



WALNUT CANYON

WALNUT CANYON

NATIONAL MONUMENT, ARIZONA



THE SINAGUA

Nine hundred years ago, in what is now north-central Arizona, a volcano erupted and spewed fine cinders and ash over an area of about 800 square miles. The porous cinder layer formed a moisture-retaining agent that transformed the marginal farmland into a country of rich farmland.

Word of this new oasis spread among the Indians of the Southwest, setting off a prehistoric land rush that brought together the Pueblo dry farmer from the east and north, the Hohokam irrigation farmer from the south, and probably Mogollon groups from the south and east and Cohonino groups from the west. Focal points of the immigrants were the stretches of land lying some 15 miles northeast and southeast of the volcano, bordering territory already occupied by the Sinagua Indians.

Nudged out of their now-crowded corner by the newcomers, some of the Sinagua moved to the south of the volcano to a canyon that offered building sites and a means of livelihood. Here they made their homes.

Remains of the Sinagua's new homes, built in the early 1100's, are now preserved in Walnut Canyon National Monument; the cone of the benevolent volcano, in Sunset Crater National Monument; and part of the focal points of the immigrants, in Wupatki National Monument.

WALNUT CANYON THEN

When the Sinagua arrived at Walnut Canyon, they were richer from having associated with Indians of other tribes, for the exchange of ideas and customs had taught them much. They had also contributed much.

At Walnut Canyon, the Sinagua put to use one of their new crafts: masonry. The upper walls of the 400-foot-deep canyon are of limestone, with layers of different degrees of hardness. The softer layers have eroded faster than the harder layers, thus forming long but shallow cavelike recesses. The Sinagua saw that by building front walls and room and house partitions in the recesses they could have snug homes that were protected against the weather and possibly against man. They built them. More than 300 small cliff rooms fill the shadowy recesses in the canyon walls.

But Walnut Canyon offered the Sinagua more than cozy homesites. A dependable supply of water flowed along the streambed on the floor of the canyon. Fertile volcanic-cinder soil lay within about 2 miles of the canyon rim. A great variety of trees, for fuel and implements, grew within the canyon and on the mesa. Other wild plants, a source of food and medicines, lined the banks of the stream and blanketed the slopes. Game, furred and feathered, haunted canyon and mesa top.

Pottery, pendants, and houses left by the Sinagua show that they appreciated the graceful, the beautiful. They must, then, have responded to the setting for their new homes: the soothing blend of grays and greens of the canyon walls; the meadowlike expanse of treetops far below, enlivened by moving cloud shadows; the purples and blues of distant horizons.

Surprisingly, Walnut Canyon had been little used by humans before the arrival of the Sinagua. Remains of pithouses of the rim suggest that earlier occupation was light and probably seasonal.

The Sinagua made the canyon a place of activity. On a spring morning eight centuries ago, the scene might have been something like this:

Six girls, carrying clay pots filled with water, pause at the rim of the canyon to gasp for breath. They have just climbed up the steep trail from the stream. After a few minutes of rest, they continue on the trail to the fields.

Men and women stop their work with digging sticks as they notice the approach of the waterbearers. They are slight but muscular, and have dark hair and eyes and brown skin. Some of the men wear small woven cotton blankets around their waists, kiltlike; others wear breechcloths of woven cotton. The women wear "skirts," or "aprons," of yucca cord. Small fur blankets, which they will drape around their shoulders when they leave the fields, hang from bushes near the trail. Sandals of plaited yucca fiber rest beside the bushes.

Will the coming winter be one of hunger? If the seeds they are planting fail to fulfill their promise, it will. The people rely heavily on corn and beans and squash.

A grandmother, twisted and bent by arthritis, sits on a stone on the ledge in front of her house and watches tiny children playing about her. When a child toddles too near the edge or strays too far up the trail, her call brings it back. Accustomed to the sharp arthritic pain, she smiles a toothless smile as she guards the small ones. Bits of stone from metate and mano, unavoidably mixed with cornmeal, have worn away her teeth.

In another shallow cave in the opposite wall of the canyon, two men and two women are building a house by adding another 12- by 14-foot room to an existing house. Walls, made of slabs of limestone, are double, the space between being filled with mud. Mud is used also as mortar and plaster, and—firmly packed and dried—it will be used as a floor. A hole above the small door is intended as an outlet for smoke from the fire that will be built inside the room. During cold weather, an animal skin will be hung over the door.

A group of women, chatting and laughing, kneel beside the stream as they weave baskets of yucca fiber. Nearby, other women gather clay from which they will fashion their pottery.

Several men and older boys appear at the lower end of the canyon, walking along the trail that parallels the stream. They are equipped with bow and arrow, throwing stick, and stone-bladed knife. Proudly they display the

fruits of their successful hunt: two deer, a fox, six rabbits, a porcupine, pack rats, a brace of jays, and a great horned owl.

In front of his house in one of the topmost caves, a young man bends over his fire-making equipment and twirls a hardwood spindle rapidly between his palms; with one foot, he holds the cottonwood hearth firmly. Smoke rises from the hearth, and he knows that he will soon be able to blow a spark to flame.

The excited barking of dogs near the rim announces the arrival of strangers in the community. All eyes peer at the three figures descending one of the trails, figures that are instantly recognized. They are traders from the south. In proper time, they will exhibit the finished shellwork that they obtained by trade from other Indians. And when the traders return to the south, they will take some of the local products: pinyon nuts, black walnuts, baskets, and pieces of pottery. From other traders, the Sinagua obtain salt, turquoise, decorated pottery, and raw cotton.

Thus the Sinagua lived in Walnut Canyon for almost 150 years. Then they abandoned their homes. Why? No one knows. Perhaps it was drought, wornout soil, pressure from enemy groups, disease—any, all, or none of these. Anthropologists believe that some of their descendants live today among the Pueblo Indians.

WALNUT CANYON NOW

For 600 years, the little cliff dwellings apparently stood deserted and undisturbed. Then the white man came.

During the time from the earliest known report in 1883 until the area was placed under the protection of the National Park Service in 1933, vandals removed much of the cultural material that had been left by the Sinagua, even damaging and defacing the dwellings themselves. Present understanding of the area is largely derived from investigations at contemporary sites.

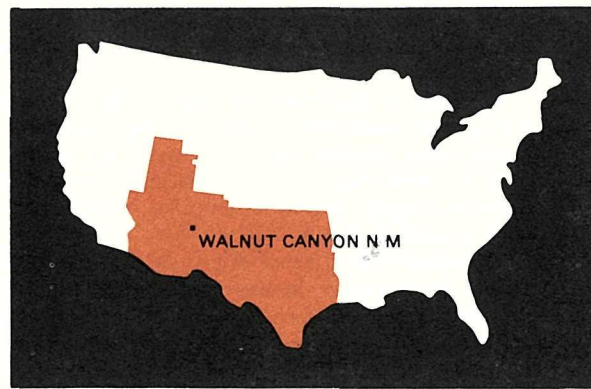
But you can still transport yourself back in time to the days when the Sinagua lived their lives in this lovely canyon.

Their homes are here, and you can walk among them. A paved foot trail leads to 25 of the cliff dwelling rooms; from the trail, you can see about 100 others.

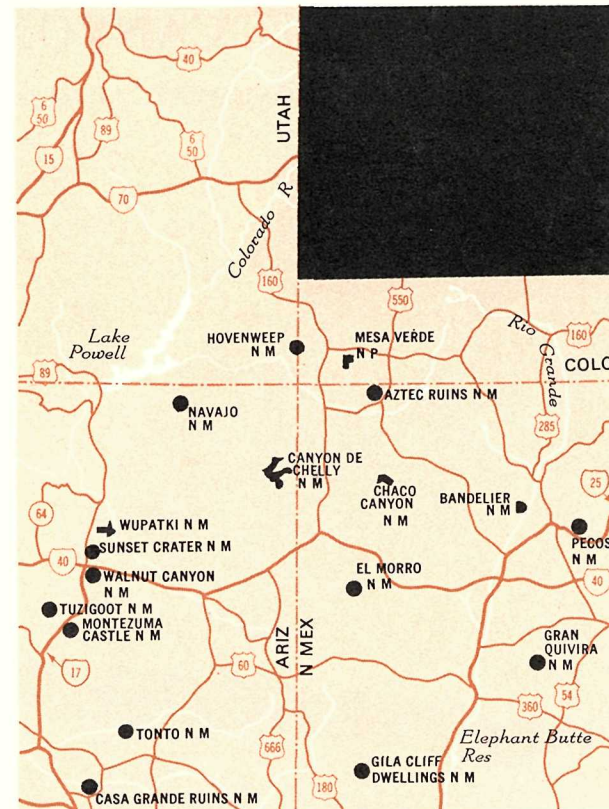
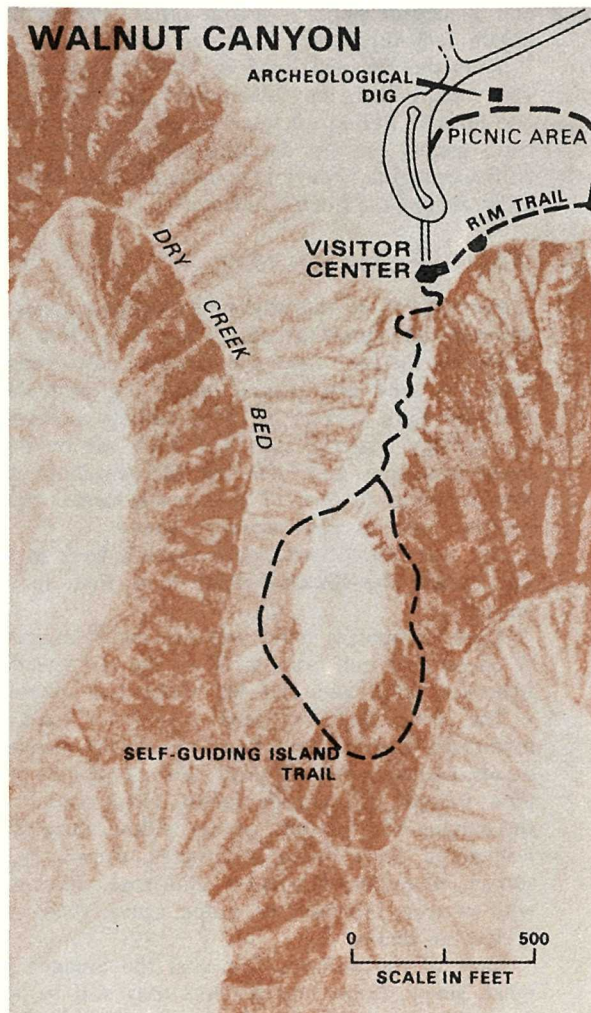
The plants that they used so well for food, fiber, dye, medicines, fuel, construction, ceremonial purposes, implements, and weapons still grow here: ponderosa pine, pinyon pine, juniper, Douglas-fir, locust, black walnut (for which the canyon was named), aspen, willow, boxelder, hoptree, hollygrape, serviceberry, elderberry, snowberry, lemonade sumac, mountain-mahogany, cliff rose, currant, saltbush, wild tobacco, Mormon tea, grape, agave, yucca, and several species of cactus.

Most of the animals, too, that the Sinagua hunted for meat, sinew, skins, and feathers may still be seen in and near the canyon: mule deer, coyote, bobcat, gray fox, cottontail, pack rat, Abert's squirrel, porcupine, and birds of many species. Cougar and bear are sometimes seen.

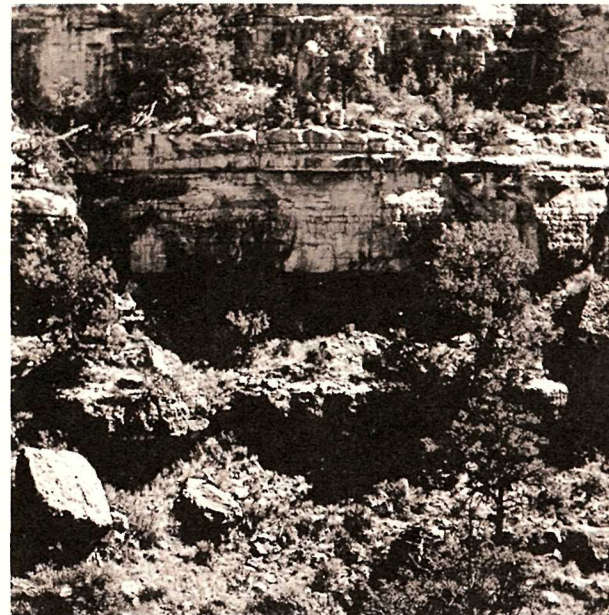
More than half a millennium has passed since the voices and laughter of the Sinagua were heard in the canyon. And yet a trace of the mood that these people created is still discernible.



SOUTHWEST REGION



SOUTHWEST ARCHEOLOGICAL AREAS



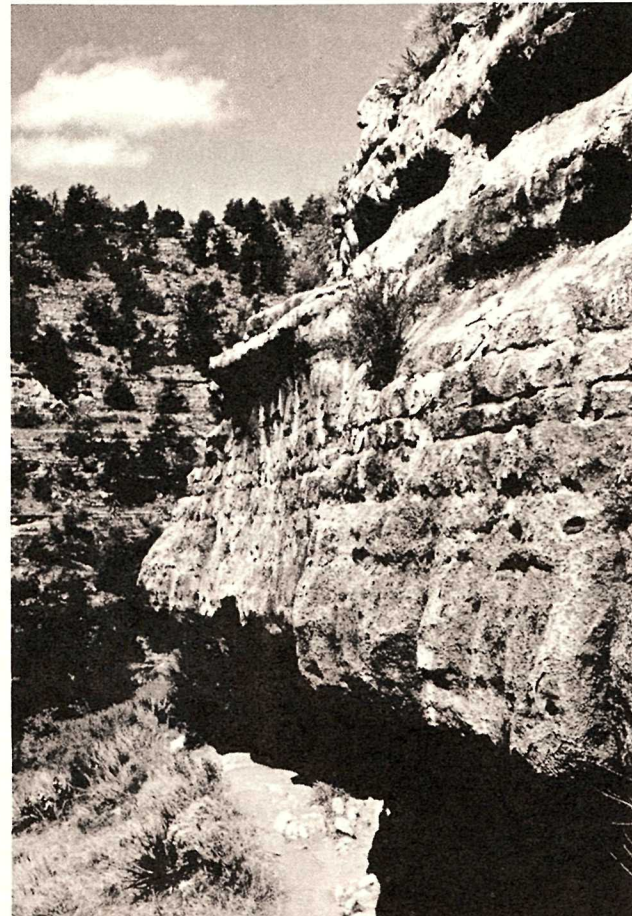
ABOUT YOUR VISIT

The entrance road to Walnut Canyon National Monument is an oiled highway 3 miles long, connecting with Int. 40 at a point 7½ miles east of Flagstaff.

Your first stop in the monument should be at the visitor center. Employees of the National Park Service will answer your questions and suggest ways you can make your visit to the monument most meaningful and enjoyable.

The trail that leads among the cliff dwellings is three-fourths of a mile long, round trip, and involves a climb of 185 feet. Elevation at the canyon rim is about 7,000 feet. The combination of the climb and the elevation will throw unaccustomed demands on your heart; and so if you have a heart condition or are uneasy about attempting the climb, you should not take the trail trip. Much can be seen from the rim of the canyon.

Accommodations are not available within the monument. Meals and lodging may be obtained at nearby towns and along the major highways.



A REMINDER

Federal laws prohibit the removal or defacement of any object of antiquity, the removal or damaging of any plant or other natural feature, and the hunting or capturing of any animal within the monument.

Fire is one of the greatest dangers to the monument. A carelessly dropped cigarette stub or match could cause a serious fire in this dry area. You are therefore asked to exercise extreme caution while smoking, especially while you are on the trail.

Hiking off established trails within the monument is permissible only by authorization of the superintendent.

Picnicking is permitted only in the designated picnic ground. If you use a fire in a fireplace in the picnic ground (and fires are prohibited elsewhere), you must extinguish it completely before you leave it—even though you intend to be away from it for only a few minutes. Just as you appreciate a clean picnic area, so will the visitors who come after you.

Because wild animals become tame and trusting in this their protected refuge, you must keep your pet on a leash or in your car at all times.

In consideration of you, visitors who preceded you to the monument observed the above rules.

ADMINISTRATION

Walnut Canyon National Monument, containing 1,879 acres, was established on November 30, 1915. It is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

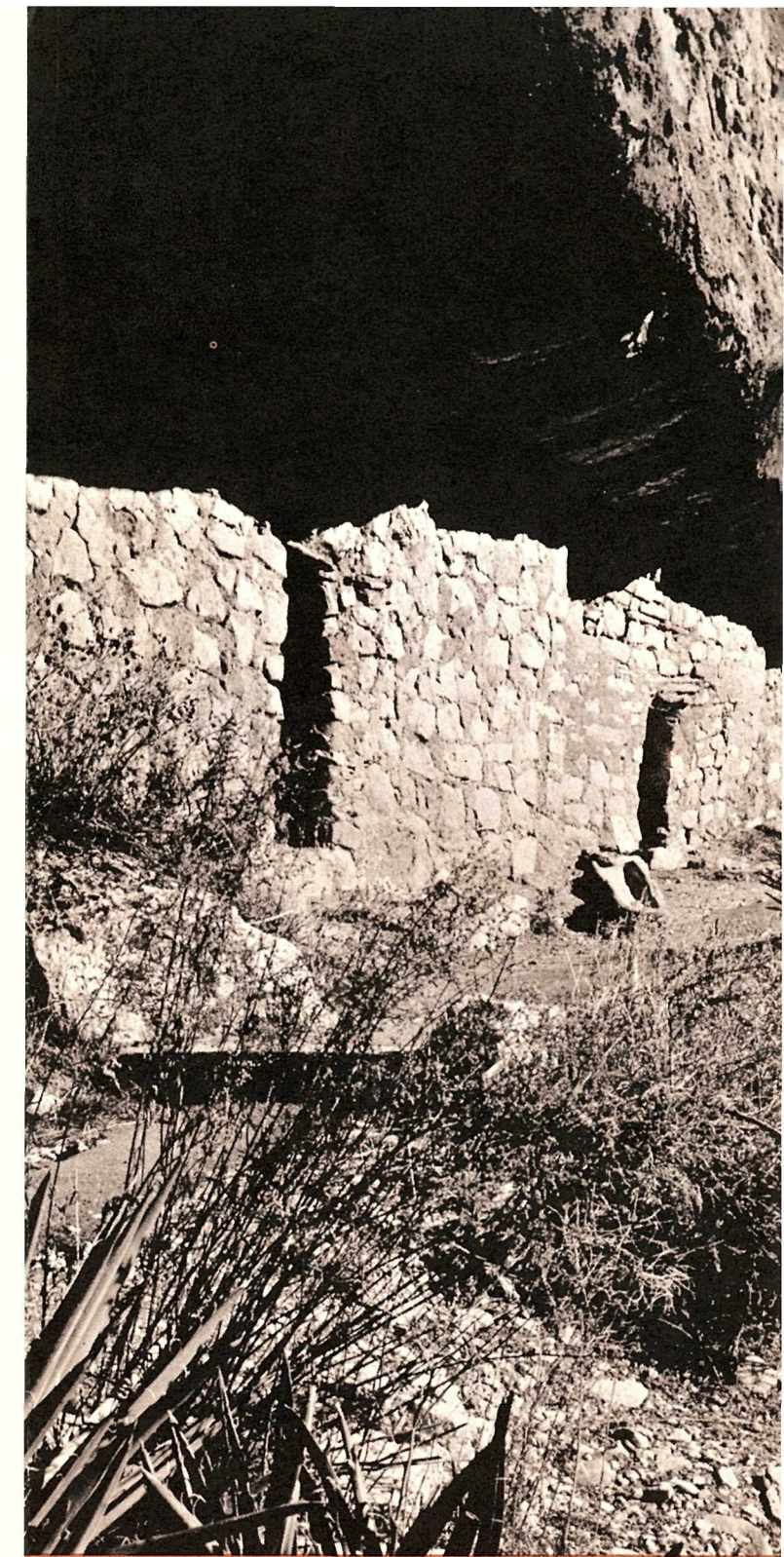
A superintendent, whose address is Route 1, Box 790, Flagstaff, AZ 86001, is in immediate charge of the monument.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U.S. DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1970—435-393 / 8
REPRINT 1970

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price 10 cents



WALNUT CANYON