



Petroglyphs

# **PETRIFIED FOREST**

*National Monument*

**ARIZONA**

**(Archeology)**

# Petrified Forest *National Monument*



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## Archeology

The Petrified Forest area, whose major interest is provided by the fossilized trees antedating by millions of years the coming of man, is dotted with a surprising number of small stone ruins of settlements of prehistoric Pueblo Indians.

This seemingly desolate region evidently was relatively densely occupied by little groups of farming Indians for eight centuries, from nearly 1500 years ago to 700 years ago, with a few vil-

lages containing another hundred years or so, into or through the fourteenth century.

The people had sufficient leisure, somehow, in this difficult environment, to indulge their artistic impulses by carving hundreds of petroglyphs on the low sandstone cliffs and great boulders.

The people who lived in the Petrified Forest region hundreds of years ago were Pueblo Indians of the same race seen today in the Hopi villages and

Excavated room in the Puerco Ruin



other modern pueblos. They practiced agriculture, cultivating corn, beans, and pumpkins; and made pottery. They had tools and weapons of stone, bone, and wood, and they probably wore simple garments made of cotton cloth and the skins of wild animals.

### Earliest Occupants

In the sixth or seventh century of our era there were small groups of early people occupying the region, living in scattered villages of large circular slab-lined pit houses. These pit houses consisted of a shallow excavation walled with a row of large slabs of stone, covered over with a construction, perhaps shaped like a flattened dome, of poles, brush, and mud.

The early people made fairly good, but undecorated, pottery, both a polished brownware and cruder, rough, light-gray, typical Basketmaker ceramics. It is possible that the two kinds of pottery represent two groups, or tribes, of Indians, coming into the Petrified Forest from different directions.

### The Formative Pueblo Period

From a thousand years ago to about the middle of the thirteenth century, there apparently was a fairly large pueblo population in the Petrified Forest, as more than a hundred village sites of the period have been located. They are mostly very small settlements, no longer of slab houses but of small adjoining rooms of stone masonry built on the surface.

The pottery of this epoch includes brown utility ware and several types of black-on-white and black-on-red painted ware. Some of this pottery was received by trade, not locally manufactured.

There must have been more seeps and springs than there are now along the escarpments to provide sufficient water for a farming population of the size indicated. It would be quite possible for many springs to have failed without any notable climatic change or decrease in rainfall.

Painted Desert Inn



## The Final Phase

In the fourteenth century, characterized by polychrome pottery, a pink or tan ware with black designs outlined in white, there were only a few villages in the Petrified Forest area and they were notably larger than the tiny earlier settlements.

Trade with different regions is evidenced by the finding of fourteenth century Zuni and Hopi pottery, as well as pottery from the White Mountains to the south, related to the former.

The people evidently collected into fewer and larger groups toward the end of the thirteenth century, and abandoned the area within another hundred years, joining either the Zuni people to the east or the Hopi Indians to the northwest. Whether they left because of failure of water sources or because of Apache attacks is not known.

## Puerco Ruin

One of the few late sites is the Puerco Ruin, occupied from very early times on into the fourteenth century. This ruin, located adjacent to the main road through the monument, is built in the form of a hollow square about 230 feet by 180 feet, around a plaza 185 by 130 feet. It probably was two-storied, and could have housed a hundred families.

## Agate House

In the southern end of the monument are several sites that were built of chunks of petrified wood. One of these, known as Agate House, was partially reconstructed in aboriginal style in 1934. This site, as well as the Puerco Ruin, is easily accessible.

The ancient people also used petrified wood occasionally, extremely hard though it is, for flaked stone instruments such as arrowpoints.

Agate House



## The Petroglyphs

Pictures and designs were carved or pecked in the sandstone faces of the low escarpment forming the edge of the mesa just south of the Rio Puerco, and on great boulders fallen away from the cliff. A few are readily seen at the Puerco Ruin, and there are many others on and near Newspaper Rock. These petroglyphs include geometric patterns, similar to painted pottery designs, and life-figures.

Petroglyphs can seldom be "interpreted"; they probably have no mystic meaning, no story to tell. They may be clan symbols in some cases, inscribed by passersby, in the same way that unthinking persons today scribble their names on rocks and buildings; or they may be art for art's sake, simply casual decoration.

## The Modern Indians

Nobody lived in the Petrified Forest when the first white men came, but Zuni Pueblo is only about 50 miles east, and the Hopi towns about 75 miles northwest. The Navajo Indians, a people closely related to the Apaches and quite different from the Pueblos, have ranged the country north of the Painted Desert for at least 200 years.

## Facilities and Administration

The Painted Desert Inn, a government-built and government-owned lodge operated by a concessionaire under a lease from the United States Department of the Interior, is only a few miles north of U. S. Highway 66, and may be reached by a loop road on the mesa rim overlooking the Painted Desert. The Inn, as well as providing meals and accommodations, includes National

Park Service exhibit rooms showing the arts and crafts of the Hopi and Navajo Indians.

The ranger station at the Puerco Ruin, at the south end of the bridge 5 miles south of U. S. Highway 66, includes exhibits on the archeology of the Petrified Forest.

Fossilized trees, the main attraction of the area, can be seen at the locations indicated on the map in this folder. Outstanding examples of polished petrified wood, as well as dioramas, charts, etc., relating to the geology of the area, are on display in the Rainbow Forest Museum (in the monument headquarters, 1 mile north of U. S. 60).

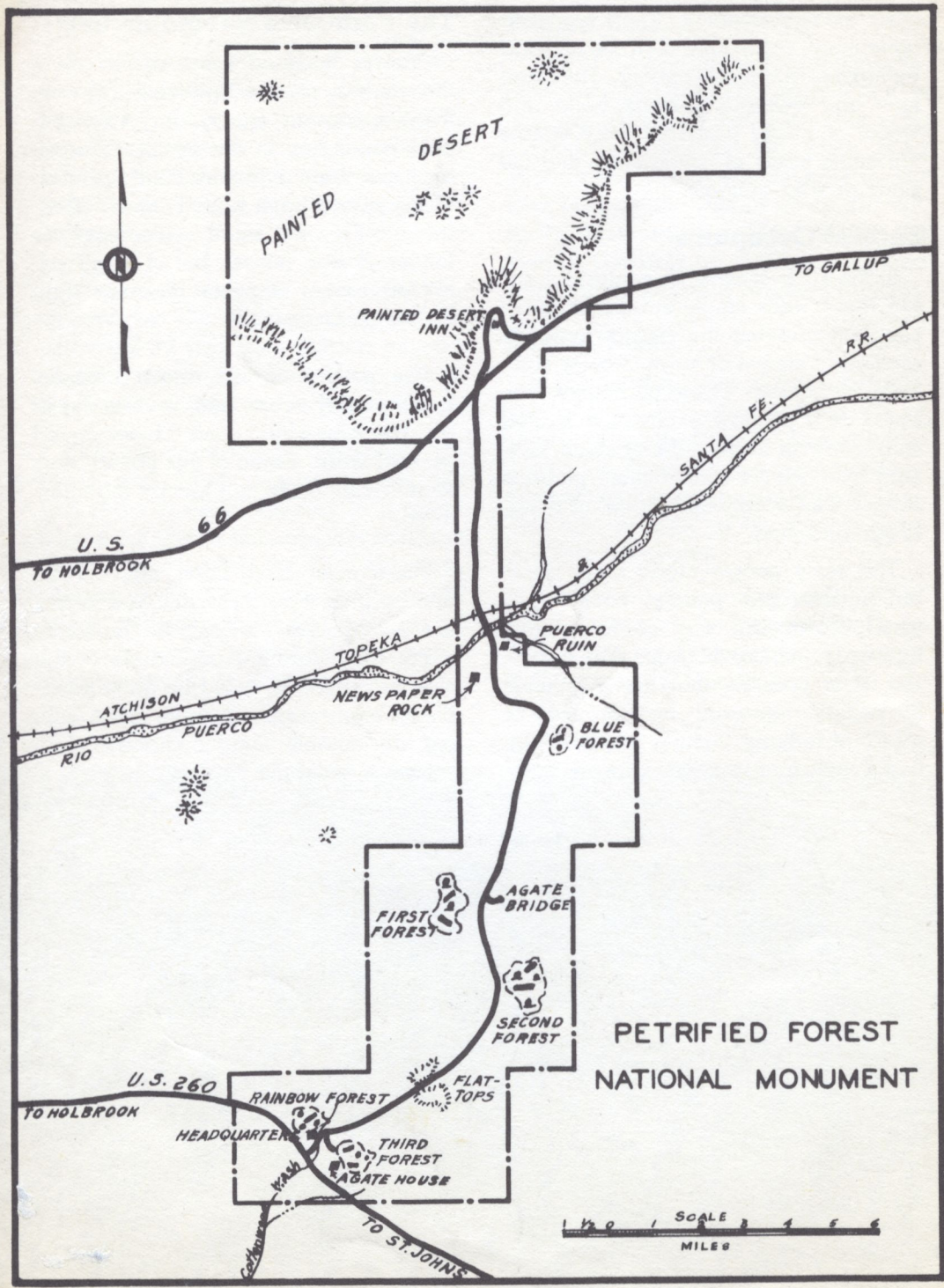
Federal laws prohibit damaging of the archeological sites, theft of petrified wood, or other acts of vandalism. These relics belong to all the people, including those of future generations, and must not be disturbed or defaced.

There is an annual permit fee of 50 cents for each automobile.

Requests for information and other correspondence should be directed to the Superintendent, Petrified Forest National Monument, Holbrook, Ariz.

Petrified Stumps





**PETRIFIED FOREST NATIONAL MONUMENT**