect the cultural traditions of past residents.

Organically evolved and of the historic-vernacular type, the landscape of the upper Largo Canyon in northwest New Mexico includes a former residential community of primarily Spanish Americans, along with Anglo-American and Native American inhabitants. Today most of the land within the canyon is administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) of New Mexico, which is tasked with balancing natural-resource procurement (oil and gas development) and cultural-resource conservation in this region. Under Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, through the placement of Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns around these properties, and with their own guidance, the BLM has long been actively preserving the few architectural and structural remnants of the historical period in upper Largo Canyon.¹

Background

The initial project, sponsored and funded by the BLM, consisted of an archaeological and cultural-landscape inventory of upper Largo Canyon of known historical-period archaeological sites and potential new sites that dated from

1829 to 1943. Specialists conducting the fieldwork included a historical archaeologist, prehistoric archaeologists specializing in the region, a cartographer, and a landscape historian. Methods included intensive archaeological and landscape survey, digital photography, geospatial analysis and mapping, and documentation. Project results were presented in a cultural-resources inventory report and a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form with nine individual nominations.² This article is a synthesis of some of the results of that project and an exploration of whether vestiges or signatures identified in the landscape that reflect the cultural traditions of its former residents can be correlated to cultural affiliation.

Many researchers have studied ethnic communities in northern New Mexico, their associated cultural patterns, and how these patterns are manifested. Particular to this investigation were those publications that looked at community structure or focused on the landscape impress. The extensive archival research for this project provided direct associations of specific properties and historical activities to early settlers of upper Largo Canyon and their families.³ Upper Largo Canyon is considered a Spanish-American community. Research indicates that between 1877 and 1943, 187 people resided in the area: 126 were Spanish-American, 59 were Anglo-American, 1 was Navajo, and 1 was Native American (tribal affiliation not specified).⁴

Historical-period land use within upper Largo Canyon began with Spanish military expeditions in pursuit of Navajo raiders in 1705, increased with the establishment of the Old Spanish Trail in 1829, became permanent with the first homestead built circa 1869, and waned after the last homestead patent was granted in 1943.⁵ Primary historical-period activities included homesteading, ranching, farming, commerce, and transportation.⁶ Settlers developed the infrastructure to support these endeavors in direct response to local geography, topography, vegetation, and access to water, interacting with and

adapting to the natural environment. Settlers resided along Largo Wash and in branch canyons having walls up to 600 feet (180 meters) high. Settlement in upper Largo Canyon was dispersed linearly through the canyon, and there was no coherent village center. Community resources included a cemetery, a school, a dwelling used as a part-time church, a stock trail to the top of the mesa, and three trading posts. There were few reliable water sources, and settlements were constructed primarily from available local resources, such as stone, adobe, *piñon* (pinyon pine), and cottonwood. Eking out a subsistence living, residents grew corn, beans, chiles, tobacco, onions, garlic, and squash and raised sheep, goats, cattle, and mules.⁷ These activities left an imprint on the landscape that is important in New Mexico's history, as it exhibits the vestiges of rural settlement and homesteading patterns, as well as trade, transportation, and cultural traditions.

Literature Review

In their seminal 1989 publication about the history, architecture, and cultural landscape of the Spanish American village of La Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico (located 55 miles northeast of upper Largo Canyon), historians Chris Wilson and David Kammer elucidate the importance of the "trinity of land, water, and people."⁸ They noted that the most common nineteenth-century Spanish-American settlement type was the linear village, or roadside settlement pattern, and explained that the "fundamental Hispanic organization of space [is]: first the river, then the fields, above them the acequia [water conveyance channel], the road, the houses and finally above and behind them are the corrals formed by barns, shed and fences."⁹ Spanish colonial settlements and Spanish-American settlements have always been dispersed across the landscape. As described by ethnographer Frances Leon Swadesh, they consisted of "a few small, scattered ranches and lacked local administrative machinery."¹⁰ Archaeologist David Snow, writing about rural Spanish-American community organization, stated that "the tendency of settlement

has been toward dispersal of households over an uncrowded landscape."¹¹

As historians Boyd C. Pratt and Dan Scurlock have explained, post-1868 settlement patterns of Spanish-American villages were developed in response to local geography and access to a water supply for domestic and agricultural purposes.¹² It should be noted that this is also a common trait of Native American settlements throughout time. Both Spanish-American and Anglo-American agricultural systems depended on ditch irrigation, in which farmers diverted water from streams, seeps, and springs to their fields.¹³ Spanish-American residential features in rural areas included dugout root cellars, corrals, outbuildings, *hornos* (mud-adobe outdoor ovens), and wells.¹⁴ Landscape historian John Brinckerhoff Jackson argued that the traditional use of space within Spanish-American homesteads showed clear distinctions between dwellings associated with daily household activities and outbuildings used for ranching and farming activities. Anglo-American residential features in rural areas also included barns, granaries, and fences.¹⁵ In addition, Pratt and Scurlock have noted that the layout of buildings constructed by Anglo-Americans and Spanish Americans differs from that of the Navajo. In homesteads of both Spanish Americans and Anglo-Americans, the buildings—dwellings, barns, and corrals—were often arranged in a C-shape and opened to the south.¹⁶ In Navajo landscapes the dwelling was separate from ranching features and opened to the east.¹⁷

Pratt and Scurlock also indicated that the dwellings of the earliest colonial settlers of northwest New Mexico were originally constructed in the *jacal* fashion, "with upright posts plastered with mud and roofed with flat beams and *latillas*" (narrow pieces of wood laid between ceiling beams).¹⁸ Adobe construction with *viga* (ceiling beams or rafters) and *latilla*-style roofs was also common in Spanish-American settlements of this region. Early Spanish-American house forms had linearly arranged rooms. Called "boxcar" houses by Swadesh, these dwellings consisted

of two or three rooms with one door to the outside.¹⁹ Additions included sections joined to the house along the same axis or at right angles. Larger houses were L-shaped or U-shaped with a *plazuela* or *placita*, a courtyard surrounded by room blocks. Food preparation often occurred outside the house at a hearth under a *ramada*, a temporary or permanent shelter with a roof and no walls. Historical archaeologist Scott O'Mack agreed with Jackson that additive construction was the "hallmark of Spanish-American rural architecture" and that it "was not simply an expedient building style dictated by circumstances, but an expression of a distinctive cultural outlook having a similarly additive notion of the family."²⁰ Anglo-American dwellings were often constructed of logs or adobe; the former were picket houses or log cabins. The picket house is very similar in form to the Spanish-American *jacal*, a construction type that Native Americans also used in the area for thousands of years. Anglo-American house forms were typically single-cell or hall-and-parlor plans. The Spanish-American linear arrangement of rooms was not typical in Anglo-American buildings.²¹

In addition to homesteading, another common enterprise of regional settlements was the trading post. Although not much is known about features associated with Anglo-American or Spanish-American trading posts in the region, Pratt and Scurlock have conducted investigations of trading posts on the lands of the nearby Navajo Nation.²² Archaeologist Lynn Cronk has described expected components of a Navajo trading-post site to be as follows:

- Trading-post building
- Trader's living quarters within the main building or in an adjacent building that included a combination cooking-and-eating area and sleeping quarters
- Storage for goods within the main building or in an adjacent building
- A well or permanent source of water
- Hogans, traditional dwellings of the Navajo people for resident laborers, guests, or additional storage; substantial corrals or a temporary animal-



Fig. 2. Martin Apodaca Homestead, built c. 1910, overview of residential complex, view looking south-southeast, April 6, 2012. Unless otherwise noted, all images from Phillip O. Leckman et al., courtesy Bureau of Land Management, Farmington Field Office.

containment area, grazing area, and water source

- A ramada, or shade area
- Horno
- Spatial patterning and proximity of components providing accessibility and protection
- Location near well-traveled route or number of Navajo families
- Evidence of additional profession or occupation.²³

Cultural-landscape Inventory

Largo Canyon is one of the longest dry washes in the world and the most important and predominant natural landscape feature of its region.²⁴ The patterns and signatures of abandoned rural homesteading and ranching on cultural landscapes are often hard to discern in arid environments. Some features are ephemeral in nature, such as once-sowed gardens or former grazing lands. Many features, such as low rock walls, rock scatters, and unlined water-conveyance channels, blend in visually and can be missed easily during an inventory, especially because they were developed using on-site materials. Environmental factors have the most effect on landscape features in arid environments. Erosion of materials from wind

and water and the growth of vegetation diminish the integrity, condition, and visibility of features. With such ephemeral features and potential condition problems, historical documentation becomes a critical component of identification efforts.

Nonetheless, even in this formidable environment, many of the historical-period activities that occurred in upper Largo Canyon left imprints on the landscape. Consisting of components and evidence of processes, cultural and natural features reflected the day-to-day activities and traditions of ordinary people and how they adapted to the natural environment. Landscape characteristics identified in the canyon were categorized following guidelines provided by the U.S. National Park Service.²⁵ Landscape components—particularly land use, spatial organization, buildings and structures, circulation patterns,

Fig. 3. Margarita Martinez Homestead, Canyon Largo, Lindriith Vicinity, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, 2004. HABS No. NM-202.



and cluster arrangements—reflected a direct response by the residents to natural systems and features of the environment, such as climate, topography, and vegetation. Eleven properties were assessed for the cultural-landscape inventory in the original project, and three properties, which had potentially discernable features associated with cultural traditions, are of focus in this article: two residential properties, the Martin Apodaca Homestead and the Margarita Martinez Homestead, and one commercial/residential property, the Haynes Trading Post. The Apodaca and Martinez homesteads were settled by Spanish-American settlers, and the Haynes Trading Post was operated by Anglo-American brothers, who employed Navajo laborers to run the establishment. All of these properties have remained abandoned since their original occupants left. While each of these three properties has numerous extant landscape features, only a selection of features are discussed in this article.

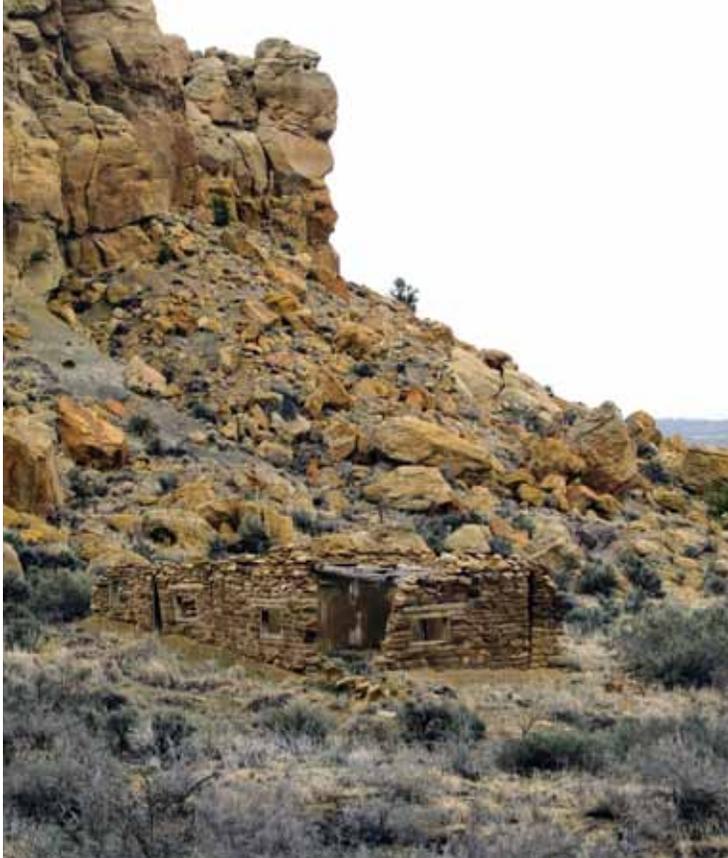
Martin Apodaca Homestead

The Martin Apodaca Homestead still exhibits several historical landscape

characteristics, despite the fact that the Apodacas left the property in approximately 1930. The homestead is tucked into the end of a small branch canyon known locally as Rincon Pollito; it is located at the base of the escarpment in a small box canyon (Fig. 1). Natural systems and features and the topography are reflected in the location and setting of the homestead and in the use of local construction materials. Vegetation, small-scale features, and the remains of a barn suggest the land was used for ranching, a use that is supported by historical documentation. Spatial organization is evident in the clustered residential complex (the remains of a residence, barn, and three large cottonwood trees) (Fig. 2); the distance of that complex from the other combined residence and part-time church; and the ranching features between them. Constructed water features still evident include a portion of an earthen dam, which was used to enclose a large reservoir fed by a spring and a seep. Views from the residential complex are to the southwest, overlooking upper Largo Canyon and the main road, and likely toward nonextant cultivated lands and grazing areas.

Margarita Martinez Homestead

The Margarita Martinez Homestead still exhibits several historical landscape characteristics, in spite of the family selling the property in 1943. The homestead is situated on the northern side of Tafoya Canyon, a small branch or side canyon of upper Largo Canyon (Fig. 3). Natural systems and features and topography are reflected in the location and setting of the homestead and in the use of local materials for construction. Vegetation and small-scale features suggest a land use of ranching, which is supported by historical documentation. Spatial organization is expressed through the separation of a cluster of ranching features from the remains of a residence and the location of water-conveyance channels that run through the landscape (Fig. 4). Constructed water features are represented by the three water-conveyance channels; one channel is located directly below an unenhanced spring. Views from the landscape are to the southeast, overlooking Largo Canyon and the main road and likely toward nonextant cultivated lands and grazing areas (Fig. 5).



(Fig. 6). The landscape of the trading post extends from the floor of a wash, up two terraces, and onto the mesa above. The remains of the main building are located at the lowest elevation. On the terrace above the building is a road, and on the terrace above the road are trails that lead to five water sources and the remains of contemporaneous Navajo archaeological features to the Haynes trading post on another terrace above (Fig. 7).

Vegetation and extant small-scale features suggest a land use of ranching. The remains of the large main building, a permanent water system, *hogans*, and sweat lodges on the mesa above, as well as animal-containment areas, suggest that ranching was carried out at a commercial scale, as supported by historical research. Spatial organization of the large complex is expressed through the locations and layout of features and the inclusion of three large cluster arrangements. The views from the landscape are to the northwest, overlooking Escrito Canyon and the road that traverses it; the upper terrace of the landscape also affords views of the Haynes Trading Post itself.

Identification of Cultural Traditions

Upper Largo Canyon exhibits a linear village or roadside settlement pattern, which was the most common nineteenth-century Spanish-American settlement type. With not quite one person per square mile, the canyon had a dispersed population and uncrowded landscape, typical of Spanish-American settlements. The landscape reflects the importance of land, water, and people, and the pattern of settlement was clearly developed in response to local geography and access to water, a pattern of all early villages in the low and high deserts of the American Southwest.

At both the Apodaca and Martinez homesteads and the Haynes Trading Post, cultural traditions are recognizable in the layout of the landscape features and the construction techniques. The extant features of each reflected a C-shape plan that opens to the south, typical of both Anglo-American and



Fig. 4. Margarita Martinez Homestead, built 1908, view looking west-northwest, April 6, 2012.

Fig. 5. Margarita Martinez Homestead, overview with corrals and lambing pens to the right and residence to the left (in middle ground), view looking south-southwest, April 6, 2012.

Haynes Trading Post

The Haynes Trading Post still exhibits several historical landscape characteristics, despite the fact that the operations ceased circa 1929. The trading post is situated on the south side of an unnamed branch canyon of Escrito Canyon, south of upper Largo Canyon. Natural systems and features and the builders' response to the topography are evident in the location and setting of the trading post and in the use of local materials for construction. A large *arroyo*, a dry stream bed that seasonally flows after sufficient rain, cuts through the canyon just north of the remains of the main building of the trading post



Fig. 6. Haynes Trading Post (in middle ground), Escrito Canyon, New Mexico, built c. 1875–1908, view looking north-northeast, April 6, 2012.

Fig. 7. Haynes Trading Post, date built unknown, rock-lined trail to terrace above post, view looking southeast, April 6, 2012.

Spanish-American settlements. Both homesteads used gravity irrigation through ditches diverting the runoff from natural springs and seeps, while the trading post used gravity irrigation with a system of pipes that diverted runoff from enhanced springs and stored the water in a cistern. The trading post had a much more sophisticated water system, indicating a greater need

for a domestic water supply and the potential for commercial value.

All buildings at these sites were constructed of stone laid in mortar and had Spanish-American viga- and latilla-style roofs; in one room at the Martinez Homestead the *jacal* construction technique was used. Rooms were added to the dwellings at the two homesteads at right angles. The layout of the main building of the trading post was rectangular, but every room had an exterior door. While the construction methods at the trading post were associated with Spanish-American tradition, the layout of the building was not.

The landscape of the Haynes Trading Post includes many characteristics of a typical trading post found on the Navajo Nation. It includes a trading-post shelter with the trader’s living quarters in the main building; archaeological remains of outbuildings possibly used for storage; a permanent source of water; *hogans*; animal-containment areas; grazing areas atop the mesa accessed by the main trail; and a geographical location that provided protection and access to a well-traveled route. Additionally, two *hogans* and two sweat lodges on the terrace above the trading post reflect traditional Navajo construction techniques.

Conclusions

Ambiguities limit the ability to correlate cultural traditions seen in the landscape components of upper Largo Canyon to the cultural affiliation of the occupant. For example, organization of space in these landscapes may have been restricted due to the amount of arable land within the canyon walls and not associated with the fundamental Hispanic organization of space. Additionally, the absence of vegetation and the lack of small-scale features associated with ranching areas limited the ability to define distinct separations of space between residential and agricultural activities, which is an indicator of cultural affiliation. Lastly, in the same way that building materials were more likely chosen because of their availability rather than cultural tradition, there is the potential that a builder or group

of builders provided services to all residents in this region, thereby making the method of construction an unreliable means of associating cultural affiliation to the occupant of the landscape.

While the associations between cultural traditions and affiliations remain somewhat tenuous in these three cultural landscapes of upper Largo Canyon, this article does demonstrate that cultural-landscape characteristics can be associated with cultural traditions and potential cultural affiliations. Additional research could assist in the development of a model or means by which to assess the cultural affiliation of settlement landscapes in northern New Mexico. Such research efforts could include identifying cultural traditions of additional landscape-feature types; defining additional differences in property layouts among cultural groups; determining whether cultural traditions were influenced by ownership, including age or gender; determining whether the landscape layout was influenced more by use than by cultural affiliation; and determining whether residents modified their cultural traditions to fit the environment, despite their cultural affiliation.

Acknowledgements

The importance of North American rural landscapes was evident in Susan Buggy's presentation at the 2014 annual meeting of the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: Conserving Cultural Landscapes. This article is dedicated to her and her work with the World Rural Landscape initiative. I thank senior archaeologist James Copeland at the BLM Farmington field office. This region is his passion, and the cultural-landscape inventory project was his vision and a means by which the extant historical-period cultural landscapes of upper Largo Canyon can be identified and protected. A special thanks to Phillip O. Leckman, cartographer and archaeologist, and Jorge A. Provenzali, historical archaeologist, who assisted greatly with the geospatial and archaeological analyses during the original study.

Carrie J. Gregory holds a bachelor of anthropology and a master of historic preservation. She is a senior historic preservation project director for *Statistical Research, Inc.*, in New Mexico and is president of the *Alliance for Historic*

Landscape Preservation: Conserving Cultural Landscapes.

Notes

1. In this article, the historical period refers to the period that begins with the arrival of Europeans to this region, or post-1540. The Spanish empire in this region formally consisted of New Mexico and New Spain (present-day Mexico). In this article, Spanish Americans are those of Spanish-speaking descent; Anglo-Americans are those of non-Spanish-speaking descent; and Native Americans are those of American Indian descent or indigenous peoples.
2. Phillip O. Leckman, Jorge A. Provenzali, Carrie J. Gregory, et al., *Upper Largo Canyon Class III Inventory and Historical Landscape Study*, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico (Albuquerque, N.M.: Statistical Research, 2013). Carrie J. Gregory, *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form for Historical Settlement in Upper Largo Canyon, Northwest New Mexico, 1829—1943* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Statistical Research, 2013).
3. Both textual and nontextual documents were reviewed for this project. Textual records consisted of published and unpublished histories, newspaper and magazine articles, cultural resource management reports and records, oral-history transcripts, paper presentations, community directories, land-entry records, census records, government reports and notes, and tax-assessment rolls. Nontextual records consisted of maps, aerial photographs, historical and archaeological site plans, and Historical American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation.
4. Gregory, National Register, E-1, E-16, and F-2.
5. *Ibid.*, E-4–E-5.
6. In this article, homesteading refers to living life as a settler on a homestead, ranching refers to raising animals, and farming refers to growing crops.
7. Gregory, National Register, E-1–E-51.
8. Chris Wilson and David Kammer, *La Tierra Amarilla: Its History, Architecture, and Cultural Landscape* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1989), 57.
9. *Ibid.*, 83, 89, 105.
10. Frances Leon Swadesh, *Los Primeros Pobladores: Hispanic Americans of the Ute Frontier* (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 133.
11. David H. Snow, "Rural Hispanic Community Organization in Northern New Mexico: An Historical Perspective," in *The Survival of Spanish American Villages*, ed. Paul Kutsche, 45–52 (Colorado Springs: Research Committee, Colorado College, 1979), 50.
12. Boyd C. Pratt and Dan Scurlock, *The Northwest New Mexico Regional Overview*,

vol. 1, *Historic Overview* (Santa Fe: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1990), 175.

13. *Ibid.*, 181.

14. Alvar W. Carlson, *The Spanish-American Homeland: Four Centuries in New Mexico's Rio Arriba* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 132, 137–138. Pratt and Scurlock, *Historic Overview*, 175–177, 328. Swadesh, *Los Primeros Pobladores*, 139–143.

15. Pratt and Scurlock, *Historic Overview*, 181–183.

16. Boyd C. Pratt and Dan Scurlock, *Navajo Reservation Trading Posts in Northwest New Mexico*, draft (Santa Fe: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1993), 22–23.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Pratt and Scurlock, *Historic Overview*, 175.

19. Swadesh, *Los Primeros Pobladores*.

20. Scott O'Mack, "The Spanish-American Presence" in *Fence Lake Archaeological Data Recovery in the New Mexico Transportation Corridor and First Five-Year Permit Area, Fence Lake Coal Mine Project, Catron County, New Mexico*, vol. 4, *Synthetic Studies and Summary*, ed. Edgar K. Huber and Carla R. Van West, 41.1–41.19, draft (Tucson, Az.: Statistical Research, 2005), 41.18. See also Carlson, *Spanish-American Homeland*, 130–134; Pratt and Scurlock *Historic Overview*, 175–177; and Swadesh *Los Primeros Pobladores*, 138–142.

21. Gregory, National Register, E-42.

22. Pratt and Scurlock, *Navajo Reservation Trading Posts*.

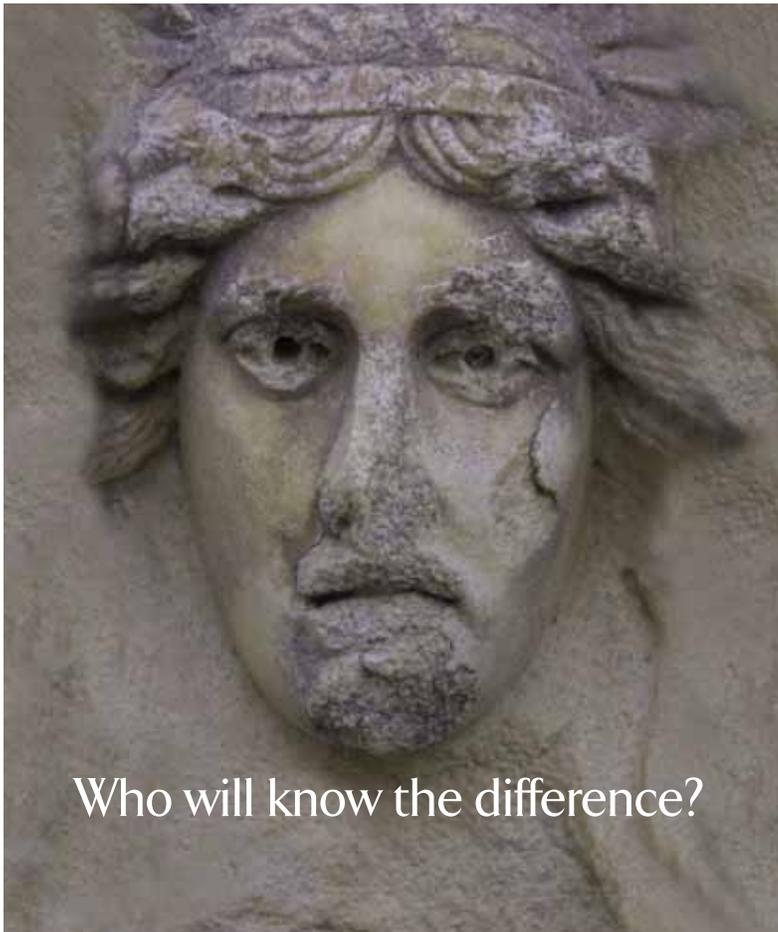
23. Pratt and Scurlock, *Historic Overview*, 171–173. Pratt and Scurlock, *Navajo Reservation Trading Posts*, 29–31.

24. A dry wash is the dry bed of an intermittent stream. Largo Canyon extends 68 miles.

25. Linda Flint McClelland, J. Timothy Keller, Genevieve P. Keller, and Robert Z. Melnick, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes, National Register Bulletin 30*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1999).



The *APT Bulletin* is published by the Association of Preservation Technology, an interdisciplinary organization dedicated to the practical application of the principles and techniques necessary for the care and wise use of the built environment. A subscription to the *Bulletin* and free online access to past articles are member benefits. For more information please visit www.apti.org.



Who will know the difference?

At first, nobody will know you didn't use Cathedral Stone Products' substrate-compatible masonry restoration systems. But later, when the repair fails, everyone will know. Why take chances when you can count on our scientifically-engineered line of integrated masonry restoration mortar, cleaning and stripping, coating and repellent systems to deliver results that last a lifetime.

Contact us today to find out more.

www.cathedralstone.com
info@cathedralstone.com • 410-782-9150



Cathedral Stone® Products, Inc.

The leader in scientific masonry restoration

SIMPLE SOLUTION...IN ONE CAN

ABR® WATERLESS CLEANING POULTICE™

A unique, temporary adhesive coating cleaner designed for use on a wide variety of surfaces where an unconventional cleaning method is needed. This peel away masking collects all dirt and contaminants removed from the substrate surface within the coating for easy collection and disposal, and requires no water in its application or removal.

ABR® Waterless Cleaning Poultice™ may be used on interior and exterior surfaces including, but not limited to, painted or bare metal, brick, textured stone, concrete, marble, ceramic, terrazzo, slate, limestone, granite and plastic.

The creamy consistency and opaque color of **ABR® Waterless Cleaning Poultice™** allows for an even and "easy to see" application.



abr.com | 1-800-346-7532 | abr@abr.com

Patent pending products created for the craftsman and historic restoration professional.