

TONTO



NATIONAL MONUMENT
ARIZONA

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Fourteenth-century cliff dwellings of the Arizona Salado Tribe, who were among the finest craftsmen of the prehistoric Pueblo Indians



Tonto National Monument, containing about 2 square miles of picturesque desert hill and canyon country, was established by Presidential proclamation in 1907 to protect the outstanding cliff dwellings here. The southern Arizona group of Pueblo Indians, builders of cliff dwellings in this area, were not too different from the present day Hopi and Zuni. They have been named Salado (Spanish for salty) because they lived near the Salt River.

The cliff dwellings were occupied during the 1300's, a period determined by comparison of pottery and other remains with material from other sites accurately dated by annual growth rings in timbers used in construction of the buildings. A

single tree-ring date of A. D. 1346 is recorded from the Tonto ruin.

Before occupying the cliff dwellings, the Salado Indians lived in the valley proper, where the remains of many of their houses are still visible. The cliff dwellings appear to have been built as defensive sites when the valley villages became the object of attack by enemies. Eventually, around A. D. 1400, the Salado people left the region, probably because of continued trouble at the hands of their enemies. Identification of these enemies is not certain, but they may possibly have been ancestors of the Yavapai Indians, who now live north and west of the Tonto Basin.

View from cliff dwelling across Roosevelt Lake to the Sierra Ancha

The Cliff Dwellings

On both sides of the Roosevelt Lake Basin are many long canyons leading up into the mountains. Near the tops of some of the canyon walls are cliffs in which shallow caves are located. The cliff dwelling seen from the Tonto parking area is located in a natural cave in the quartzite cliff. A good trail, a half-mile long, with a rise of 350 feet, leads to the ruin.

This cliff dwelling is a pueblo of rough masonry walls, with adobe clay used as mortar and plaster, and native rock as a filler. The walls were laid up in courses 2 to 3 feet in height. When these walls were built up about 6 feet high a ceiling of juniper or pinyon poles was laid across the room, one end resting on the wall, the other on a center beam supported by an upright post. A substantial layer of saguaro ribs was laid across the poles, and this was covered with a 3- or 4-inch layer of adobe. A similar roof on the second-story rooms furnished good deck space which was well-lighted and ventilated.

When complete, this dwelling had about 25 rooms.

How the Salados Lived

The nearest dependable water was probably a seep or spring a half mile up the main canyon from the dwelling. The farmlands were located in the Salt River flood plain 2 to 4 miles distant and at about 1,000 feet lower elevation. Water, firewood, harvested crops, and wild game secured by hunting, all had to be carried up the trail to the cliff house. Crops of maize, beans, squash, and cotton were raised by irrigation. Until the valley was flooded by construction of Roosevelt Dam, the old irrigation canals built and used by occupants of the Tonto cliff dwellings and other nearby prehistoric villages could still be traced.

In addition to cultivated foods, the Indians gathered mesquite beans, cactus fruits, and many wild nuts and berries. Undoubtedly they hunted wild game for a meat supply, as deer bones have been found in the cliff dwellings. Rabbits and other small animals, as well as birds, were also available.

Stone hoes, and possibly wooden digging tools, were used in the farming. The roof beams of the dwellings were cut with stone axes, and the ax marks still may be seen on beams in place in one remaining original roof. An incomplete bow with a yucca fiber string and a bundle of reed arrows with pointed wooden tips were found with a burial in 1950. A number of stone arrowheads have also been found.

Manufactures

The Salado people were excellent pottery makers and weavers of cotton textiles. Their painted pottery of red, cream, and black shows a high degree of appreciation of design and form. Undecorated pottery was also made for storage and cooking purposes, some of the storage vessels having a capacity of as much as 60 gallons.

Cotton textiles were made in a variety of weaves and color combinations. Embroidery, open work, diamond twills, and gauze weaves were among the types made, and dyed threads of blue, brown, black, red, and yellow were used to create complex designs. A considerable amount of good quality cloth of plain weave was made for everyday use. A specimen of this is the one used as a wrapping on the child burial found in 1950, which is now on display in the museum.

Sandals and mats were woven of yucca fibers; the yucca leaf was also shredded and spun into strong cordage. Beargrass was used for mats.

Ornaments were made of turquoise and several varieties of shells. The shells are from the Gulf of California, hundreds of miles to the southwest, indicating the distance over which objects were carried by trade even at that time.

A small but excellent and representative collection of prehistoric Salado tools, utensils, and weapons is on display in the museum at the parking area.

Desert Plants

Although Tonto National Monument is primarily an archeological area, it has a variety of desert plants which are interesting. The Upper and Lower Sonoran Life Zones are represented by several species of cactuses and by the desert chaparral cover. Barrel, hedgehog, fishhook, and several kinds of cholla cactuses are abundant, some of which bloom during April and May. The saguaro, or giant cactus, most spectacular in this area, usually blooms in May or early in June.

The mesquite, paloverde, Mohave-thorn, catclaw or acacia, and jojoba predominate to make the brushy desert chaparral cover. Many of the plants are labeled for identification. You may obtain further information on plant life and archeology from the monument staff.

Photography

The cliff dwelling faces nearly east and is fully lighted in the morning, especially from about 8 to 10 a. m. By noon, the face of the cliff is in full shadow. Photography in the cave is possible during daylight hours, but exterior shots are best in the morning.

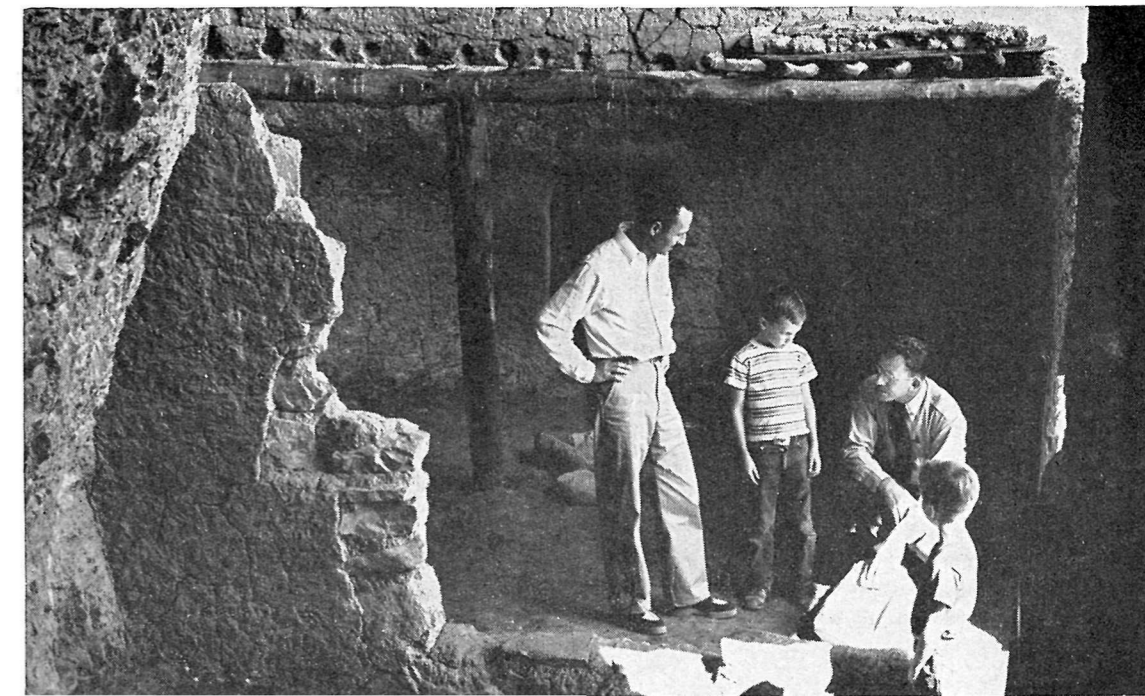
The Monument

Tonto National Monument was transferred to the National Park Service in 1933 from the Department of Agriculture.

How To Reach the Monument

If driving from Phoenix, take U. S. 89 to Mesa, then U. S. 60-70 to Apache Junction, where you turn left on State

Visitors in Tonto cliff dwelling





Utensils and implements used by prehistoric inhabitants

Route 88, the Apache Trail, to Roosevelt. The monument visitor center is just 3 miles beyond. Average driving time: 4 hours. From Globe, take State Route 88 to the monument entrance, which is 28 miles away. Average driving time: 50 minutes.

Visitor Use Fee

A nominal fee is charged for admission to the ruins. All National Park and Monument fees are deposited as revenue in the U. S. Treasury; they offset, in part, appropriations made for operating the National Park System.

Season and Facilities

The monument is open all year, with the most comfortable weather between late October and the first of June.

Picnic facilities are available in the monument, but no camping is permitted. Food, lodging, and camping

facilities are available at Roosevelt.

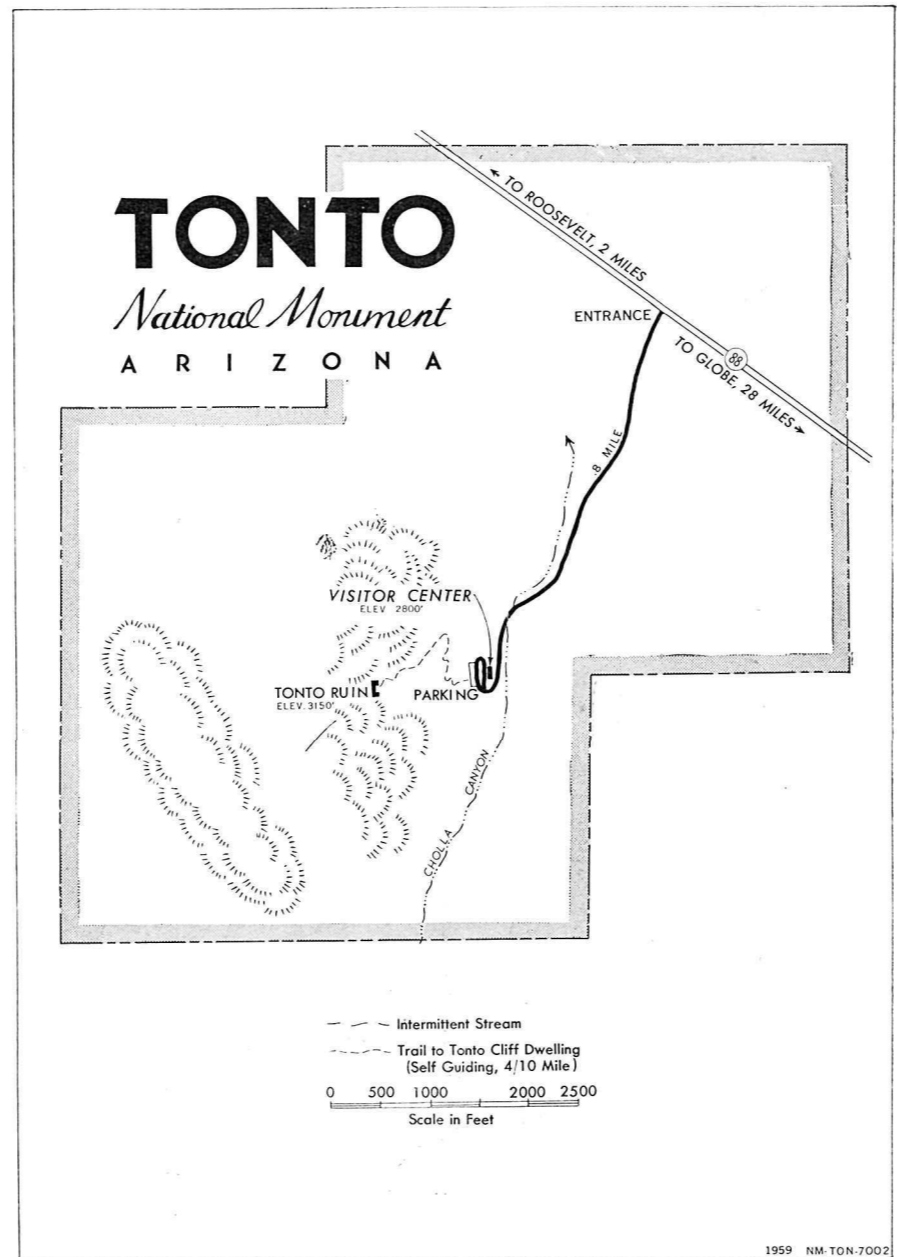
A self-guiding trail leads from the parking area to Tonto ruin. Near the parking lot is the short, self-guiding Cactus Patch Trail.

Administration

Tonto National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Roosevelt, Ariz., is in immediate charge.

Mission 66

Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed in 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.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FRED A. SEATON, Secretary

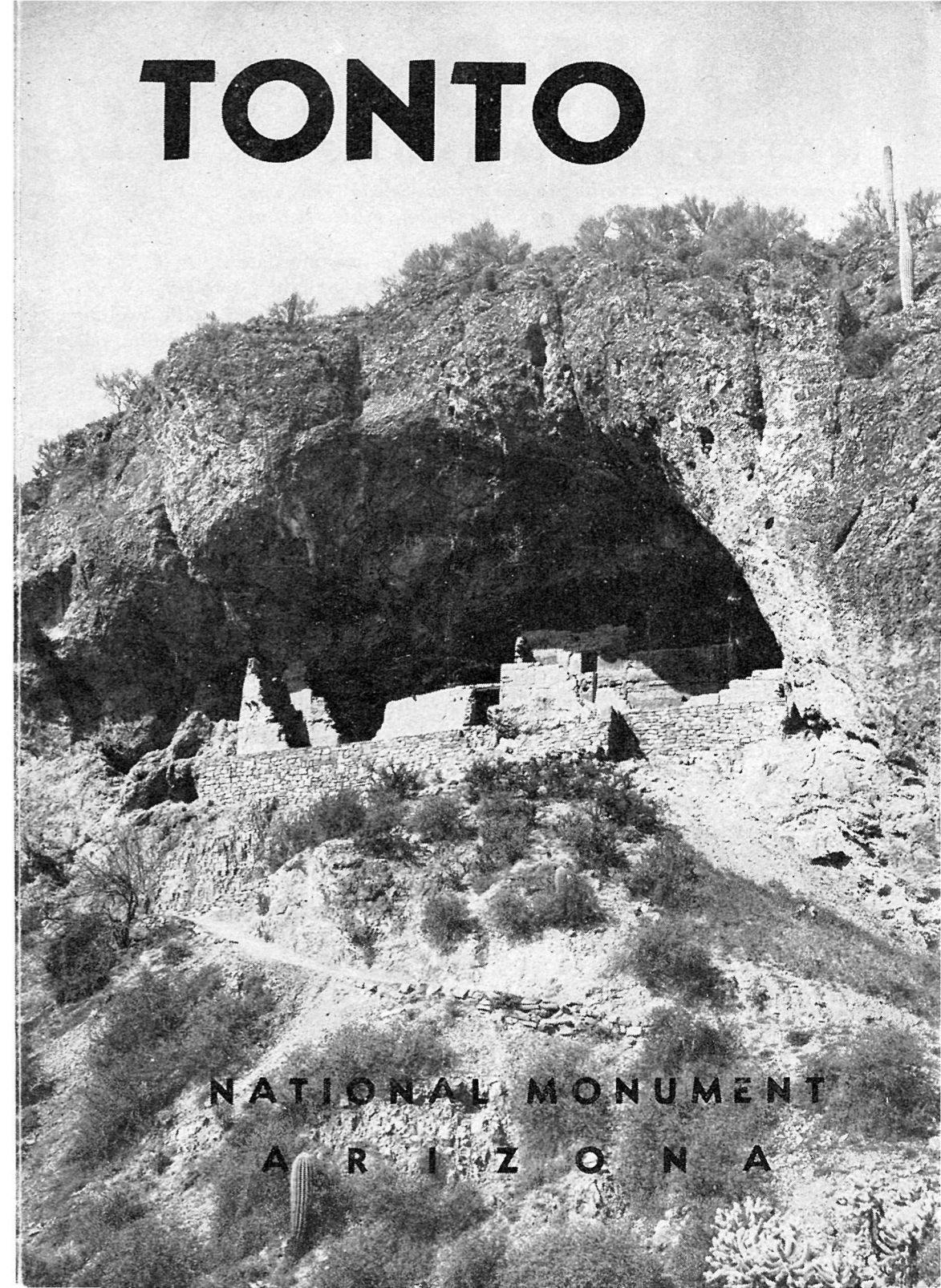
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, CONRAD L. WIRTH, Director

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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.

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