

## Slab House Builders in Chaco Canyon

The Associated Press recently broadcast the following news items:

A race of “long-headed” Indians who vanished perhaps 2000 years before Columbus sailed from Spain, laid the foundation for the rich Pueblo culture of the Southwest, it was revealed today by a Smithsonian archaeological expedition which has returned from New Mexico. The first complete village of the race was discovered by the expedition in Chaco Canyon. Seventeen houses, sunk several feet in the earth and lined with slabs, are in the village, together with forty-five cellars for storage of corn and a kiva or ceremonial temple. The inhabitants of the village were a race distinct from the Pueblos, said Frank H. H. Roberts of the Bureau of American Ethnology, who headed the expedition. Skeletons of the inhabitants were found to be undeformed and long-headed, while the Pueblos were round headed and accustomed to deform the heads of their children. The Pueblo architecture is believed by scientists to be an improvement on the slab house type of the earlier race. The site in Chaco Canyon is only 9 miles from Pueblo Bonito, the largest and one of the finest examples of Pueblo buildings. While the long-headed Indians, if they may properly be called Indians, Roberts said, probably were not numerous, they were scattered over a territory from Northeastern Arizona to the Colorado-Utah border, where examples of their architecture also have been found. They apparently either were driven away and killed by the barbaric round heads, or were absorbed by the invaders.

Upon this the Albuquerque Morning Journal comments as follows:

“That the prehistoric race of people whose existence in the Southwest has been reported by the Bureau of American Ethnology and referred to as long headed, were Indians, is the opinion of Dr. Edgar L. Hewett, professor of anthropology and archaeology at the University of New Mexico. Dr. Hewett states that it is possible that the remains were those of some of the earliest Indian inhabitants but to fix the date of their existence is merely guesswork. He also declares that there is no significance to the fact that they were long headed—that there are long-headed as well as round-headed Indians today. Dr. Hewett authorized the following statement in regard to this find: The finds are important in that they give us additional material for the study of small groups of little known

Indians whose skeletal and cultural remains are found chiefly in our San Juan drainage in New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and Arizona. If the remains are found underneath large pueblo villages such as Pueblo Bonito in Chaco canyon, the indications are that they were among the earliest of the Indian inhabitants of our Southwest. There is as yet nothing to indicate that they were very numerous or that their culture was very important. To say that they laid the foundation for the rich Pueblo culture of the Southwest, as has been stated in the press, is unwarranted. The fact that they were 'long headed' is of little significance so were and are, many of the Indian tribes, ancient and modern. Both types, 'long headed and round headed' are numerous among the Pueblos of the present time. The fact that the skulls are 'undeformed' means simply that they did not bind their babies on the cradle board as the Pueblos did. It would be misleading to speak of them as anything but Indians and the representative of the Bureau of American Ethnology who reported the find, surely had no intention of saying or implying that these people were of any other than the American Indian race. The differences between them and the ancient Pueblos were just such as exist today between the Pueblos and the other tribes. The cause of disappearance in terms of years is mere guess work. The ancient Pueblos and cliff dwellers of our San Juan drainage and whatever tribes may have preceded them, had completely disappeared before the coming of the Spaniards to this part of the world. No satisfactory chronology of them has been established."

Walter, Paul A. F., ed., "Slab House Builders in Chaco Canyon." *El Palacio* 18 (November 1927): 462-464.