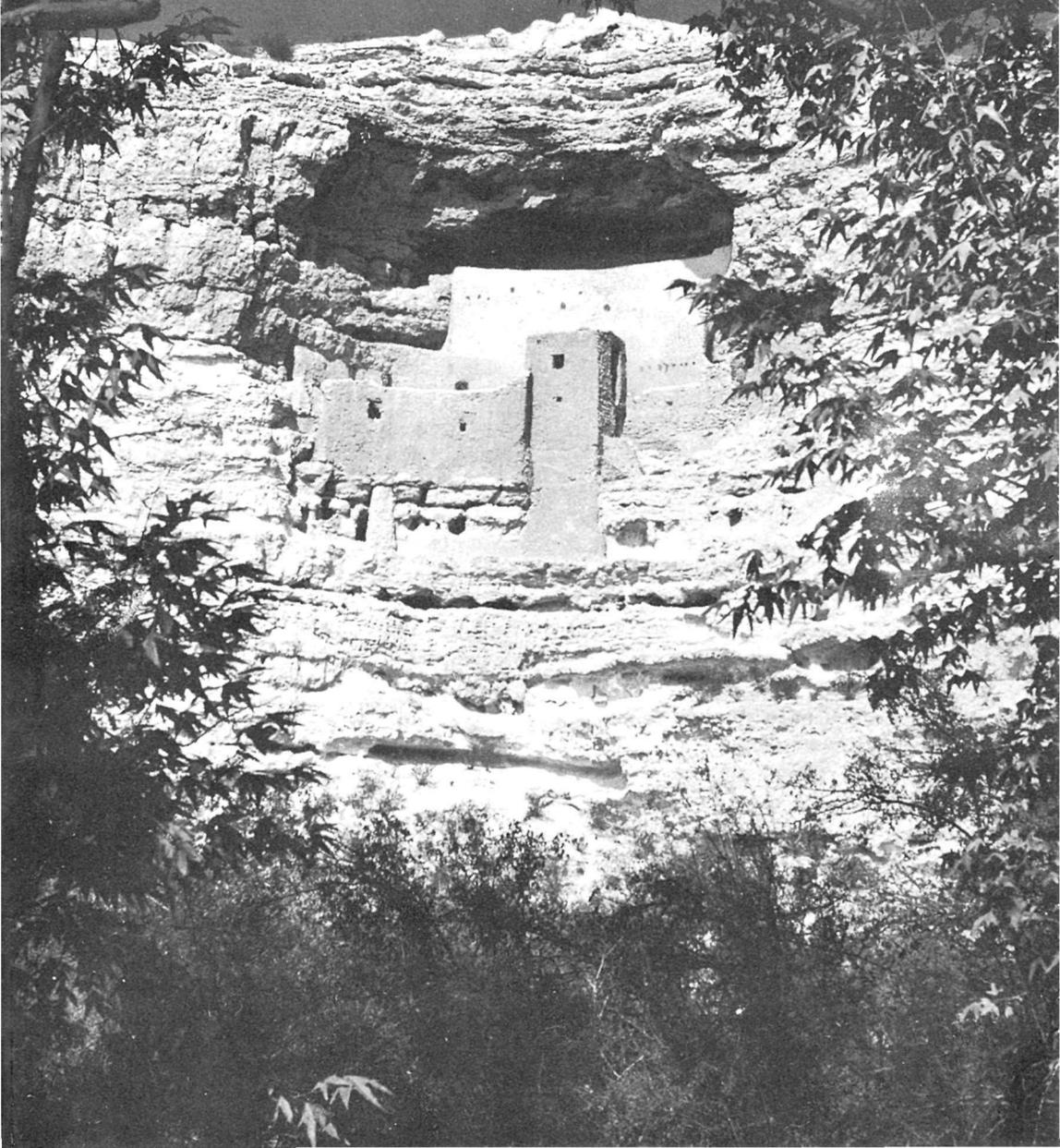


Montezuma Castle

National Monument • ARIZONA



Montezuma Castle

NATIONAL MONUMENT

High in a cliff cavity stands Montezuma Castle, a prehistoric Indian dwelling so perfectly preserved that ceiling timbers in many of the rooms are still intact

MONTEZUMA CASTLE National Monument, in the Verde Valley of central Arizona, protects one of the best preserved and most interesting cliff dwellings in the United States. Within the monument, occupying part of a limestone cliff which borders Beaver Creek for half a mile, are the ruins of several prehistoric Indian house clusters. Among them is the large structure called Montezuma Castle, which is about 90 percent intact and original.

The Environment

The Verde Valley of central Arizona is bordered on the north and east by the great plateau of northeastern Arizona and on the southwest by the Black Hills. Through the level floor of the valley winds the Verde River, fed by Beaver Creek and several other tributaries.

Several million years ago the mouth of this valley was dammed by a lava flow from Arizona's volcanic Black Hills. The impounded waters formed a lake 35 miles long and 18 miles wide. In it, streams feeding the lake deposited enormous quantities of limy mud. Perhaps by 2 million years ago, the overflow from the imprisoned waters had worn down the lava dam so that eventually the lake was drained. Subsequently, the

Verde River and its tributaries cut channels through the now dry and hardened lime deposits of the old lake bed. Since then, much of the limestone bordering these streams has been eroded away, thus broadening their valleys.

The Early Inhabitants

Scant archeological evidence so far available indicates human beings were living in the Verde Valley over a thousand years ago.

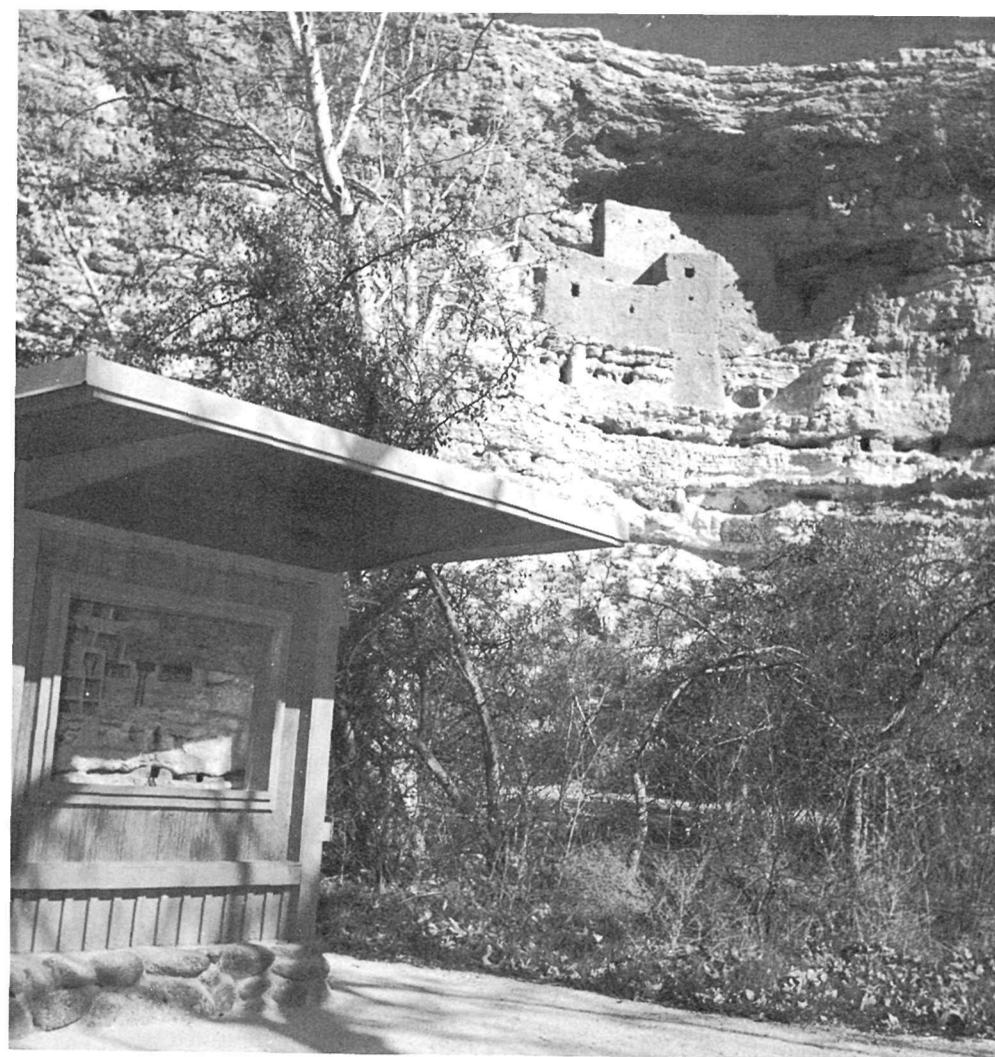
These were industrious, sedentary Indians from southern Arizona who settled on the fertile river terraces and began farming. They lived a distinctly rural life, with no cities or large centers of population, in little villages of one-room, pole-and-brush houses.

These farm folk probably lived in comparative peace in the valley until about the beginning of the 12th century. After 1100, another group of farm Indians entered the valley from the north. These people constructed communal dwellings, or pueblos, which after A. D. 1250 were converted into large compact defensible structures.

Beginnings of Montezuma Castle

The majority of these Indians concentrated into larger settlements for protection. They built their pueblos on the hilltops near

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.



Montezuma Castle rises above the model which explains its history

their fields, for here were the most convenient sites. Tuzigoot National Monument, 2 miles east of Clarkdale, Ariz., provides an excellent example of these hilltop locations. Occasionally, a suitable location was found in a cliff.

It can be imagined with what enthusiasm a band of the farmers might have first noticed, on the north bank of Beaver Creek, only 4 miles from the Verde River, a great cavern-pitted limestone cliff, well over 100 feet high. This was an ideal spot for a dwelling site, with good farmland nearby on the creek terrace. Here they began building rooms to

accommodate their needs. We find that in a quarter-mile strip of cliff there were two distinct apartment houses. Growth during several generations made one of these villages a 5-story structure with 45 rooms. A hundred yards east was a 5-story structure with 20 rooms, which was destined, centuries later, to be inaccurately called Montezuma Castle.

The Classic Period

These dwellings were occupied until about A. D. 1400. As many as 200 persons may well have lived in the several house clusters. The castle could have accommodated 12 or

15 families (possibly 50 people). These cliff dwellers lived through the peak period of Pueblo culture, producing stone implements, excellent turquoise and shell jewelry, cotton cloth (some of it elaborately decorated), sturdily constructed baskets, and many other objects.

The pottery made locally, at Montezuma Castle and in the Verde Valley generally, consisted mainly of plain brown or red ware. The prehistoric people of the Verde, although apparently highly talented along certain other lines, seem never to have developed a really ornamental painted pottery of their own. Instead, they acquired decorated pottery from the north by trade with the Flagstaff area and the Hopi country.

Abandonment

There seem to have been several reasons for the abandonment of Montezuma Castle and other pueblos in nearby areas. Those in the Flagstaff area, about 50 miles to the north, underwent depopulation sometime in the 1200's, possibly as a result of a century of recurring droughts. There was continuous drought for 23 years, from 1276-99. It is thought that many of these people moved southward into the Verde Valley which during this period showed an increase in population.

During this same period, the dry farmers on the desert flats of the Verde Valley moved to the banks of the spring-fed streams. Here irrigation was practiced by others in the small acreage available along the streams. This combination of small farming acreage and a concentration of population may have led to interueblo strife; and this in turn contributed to a gradual exodus from the Verde Valley. By the late 1300's the pueblos in the Verde Valley were overpopulated for the available farmland and food supply. Montezuma Castle was probably abandoned during the first part of the 1400's, since no trade

pottery dating after that time has been found.

A number of the cliff dwellers must have gone into northern Arizona to join the friendly Hopi, with whom they had long established trade relations. Modern Hopi traditions still indicate some ancestral origins in the Verde Valley.

Montezuma Well

Another example of prehistoric Indian work can be seen at Montezuma Well, a detached part of Montezuma Castle National Monument, 7 miles by road northeast of the Castle. This area contains a large limestone sink, half filled with water which continually flows out at the rate of 1,500,000 gallons a day. The Indians, who constructed their small cliff dwellings and pueblos around this well, diverted the water into irrigation ditches which carried it to their farmlands below. These ditches are visible today because they were cemented up by the lime content of the water which flowed through them. The story of the Indians at Montezuma Well is similar to that at Montezuma Castle.

How To Reach the Monument

Montezuma Castle is 5 miles north of Camp Verde, 60 miles south of Flagstaff, and 65 miles east of Prescott. It may be reached by U. S. 89 Alternate from Flagstaff via Oak Creek Canyon and Sedona, or by the same highway from Prescott through Jerome, Clarkdale, and Cottonwood, then on a State road through Cornville. It may also be reached by State Routes 69 and 79 from Phoenix, 95 miles to the south.

Another approach from the south is the graveled road from Roosevelt Dam, via Payson, Pine, and Camp Verde.

About Your Visit

You will find small museums at both Montezuma Castle and Montezuma Well, to help you understand the area and its history. The



Cliff Dwelling at Montezuma Well

monument is open daily from 8 a. m. to 5 p. m. There are very limited picnic facilities in both sections.

The nominal admission fee is waived for children under 12 years of age.

Mission 66

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by

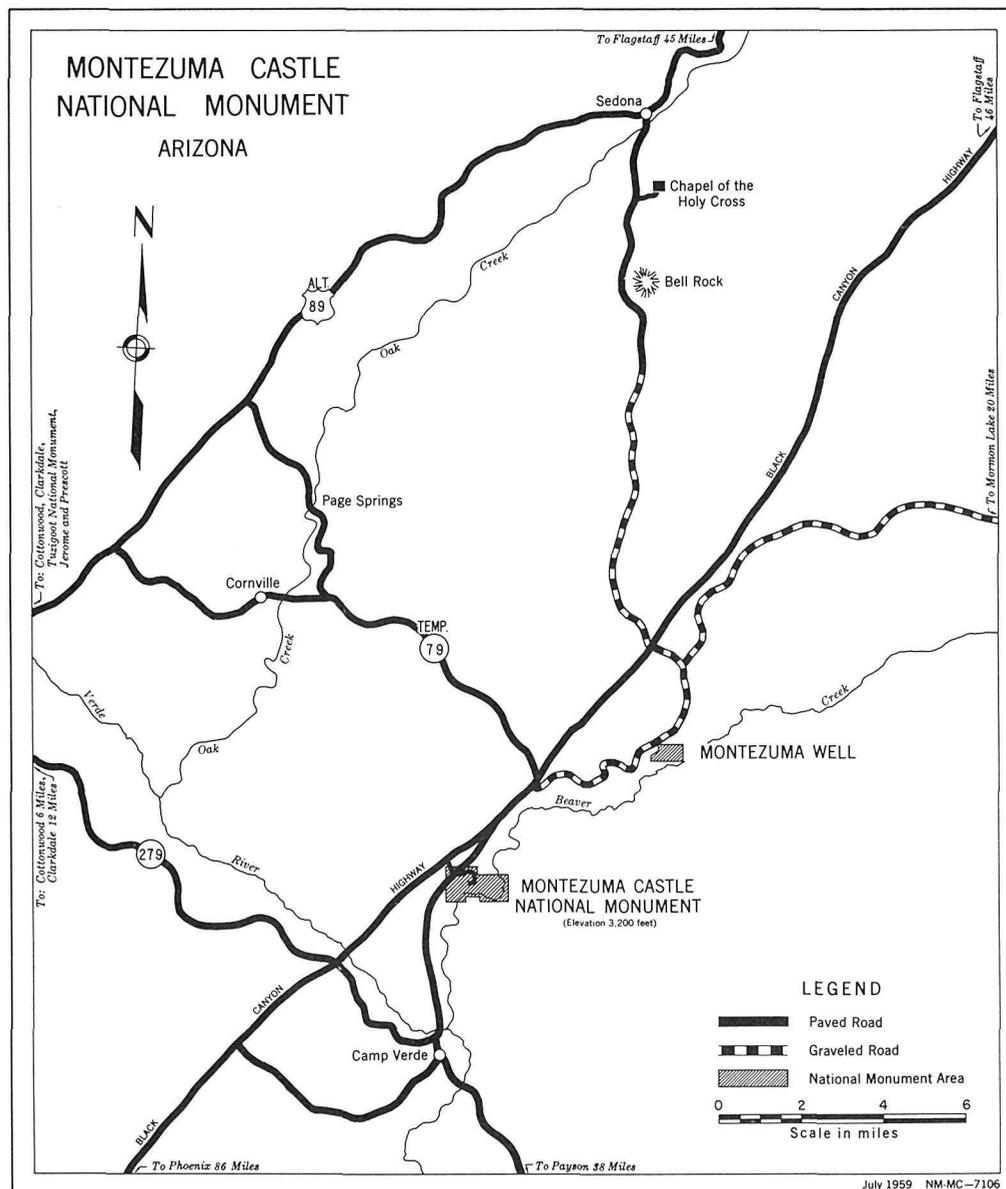
such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Administration

Montezuma Castle National Monument is administered by the National Park Service of the U. S. Department of the Interior. It was established by Presidential proclamation in 1906 and contains 783 acres in 2 sections. A superintendent, whose address is Camp Verde, Ariz., is in immediate charge.



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fred A. Seaton, Secretary
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Conrad L. Wirth, Director



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