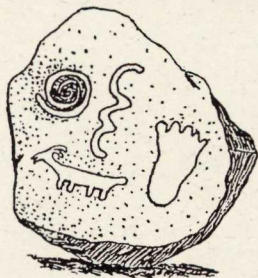


Help Save Our Cultural Heritage



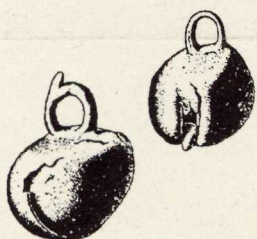
Ornaments such as this animal figure carved from jet were found in Pueblo Bonito.



Common petroglyph symbols, from left to right, the universe, snake, bighorn sheep, foot.

Prehistoric sites in the Southwest are being damaged or lost at an alarming rate. During a recent two year period, over 1,700 sites on Indian and federal lands were looted, vandalized, or destroyed. But these are just the documented violations. Over a third of the known archeological sites on federal land in the Four Corners region have been vandalized or destroyed.

It is a great loss to ourselves and society when these sites are vandalized. Every prehistoric artifact removed, every wall crumbled by careless climbers, every petroglyph damaged makes the past that much harder to understand and piece together. It is imperative that these precious resources remain intact.



Artist's rendition of copper bells, likely acquired by trade, found at Chaco.

Before the fifteenth century, the people of North America left no written record. Their culture was passed on orally. We can only find out about their culture by studying what objects they left behind and the structures they created. The remains of buildings, pieces of broken pottery, ornaments of shell and turquoise, and stone and bone tools are a few of the clues we have of their life.

of pottery can place it in time and disclose cultural associations. Macaw feathers, copper bells, and sea shells reveal prehistoric trade routes to distant lands. The stone of projectile points and other tools can be traced to prehistoric quarries in the Southwest. Studying tree rings in a fragment of wood from one of their structures can yield precise dates of construction. Every object associated with these sites has value as a potential clue to the lives and livelihoods of Chaco's occupants.

A shred of woven textile can reveal if cotton was brought by trade or locally grown. Distinctive designs on pieces



Yucca fibers were often used to make sandals.

Federal legislation for the protection and preservation of prehistoric sites and objects began with the Antiquities Act of 1906. This act makes it illegal to "appropriate, excavate, injure or destroy any prehistoric ruin or object of antiquity."

Act was passed in 1979. It further defines archeological resources as material remains of human life and activity more than one hundred years old. The law states it is "illegal to excavate, remove, damage, alter or deface any archeological resources."

Because people still continued damaging and looting prehistoric sites, the Archaeological Resources Protection

Stiff criminal penalties accompany the 1979 law (up to \$250,000 in fines and 2 years in jail).



Black-on-white pottery was common during the Classic period at Chaco.

We all share the responsibility of preserving our rich cultural heritage. By using care in walking through prehistoric sites, by staying off the fragile walls, and by leaving all artifacts where they lay, we can help preserve these fragile resources so that future generations may enjoy their mystery and intrigue.

If you observe someone vandalizing archeological sites or removing prehistoric materials, do not attempt to confront the offender. Immediately report your observation to a park ranger.

The sites here have survived over eight hundred years since the Chacoans left. Please help us to preserve these links to our past.