

ADMINISTRATION

Hovenweep National Monument, established on March 2, 1923, and containing 784 acres, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Contact: Superintendent, Hovenweep NM, McElmo Route, Cortez, CO 81321.

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.

FOR YOUR SAFETY

Do not allow your visit to be spoiled by an accident. Efforts have been made to provide for your safety and comfort. Warning signs are placed among the sites and along trails and walls, but there are still hazards that require your alertness and vigilance. Please exercise common sense and caution.

HELP US PROTECT THIS NATIONAL MONUMENT

Please leave plants, animals, rocks, and other natural and manmade features undisturbed. Under the 1906 Federal Antiquities Act, it is unlawful to appropriate, excavate, injure, or destroy "any historic or prehistoric ruin or monument, or any object of antiquity" on Federal lands.

National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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HOVENWEEP

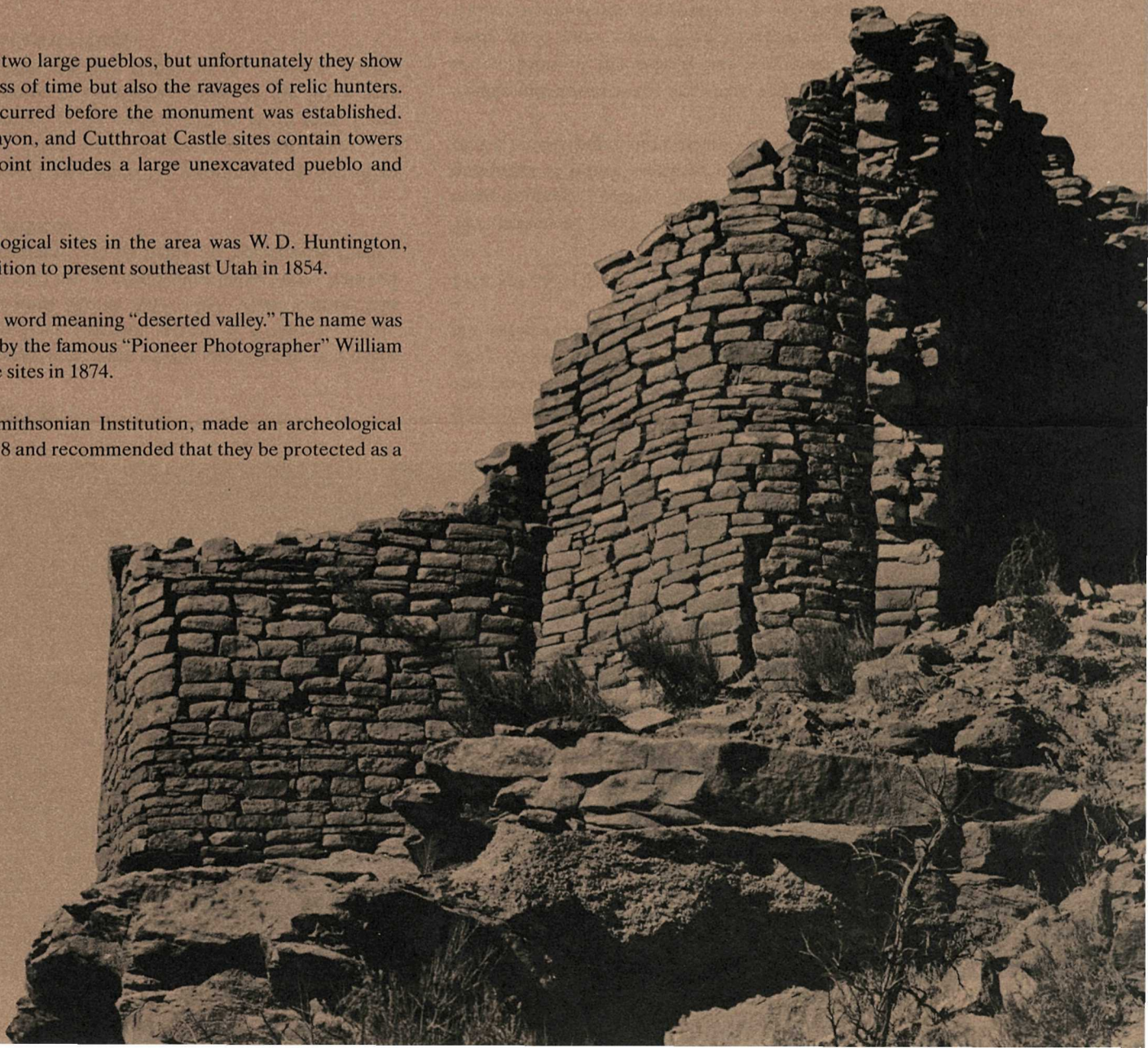
The desolate country north of the San Juan River contains mesas and small canyons where Pueblo Indians once lived. The monument consists of six groups of archeological sites: the Square Tower sites—the best preserved and most impressive—and the Cajon sites in Utah, and the Holly, Hackberry Canyon, Cutthroat Castle, and Goodman Point sites in Colorado. These sites are all noted for their square, oval, circular, and D-shaped towers. All the sites except Square Tower are isolated and difficult to reach.

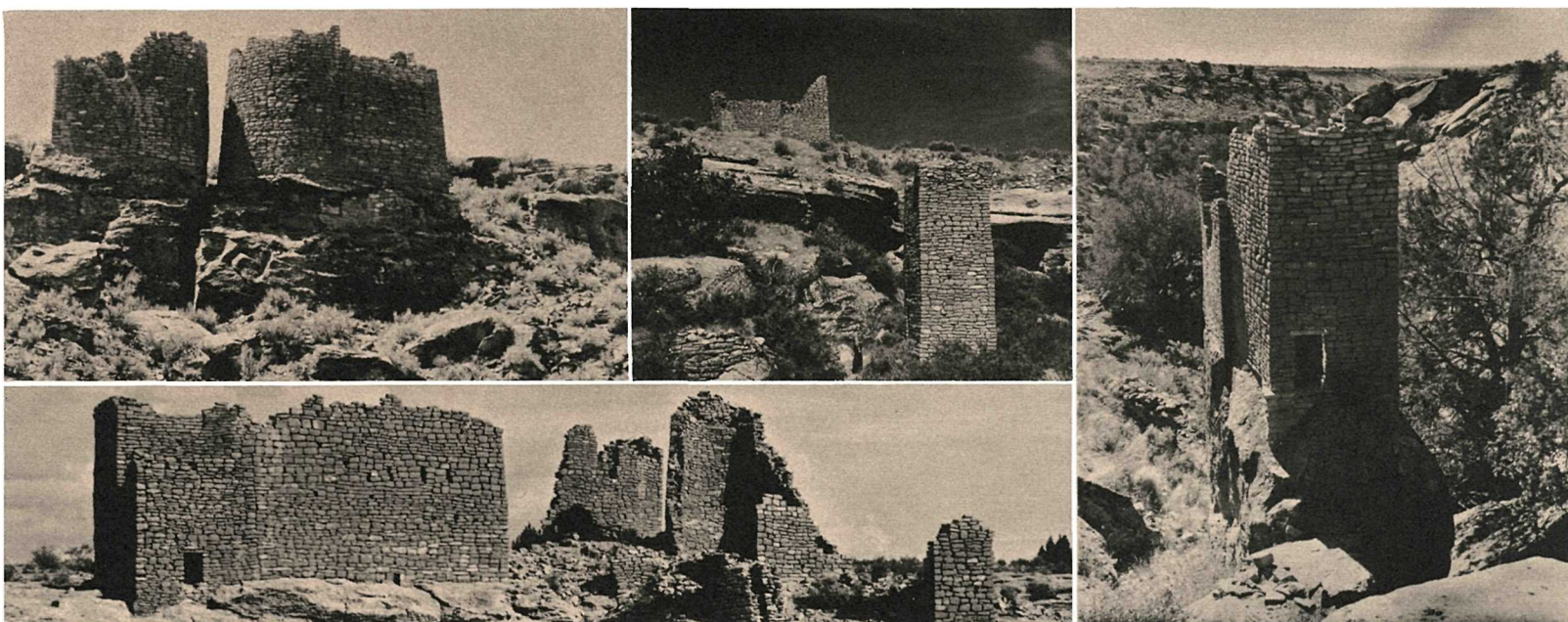
The Cajon sites consist of two large pueblos, but unfortunately they show not only the destructiveness of time but also the ravages of relic hunters. Most of the vandalism occurred before the monument was established. The Holly, Hackberry Canyon, and Cutthroat Castle sites contain towers and pueblos. Goodman Point includes a large unexcavated pueblo and several smaller sites.

First to report on archeological sites in the area was W.D. Huntington, leader of a Mormon expedition to present southeast Utah in 1854.

Hovenweep is a Ute Indian word meaning "deserted valley." The name was first applied to this region by the famous "Pioneer Photographer" William H. Jackson, who visited the sites in 1874.

Dr. J.W. Fewkes, of the Smithsonian Institution, made an archeological survey of the sites in 1917-18 and recommended that they be protected as a national monument.





THE HOVENWEEP PEOPLE

The inhabitants of Hovenweep were part of the large group of Pueblo Indians who occupied the Four Corners region of Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico until almost A.D. 1300. Their culture was similar to that of the people who live in what is now Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. Their descendants are probably the present-day Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona.

It may have been 2,000 years ago when the people in the San Juan region first began to farm. They took shelter in shallow caves, but before long they built pithouses in the valleys and on mesa tops. Later they constructed surface rooms in contiguous rows. In the 900's they adopted stone masonry. From the late 1000's to the present, Pueblo Indians have built multistoried dwellings.

Like their descendants, the prehistoric Pueblos raised corn, beans, and squash in small fields. They also used many wild plant foods, hunted and trapped animals, including birds, and domesticated the turkey. These people were expert artists and craftsmen who produced a variety of tools, utensils, ceremonial objects, jewelry, and articles of dress. Their social and religious organization was apparently well developed.

For centuries the Pueblos lived in peace and security in small, scattered villages. But by the early 1100's, they had left many of their small villages in favor of larger, compact pueblos. By 1200, they had moved from the open valleys and mesa tops to the heads of the Hovenweep canyons, which contain permanent springs. They constructed their pueblos and towers here in order to protect their precious sources of water.

The long draws draining into the canyons offered an advantage in that they could be terraced to hold back the soil and provide sheet-water irrigation for crops. The canyon heads, at somewhat higher elevations, also afforded the Pueblos unobstructed views of the countryside.

In the late 1200's a long period of drought began in the San Juan area. The people, now concentrated in restricted places, were unable to cope

with such prolonged hardship. Failing crops, diminishing water supplies, and perhaps warfare forced them to abandon their homes before 1300. They drifted south to the Rio Grande and Little Colorado drainages and never returned.

THE SITES TODAY

The presence, today, of tumbled piles of masonry, the remains of many-roomed pueblos, small cliff dwellings, and towers, and the quantities of refuse scattered over the canyon slopes leave little doubt that a sizable population 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 stand more than 20 feet high. Ports at strategic points in these walls command the approaches to buildings, trails, and springs.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The approach roads to Hovenweep range from dirt and gravel to paved. Dirt roads can become muddy and sometimes impassable during or following storms. Make local inquiry during stormy weather regarding road conditions.

A self-guiding trail leads through the prehistoric sites of Square Tower Group. A park ranger is on duty all year to assist you with more information about the area.

There is a modern campground near the ranger station. Camping supplies, firewood, and gasoline are not available at the monument. The closest supplies are at Hatch Trading Post, 16 miles west, or at Ismay Trading Post, 14 miles southeast. The nearest overnight accommodations are at Blanding and Bluff in Utah and Cortez in Colorado. The monument and campground are open all year.

