

# 4TH GRADE PACKET

**SAN JUAN COUNTY, UTAH**

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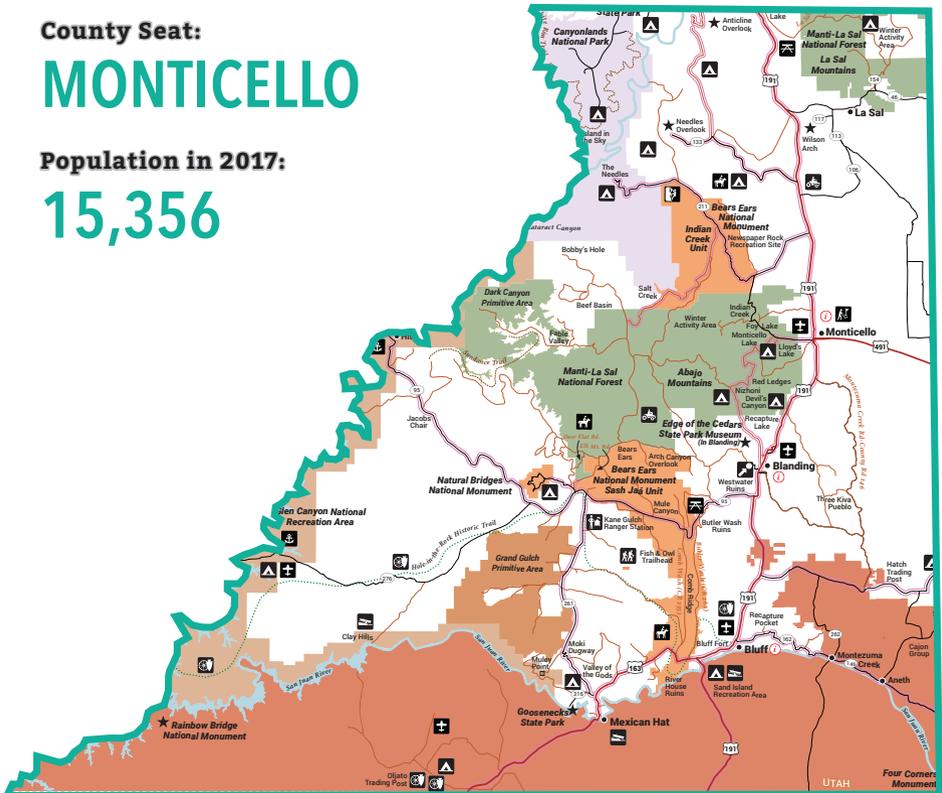


County Seat:

**MONTICELLO**

Population in 2017:

**15,356**



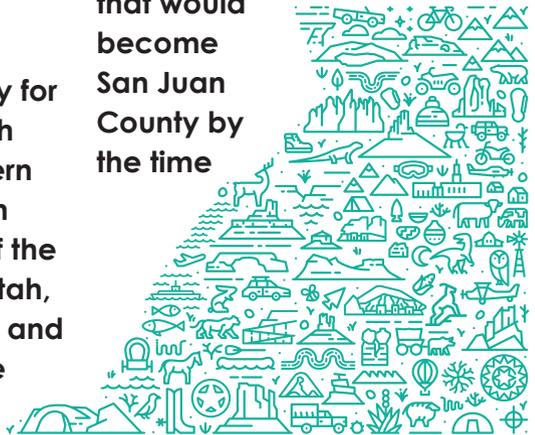


San Juan County was founded in 1880. It was named San Juan County for the San Juan River which flows through the southern part of the county. It is in the Four Corners area of the southwest USA, where Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona meet at a single point. The Four Corners Monument marks the spot where these lines on a map come together on the land. The County covers over 8,000 square miles. It is the largest county in Utah.

People have lived in this area for more than 8,000 years. By some estimates over 25,000 people inhabited San Juan County during prehistoric times. The first people were the

Ancestral Puebloans who lived on farms and in small villages. The sites they left behind, where they built their homes and villages are here for us to see.

Paiute, Ute and Navajo, also called Diné (Din-nay) tribes inhabited the area that would become San Juan County by the time



Spanish explorers laid claim to the area.

The Spanish explored this area of Utah between 1765 and 1776 while they were looking for a route from Santa Fe, New Mexico to California. The Old Spanish Trail crosses through San Juan County. Spanish families settled in this area as they came through with large cattle herds from New Mexico.



In 1810 a Catholic priest named Father Castilla, launched the Mexican War of Independence against Spain.

By 1823 Mexico was free of Spain and controlled the area that is now Utah and San Juan County. War between Mexico and the United States resulted in much of the southwest including Utah becoming US Territories by 1846.

As early as 1849 those living in the area were petitioning the US Government to become a state. For nearly 50 years Utah would remain a territory.

By the early 1870's cowboys began ranching and running their cattle in areas in the north half of San Juan County. Cattlemen boasted

of grasslands with grass “belly high” on horses as grazing land for their cattle herds. Since there were few lawmen in the area, infamous outlaws of the old west like the Wild Bunch, members of the McClarty Gang and Butch Cassidy would work on some of the cattle ranches, laying low after robberies waiting for things to cool off back in town and hiding out in the vast canyons and mountains.



*Butch Cassidy*

In 1879 the Mormon church sent a party of pioneers from Parowan, Utah into southeast Utah. These pioneers left the established trails in the area at the town

of Escalante and pushed into unknown territory towards the Colorado River. Nearing the end of their 180 mile trek the pioneers found themselves 1000 feet above the Colorado River with barely a passage to where they were going. With some ingenuity, a little bit of dynamite and a lot of hard work, these Mormon pioneers enlarged a wide spot in the cliff, built a road their horse drawn wagons could pass through and descend to the river crossing below earning the

route the name the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail.

Farmers and ranchers settled areas of the county in the late 1800s and many ranches and farms are still owned by the original families. For many years agriculture was the mainstay of life in San Juan County.

In 1913 uranium was discovered in San Juan County's Lisbon Valley. Following World War II uranium mining started to boom in San Juan



County. In 1952 Charlie Steen discovered the Mi Vida Uranium Mine in Dry Valley north of Monticello. The boom that followed changed San Juan County forever. People from all over the country came to this remote part of Utah and many stayed to make their homes in the area.



## SAN JUAN COMMUNITIES

### LA SAL

La Sal is a Spanish term for salt. Early Spanish explorers viewing the La Sal Mountains with snow on them thought they looked like piles of salt. Spanish ranchers settled La Sal but did not build a town. Cattlemen came to the area in the late 1800's. Shepherders also grazed their animals on the lush grass that would grow on the foothills of the La Sal Mountains in the area of the little town. Today there is a post office, general store and school in La Sal.



## MONTICELLO

Monticello is the county seat of San Juan County. It became the county seat in 1895. A county seat is the location of the county government offices. There



is a high school and an elementary school in the town. There is also a hospital, a Mormon Temple and several churches.

Monticello also is home to The Hideout Golf Course. This course is recognized by golf magazines, year after year, as one of the best public golf courses in the United States. It also boasts the highest elevation of any golf green in the state of Utah.

In 2016 the Canyon

Country Discovery Center opened the doors to its new buildings just north of town. Visitors can learn about everything from the geological history of the area to astronomy at the CCDC. Hands on demonstrations designed for kids and adults provide an education in the nature of the region.

sPower's Latigo Wind Farm became operational in 2017. There are 27 wind turbines on the site with each one standing 262 feet tall at the hub with the blades extending skyward another 196 feet. Each tower is capable of generating enough power to supply the needs of 600 homes continuously. Each wind





tower cost \$2.3 million to build. Rocky Mountain Power customers are customers of the grid getting power from the windmills. The Latigo Wind Farm and some other features in the area are named for a cowboy who worked and lived in the Monticello area around the 1890's named Latigo Gordon.

## **BLANDING**

Blanding has the largest population of any town in San Juan County. It was first called Grayson, but the name was changed to Blanding when Thomas Bicknell promised to provide 500 books for a library to any town that would take his wife's maiden name.

The name was changed to Blanding in 1914. Blanding has had a library ever since. The current library was built in the 1960's with money from the uranium boom. It is very similar to the library in Monticello. Native Sandstone makes up much of both libraries. Utah State University has a campus in Blanding. Edge of the Cedars State Park and The Dinosaur Museum are in Blanding. Bears Ears National Monument and Natural Bridges National Monument are both nearby.

## **WHITE MESA**

White Mesa is on the White Mesa Ute Reservation. The Ute people who live here are part of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. The town did not exist until the 1950's. At that time groups of Utes began





building houses on Ute tribal land south of the nearby town of Blanding and the community grew. White Mesa has a chapter house, school and Head Start program.

## **BLUFF**

Bluff was the first town in San Juan County. It was settled by many of the pioneers who blazed the Hole-In-the-Rock Trail. It is on the banks of the San Juan River. Bluff was home to the Ancestral

Puebloans long before the pioneers of the Hole-in-the-Rock Expedition arrived. Evidence of the Ancestral Puebloans lives can be found around the town in the form of pottery shards and some traces of their homes and granaries, or food storage vaults. The Mormon settlers built a small fort for protection in the town of Bluff. That fort has been restored and visitors can see how early pioneers lived at the Bluff Fort. Today Bluff has several



hotels and restaurants. The town has an annual Hot Air Balloon festival and is a popular destination for those wanting to explore Utah's Canyon Country.

South of Bluff is a river landing on the San Juan River called Sand Island. This is where many people begin river rafting trips. Sand Island also has a rock cliff with over 100 yards of petroglyph panels. Some of the figures pecked into the varnish on the panel are estimated to be as much as 2500 years old.

## **MONTEZUMA CREEK**

This community is on the Navajo Reservation. It is near the Aneth Oil Field. Oil is still being pumped from

this field which is one of the largest in North America. There is a small store, churches, a county library and schools in Montezuma Creek. Hovenweep National Monument is nearby.

## **MEXICAN HAT**

Mexican Hat is named for a rock near the town that looks like a Mexican sombrero sitting on it's crown. The town is next to the San Juan River and is a popular destination for river trips from Sand Island upstream on the San Juan River. The Goosenecks are the twists and turns of the river below Mexican Hat. The twists are called a meander. The Goosenecks are a State Park and the

longest river meander in North America. The river flows six miles through the Goosenecks but advances toward Lake Powell only a mile and a half. You can see over 300 million years of geology in the surrounding land.

are called The Mittens. Goulding's Trading Post has been in Monument Valley since 1920. It is a popular place to eat and stay for travelers coming to Monument Valley and became a favorite spot for film director John Ford in the 1940's.



## MONUMENT VALLEY

Monument Valley is on the southern border of San Juan County and is on the Navajo Reservation. Visitors come from all over the world to see Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park and learn about the Navajo people. Monument Valley is home to the massive red sandstone formations identified as Cutler Sandstone. The two most famous formations

## NAVAJO MOUNTAIN

Around 500 people live in this remote town at the south end of San Juan County. Navajo Mountain was the home to Navajo Chief Hoskinini who led a defiant band into the rugged canyons escaping capture by federal troops commanded by Kit Carson during their 1863 war with the United States. Chief Hoskinini and his people

evaded capture and never surrendered to Colonel Carson. He and his tribe lived for 5 years in and around the rugged lands near Navajo Mountain before the rest of the tribe was released from their detention in New Mexico. When those Navajo were freed, Hoskinini provided sheep to many of his returning tribesmen so they could rebuild herds wiped out by the federal troops during the war. Today there is a high school and a health clinic in the village of Navajo Mountain.

## MAKING MOVIES IN SAN JUAN COUNTY

The first movie filmed in

Monument Valley was in 1925 but the area became famous in the movies after a trading post operator named Harry Goulding went to Hollywood with pictures to show to director John Ford. In 1939 Ford filmed the first of his big movies, “Stagecoach”, in Monument Valley. The movie starred John Wayne and was the first of 9 westerns Ford filmed in Monument Valley. More recently Monument Valley was the scene of filming with Tom Hanks for the movie “Forrest Gump”. In the movie “Thelma and Louise” Dead Horse Point appears in the movie as the Grand Canyon. One of the “Transformer” series of movies was partly filmed in



**San Juan County. “Back to The Future III”, “City Slickers II” and many more movies have filmed scenes in our county.**



## MINING IN SAN JUAN COUNTY

Early miners in the county were looking for gold and silver. The gold that was found was not in the form of nuggets but in fine powder and difficult to process.

Copper was found in Lisbon Valley with the opening of the Big Indian Mine in 1903. The Big Indian Mine at first was an underground mine but became an open pit mine during World War II. Copper is still mined in Lisbon Valley.

Oil was discovered in San Juan County in 1879 by E. L. Goodridge. He saw bubbles

of oil coming from the loose rocks at the edge of the San Juan River near Mexican Hat. Oil is pumped today from the Aneth Oil Field, one of the largest fields in the United States. The Aneth field is near the communities of Montezuma Creek and Aneth.

Uranium was discovered in San Juan County in the early part of the 20th century. This discovery sparked the Uranium Boom. Madam Curie, a French scientist, was one of the first people to use Uranium. She used ore from San Juan County in her experiments. At the end of World War II a uranium boom in the area brought





lots of jobs and money into San Juan County.

## NATIONAL PARKS, MONUMENTS AND STATE PARKS IN SAN JUAN COUNTY

**Dead Horse Point State Park** is at the north end of San Juan County. It overlooks **Canyonlands National Park** and is named for an incident where a cowboy left horses penned onto the point and was unable to get back to care for them because of a snow storm. The horses died on the point.

**Canyonlands National Park** is made up of deep canyons and high mesas of red colored sandstone.

The park is divided into four 'districts': Island in the Sky, the Needles, the Maze, and the River. Four wheel drive roads in **Canyonlands National Park** are very popular. There are also many hiking trails in the park. For those who venture far enough into Canyonlands there are many panels of images created by Ancestral Puebloans.

Newspaper Rock Recreation Site and Indian Creek are





near the Needles District of **Canyonlands National Park**. Not far off the road is a large rock covered with petroglyphs, where first Ancestral Pueblans and later Ute and others carved images on the rock. The images are pecked into the layer of 'desert varnish' on the rock. This is a dark layer on the surface of the rock that occurs as a reaction of minerals, water and air. When it is chipped off the rock, the lighter rock

underneath shows through. Many of the images are of animals and people but some are strange looking creatures interpreters feel represent the medicine men or shamans. Tracks of dinosaurs can be found in the streambeds of a nearby canyon and petroglyphs appear at many other locations in Indian Creek. Cliffs in the Indian Creek area are famous throughout the world to people who like to climb their sheer faces. This small recreation site is near Monticello.

There are three natural stone bridges in **Natural Bridges National Monument**. The bridges have names in the Hopi language: Sipapu (See Pa' Poo), Kachina (Ka Cheen' Na), and Owachomo (Oh Watch' O Moe). You can see all the bridges from Bridge View Drive in the park or you can hike to each one. You can also hike into the canyon and to all the bridges. These are three of the world's largest natural stone

bridges. **Natural Bridges National Monument** is 50 miles west of Blanding.

Edge of the Cedars State Park & Museum is a place where ancient pottery, baskets, sandals, weapons, and other items are stored. These items once belonged to the Ancestral Puebloans and others who lived here over the last 8000 years or so. The park museum is a good place to learn about the people who populated our area before European explorers made contact with the new world.

**Hovenweep National Monument** was once a busy

community of Ancestral Puebloans. Fairly intact remnants of their homes and towers are at the monument. The towers are interesting because they are unique to this area. Some people believe the towers were used in communication from one



village to another. You can hike, camp, and visit the ancient structures at this monument near the towns of Montezuma Creek and Aneth.

Lake Powell & Glen Canyon National Recreation Area is a fun place to boat, fish, and water ski. Glen Canyon Recreation Area surrounds the lake and is a remote

place to hike or camp. At Halls Crossing on Lake Powell you can take the Charles Hall Ferry across the lake from Halls Crossing Marina to Bullfrog Marina. The lake was created by the building of Glen Canyon Dam 95 miles down lake near Page Arizona.

**Rainbow Bridge National Monument** is part of Glen Canyon Recreation Area. It is on the side of the lake that is the Navajo Nation.

The bridge is a sacred place to the Navajo people. The bridge is 300 feet tall, 278 feet from end to end, 33 feet wide at the top, and 42 feet thick at the top. It is the largest natural stone bridge in the world.

## THE FIRST PEOPLE IN SAN JUAN COUNTY

The people who lived in southeast Utah hundreds of years ago are referred to as the Ancestral Puebloans. They lived here until around the year 1300. Two thousand years ago they began to farm and build small clusters of homes or villages. At first they lived in caves, then they moved to 'pit houses' that were below ground level, then they began to build stone houses above ground. You can see fairly intact remnants of their homes and villages at Edge of the Cedars State Park & Museum in Blanding. The museum displays the pottery they



made and textile products they created. The textiles were made by weaving the natural fibers of plants into sandals, baskets and other items. The earliest civilizations are referred to as Basketmakers because of this. These people and later civilizations chipped images into the rocks by chipping away the darker outer layer to reveal the lighter layer beneath. We call those images petroglyphs. Another method they used was to paint images on the rocks, these are called pictographs.



The throwing stick or atlatl and a dart or pointed spear were used as a hunting tool before the bow and arrow appeared in their cultures. The atlatl gave the person throwing more power to throw the spear farther.

Edge of the Cedars State Park & Museum displays many pots, baskets, tools, and other items left by the Ancestral Puebloans. The museum is a very good place to learn about the Ancestral Puebloans and to see the bits of their lives that were left behind. The Hopi, Zuni, Acoma and Laguna tribes today are believed to be the descendents of these ancient residents.

## SAN JUAN COUNTY CULTURES

The Navajo (also called Diné, pronounced Din-ay), Ute, Hispanic (Spanish), and Anglo (white) cultures all live in San Juan County today. The earliest people to live in the area were the Ancestral Puebloan people. The Navajo and Ute people arrived here after the Pueblo people left, sometime around the year 1300. It is

believed the Navajo people came from the northwest part of the United States. The Ute people are believed to have come to the area from the territory that would become Colorado and Wyoming. The Spanish contact with Navajo and Ute tribes is believed to have begun around 1620. By the 1700's Spanish cowboys herded cattle from Santa Fe. They traveled the Old Spanish Trail from New Mexico through southeast Utah and on to where Green River, Utah is now. The trail then turned west and

continued to what is now Salina, then south to where St. George is today and on across Nevada to California. The Spanish Trail ended at what is today Los Angeles. The Anglo people arrived when French trappers, traders and explorers came into our area by the early 1800s. They were followed by cowboys, outlaws, ranchers and farmers and by the late 1800s small ranching settlements were in La Sal, near Monticello and Bluff.

The first continuously occupied settlement under



US law in what would become San Juan County was Bluff. A group of Mormon settlers called The Hole-in-the-Rock Expedition after the trail they created to get across the Colorado River, settled what has become Bluff. Although people have lived on the banks of the San Juan River here for 1300 years. Bluff just became a legal town in the State of Utah in 2019.









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