



# upatki

*National Monument*



A R I Z O N A



# Wupatki NATIONAL MONUMENT

Remains of many 12th-century pueblos which sprang up after a volcanic eruption formed a mulch which improved agricultural conditions

The red sandstone pueblos of Wupatki were built by groups of prehistoric farming Indians, who lived much like the Hopis do today. More than 800 homesites have been discovered in the monument which include the pits of early earthlodges as well as 3-storied house structures. Studies of ancient wooden beams in the ruins have dated the major occupation as occurring between the late 1000's and the early 1200's.

These abundant prehistoric ruins constitute the tangible and colorful remains of an 11th-century Indian "land rush" that resulted from the eruption of a nearby volcano now called Sunset Crater.

Coming from several directions, groups of Indians met here and began to settle the extremely fertile land. At first they remained as distinct groups, but later they formed a local culture different from those in other sections of the prehistoric American Southwest.

The many ruins in Wupatki National Monument are in an unusual state of preservation. The most accessible are the Citadel and Wupatki Ruins, located 5 and 14 miles, respectively, from U. S. 89.

## *The Eruption and the Land Rush*

Prior to the eruption of Sunset Crater, the vast area from the San Francisco Peaks to the Little Colorado River was sparsely inhabited due to the scarcity of rainfall

for raising crops. A few families were scattered along the base of the peaks where abundant snow and frequent summer rains made farming possible.

In the fall of A. D. 1064, there were rumblings in the valley and a new volcano appeared which rapidly built into a cinder cone. Earthlodges, abandoned by the frightened Indians, collapsed into ruins, and huge clouds of volcanic cinder or ash buried the remains of their homes. A black mantle spread over more than 800 square miles between the mountains and the river.

Although this eruption was probably regarded as a catastrophe at the time, the Indians soon discovered that corn could be raised where plants previously had shriveled and died from lack of water. The fine layer of cinder over the soil formed a mulch which absorbed moisture from the scanty rain and snow. Gradually, news of this new farmland filtered out over the Southwest. The land rush was on.

## *The People*

Here truly was a "melting pot." Indian families came from the north, south, east, and west. This cinder-covered area is the only place where we find the Pueblo dry farmer from eastern and northern Arizona mingling with the Hohokam irrigation farmer from the south. Influences also are evident from the Mogollon groups to the

south and east and the less developed cultures of the Patayan groups to the west.

Each tribe came with corn seed and digging sticks to cultivate the cinder soils. They met and mingled. In the earlier village ruins, it is possible to distinguish these various people by characteristic styles of their utensils, tools, and weapons, but as time went on these differences became less and less apparent.

### *The Villages*

Villages were developed throughout the cinder-covered area. One of the most important and longest inhabited of these was a ruin now called Wupatki—a Hopi word for “Tall House.” Its location and size were probably determined by a spring, one of the few in this arid region.

Wupatki is one of the most spectacular pueblos in northern Arizona. Its walls rise from a sandstone spur at the base of a black lava mesa that overlooks the Painted Desert. From an insignificant pueblo of a few rooms, Wupatki grew until it became the largest in the region. During the 1100's it contained more than 100 rooms, was in places at least 3 stories high, and

had an estimated population of between 250 and 300 persons. To one side of the ruin, protected from the prevailing winds, was an open-air amphitheater which apparently was used for public ceremonies. In the valley below was a “ball court,” of stone masonry, 1 of 2 found in the vicinity. Little is known of the game itself, but it was very popular in southern Arizona prior to A. D. 1150 and was brought up by migrants from that region. In 1933-34, Wupatki was partially excavated by the Museum of Northern Arizona in cooperation with the National Park Service.

Around the Citadel was another concentration of prehistoric Indians. Within 1 square mile there are more than 100 sites, varying in size from earthlodges to the larger pueblos. The Citadel itself, as yet unexcavated, is a fortified apartment house. Probably it was 1 or 2 stories high and contained nearly 50 rooms. Its impregnable position on top of a small lava-capped mesa, overlooking a wide expanse of country, suggests that it served as a retreat during times of stress. Numerous loopholes through the thick walls strengthen this impression. On the ter-

The Citadel overlooking Nalakihi and the limestone sink





Wukoki Ruin

raced slopes of the mesa are circles of boulders, perhaps the remains of pole-and-mud houses. It is possible that the Citadel was built to guard a water supply that existed in the nearby limestone sinkhole.

Just below the Citadel is the small pueblo now called Nalakihi, a Hopi word for "House Standing Alone." Like Wupatki, it was excavated in 1934.

Other outstanding ruins in the monument are Wukoki Ruin, another fortified apartment house, and Crack-in-Rock near the Little Colorado River. To reach these less accessible ruins, it is necessary to make arrangements with the superintendent, whose office is near Wupatki Ruin.

### *Abandonment*

Tree-ring data indicate that the people of the Wupatki region did little or no building after the early 1200's. This situation probably was brought about by almost a century of drought in the Colorado River Basin, which began around A. D. 1215 and culminated in a great drought that lasted from A. D. 1276 to 1299. During this prolonged dry period, high winds undoubtedly swept much of the moisture-conserving

cinders into dunes, and gradually depleted the available acreage of farmland.

The entire region around the cinder-fall area underwent gradual depopulation during the 1200's, due to the drought conditions and reduction in cinder-covered fields. Some of the people apparently went south into the Verde Valley where there was a population increase around A. D. 1250. Others went east toward the Winslow region. By A. D. 1300, the Wupatki Basin was abandoned.

### *Tree-Ring Dates*

The time of occupation of many ruins in this region is fairly well known through the tree-ring dating method. The date of eruption of Sunset Crater is known from the study of timbers which had survived the eruption as living trees, and were used by the Indians in construction of pueblos built later. These beams exhibit a sudden decrease in growth at the end of the summer growing season of A. D. 1064.

### *The Monument*

Wupatki National Monument was established in 1924 by Presidential proclamation and contains 34,733 acres of Federal lands.

Elevation at Wupatki (headquarters) is 4,900 feet.

### *How To Reach the Monument*

The monument is easily approached from U. S. 89 at a point 27 miles north of its junction with U. S. 66, 4 miles east of Flagstaff, and 21 miles south of its junction with State Route 64 close to Cameron. There is also another entrance road from Sunset Crater National Monument, which is sometimes closed by snow in winter. Improvement of monument roads, started in 1953, will be completed by 1957. The entrance from U. S. 89 is a surfaced all-weather road.

### *About Your Visit*

Wupatki Ruin is open from 8 a. m. to 5 p. m. No accommodations are provided in the monument, but they may be obtained at either Flagstaff or Cameron, each approximately 40 miles away. Lunches may be purchased at a few points along U. S. 89.

*To preserve the ruins and for your own safety, do not walk on prehistoric walls.*

*Drive carefully and stay on the main traveled roads and established trails.*

*All areas of the National Park System are wildlife sanctuaries, and hunting is not allowed.*

*Dogs and cats must be kept on leash or otherwise under physical restrictive control.*

### *Related Areas*

This is one of the most interesting archeological and scenic localities in the United States. Walnut Canyon and Wupatki National Monuments are different manifestations of the effect of the eruption of Sunset Crater. Notable as the refugee areas during the Great Drought of prehistoric times are Tuzigoot and Montezuma Castle National Monuments. Montezuma Well, included in Montezuma Castle National Monument, is an important spot on the prehistoric trade route from the south. These areas also are administered by the National Park Service.

### *Administration*

Wupatki National Monument is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Tuba Star Route, Flagstaff, Ariz., is in immediate charge.

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.

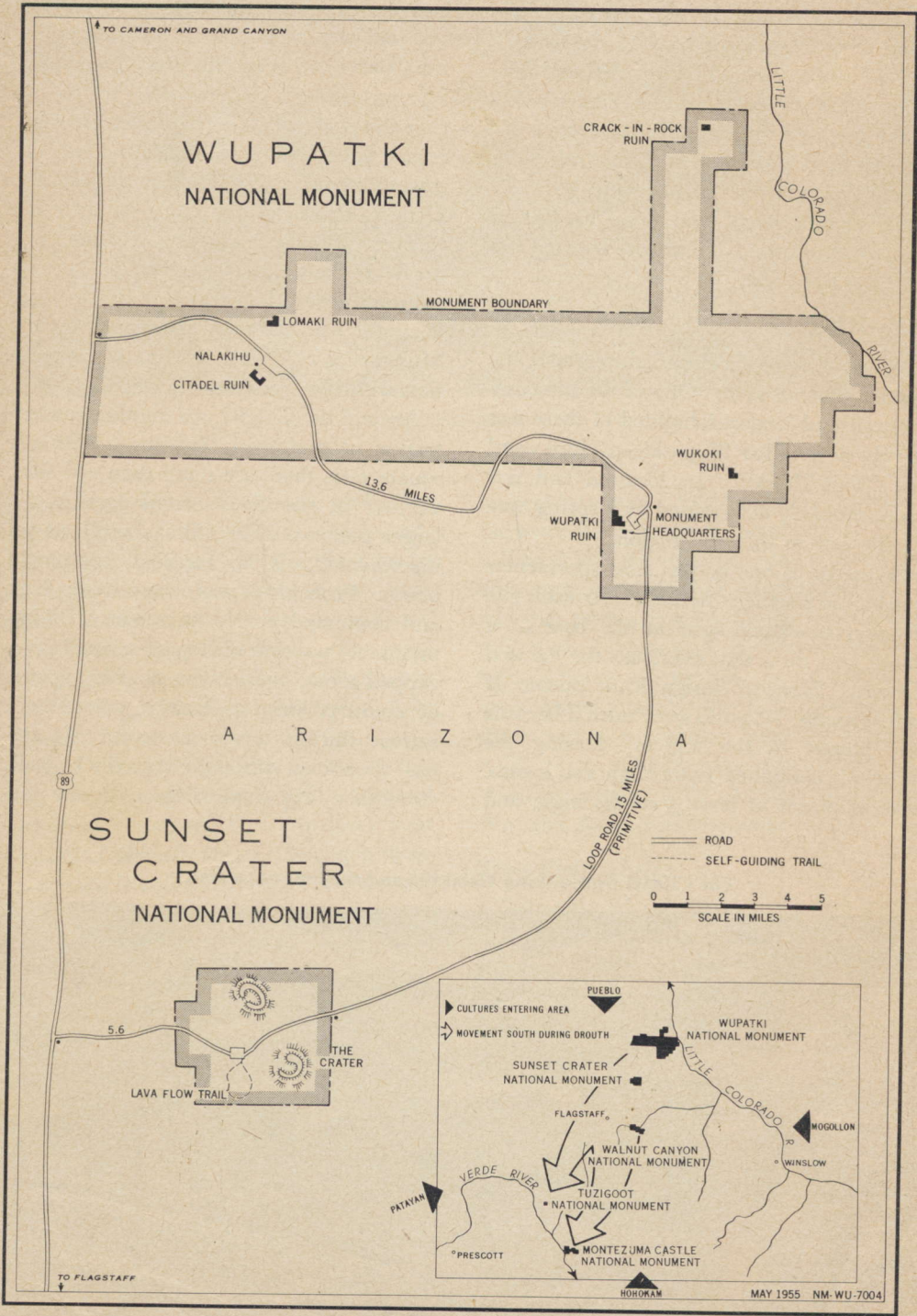


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Douglas McKay, Secretary

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Cover: Wupatki Ruin.

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