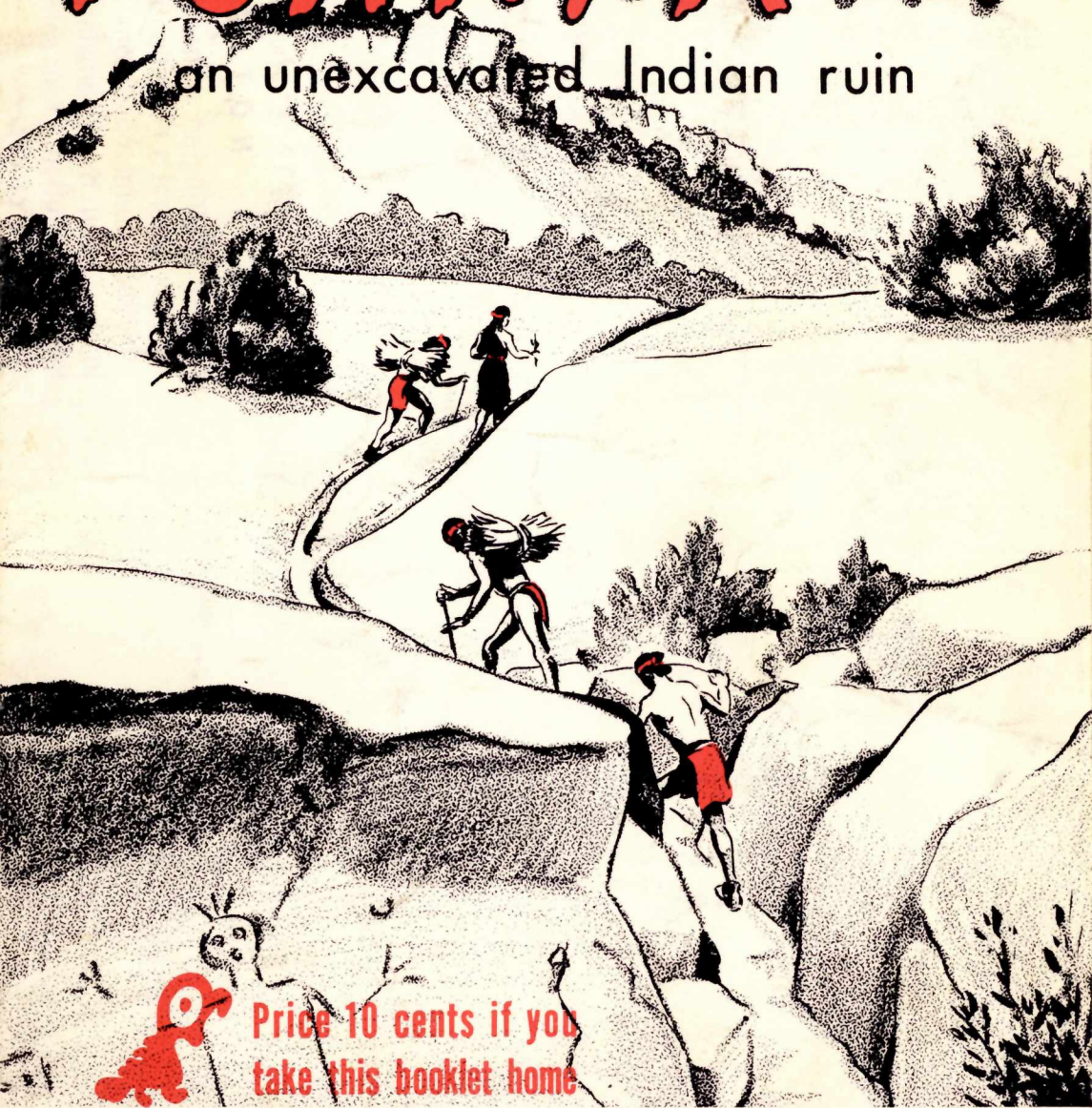


The TRAIL To

TSANKAWI

an unexcavated Indian ruin



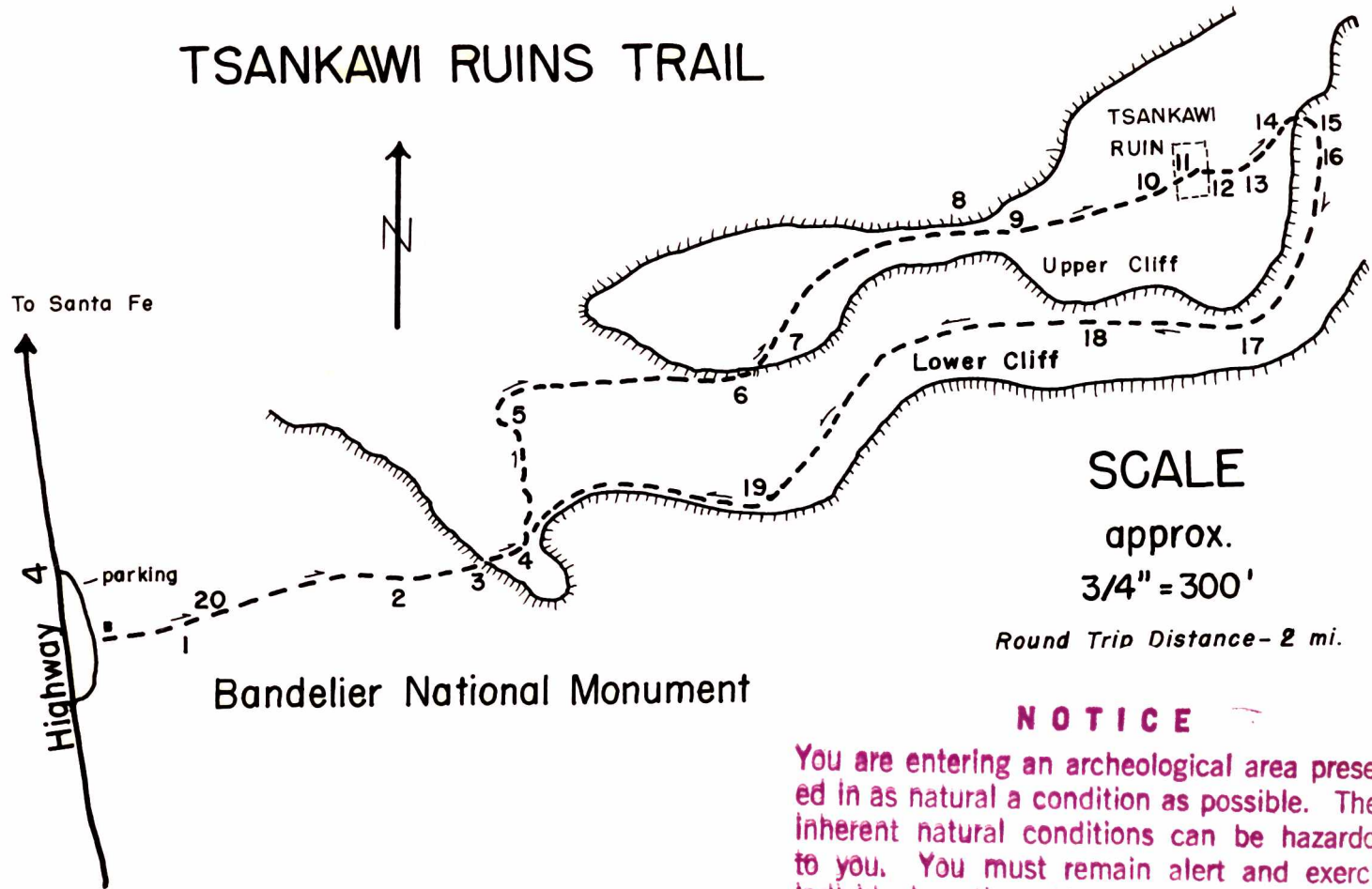
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BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT

28 MILES NORTHWEST OF SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

TSANKAWI RUINS TRAIL



Round Trip Distance - 2 mi.

NOTICE

You are entering an archeological area preserved in as natural a condition as possible. These inherent natural conditions can be hazardous to you. You must remain alert and exercise individual caution. Your safety and that of your children are of concern to us.

TSANKAWI RUINS BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT

This booklet will be the trail guide for your walk to Tsankawi (TSANK-ah-wee), a large unexcavated pueblo ruin, located in a spectacular mesa-top setting about three-quarters of a mile from here. In climbing to the mesa top you will follow some of the original trails used by the people who lived here hundreds of years ago.

Numbered paragraphs in this booklet correspond to numbered markers which are located at points of interest along the trail. The map on the opposite page shows the route to travel.

Tsankawi Ruin, the cliff dwellings, and other features are within the boundaries of Bandelier National Monument. The National Park Service asks your cooperation in preserving these ruins for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. **Caution: Please be careful with fire.**

TRAIL TO TSANKAWI RUINS

The prehistoric inhabitants of Tsankawi were totally dependent upon their environment. Everything they owned — their homes, clothing, and tools; all of their food; everything came directly from their “mother Earth.” Then, after many years of occupancy they suddenly vanished. Why? Archeologists tell us perhaps they ceased to live in harmony with their environment.

Are we today with all our technical advances any less dependent on our environment for survival? What will be our history if we live without regard for the laws of nature?

Some of these issues may come to mind as you take this trail.

1 ENVIRONMENT. This landscape has changed little if any since the time when the Indians were living here. The environment is dry and harsh, and cold at times in winter, yet these folk were able to develop an agricultural way of

life that was adapted to it. They were able to take advantage of the few available natural resources, and made their living from the land.

2 **VEGETATION.** The vegetation here is characteristic of the Upper Sonoran Life Zone which is relatively warm and dry for this altitude (6500 to 7090 feet). Along the trail you will see pinyon and juniper trees, rabbitbrush, yucca, saltbush, and other plants, many of which were used at Tsankawi to help provide food, clothing, and shelter.

See all that you care to, but do not disturb or remove any pieces of pottery or other artifacts that you may see here. Please do not deface walls of the caves or cliffs in any way.

3 **TUFF.** These mesas are made of a soft volcanic-ash rock called *tuff*, spewn from a gigantic, long extinct volcano about 10 miles west of here. This material could be shaped into blocks for house building, cave shelters could be carved into its soft cliffs, and it provided a rich soil for farming.





These are only a few of many petroglyphs or rock carvings along the cliff.

4 **ROCK PLATFORM.** This natural platform would have been a good place for ceremonial purposes, or for carrying on many everyday activities. Near the edge are a series of shallow depressions which were probably used as mortars for grinding seeds, or for pounding up other materials.

5 **ORIGINAL TRAILS.** These trails, and sections of the trail which you are following, are centuries old. They were worn down into the rock by countless bare and sandal-shod feet, as these people travelled back and forth from their mesa-top home to their fields and springs in the canyons below. The rock is soft, but even so, you get a strange and “temporary” feeling when trying to imagine how long it took to wear trails this deep.

Do not disturb these trails or any trees or shrubs.

6 **PETROGLYPHS.** The petroglyphs, or rock carvings, on the rock to the left are only a few of many along this cliff.

You can see three human-like figures, two bird designs, crosses, and other symbols. The large figure has corn husks, or parrot feathers, on top of the head, and may be a trail guard.

Just ahead, you will climb to the mesa top in the original trail of long ago.

7 MESA TOP. Why did the people choose this, and other similar mesa-top locations for their home? A lack of soil here would have made farming possible only in a few small and scattered plots. Certainly most of their fields of corn, beans, and squash were in the canyons below. The small amount of water which was available was probably to be found mostly in a few springs along the canyon floors. It would have to be carried up here in pottery jars. Perhaps these mesa-top locations were chosen for defensive reasons, yet there is no evidence of warfare or strife. Perhaps there were other reasons for which we have no evidence as yet.

8 "DUCHESS CASTLE." In the valley to the northeast are the remains of a home built by Madame Vera von Blumenthal in 1918. She and a close friend, Miss Rose Dugan, lived there for several years. During this time they did a great deal to revive and improve the quality of pottery made in some of the nearby Indian Pueblos, especially San Ildefonso.

9 GEOLOGY. To the west (behind you) are the Jemez (HAY-mess) Mountains. They form the east rim of the great extinct volcano which showered forth the ash or *tuff* to form the plateau which you see in the foreground. This Pajarito (Spanish for "little bird") Plateau recently has been singled out by geologists as one of the most outstanding examples of *tuff* formations in the world. On the south and east flanks of the plateau rain and streams have cut the region into countless mesas—such as the one on which you now stand — separated by narrow, steep-walled can-



Streams have cut deep canyons through the ash deposited from the Jemez Volcano leaving high mesas.

yons. The walls of these canyons are the exposed deposits of compacted ash that in some places reach a thickness of 1000 feet.

The main portion of Bandelier National Monument, of which Tsankawi is a part, is an ideal place to see this geological phenomenon. You may reach Bandelier by driving west on State Road 4 for 11 miles to the entrance and then an additional 3 miles on park roads to monument headquarters in Frijoles Canyon.

10 TSANKAWI RUIN. The Tewa Indian name for Tsankawi (*saekewikwaje onwikege*) means "pueblo ruin above the gap of the sharp round cactus." This large "apartment" house had about 350 rooms. It was two, and perhaps even three, stories high in some places. It is roughly rectangular in shape, and encloses a large central courtyard, or plaza, in front of you. Archeological evidence indicates that this site may have been occupied as early as A.D. 1200, although the main building was probably built during the 1400's.

The centuries have taken their toll, the roofs have fallen in, and the walls have partially collapsed. Windblown material has sifted in and the once-proud building has been reduced to the low mounds of rubble which you now see.

The townspeople had a spectacular view of the surrounding area from their home here. To the west are the Jemez Mountains, and to the east are the Sangre de Cristo (Blood of Christ) Mountains, and the Española Valley. To the south, about 70 miles, are the Sandia (watermelon) Mountains, which are just east of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

11 KIVAS. The two shallow depressions in the plaza are *kivas*, or ceremonial rooms. These circular rooms were usually built below ground level, and were used primarily for religious observances.

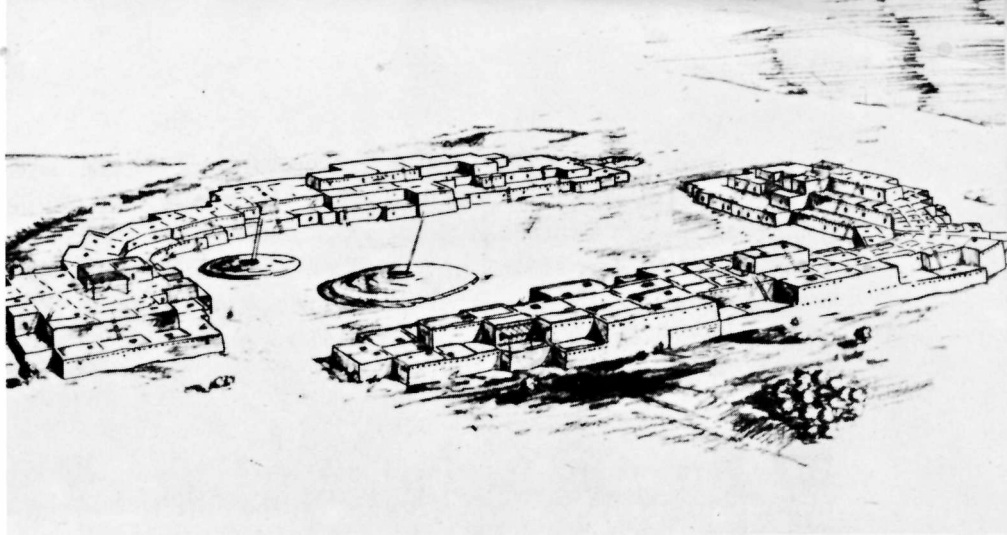
12 TSANKAWI RUIN. Tsankawi was probably occupied until about A.D. 1600. Traditions at the modern pueblo of San Ildefonso, 8 miles northeast of here, say that their ancestors once lived in Tsankawi and other nearby towns. Why did these people leave this, and other sites? From tree-ring evidence we learn there was a prolonged dry period in this area during the late 1500's. Perhaps the lack of rain brought about crop failures, and the drying up of springs. There may have been other reasons too, but this and other intriguing problems cannot be fully solved until further research and excavation is completed.

Please do not remove any pieces of pottery, or other artifacts. They are important archeological evidence of the people who lived here.

13 KIVA. This round depression, and several similar structures around the outside of the main building are apparently kivas.

14 WALL. The purpose of this low wall is not known. Perhaps it was a retaining wall to hold soil in place for farming. Knowledge of its use must await excavation.

The trail from here on is somewhat more difficult, so you may wish to return by the trail which you followed to this point.



Tsankawi as it might have looked when occupied

However, if you wish to see some of the cave dwellings associated with Tsankawi, follow this trail to the cliff edge, proceed down the ladder to the first ledge, and return by that lower route to the beginning of the trail.

15 CAVES. Most of the caves carved into the cliff to your left had small masonry buildings constructed in front of them. These buildings have long since collapsed. In many cases the only remaining evidences of them are the socket holes in which their roof timbers once rested, above the caves which you see today.

To return follow the trail to the right.

16 HAND AND TOE TRAIL. Numerous hand and toe trails such as this one were cut into the cliffs in place of ladders.

17 THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE. Now as in times past there are many forces which are slowly changing the landscape. Erosion is gradually wearing away the cliffs here. Wind, running water, freezing and thawing, and plant action, such as tree roots, break away sections of the rock. In turn chemical action from lichens (the light green and rust colored growth on the nearby rocks), and from other sources break down the rock into soil. Man, too, can

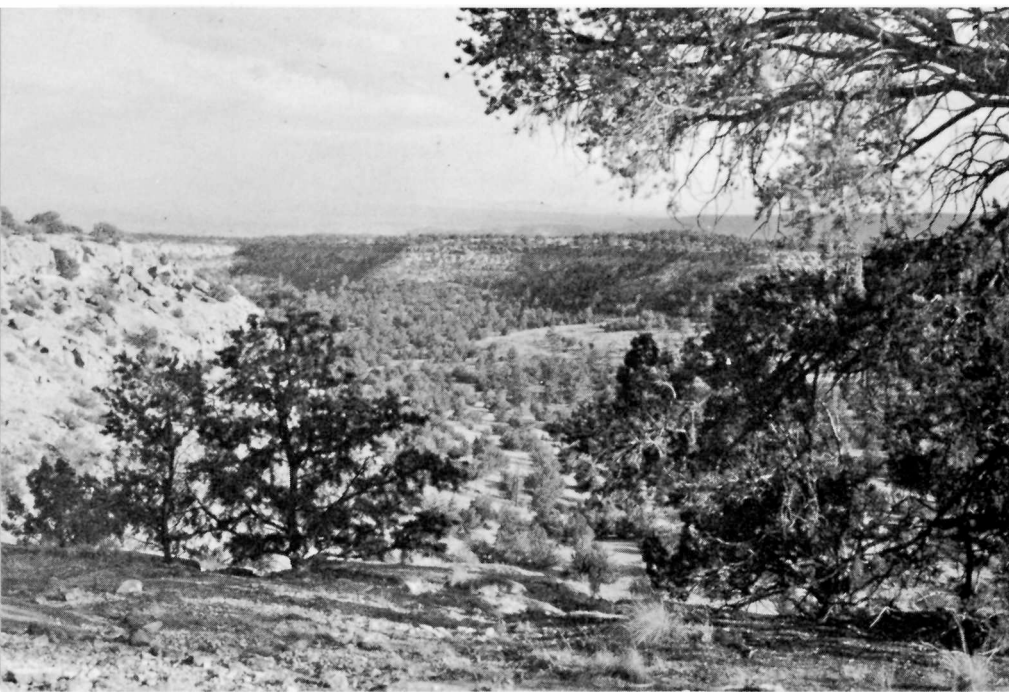
change his environment. Along the bases of the low mesas to the south you can see the scar of a forest fire, caused by a carelessly left campfire. The people who lived here centuries ago changed the canyon floors by planting their crops. Small differences in the amount of rainfall also would affect the growth of these crops and other vegetation, and thereby produce additional slight changes in the landscape.

18 **PETROGLYPHS.** If you will look carefully you will see many petroglyphs, or rock carvings, on the cliff to the right along this section of trail.

19 **RETURN TRAIL.** By following the lower ledge you will return to the rock platform near the beginning of the trail.

20 **END OF THE TRAIL.** The National Park Service hopes that you have enjoyed your visit to Tsankawi. You have just explored a small part of Bandelier National Monument. You are invited to visit the main section of the Monument, which is 11 miles south of here on State Highway 4. There in beautiful Frijoles Canyon are located the

Crops of corn, beans, and squash were raised in the canyons below Tsankawi



Monument Headquarters, Visitor Center, and numerous ruins. The Visitor Center is open daily from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. (longer hours during the summer). A park ranger is on duty to answer your questions, and to help you plan your visit. The Visitor Center has a small museum, and there you may view a short sound-slide program describing the ruins in Frijoles Canyon, and other points of interest. Other facilities and services in the headquarters area are:

1. *Frijoles Canyon Ruins Trail.* Open all year, self-guiding. Also there are conducted trips by rangers during the summer.

2. *A small picnic and lunch area* is located near the Visitor Center in Frijoles Canyon.

3. *Camping.* A ninety-two site campground, with space for tents or trailers, is located on the mesa above Frijoles Canyon. Each camp site has a table, fireplace, and parking area. There are centrally located modern restrooms, and water taps.

4. *Campfire programs.* During the summer rangers present informal talks nightly (weather permitting) at the campfire circle in the campground.

5. *Hiking.* In addition to the main ruins trails there are over 60 miles of maintained trails in the 29,000 acre wilderness of the Monument's back country. *Please register with the ranger at the Visitor Center before taking any of these trails.*

6. *Accommodations and Meals.* The Frijoles Canyon Lodge, which has overnight accommodations, a snack bar, and curio shop, is open during the summer months.

Remember:

The men and women in the uniform of the National Park Service are here to make your stay at Bandelier National Monument more enjoyable. If you wish additional information *ask a ranger.*

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