



Mabel Dodge Luhan ... the heiress daughter of a wealthy East Coast banker, ... made herself the center of salons that gathered artists and intellectuals for creative ferment in Florence, Italy, and New York before moving to Taos in 1917 with her third husband, painter Maurice Sterne. He didn't have a chance. Soon after she arrived, Mabel met Antonio Lujan, a Taos Pueblo Indian who dressed traditionally and wooed powerfully. Clad in a Native blanket, "Tony" set up a tepee in front of her home and drummed there every night—irresistibly apparently. (After they married, Mabel changed her name to Luhan, adopting an Anglo version of his name.)

The home they built became a New Mexico Mecca for all sorts of early 20th-century luminaries, and Mabel became Taos' great promoter. "I have no news. Nothing happens here but miracles," she once wrote to a friend. Mabel's own miracle was to create

such a social swirl and mystique around the remote town that writers and artists—even Greta Garbo—streamed to Taos to visit. Today the home is a historic inn that offers workshops and accommodations in rooms where D.H. Lawrence, Georgia O’Keeffe, Willa Cather, Ansel Adams, Robinson Jeffers, and Thornton Wilder (among many others) were Mabel’s guests.

Mabel Dodge Luhan and her husband drew an elite crowd to Taos. If Mabel Dodge Luhan was a persuasive summons, it was the centuries-old Taos Pueblo and the Pueblo culture that were her magnets and muse. Inspired by the Southwestern landscape and Native spirituality and community, she sensed an antidote to what she saw as a materialistic and industrial world destined to decline. Cultivating a significant salon society in the stimulating atmosphere of all that seemed sacred about Taos, Mabel sought a radical Modernist

movement and perhaps a path to her own wholeness.

In fact, a literal path behind the Luhan home leads to the Pueblo. Bordered on either side by Pueblo land (well over 100,000 acres in all), the path first comes to a bleached-out cross once famously painted against a vibrant blue sky by Georgia O'Keeffe. Farther down the path, two miles from Taos Plaza, the Pueblo itself stands, aged and timeless. Rising in the shadow of Taos Mountain, the multistory complex dates to about A.D. 1350, but archaeological evidence indicates that room blocks and pit houses in the area date to A.D. 900. Regional excavations suggest that people have been moving through and using Taos Valley for 6,000 years and that it was the Anasazi, ancestors of the Pueblo people, who were the valley's first permanent residents.

A National Historic Landmark and World Heritage Site, the protective Taos Pueblo does allow visitors, and for that privilege the residents ask that their

privacy be respected. You cannot see their secretive ceremonies, but you can see Red Willow Creek running as it has for all of recorded history through the middle of the Pueblo from its source in the Sangre de Cristos. In certain respects, life here is as it always has been—close to nature and ritual and survival. Getting in the mood of the place, you would swear that Ancestral Puebloans still populate it invisibly.

The valley where Pueblo cultures have been living in harmony with nature for more than a thousand years was not always so peaceful. Members of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's expedition passed through in 1540, and colonization began in earnest in the 1600s. Culture clashes, cruelty, and troubled relations characterized the century, until the Pueblos finally banded together and revolted in 1680. When Spanish governor Don Diego de Vargas reconquered the area in 1692 and the Spanish settled in to govern and live instead of acquire and exploit, the peace was eventually restored, the valley's allure intact.

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