

# Bandelier

NATIONAL

MONUMENT

*New Mexico*

# Bandelier NATIONAL MONUMENT



United States Department of the Interior •  
Oscar L. Chapman, Secretary  
National Park Service • Newton B. Drury, Director

*Beautiful canyon country containing many cliff and open pueblo ruins of late prehistoric period*

The disastrous drought of the late 1200's broke up the ancient Pueblo Indian centers in the Southwest and forced the harried and worn survivors to move to locations where water supply was more constant.

A favorable area which received an influx of population was the upper Rio Grande Valley, in New Mexico. Here occurred one of the later flowerings of Pueblo culture, and it is this phase which the numerous ruins of Bandelier National Monument typify.

Several groups settled on the canyon-slashed slopes of the Pajarito Plateau.

Their habitat was unusual, with its tan cliffs of tuff, forested mesas, deep gorges, and general volcanic character. The story of their adaptation to their environment and their relationships with other groups adds a significant contribution to Southwestern prehistory as it is slowly brought to light through research by archeologists.

The Pajarito Plateau is of interest geologically as well as archeologically. It is constituted largely of tuff, or consolidated volcanic ash, and basaltic lava ejected thousands of years ago from the great volcanic crater—perhaps the largest in the world—

whose rim today forms the Jemez Mountains. Through this large plateau of volcanic material, running water has cut many steep-walled canyons down to the Rio Grande.

South of Frijoles Canyon is an undeveloped area of some 25,000 acres of wilderness, traversed only by trails.

The monument is named in honor of Adolph F. A. Bandelier, distinguished Swiss-American scholar, who carried on an extensive survey of prehistoric ruins in the region, and studied the Pueblo Indians around Santa Fe, between the years 1880 and 1886. Part of his time was spent in Frijoles Canyon. The plot of his ethno-historical novel, "The Delight Makers," is laid in Frijoles Canyon in prehistoric times.

## The Ruins

The most accessible features of Bandelier National Monument are the ruins in Frijoles Canyon. The ancients chose well the location for their dwellings. A deep gorge, cut by the stream rising high in the mountains, it is a veritable oasis in the dry coun-

try of New Mexico. Translated, the name "Rito de los Frijoles" means simply Bean Creek.

Cliff ruins, or talus villages, extend along the base of the northern wall of the canyon for approximately 2 miles. These houses of masonry were irregularly terraced, from one to three stories in height, and had many cave rooms, gouged out of the solid cliff. The cliff is of compressed volcanic ash, or tuff, worked with tools of harder stone.

In front of the caves is the ruined pueblo of Tyuonyi, on the floor of Frijoles Canyon. It is a large structure of nearly circular plan with three kivas in an enclosed plaza. This large community house was excavated in 1908, 1909, and 1910 by the Museum of New Mexico and the School of American Research.

Tree-ring chronology and correlations of pottery types indicate that most of Bandelier's ruins belong to the late prehistoric period, although a few small ruins date back to the twelfth century. The large pueblos of Tyuonyi, Sankawi, and Otowi evidently were occupied until near A. D.

1600 although their decline had probably set in by the time Coronado visited the country in 1540. No direct mention of Pajarito villages is made in chronicles of the expedition.

Like other ancient pueblo dwellers, the Frijoles inhabitants were farmers. They grew corn, beans, and pumpkins. Cotton cloth is found in the caves, indicating they probably had cotton and understood the use of the loom, but, since the growing season on the plateau is short, cotton may have been obtained by trade. Pottery with decorations in glaze was made.

Exact cause of abandonment of the dwellings is unknown. For centuries the pioneer Indian farmers lived in the Rito, built villages, honeycombed the cliffs with artificial caves, and tilled the soil in the valley and on the uplands. After several centuries, drought, flood, famine, savage foes, disease, or the depletion of the soil forced the dwellers in the canyon again to seek new homes.

## Establishment

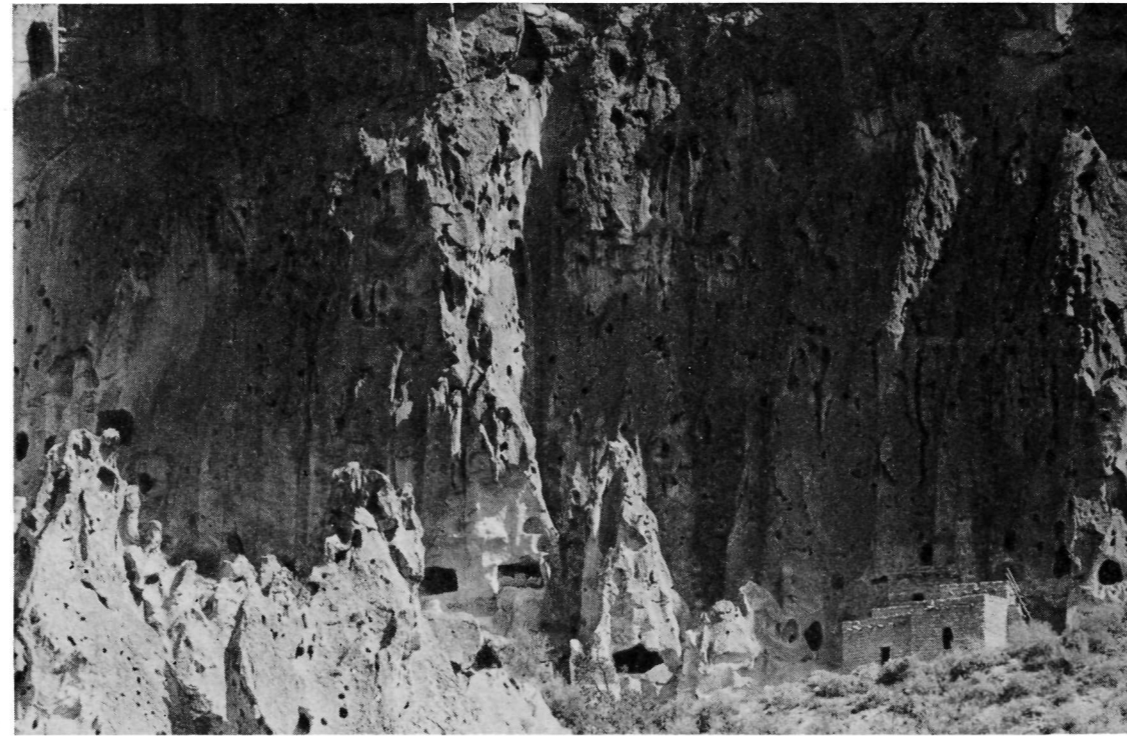
Bandelier National Monument, established in 1916, is part of the National Park System, owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. In these the scenery and the objects of historic, prehistoric, and scientific interest are carefully preserved and displayed for public enjoyment.

Consisting of 27,049 acres, Bandelier National Monument is located 46 miles west of Santa Fe, N. Mex. It is one of a number of southwestern areas in the National Park System which have been established to provide special protection for prehistoric structures. These include Mesa Verde National Park, in southwestern Colorado, and the following national monuments: Aztec Ruins, Chaco Canyon, and Gila Cliff Dwellings, in New Mexico; Canyon de Chelly, Casa Grande, Montezuma Castle, Navajo, Tonto, Tuzigoot, Walnut Canyon, and Wupatki, in Arizona; Yucca

Tyuonyi Ruin



Restored Prehistoric Dwelling and "Tent" Rocks, Frijoles Canyon



Frijoles Canyon Lodge



