

Walnut Canyon

National Monument

ARIZONA

Walnut Canyon

NATIONAL MONUMENT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

J. A. Krug, *Secretary*



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, Newton B. Drury, *Director*

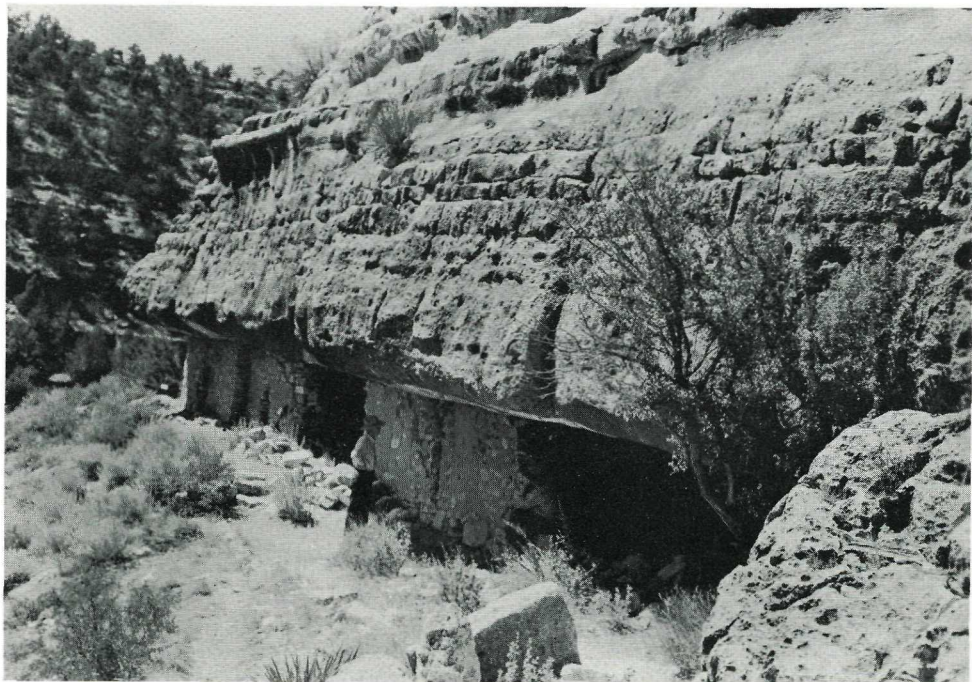
Site of hundreds of little thirteenth century cliff dwellings which their Indian builders constructed in the shallow caves of a steep canyon

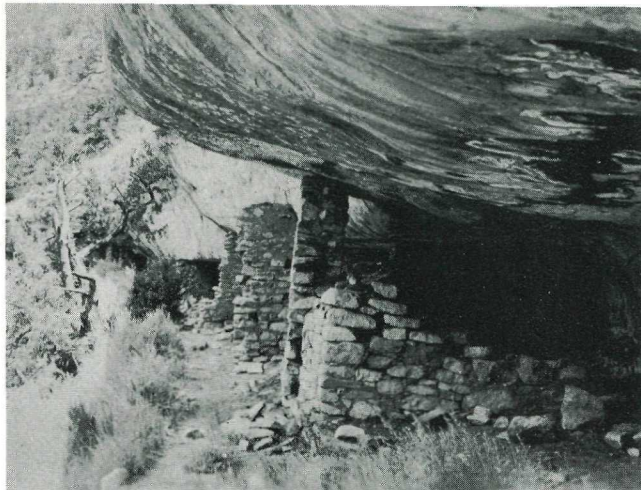
Walnut Canyon National Monument preserves the remains of some 200 small prehistoric cliff dwellings. In addition, there are many small surface ruins of the same early period, which have all weathered to unspectacular mounds of rock and clay. Walnut Canyon is also a scenic area and of geological and biological interest.

Why Did the People Live Here?

Through the monument area Walnut Canyon is approximately 400 feet deep. The lower part is carved into a cross-bedded sandstone believed to have been once the dunes of an ancient desert. The upper 270 feet of the canyon was cut

Overhanging ledges protected homes





Ruins show construction methods

through a marine limestone deposit containing many fossils.

The limestone formation is made up of layers varying in resistance. Due to the processes of "differential weathering" through past ages, the softer layers have retreated, leaving a series of ledges and recesses along canyon walls. It was in these recesses that the cliff dwelling Indians built their one-room homes, using the overhanging ledge for a ceiling. Usually, several rooms were constructed side by side in the same recess. As there were no doors in the dividing partitions, it appears that one family lived in each room.

Inducements for living in the canyon were many: There was sufficient water in the canyon (before the recent construction of a dam upstream); dwelling sites were sheltered from rain and snow; difficult accessibility furnished some protection from enemies; fuel was abundant; and fertile soil for the cultivation of crops was available on top, close to the canyon rim.

How Did the People Live?

These Indians were farmers, growing corn (maize), beans, pumpkins, and sunflowers; they gathered many wild plants; they hunted various animals; they were excellent pottery makers; and

they wove good basketry and perhaps cotton cloth.

Some of the more common wild plants in the canyon known to have been used by historic Indians for food, fiber, dye, medicine, fuel, construction, ceremonial purposes, or as materials for implements, weapons, and household furnishings, included: yellow pine, pinyon, oak, four species of juniper, Douglas fir, locust, black walnut, aspen, willow, box elder, hoptree, hollygrape, serviceberry, elderberry, snowberry, lemonade sumac, mountain mahogany, cliffrose, currant, saltbrush, tobacco, Mormon tea, grape, mesal, yucca, and several species of cactus.

Animals which they could have hunted for meat, sinew or skins were: deer, elk, antelope, bear, cougar, wolf, coyote, bobcat, fox, rabbits, pack rats, squirrels, porcupines, and many species of birds, ranging from wild turkeys to sparrows.

They traded extensively with other tribes for such things as red stone, sea shells, and turquoise for ornaments, pottery vessels of black-on-white types, stone axes, salt, and cotton.

The cliff dwelling Indians were Stone Age people with no knowledge of metal, nor did they have domestic animals, except dogs and possibly turkeys. Their modern descendants, such as the Hopi Indians of northern Arizona,

make good use of sheep, goats, cows, horses, and burros, and of fruit trees, all introduced by Europeans since 1629. With only stone and wooden tools, it was more difficult to earn a living in prehistoric times than today, and the cliff dwellers must have worked long hours.

When Did They Live Here?

The period of occupation has been determined from the various types of pottery in Walnut Canyon. Identical pottery has been found at other sites which have been accurately dated by the Douglass tree-ring method. The period of greatest population was from 1000 to 1200 A. D. Pottery dating from earlier than 1000 A. D. is sometimes found.

What Happened After They Left?

For several hundred years the little cliff dwellings stood deserted and unmolested. Then white men began to visit and plunder them.

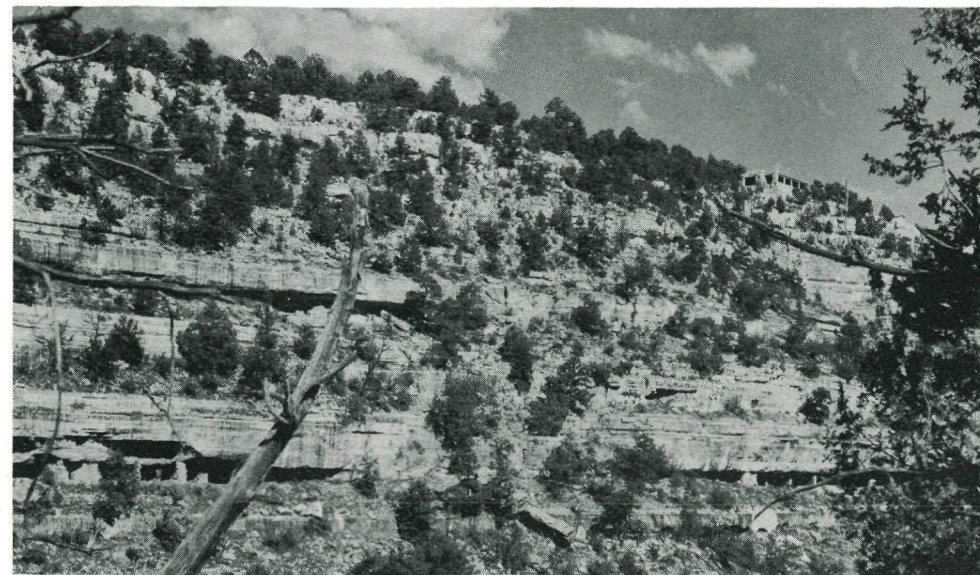
Since the earliest known report in 1883, and before the area was placed under the protection

of the National Park Service, pothunters had removed the great accumulation of cultural material seen by pioneer scientists, and our understanding of the area is largely derived from investigations at other contemporaneous sites. The dwellings themselves suffered a great deal of destruction and defacement in the same period from the selfish acts of a few unthinking persons.

How to Reach Walnut Canyon

Walnut Canyon National Monument may be reached from either east or west, by an unsurfaced road from U. S. Highway 66. The western entrance road is 7 miles long, leaving the highway 3 ½ miles east of Flagstaff. The eastern entrance road is 6 miles long, leaving Highway 66 at a point 14 miles east of Flagstaff. Autoists passing through Arizona via Highway 66 increase their mileage only 3 miles to visit the monument, when entering by the first road encountered and departing by the other. Both entrance roads are sometimes impassable, however, in bad weather.

North side of Walnut Canyon with cliff dwellings and Museum building on the rim



The monument season is from April 1 to December 15.

Admission to the monument is free.

Facilities

A custodian and ranger are stationed in the monument. Visiting hours are from 8 a. m. to 5 p. m. There is no guide fee.

A good foot trail leads to 30 of the cliff dwellings, and from this trail about 100 more may be seen. Young people sometimes make the trail trip in 20 minutes, but the average time for all parties is 50 minutes.

For those who do not wish to climb the steps of the trail, a good view of the canyon and some of its cliff dwellings may be seen from the observation porch at the canyon rim.

Construction in 1940 of an attractive exhibition and observation building has provided additional facilities for the comfort of visitors. When completed, museum exhibits will interpret various interesting phases of the life of ancient inhabitants of the Walnut Canyon region. Nearby there is a small picnic area.

There are no accommodations except for picnicking; meals and lodgings are available in Flagstaff and along U. S. Highway 66 between Flagstaff and the monument's western entrance.

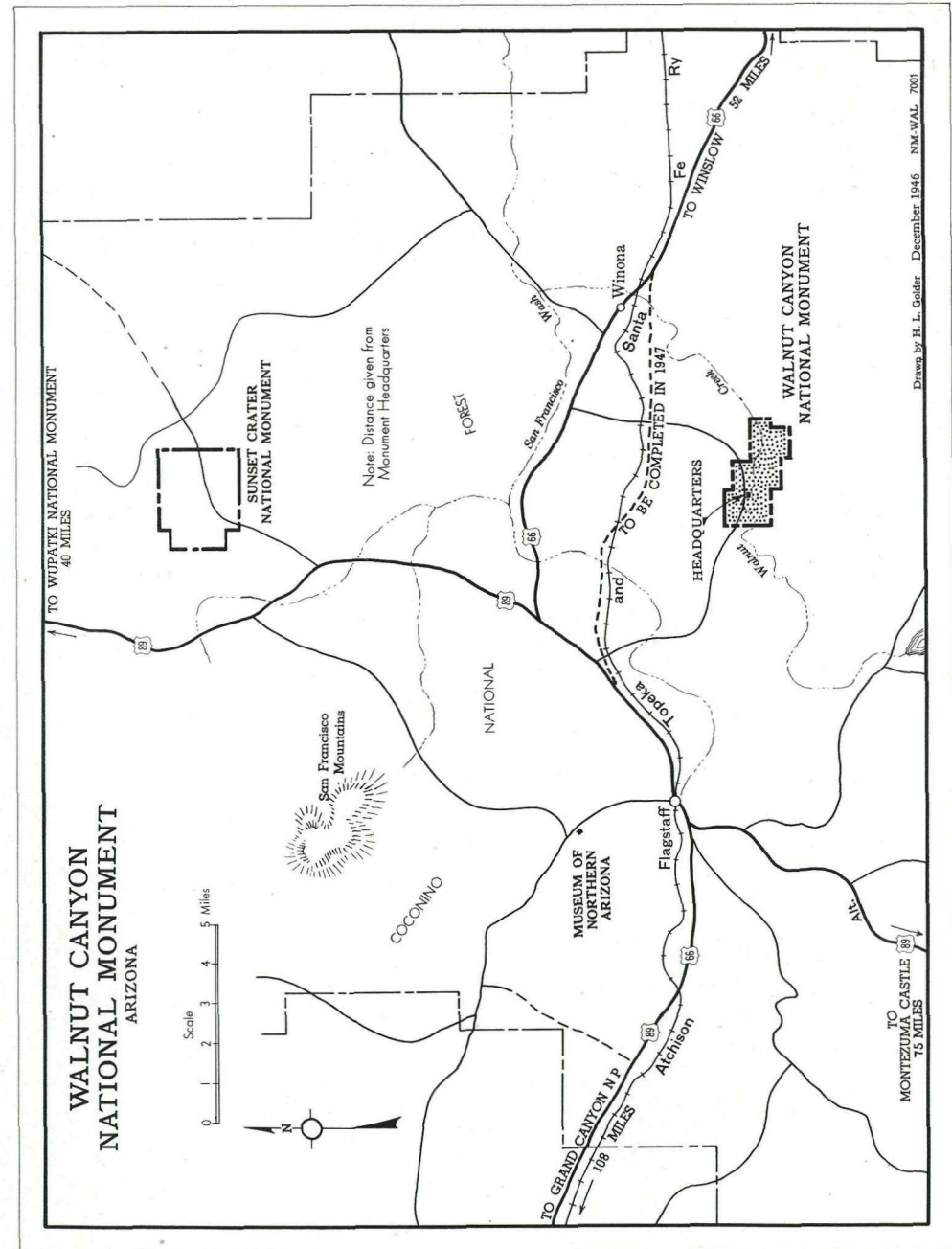
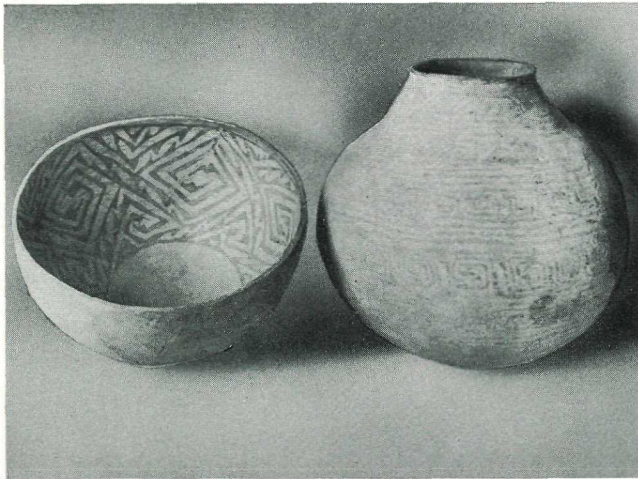
Administration

Walnut Canyon National Monument, which includes an area of 1,635 acres, is a part of the National Park System and is administered by the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. The monument was created by the Presidential proclamation of November 30, 1915, and enlarged by the Presidential proclamation of September 24, 1938.

For additional information, address the Custodian, Walnut Canyon National Monument, Flagstaff, Ariz.

Walnut Canyon's numerous small cliff dwellings serve as an excellent introduction to the more spectacular dwellings at Navajo, Canyon de Chelly, Montezuma Castle, and Tonto National Monuments in Arizona; Bandelier and Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monuments in New Mexico; and Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado.

Pottery from Walnut Canyon cliff dwelling



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