

MONTEZUMA
CASTLE



MONTEZUMA CASTLE NATIONAL MONUMENT / ARIZONA

Montezuma Castle, one of the best preserved prehistoric cliff dwellings in the Southwest, is located along Beaver Creek in the Verde Valley. The Castle was named by early white settlers who believed, mistakenly, that it had been built by the Aztec Indians of Mexico. Montezuma Well, also included in the monument, is 7 miles by road north-east of Montezuma Castle.

THE SETTING

Several million years ago a lava flow from the Black Hills, which borders the Verde Valley on the southwest, dammed the mouth of the river and formed a lake, 35 miles long and 18 miles wide. Tributaries deposited enormous quantities of limy mud in the lake. About 2 million years ago, when overflows had worn down the lava dam, the lake drained. The Verde River and its tributaries then cut channels through the dry sediments. Erosion has since taken its toll of the limestone bluffs, thus broadening the valleys.

EARLIEST INHABITANTS

Although Indians are known to have lived in the Southwest for several thousand years, there is little evidence of the earliest inhabitants of the Verde Valley. Nomadic hunters and gatherers probably entered the valley well before the birth of Christ.

THE FIRST FARMERS

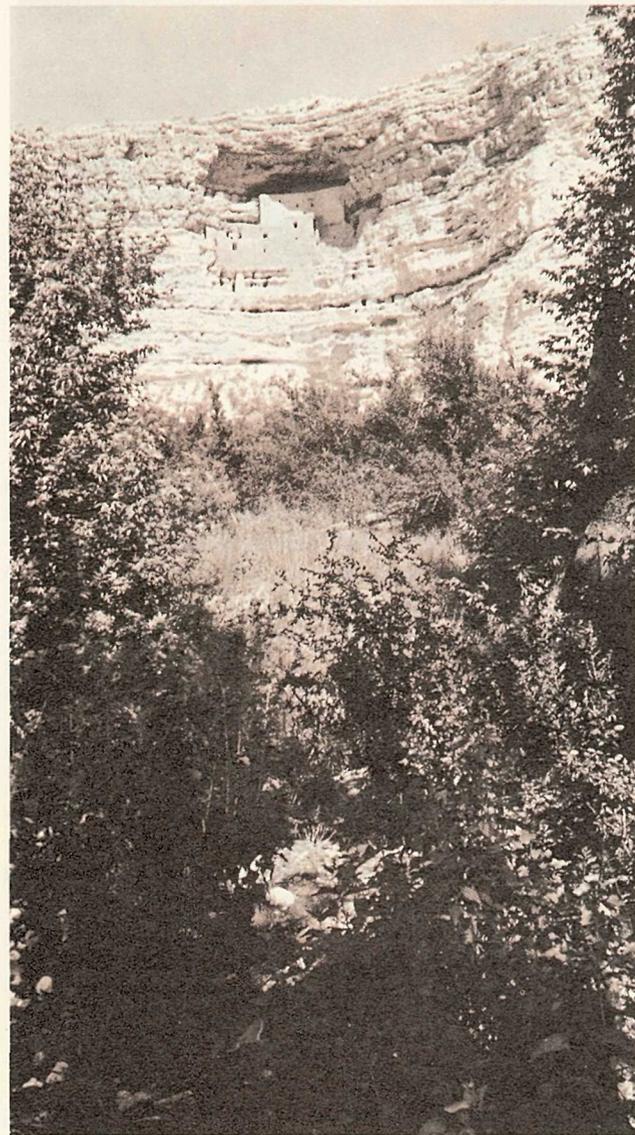
About A.D. 700, a group of Indians, now called the Hohokam, came into the valley from the south. Living in small clusters of one-room, pole-and-brush huts along the streambanks, they grew maize, beans, squash, and cotton under irrigation.

Approximately 350 years later, many of these people moved to the Flagstaff area, 50 miles north. They were drawn there by the fertile farmlands created by the eruption of Sunset Crater in 1065.

MONTEZUMA CASTLE

About 1100, a group of dryfarming Indians entered the Verde Valley from the north. These people, referred to as the Sinagua, were probably forced out of the Flagstaff area by overpopulation. They built small communal dwellings (pueblos) of stone and farmed dry areas and the few terraces still available. Around 1250, they began to erect large compact structures, often on hilltops or in cliffs.

One can easily imagine the enthusiasm felt by a group of farmers when it first saw the sheltering, cavern-studded limestone cliff along the north bank of Beaver



Creek, only 4 miles from the Verde River. This was an ideal place to live, with good cropland on the creek terrace nearby. They began building several house clusters of limestone chunks and river boulders laid in adobe mortar. Two of these eventually became five-story apartment houses—Montezuma Castle, with 20 rooms; and, 100 yards to the west, Castle A, severely damaged in the course of time, with 45 or more rooms.

These dwellings were occupied for about two centuries. As many as 200 people may have lived here; Montezuma Castle alone could have accommodated about 50 persons. Handcrafts included work in stone, bone, and shell, weaving, basketry, and pottery making. These Verde

Valley people produced quantities of plain pottery, but they seem to have acquired by trade very nearly all their decorated vessels from neighbors to the north.

Exhibits in the visitor center show examples of weaving, basketry, shell and turquoise jewelry, tools such as bone awls and stone axes, and other devices. Pottery-making tools and examples of pottery are also on display.

ABANDONMENT

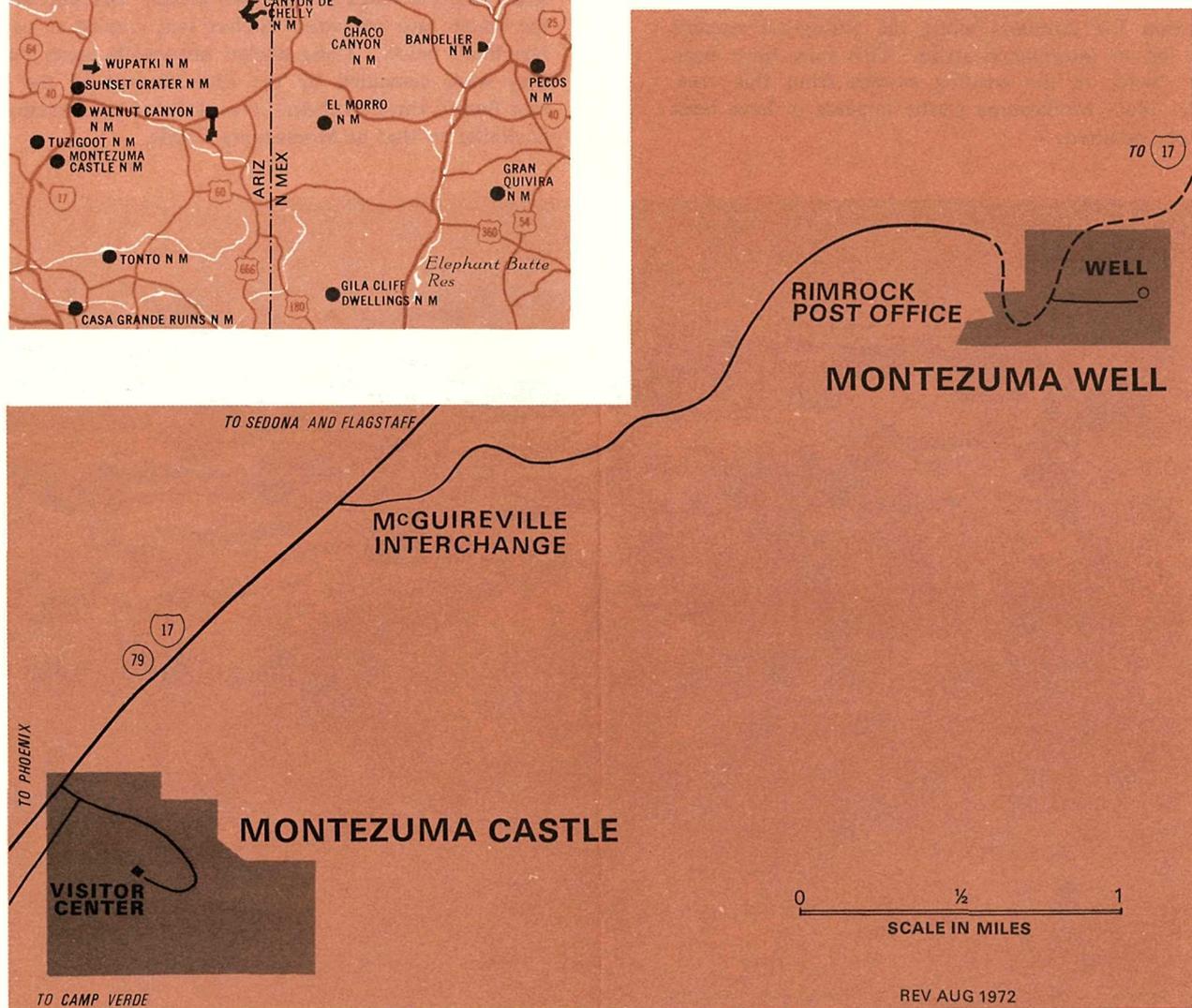
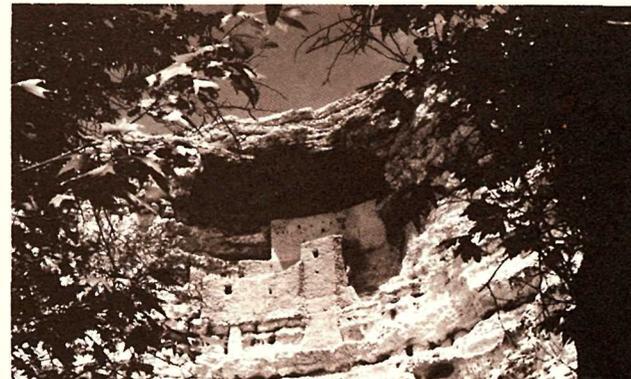
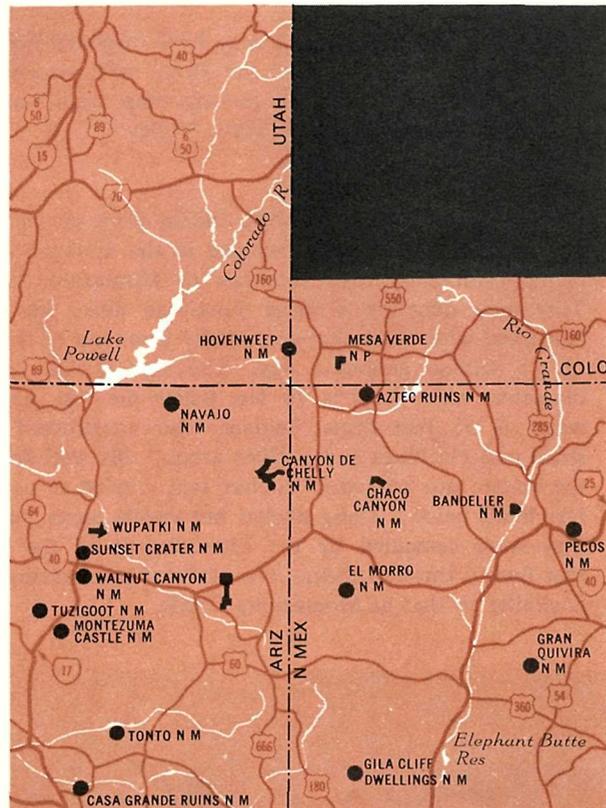
During the 1100's, the two groups of farmers in the Verde Valley—the earlier Hohokam and the later Sinagua—blended together without apparent conflict, adopting customs and practices from each other. Then, in the 1200's, a series of droughts in the Flagstaff area caused more Sinagua people to move into the valley. Competition for farmland along the spring-fed streams perhaps led to interueblo strife. This may have been a major factor in the ensuing exodus from this area. By about 1450, Montezuma Castle appears to have been completely deserted.



Many of the cliff dwellers may have migrated north to join Indians now known as the Hopi, with whom they had trade relations, for some modern Hopi traditions suggest ancestral origins in the Verde Valley.

MONTEZUMA WELL

Another example of prehistoric Indian work can be seen at Montezuma Well, also included in the national monument, 7 miles by road northeast of Montezuma Castle. This area contains a large limestone sink, less than half-filled with water that continually flows out at the rate of 1.5 million gallons a day. The sink is 470 feet in diameter; water level is 70 feet below the rim; and the water is 55 feet deep. Indians who constructed their small cliff dwellings and pueblos around this well diverted the water into irrigation ditches that carried it to their farmlands below. These ditches are visible today because they were cemented by the lime content of the water that flowed through them. The story of the Indians here is similar to that at Montezuma Castle.



ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The map in this folder shows the routes by which you can reach the monument and other areas of the National Park System that are within easy driving distance. The monument is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; from May to October, it remains open later.

Your first stop should be at the visitor center. Exhibits here, describing the culture of the people who lived in Montezuma Castle, will help you to understand the things you will see.

Limited picnic facilities are located in each of the two sections of the monument.

For more detailed information on the monument, you can purchase the 40-page illustrated Montezuma Castle Historical Handbook at the visitor center or by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402.

Please help in the conservation of your national parks and monuments for this and future generations.

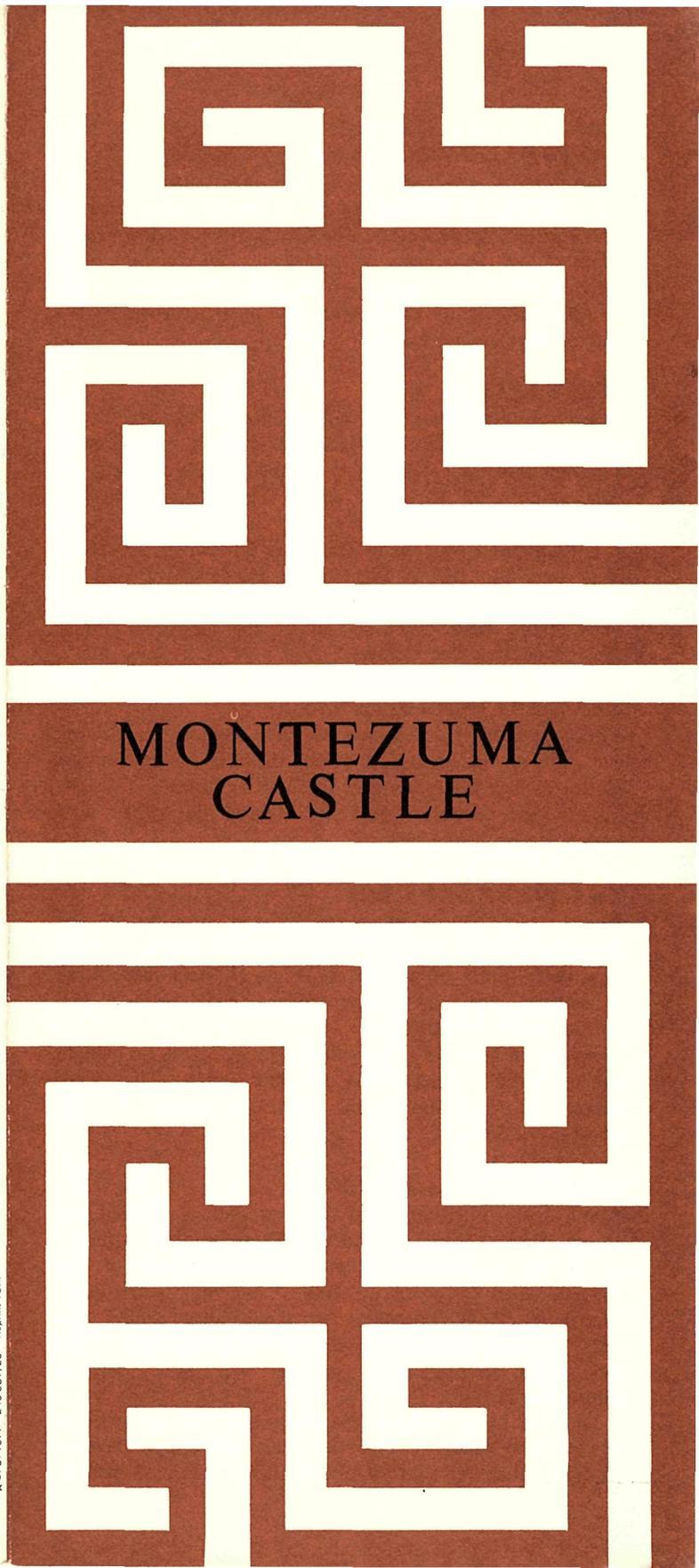
For your safety, stay on the trails. Falls are the major safety hazard.

ADMINISTRATION

Montezuma Castle National Monument, established on December 8, 1906, and containing about 842 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is P.O. Box 68, Clarkdale, AZ 86324.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



MONTEZUMA CASTLE