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Cave Dwellings within the Gila Cliff-Dwellings National Monument.



Community House Ruin Within Cave in Gila Cliff-Dwellings National Monument.

NATIONAL MONUMENTS OF NEW MEXICO

IV—Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument.

WHEN the hero Hlakwa, so runs the Zuni legend, who came from Santa Domingo to join the Puebloos at Zuni, four years after the War Gods had set fire to the world, had fulfilled his mission among the Seven Cities of Cibola, he separated from the Puebloos and took up his abode in the great mountains south of the Sacred Salt Lake. One may infer from the artifacts and remains found in this region, that of the upper Gila and San Francisco, in western Socorro and Grant counties, New Mexico, that Hlakwa took with him the culture of the Puebloos.

It is fairly well established that the earliest expeditions of the Spaniards to the Seven Cities of Cibola took them through the rough Gila country, but even at that early date, 1539, it had been abandoned by its inhabitants. Later the Apaches took possession. But the caves and cliff dwellings, the communal house-rains and the artifacts the pre-Spanish inhabitants left centuries before are the marvel and the puzzle of archaeologists today.

Walter Hough in his "Antiquities of the Upper Gila" says of this region: "The Gila-Salt region is of such great extent and presents such physiographic diversity that it could well have contained within its walls several peoples distinct in language and arts. Transitory tribes moved across it and local populations inhabited almost inaccessible valleys, cultures mingled on the indefinite boundaries, and there were displacements of one tribe by another; but as a whole, in respect to arts, this section of the Southwest is uniform and characteristic."

Of this vast region covering so large a portion of southwestern New Mexico and southern Arizona as far west as the Colorado, the United States has set aside several tracts,—samples or specimens so to speak,—and created them National Monuments, to be a heritage of the American people forever, where the spectacular architectural remains of this ancient culture may be studied for future generations. In New Mexico, only a quarter section, 160 acres, within the Gila National Forest and in the heart of



Interior of Cave Dwelling within the Gila Cliff-Dwellings National Monument.

the Mogollon mountains, north of Silver City, was taken and set aside as the "Gila Cliff-Dwelling National Monument." President Theodore Roosevelt issued the proclamation and described the site as the N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 27, T. 12 S. R. 14 W.

The region round about is equally as wonderful and prolific in prehistoric remains, in grandeur of mountain and forest scenery. Fortunately, the Forest Service is doing all in its power to preserve these cave, cliff, and even subterranean or so-called "pit" ruins which have puzzled archaeologists and which have been lately excavated and studied in detail by Dr. J. Walter Fewkes. Kivas and shrines exist by the hundreds.

Bandelier describes the type of ruins within this National Monument as follows: "These cave dwellings are properly but one story high, but the compulsory adaptation to the configuration of the ground has caused an accidental approach to two stories. They are instructive for the study of the development of the terraced house of the Pueblo Indian. Perfectly sheltered, and therefore quite well preserved, the cave villages are perhaps larger than the open air ruins, compactness compensating for the limitation in space. But they illustrate the fact that the foundations re-

maining of villages built in the open air are frequently only those of courts or enclosures, the mounds alone indicating the site of buildings. Of the 26 compartments contained in the caves on Diamond creek only nine were clearly elevated structures, as the doorways show; the rest are in many cases courts of small dimensions, encompassed by low and still perfect enclosures. The roofs are of the pueblo pattern, well defined, but in one cave the trouble of building them was spared by completely walling up the entrance, with two apertures for admission. The fireplace was a rectangular hearth, as I found it at Pecos, and placed in the center of the room.

"The partition walls are of stone and laid up in adobe mud. Some of them still preserve their outer coating of yellowish clay. Their thickness is .30 meter, and the roofs were entire on some of the rooms. Round beams with the bark peeled off were in a good state of preservation. The diameter of these beams varied between .07 and .24 of a meter (2 to 9½ inches). The roof which these beams supported was of the ordinary Pueblo pattern and .23 meter (9 inches) thick. The doorways were nearly square, and low. Air holes T shaped and of unusual size (.35 by 1 meter), opened upon the outside in several places.

"These buildings occupy four caverns the second of which toward the east is 10 meters high. The western cave communicates with the others only from the outside, while the eastern ones are separated by huge pillars, behind which are natural passages from one cave to the other. The height of the floor above the bed of the creek is 55 meters, and the ascent is steep, in some places barely possible. To one coming from the mouth of the cleft, the caves become visible only after he has passed them, so that they are well concealed. But while it would be difficult for an Indian to take the place by storm, its inhabitants could easily be cut off from water or starved. The southern slope, fronting the caves, is steep, but covered with forests, and the cleft is so narrow that a handful of men, armed with bows and arrows and posted behind the tall pines, could effectively blockade the cave dwellings. With all its natural advantages, therefore, this cave village was still extremely vulnerable.

"Among the many objects taken from these ruins I mention particularly sandals made of strips of the yucca. It

may be remembered that similar footgear was found at the Tze-yi (Chelly). I have been informed that the Tarahumares of southwestern Chihuahua still wear the same kind of sandals. In addition wear the same kind of sandals. In addition of baskets; also prayer plumes and prayer sticks. Such remains indicate that their makers were in no manner different from the Pueblo Indians in general culture."

The culture typical of the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument extended as far east as the Black Range and the Jornada del Muerto, and seemed to have flourished especially in the Mimbres Valley. To it belong the Casas Grandes in northern Mexico, the Casa Grande in Arizona and other sites that run into the hundreds. Pictographs and petroglyphs are found all over this region and the population must have been comparatively large. A visit to the Monument is sure to prove enjoyable, for it is set among superb mountain and forest scenery and it is but an introduction to sights and landmarks that are incomparable in their class.