Overhanging ledges protected homes

Please Notice

Many persons visit the monument each day. If everyone will preserve the wildflowers and protect the ruins from defacement, Walnut Canyon will remain a lovely place for future visitors to enjoy. For this reason it is also asked that picnickers leave a clean camp in the designated picnic area and be sure their fire has been completely extinguished.

Because the wild animals—birds, squirrels, foxes, turkeys, etc.—become tame and trusting in this, their protected refuge, domestic pets should not be allowed to harm them and must be kept under physical restrictive control.

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 country. If you smoke, please be very careful while on the trail.

Your suggestions and cooperation will be sincerely appreciated.

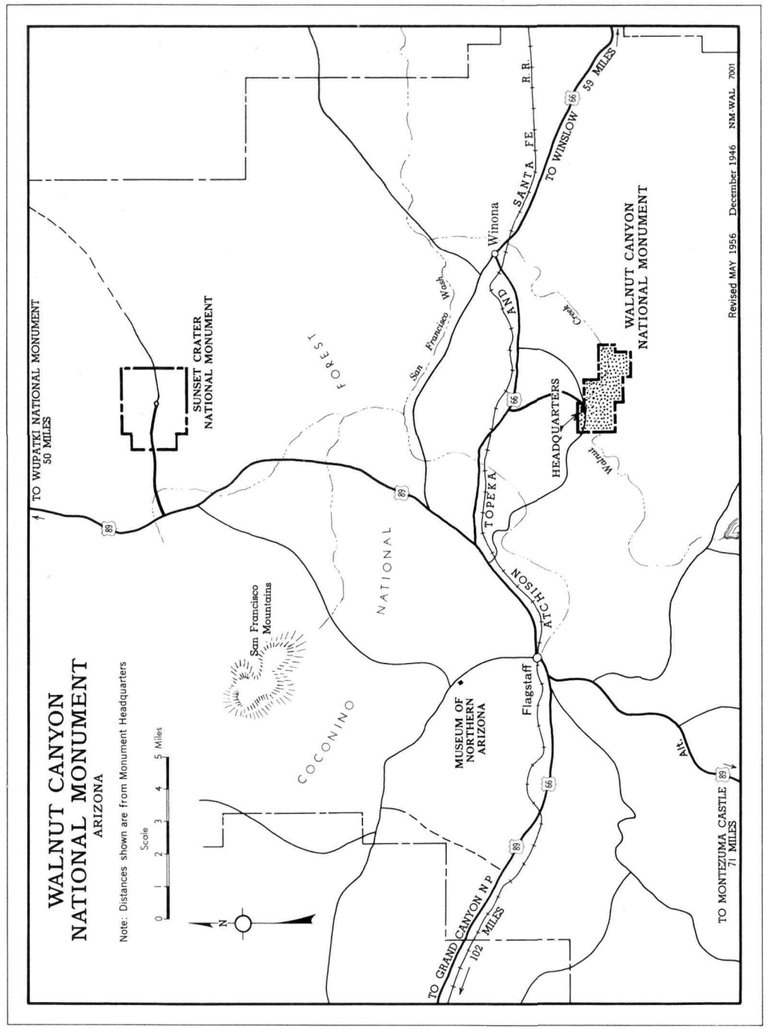
Administration

Walnut Canyon National Monument, which includes an area of approximately 1,642 acres of Federal land, is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. The monument was established by Presidential proclamation in 1915, and enlarged by Presidential proclamation in 1938.

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

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*

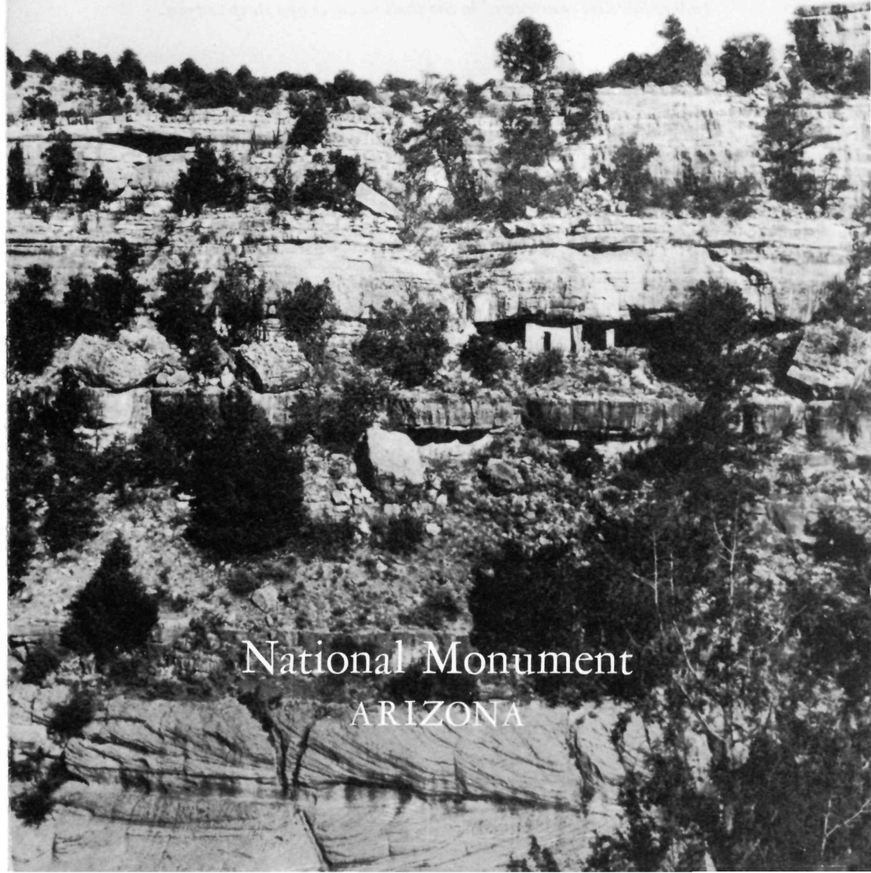
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*



Revised 1956

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1956—O-387097

WALNUT CANYON



National Monument
ARIZONA

Walnut Canyon

National Monument

Site of hundreds of small 13th-century cliff dwellings which their Indian builders constructed in the shallow caves of a steep canyon.

Walnut Canyon National Monument preserves the remains of more than 300 small prehistoric cliff dwellings. There are also many small surface ruins of the same early period, which have been weathered to unspectacular mounds of rock and clay. In addition to its geological and biological interest, Walnut Canyon is a scenic area.

Why Did The People Live Here?

Within the monument area Walnut Canyon is approximately 400 feet deep. The lower part is carved into a cross-bedded sandstone of the Toroweap formation. The upper 270 feet of the canyon was cut 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 are few doors in the dividing partitions, it appears that in most cases 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, known as the Sinagua, 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 commoner canyon plants were used by historic Indians for food, fiber, dye, medicine, fuel, construction, ceremonial purposes, or as materials for implements, weapons, and household furnishings. They included ponderosa pine, pinyon, oak, four species of juniper, Douglas-fir, locust, black walnut (for which the canyon was named), aspen, willow, boxelder, hoptree, hollygrape, serviceberry, elderberry, snowberry, lemonade sumac, mountain-mahogany, cliffrose, currant, saltbush, tobacco, Mormon tea, grape, mescal, yucca, and several species of cactuses.

Among the animals which they could have hunted for meat, sinew, or skins were the deer, elk, antelope, bear, cougar, wolf, coyote, bobcat, fox, rabbit, pack rat, squirrel, and porcupine. They could also have hunted many species of birds, ranging from wild turkeys to sparrows.

They traded extensively with other tribes for such things as red stone, seashells, 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.

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 Douglas tree-ring method. The period of greatest population was from A. D. 1000 to 1200. Pottery dating from earlier than A. D. 1000 is sometimes found.

The National Park system, of which this park is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefits and enjoyment of its people.

Ruins show construction methods

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, vandals 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

The entrance road to Walnut Canyon National Monument is an oiled highway 3 miles long, connecting with U. S. 66 at a point 7½ miles east of Flagstaff.

There are two secondary approaches by graveled road, open in good weather. One, from the west, leaves U. S. 66 at a point 4½ miles east of Flagstaff, and is 6 miles long. The other, from the east, 4 miles long, leaves U. S. 66 about 11 miles east of Flagstaff. These graveled roads make a dry-weather loop route which adds only 3½ miles to the trip for visitors traveling east or west on U. S. 66.

About Your Visit

The monument is open all year. From October through April visiting hours are 8 a. m. to 5 p. m., and from May through September, 7 a. m. to 7 p. m. There is an admission fee for persons of 12 years or older. Children under 12 must be with adults at all times while in the area.

A good foot trail leads to 25 of the cliff dwellings, and from this trail about 100 more may be seen. It is possible to make the trail trip in 20 minutes, but the average time 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 had from the observation porch at the canyon rim.

An attractive exhibition and observation building provides additional facilities for your comfort. Museum exhibits interpret various interesting phases of the life of ancient inhabitants of the Walnut Canyon region.

No accommodations are available in the monument. However, meals and lodgings may be obtained in Flagstaff and along U. S. 66 between Flagstaff and the monument's western entrance.

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