Interior. A permanent superintendent and ranger are stationed in the monument for the guidance of visitors and to give them information. The monument is open to the public every day in the year. The National Park Service maintains a picnic area at monument headquarters.

All communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Chaco Canyon National Monument, Bloomfield, N. Mex.

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Threatening Rock before it fell on January 22, 1941.
Chaco Canyon National Monument, one of the outstanding archeological areas in the United States, contains more than a dozen large ruins and hundreds of smaller archeological sites. These ruins lie about 80 miles north of central Mexico. Most of the sites are contained in a strip of land about 8 miles long and 2 miles wide, through which Chaco Canyon runs. No other archeological area in the entire Southwest exhibits such a high development of prehistoric Pueblo civilization.

It is difficult to omit superlatives when describing these ruins. Pueblo Bonito, for example, is one of the most imposing and best known of the prehistoric Southwest. Pueblo Bonito, about 3 miles down the canyon from the headquarters area, is one of the most imposing and best known of the prehistoric Southwest. This ruin contains more than 800 rooms and 32 kivas, or ceremonial chambers. Two were great kivas, while the others were smaller ritual or society rooms. Neill Judd, of the United States National Museum, who conducted the excavations for the National Geographic Society, characterizes Pueblo Bonito as the largest apartment house built anywhere in the world prior to 1887 and estimates that at one time it housed 1,200 people.

Cultural Material

Many interesting artifacts have been found in excavations in Chaco ruins, especially stone tools and weapons, bone implements, and the distinctive and characteristic Chaco pottery. Wooden objects, fragments of basketry, skin and bits of cotton cloth, cordage, and feathers have been found; but these perishable materials are rare. Of particular interest are the finds of turquoise and gilsonite, a variety of asphalt. Painted wooden, stone, and bone objects are rare.

Some of the outstanding archeological areas in the Southwest. Built more than 1,000 years ago, this four- and five-story village was constructed in the shape of a great capital D close to the base of the sandstone cliff forming the north canyon wall.

Prior to the fall of Threatening Rock, if one wished an over-all view of Pueblo Bonito, it was necessary to take about a half-mile trail to get to the top of the cliff. Part of this trail consists of stone steps cut by these prehistoric people. From the top of the cliff, an excellent view not only of Bonito but of several other ruins down the canyon. Since Threatening Rock has now fallen, it is possible to climb through its debris and get a good view from some distance. Of special interest are the bases of macaws. The skeletons of 14 macaws were found in one room in Pueblo Bonito. The ancient people, like the modern Pueblo Indians, must have been eager to get macaws and local birds, such as jays and eagles, to use the feathers in sacred dances. The macaws were presumably obtained by trade from the south, as were the copper bells and most of the sea shells.

The Small Sites

Most of this unusual material has come from the great ruins, especially Pueblo Bonito, and probably represents the late period of Chaco Canyons in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Many of the small ruins were occupied in this same period, some of them, however, at much earlier, having been occupied in the seventh and eighth centuries.

These earliest Chaco sites are little villages of crude pit houses, very different from the gigantic towns of superb masonry which developed later. Pottery of the early sites is quite different and inferior in workmanship. Sequences both of masonry types and of types of the black-on-white Chaco pottery can be worked out, showing the development over a period of some centuries in the Chaco Canyon area.

The Abandonment

Soil erosion caused by deforestation is thought to have been a major factor in the relatively early abandonment of the region. Raising of crops would have been halted by arroyo cutting, such as has gone on recently. The dry deep stream bed now seen at Chaco is only some 75 years old. Less than 100 years ago there was a running stream in a shallow bed lined with vegetation, and Navajo Indians were able to grow corn in the canyon. The Chaco apparently was abandoned during the twelfth century, and its peoples are supposed to have migrated south to the Little Colorado and east to the Rio Grande.

The Chaco Canyon was proclaimed a national monument March 11, 1907. It is a part of the National Park System owned by the people of the United States and administered for them by the National Park Service. The Chaco Canyon is now being developed for a distance of 24 miles to monument headquarters. Tourist accommodations may be had at Gallup to the south and at Artec and Farmington to the north.

Administration and Facilities

How to Reach the Monument

Chaco Canyon National Monument is in San Juan and McKinley Counties in northwestern New Mexico. The area is reached by leaving U S 66, at Thoreau and traveling 64 miles north over a graded road marked with National Park Service signs. From the north the visitor should follow State Road 44 south from the town of Artec and Artec Ruins National Monument for a distance of 40 miles, then State Road 36 for a distance of 24 miles to monument headquarters. Tourist accommodations may be had at Gallup to the south and at Artec and Farmington to the north.