

Figure 11: CLIFF DWELLINGS. Olla Cave. Shows the storage container and one house wall. The stick on the right is approximately five feet long.

It seems from the evidence available that sometime in the late 14th or early 15th century the multi-story house folk of the basin and range region, and the cliff-dwellers in the mountains abandoned their homes. The reason is not known, nor can an attempt be made to answer the problem until much more work has been done on the archaeological sites. When the first Spanish explorers arrived they found semi-agricultural peoples, who depended more on hunting and gathering than planting crops for their food. The Indians they found were located in the valleys, not in the mountains; the mountains were uninhabited.



Figure 12: CLIFF DWELLINGS. Olla Cave. Looking into the cave at several dwellings.



Figure 13: CLIFF DWELLING. Arch flat Cave. Nearly the entire content of this cave is shown.

The conquistadores first arrived in the area of Casas Grandes in 1565, under the leadership of Ybarra. During the next hundred years in southern Chihuahua, Spanish prospectors were looking for silver and Franciscan friars were establishing missions; northern Chihuahua was left to the Indians. In the 1660's missions were established at Casas Grandes and Carretas, and called "San Antonio de Casas Grandes" and Santa Maria de Carretas." Spanish settlers soon began moving into this northwestern corner of Chihuahua, not so much for mining purposes as in southern Chihuahua, but mainly for large cattle ranchos and some maize farming. The new settlements supplied food for the miners at Santa Barbara and Parral. Also, the settlements helped protect the salt route from Sonora, via Pulpito Pass and Carretas, to the Parral smelters.

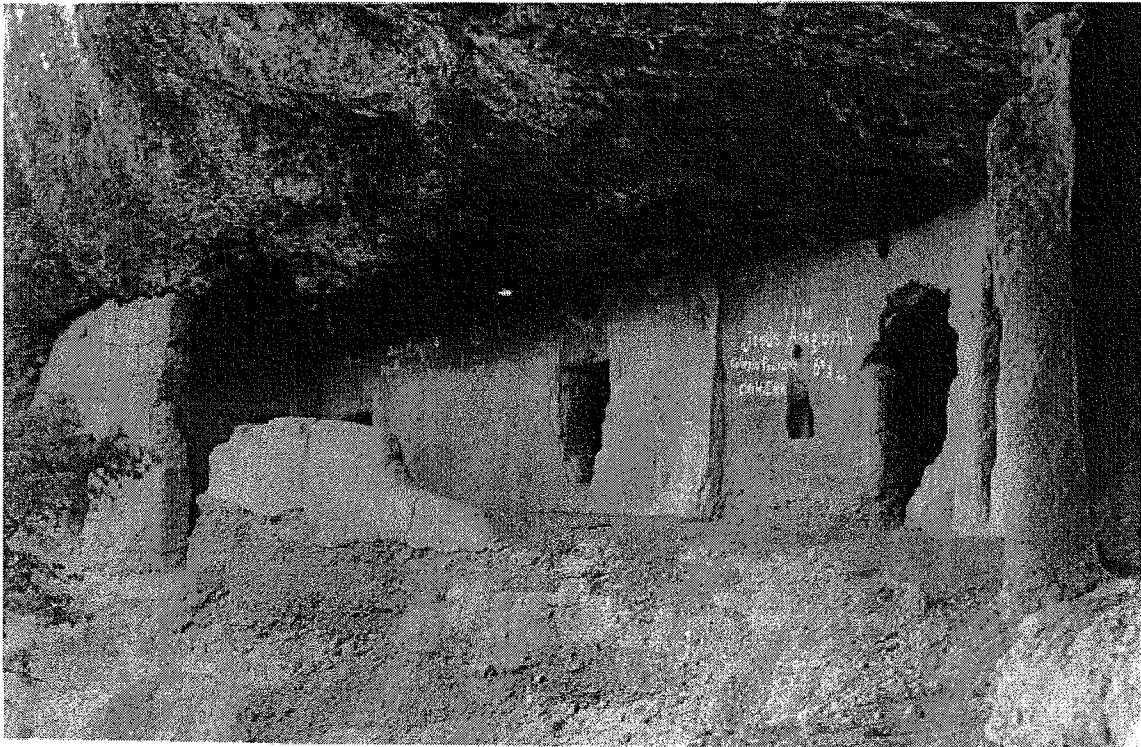


Figure 14: CLIFF DWELLINGS. Arch flat Cave. This cave is only one dwelling deep, and has a protective wall between the room wall and the cave edge, as shown on the left.

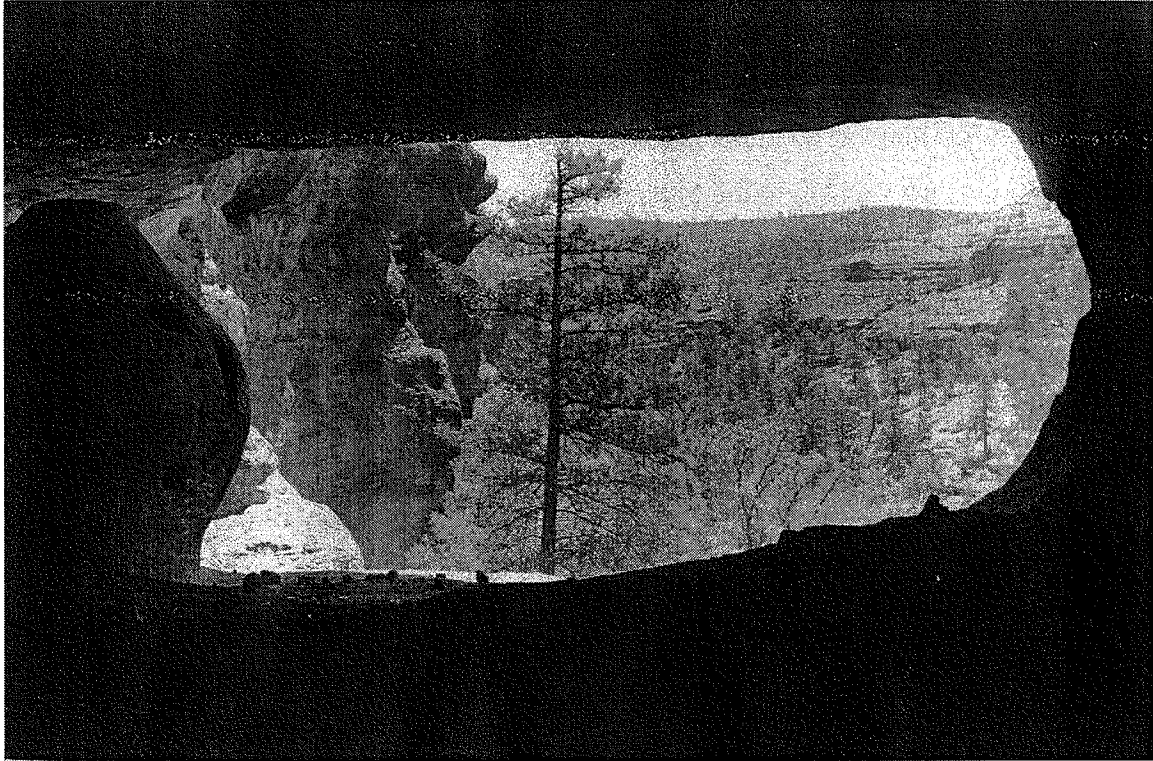


Figure 15: CLIFF DWELLINGS. Olla Cave. Looking out from the interior of Olla Cave. Notice part of the storage container on the left. The Valley beyond is the Piedras Verdes.

In 1686 the established white population of Casas Grandes was less than 300. Most of these people were engaged in ranching, and a few in several silver mines found near Casas Grandes. Spaniards from New Mexico were beginning to drift south into the Casas Grandes area due to the Indian rebellions in New Mexico between 1680 and 1696. The increased population demanded new and enlarged Presidios built at Janos and Frontera.

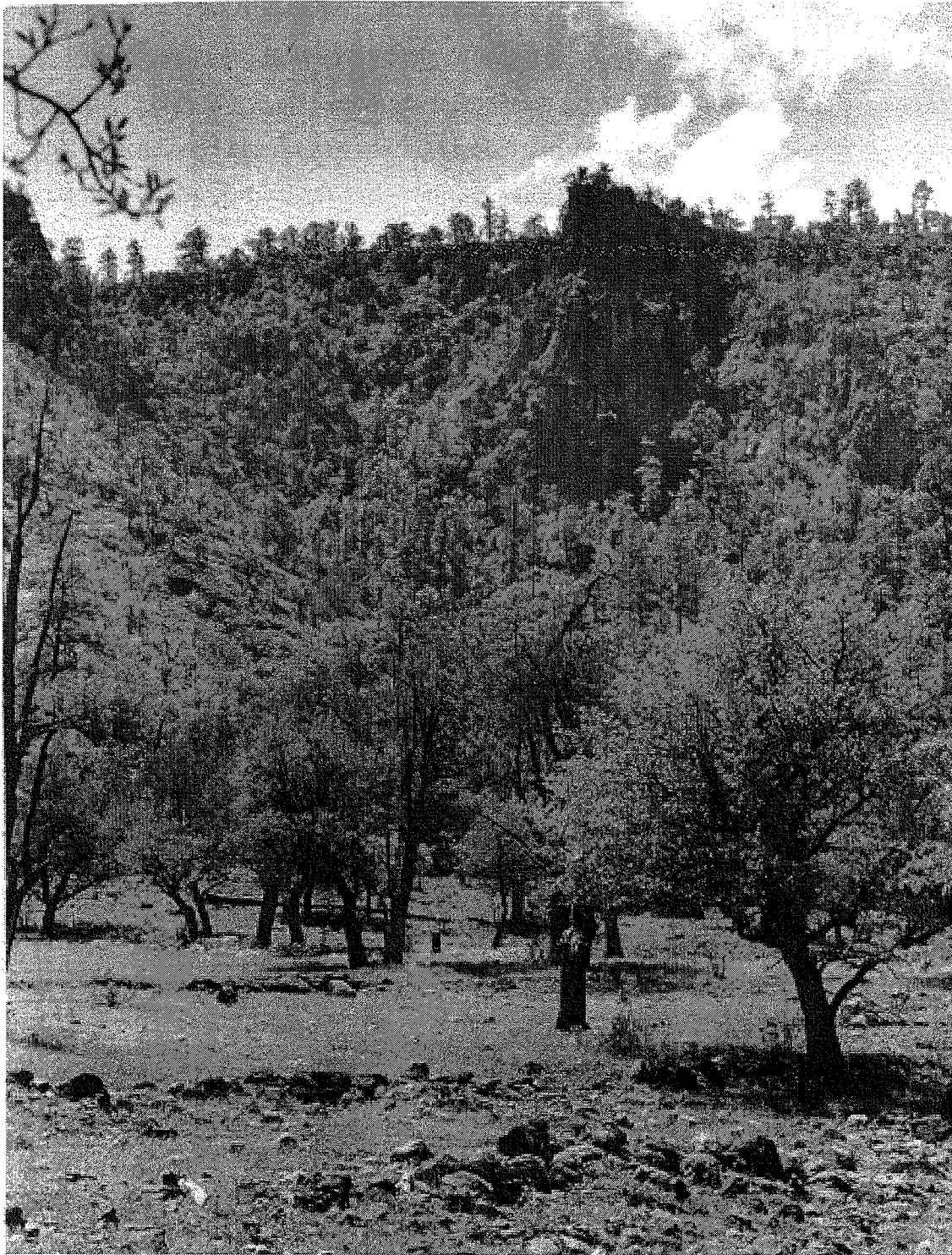


Figure 16: INDIAN TERRACES. Three terrace remnants are seen in the foreground of the picture. The rocks in the pictures indicate old terraces that were from one to two stones high and located on a wide, slightly sloping area.

The beginning of the 18th century saw the raiding Apache Indians advance south into Northern Chihuahua, and by the first quarter of the century this area of Chihuahua was unsafe for travel without a strong detachment of troops. Haciendas were raided and destroyed. Janos and Carretas barely existed and Casas Grandes had been abandoned except for several Concho and Suma Indian families. In 1773 the Presidio system was reorganized for better protection of the inhabitation. Casas Grandes was revived, Janos and Carretas were strengthened. The increased protection enabled many haciendas to be rebuilt and new ones to be established. By 1778 the first ejidos were granted to the pueblos of Casa Grandes, San Juan Nepomuceno (Galena) and Janos. This promoted larger and larger cattle herds.



Figure 17: INDIAN TERRACES. Four Terraces located in narrow draw. The terrace in the foreground measures nearly six feet in height. The others are from two to three feet in height.

By the time of the Mexican Independence the Apache raids were waning. People were moving back to the few pueblos that existed, and the cattle ranchos were doing well. As in the past, this period of relative peace did not last for long. Commencing about 1830, and lasting for over fifty years, the Apache raids made life unsafe, except in the larger settlements, and then it was safe only close to or within the settlements. Stock raising, farming and mining almost came to a halt. In 1828 the Janos area had over 100,000 head of cattle on the range, and by 1842 there were only a few hundred.

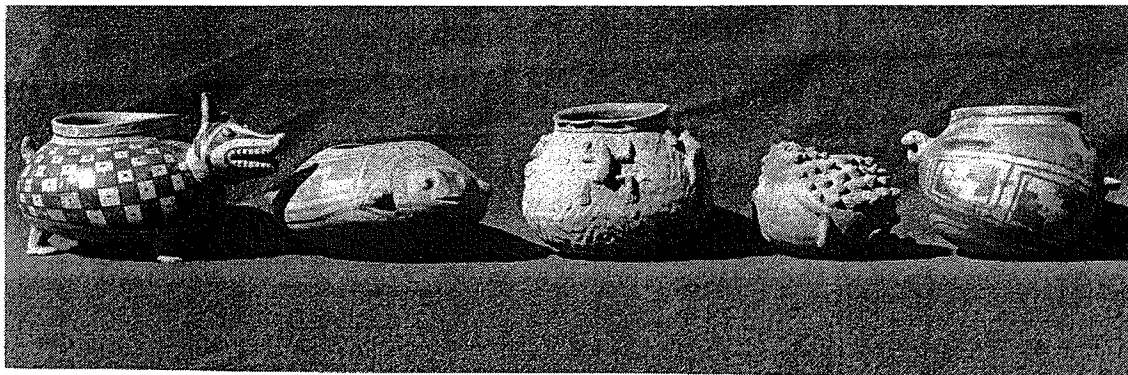


Figure 18: CASAS GRANDES POTTERY. Pots found in the Casas Grandes area in Montezumas by Mr. J. F. Memmott. Sometimes this pottery is called Dublán polychrome. The Colors used on the pots are red and black.

At the height of Apache raids a great many people left their haciendas and ranchos. Land titles to the vacant lands easily fell into the hands of a few men, and this was the beginning of the great hacienda system. One of the largest land owners, who had

taken advantage of the land-title grab was Don Luis Terrazas. He acquired over a million acres in northwestern Chihuahua.¹¹

Apache raids came to an end with the defeat of their leaders, Victoris and Geronimo, between 1880 and 1884. Only in the mountains was anyone disturbed by the Apache after the defeat of the leaders. The danger in the mountains lasted until 1900, when several Apaches were killed by a group of Mormons, and this was the last heard or seen of the Apache in northwest Chihuahua.

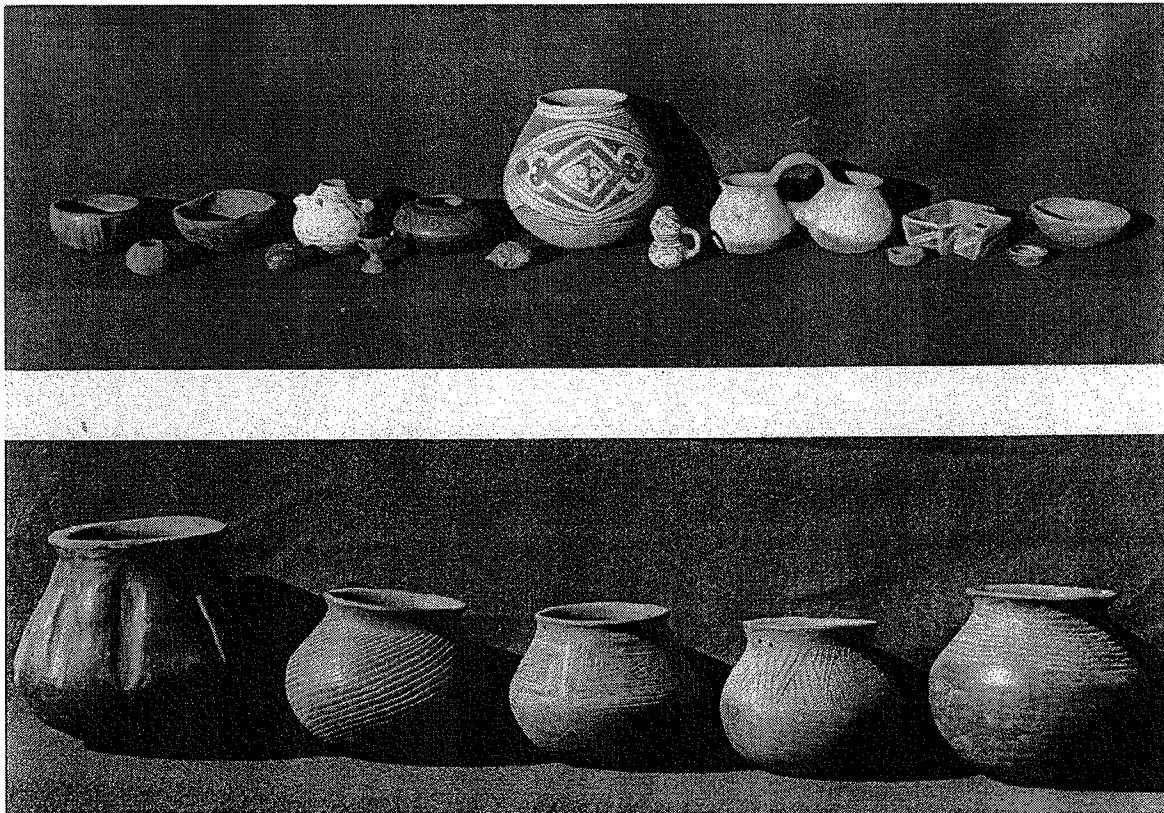


Figure 19: CASAS GRANDES POTTERY. J. F. Memmott Collection. All the pots shown were found in the vicinity of Colonia Dublán and Casas Grandes, except for the seventh pot from the left in the upper picture. This is a modern pot from Mexico City.

¹¹ Brand, D. op. cit., A more detailed history of the Spanish period in Northwestern Chihuahua can be found in this work.

MORMON EXPLORATIONS INTO MEXICO

The first Mormon missionary group to come into Mexico was in 1875, and their main purpose was to spread the Mormon doctrine among the Mexican people. Their second objective was to look for land suitable for settlement by the Mormon groups from the United States, in the event that it was necessary for some Mormons to leave the United States, due to the prosecution of polygamist by the Federal Government.

The first missionary group crossed into Mexico at San Ignacio, which is down the Río Grande from El Paso. They proceeded from San Ignacio to the City of Chihuahua, holding religious services along the way at various pueblitos. After spending a short time in Chihuahua, they traveled west and north through Casas Grandes, Corralitos, Janos, and back into New Mexico.

The second missionary group left the next year from Salt Lake City, entering Mexico at Altar, Sonora, then proceeded to Hermosillo, the capital of the state. For the next three month they traveled over most of Sonora preaching to the Mexicans. Other missionary groups were sent to Mexico before the colonist began to move across the boarder in 1885.

The majority of the missionaries were active in and around Mexico City.

In 1877 there was more discussion in the Mormon Church about establishing colonias in Mexico, but due to the still frequent Apache raids in the northern part of Chihuahua, it did not seem wise. The Mexican government in 1880 granted a Belgian, Emelio Biebuyck, the right "to establish colonies in any of the states of Mexico, the public land to be given free, together with a subsidy of \$80.00 for adults and \$40.00 each for children. Colonists were also to be exempted from taxes and from military duty for a period of twenty years. They could also bring into the country free of duty teams and wagons, agricultural implements, building materials, and provisions, pending the

establishment of the colony or colonies.” Mr. Biebuyck asked the Mormons if they would be the colonists. In a meeting of the Council of the Church the proposal was considered, but turned down, as the Council felt that colonization at this time as still “premature.”¹²

By 1884 the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints felt that it was necessary to find a place for colonization in Mexico for a number of their members, as the United States was beginning to increase the prosecution of polygamists. By this year, wherever a man with more than one wife was found, he was sent to jail. Those who were not discovered were generally forced into hiding. For these reasons a great many families were left without means of support, so it was imperative that the Church do something to relieve the situation.¹³

Two more expeditions were made into Mexico for the primary purpose of seeking suitable land for settlement. In late 1884 a group of men went into Sonora, in hopes of finding a place in southwestern Sonora, in the country of the Yaquí Indians. At that time the Yaquí were hostile to any group entering their territory. The Mormons were advised several times not to go into this area, but despite the warnings they went into the land of the Yaquí, and were treated well by these Indians. But upon hearing their report, the President of the Church advised against colonization in this area. The second expedition in 1884, went into the area along the Río Casas Grandes, into the Sierra Madre mountains to Corrales basin (area of present day Colonia Pacheco), and back to Salt Lake City, where they reported to Church officials that there was a large amount of tillable and grazing land.

While the latter expedition was still in the mountains of Chihuahua, the tension became so great over the increased prosecution of those involved in plural marriages, that families, particularly in Arizona, were making plans to leave for Mexico. By February 9, 1885, the first group left Arizona, and probably entered Mexico at a point due south of Hachita, New Mexico. A second group left later in February, joining the first company

¹² Romney, Thomas C., The Mormon Colonies in Mexico, Salt Lake City, 1938, p43-44.

¹³ It was not until 1890 that further plural marriages were declared unlawful by the Mormon Church, though the law prohibiting them was passed by the United States Congress in 1862.

March 6th, just inside the Mexican border. A third party joined the first two groups a few days later. All three groups had come from the vicinity of Snowflake Arizona¹⁴.

Within six weeks after the first Mormon settlers arrived in Mexico, It was estimated that about 350 has crossed the border. Not only had these people come in the winter, but they were poorly equipped, and had little money to finance many of their future needs in a strange country. The first camps were near the town of La Ascención, on the Río Casas Grandes and about 30 miles from the nearest boarder point of the United States. About 1,500 Mexicans lived in La Ascención at this time.

Because of the sudden influx of Mormons into the La Ascención area of Mexico, the Jefe of the Canton de Galeana suspected that they had come to conquer the country. The Jefe wrote of his suspicions to the Secretary of the State of Chihuahua. The State government immediately ordered the Mormons to leave Mexico. When the leaders of the Colonists received this order they communicated with a Mormon Missionary in Mexico City to see if the order could be rescinded by the Federal Government, or by the Governor of Chihuahua, who was in Mexico City at that time. Without much difficulty the order was rescinded, and the Mormons were told they were welcome to stay and make their home in Mexico.¹⁵

¹⁴ Jenson, Andrew, Wards of Juarez Stake, a manuscript in the Church Historians Office of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mr. Jenson made several trips to the Colonias in Mexico while he was Assistant Church Historian (1898-1941).

¹⁵ Romney, op. cit., pp. 57-59.