

HOVENWEEP

NATIONAL MONUMENT

UTAH - COLORADO • These ruins are noted for their square, oval, circular, and D-shaped towers and are perhaps the best preserved examples of Southwestern Indian defensive architecture.



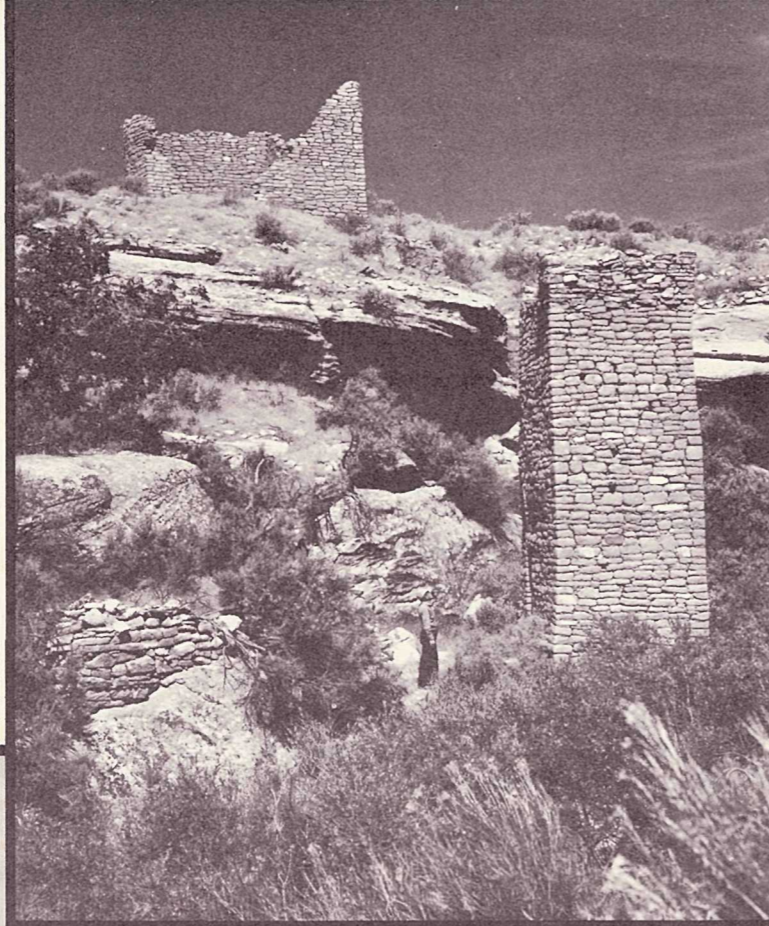
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possesses remarkably preserved

prehistoric Pueblo ruins clustered at the

heads of rocky canyons in the famed

“Four Corners” region of the Southwest.



(Upper right) The Square Tower, Square Tower Group, Utah

(Upper left) Hovenweep Castle

(Lower left) Cutthroat Castle

(Lower right) The Twin Towers

Beyond the San Juan River to the north, the country has a desolate appearance, and the solitary traveler will at times feel an intrusion from the loneliness and vastness of the landscape. His view takes in miles of scrubby vegetation that conceals another world teeming with mammals, insects, and reptiles. Off in the distance mesas rise out of the barren earth, jutting skyward, to expose their flat tops to the sun's warmth or the fury of a sudden desert storm. Thunder echoes within rugged canyons whose recesses beckon the adventurous.

If the traveler follows his inclination to explore these small, rocky box canyons, he will be rewarded for his efforts. For situated in and around the canyon mouths are the ruins of villages and the remnants of towers—the “sentry boxes” of a bygone people. If the explorer continues his search, he will find six impressive groups of these pueblo ruins. These make up what is today Hovenweep National Monument. They are the Square Tower Canyon cluster and the Cajon Group in Utah and the Holly (or Keeley) Group, the Hackberry Canyon Group, Cutthroat Castle, and Goodman Point in Colorado. These ruins, noted for their numerous square, oval, cir-

cular, and D-shaped towers, are excellent examples of defensive Indian architecture.

The Cajon Group consists of two large pueblos, but unfortunately these ruins show not only the ravages of time but also the destructiveness of vandals. Most of the vandalism here occurred prior to the establishment of the monument. The Holly, or Keeley Group, the Hackberry Canyon Group, and Cutthroat Castle each contain numerous towers and large pueblos. Goodman Point includes a large, unexcavated pueblo and several smaller sites. These detached sections of the monument, none comparing to the Square Tower cluster in extent or preservation, are isolated and difficult to get to.

Hovenweep is a Ute Indian word meaning the “deserted valley.” The name was first applied to this region by the famous “Pioneer Photographer” William H. Jackson, who visited the ruins in 1874. An extensive archeological survey of Hovenweep was made by Dr. J. W. Fewkes, of the Smithsonian Institution, in 1917–18. Dr. Fewkes was interested in the preservation of these spectacular ruins and recommended that they be protected as a National Monument.

The Hovenweep People

The prehistoric inhabitants of Hovenweep were Pueblo Indians. They were part of a large farming group which occupied the Four Corners, or San Juan, region of Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico from before A.D. 400 until almost 1300. The culture of the Hovenweep people was identical with that of the Mesa Verde people who lived in what is now Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. The descendants of these ancient people are the present-day Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona.

When the Pueblos arrived in the San Juan region they were just beginning to farm and settle down. They first took shelter in shallow caves. Before long they learned to build houses, and they soon spread out over the valleys and mesa tops. Their first homes, crude pithouses, were later replaced by surface rooms, built in contiguous rows. In the 900's stone masonry became popular. From that time to the present, these people have been constructing multistoried, terraced pueblos.

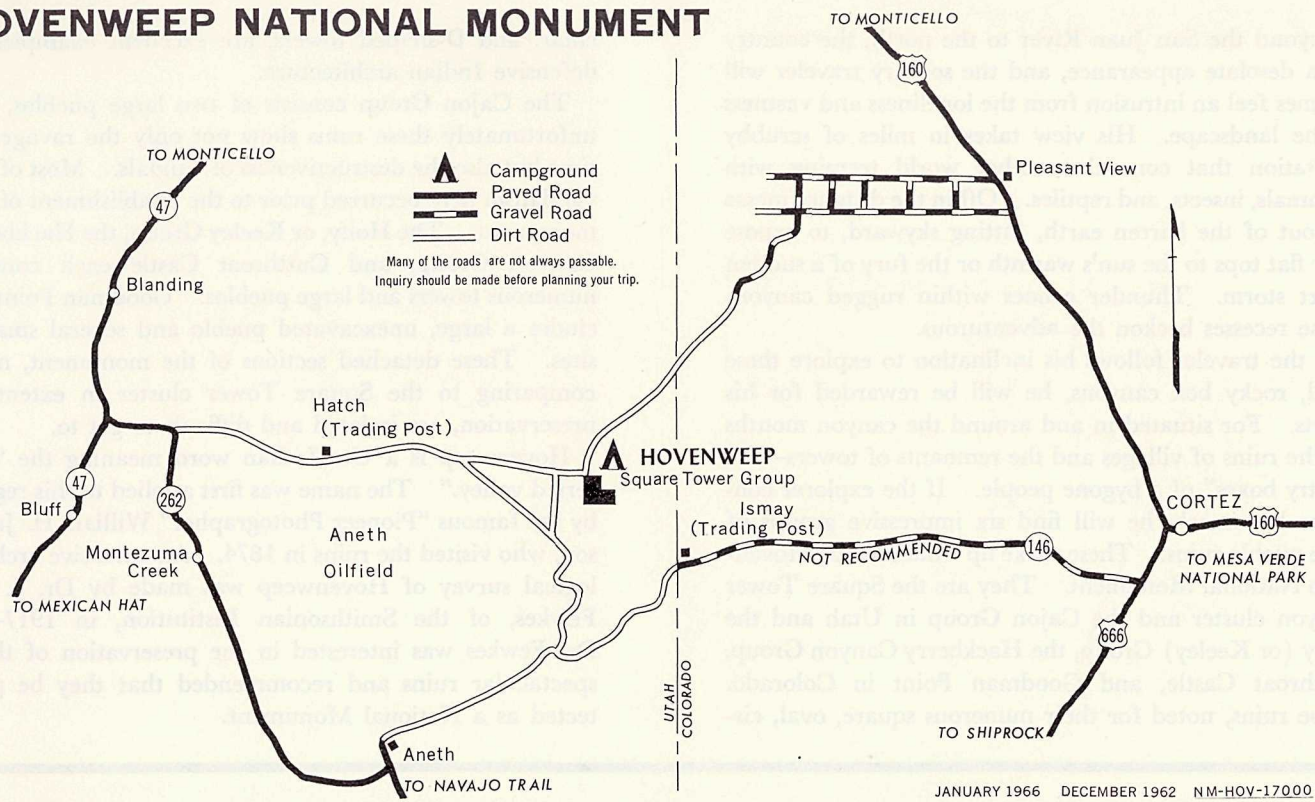
Like their descendants, the ancient Pueblo Indians were farmers who raised corn, beans, squash, and cotton in small fields. Many wild plant foods were utilized. Animals, including birds, were hunted or trapped. The turkey was domesticated. These people were expert

artists and craftsmen who produced tools, utensils, ceremonial objects, jewelry, and articles of dress. Their social and religious organization apparently was well developed and complex.

For centuries the Pueblos lived in peace and security in small villages scattered over wide areas. By the early 1100's nomadic groups apparently began drifting into the region in increasing numbers, forcing the Pueblo farmers to desert many of their small villages in favor of the better protected, larger, compact pueblos. By 1200 the Pueblo people tended to withdraw completely from the open valleys and mesa tops to more defensible sites containing permanent springs situated in the heads of the Hovenweep canyons. Since it was imperative that the people protect their water supply from enemies, they constructed, during this period, the fortified pueblos and towers of Hovenweep. Here, too, the many canyon heads with their somewhat higher elevation afforded the Pueblos long, unobstructed views of the countryside.

This new location offered another advantage. The long draws draining to the canyons could be terraced for farming. These terraces held back the soil and provided sheet-water irrigation when it rained.

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In 1276 a 24-year drought started in the San Juan area. Harassed by enemy pressure, the people were now concentrated in restricted areas and were unable to cope with such prolonged hardship. Failing crops and diminishing water supplies forced them to abandon the area before 1300. They drifted south to the Rio Grande and Little Colorado drainages and never returned.

The Ruins Today

The presence, today, of tumbled piles of masonry, the remains of many-roomed pueblos, small cliff dwellings and towers, and the vast quantities of refuse scattered over the canyon slopes leave little doubt that a sizeable population, as many people as the springs and limited farmland could support, once lived in this now desolate country.

Pueblo and tower walls are constructed of excellent coursed-stone masonry. Most of the mortar has long since disappeared, though some walls over 20 feet in height remain standing. Loopholes placed at strategic points in these walls have for centuries commanded the approaches to buildings, trails, and, especially, the springs.

About Your Visit

If you seek the unusual and can leave the modern world behind to visualize the past, then Hovenweep offers a unique experience. But don't expect to visit this monument without difficulty and inconvenience. Hovenweep is isolated. *There are no paved roads in the monument nor are there any in the vicinity. Approach roads are fair if it is not storming or has not been storming recently. There are no accommodations, stores, or service stations either in the monument or nearby. There is no wood that may be used for building campfires in the campground, which is located at monument headquarters in the Square Tower Group.*

Fees are collected under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. The Recreation/Conservation permit will admit the driver and passengers of a private automobile. Individual daily and seasonal permits can also be purchased.

The best approach to Hovenweep is from Pleasant View, Colo., 18 miles north of Cortez on U.S. 160. Turn west in Pleasant View at the Hovenweep directional sign. Follow the graded road 27.2 miles to Square

Tower Group, Utah. Colorado 146, which leaves U.S. 666 three miles south of Cortez, approaches Hovenweep via McElmo Canyon. This route is not recommended if it is or has been storming. A primitive road approaches Hovenweep from the west. This road leaves Utah 47 midway between Blanding and Bluff. It is impassable in times of storm and often requires the use of a 4-wheel-drive vehicle.

Administration

Hovenweep National Monument, established on March 2, 1923, and covering more than 500 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

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 enjoyment of its people.

Hovenweep National Monument is under the supervision of the superintendent of Mesa Verde National Park. A park ranger maintains headquarters all year at the Square Tower Group, Utah. Address all inquiries to the Superintendent, Mesa Verde National Park, Colo., 81330.

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR—the Nation's principal natural resource agency—bears a special obligation to assure that our expendable resources are conserved, that renewable resources are managed to produce optimum benefits, and that all resources contribute to the progress and prosperity of the United States, now and in the future.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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