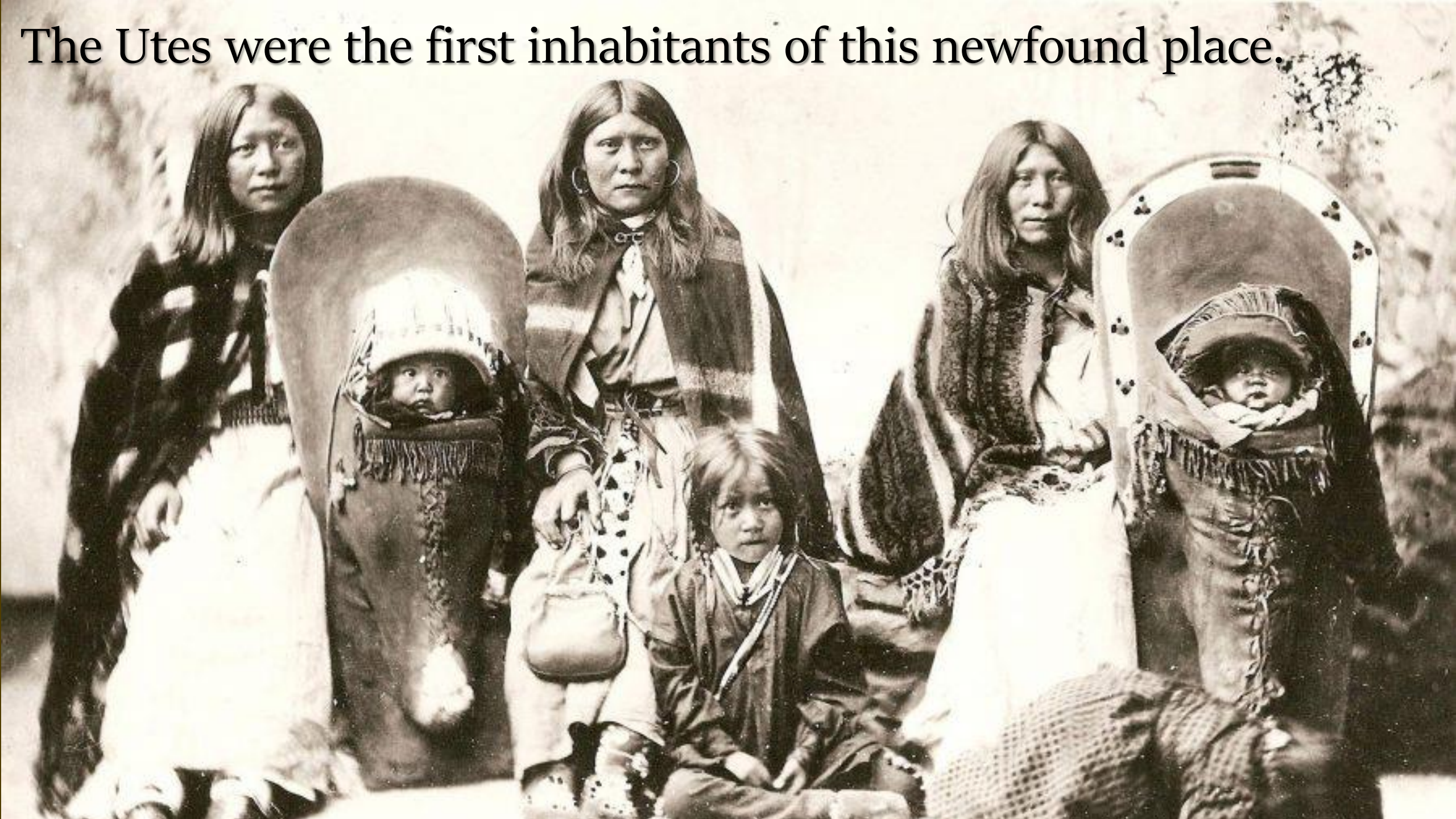
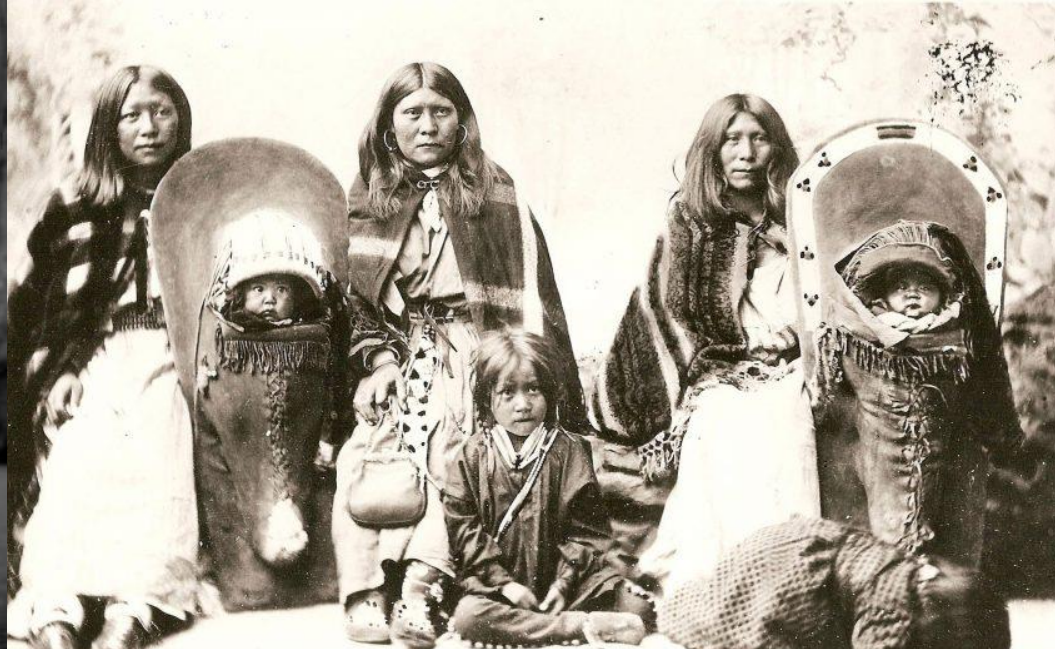


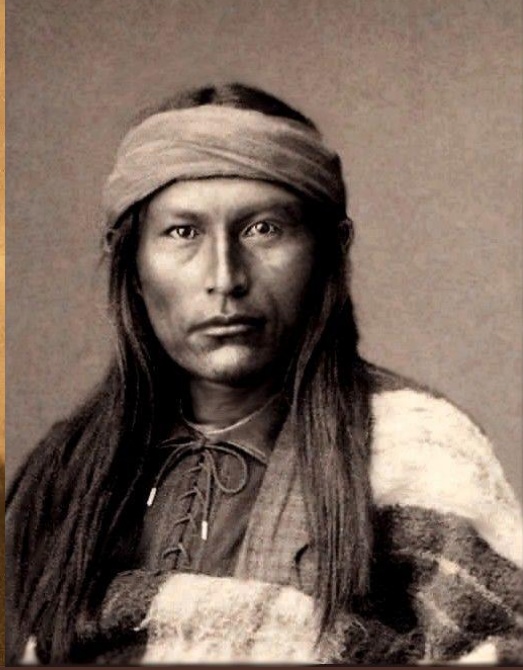
The American Indian tribe called *the Utes* made their home in a mystical land full of *Saa waap maa nache*, a Ute phrase meaning “*sand that moves*”.

The Utes were the first inhabitants of this newfound place.



Ute people





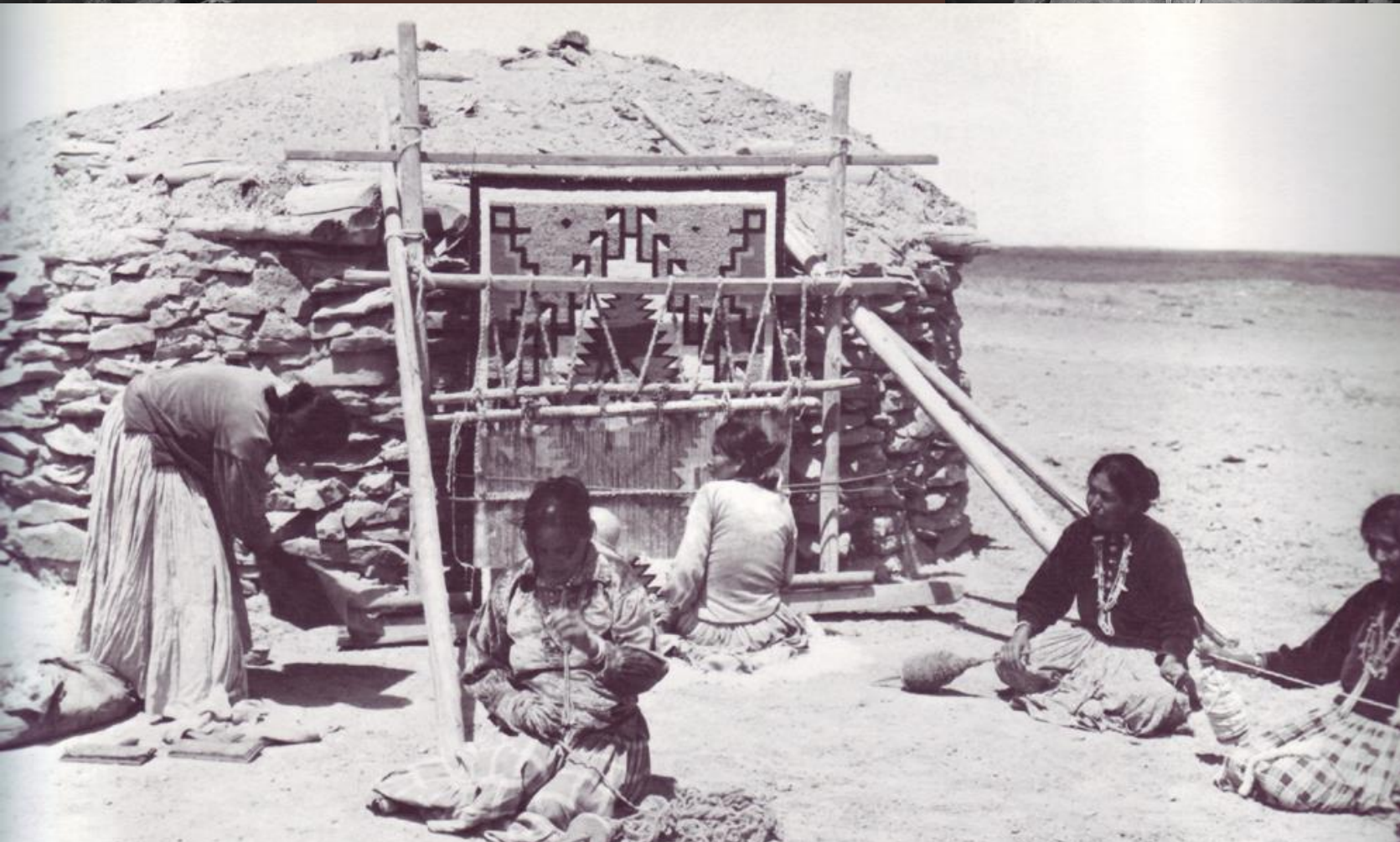
Other tribes also used this land for hunting animals & gathering useful plants, including the Apache . . .



... the Comanche ...



... and the
Navajo.



Many Europeans also arrived to
explore this vast region
beginning with Don
Diego de Vargas in
1694.

Others followed. Some of their
names are familiar to us
today – like Gunnison,
Pike, and Fremont.





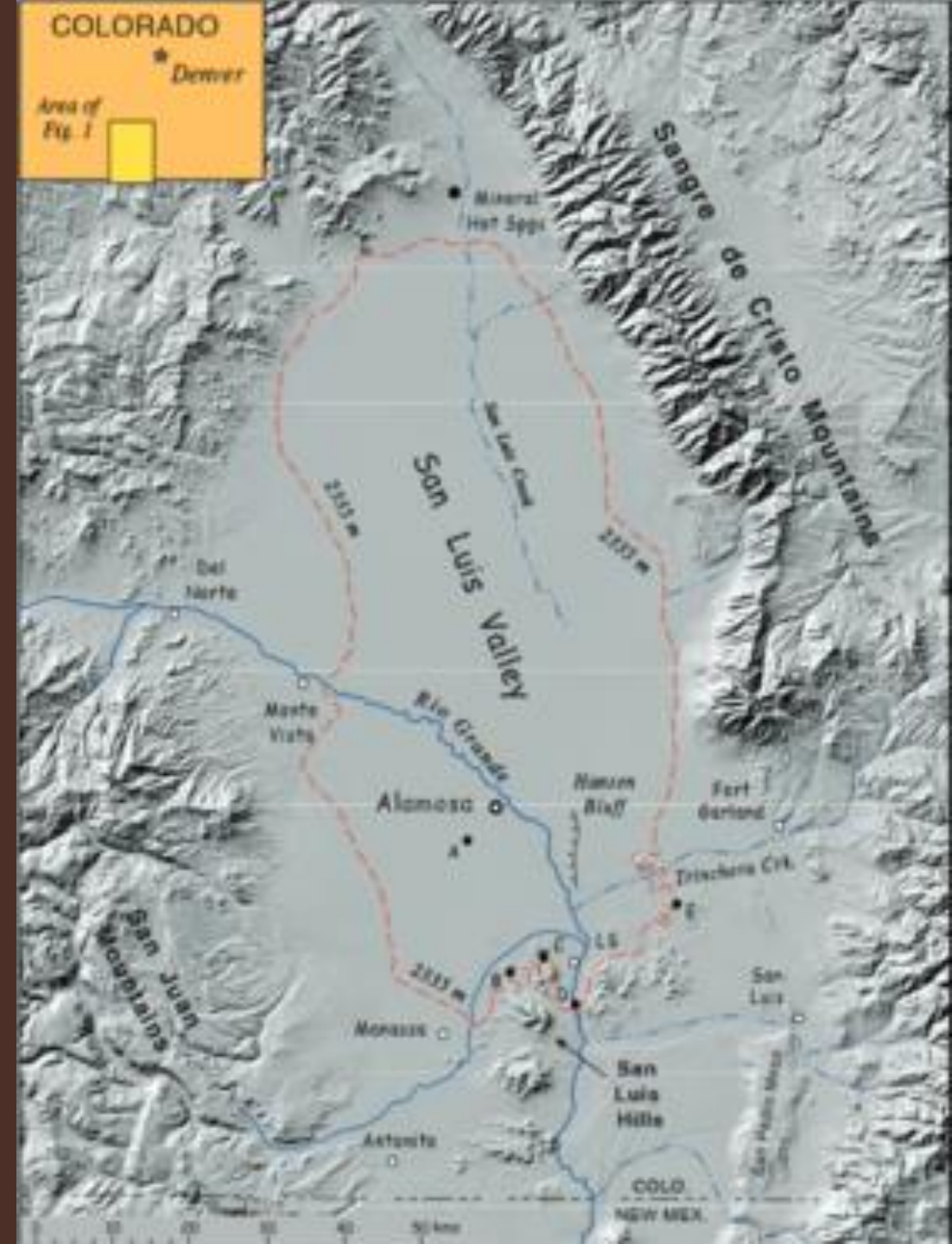
Eventually, more and more settlers chose to call this place home.

Ranching, mining, and farming were popular activities for them.



You probably know by now that this historical area we are talking about is known as the *San Luis Valley*.

It is 122 miles long and 74 miles wide. It is located in south-central Colorado, and a portion of it crosses over into New Mexico.



AND, it is the home of the “*sand that moves*” . . .
. . . ***The Great Sand Dunes National Park!***





The Great Sand Dunes from space.
(a NASA photograph)

The Great Sand Dunes – *the land of moving sand* – was designated as a national park and preserve to protect its precious resources, archaeological treasures, and its ecosystem. These sand dunes are the tallest in North America. “Star Dune” is over 750 feet tall! The dunes formed long ago from sediment that washed down from surrounding mountain ranges, and from dried up lakebeds. The wind and rain swished and swooshed the sand around causing it to pile up to form the big hills we see today.



Before the Mexican-American War, the San Luis Valley was part of Mexico. From 1846-1848, Mexico and the United States fought over possession of The Valley, Texas, and some other territories. In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war. Texas and the San Luis Valley became part of the U.S.



The U.S. established a treaty with the Ute tribe and built Fort Garland to protect the valley's residents. Settlers continued to make a home there, many of them Hispanic farmers and ranchers who came from New Mexico.



The fun never stops in the San Luis Valley with opportunities to surf and sled down the sand dunes, splash around in Medano Creek, search for fossils, view the Milky Way in the clear night sky, and learn about the rich and colorful history. Visit San Luis, the oldest town in Colorado, participate in the Monte Vista Crane Festival, or ride the train on the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad. Imagine yourself holding an alligator at the Reptile Park or being serenaded by the singing sands. The possibilities are endless! **What will you do when you visit?**



Photo sources:

<https://thehistoryjunkie.com/>
<https://www.firstpeople.us/>
<https://national-parks.org/>
<https://www.slvlocalfoods.org/>
<https://www.coloradopotato.org/>
<https://www.historycolorado.org/>
<https://www.olt.org/mine>
<https://www.nps.gov/>
<https://www.cnn.com/>
<https://time.com/>
<https://www.doi.gov/>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/>
<https://www.backpacker.com/>
<https://www.britannica.com/>
<https://gazette.com/>
<https://www.5280.com/>
<https://www.alamosa.org/>
<https://mvcranefest.org/>