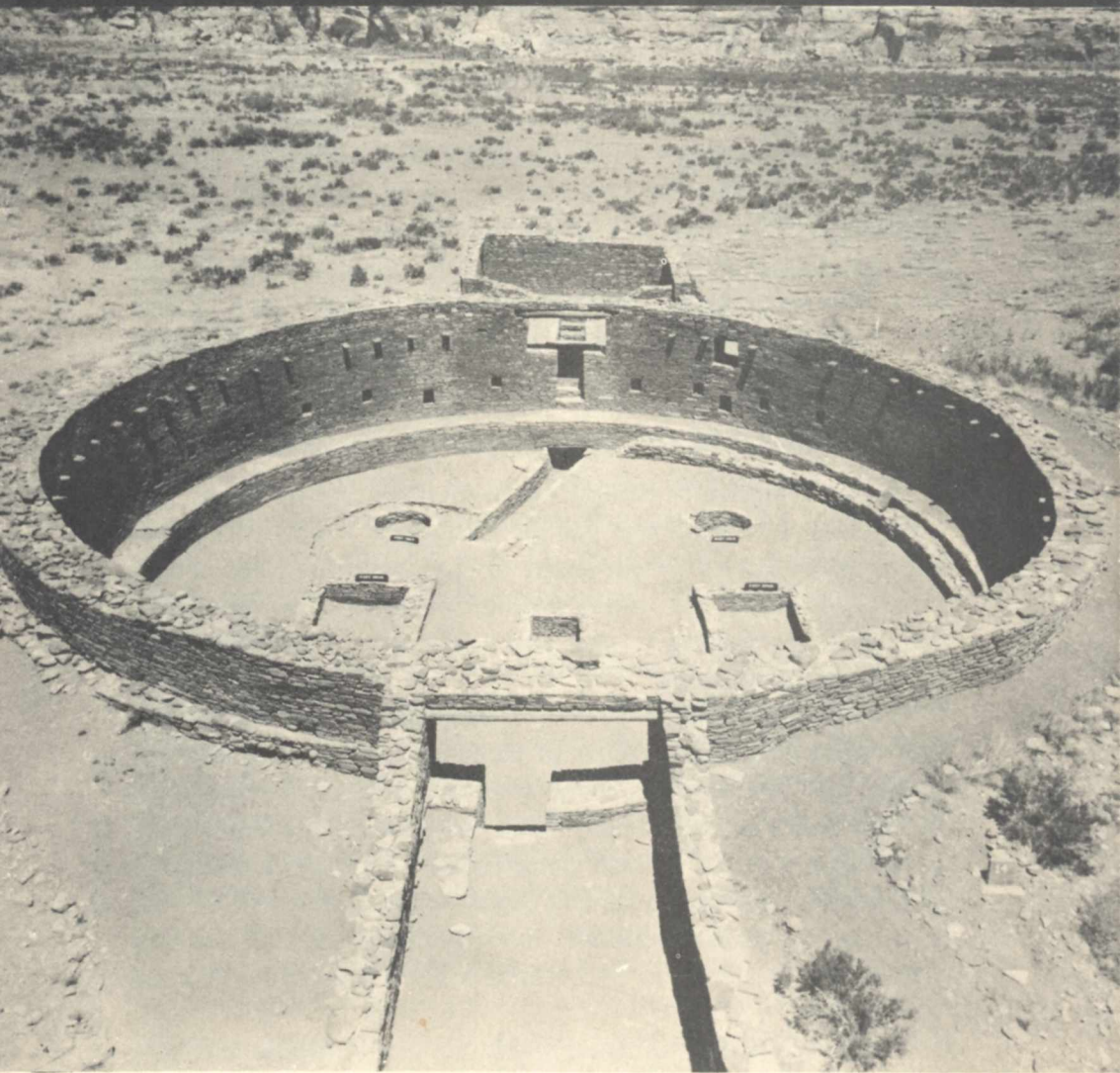
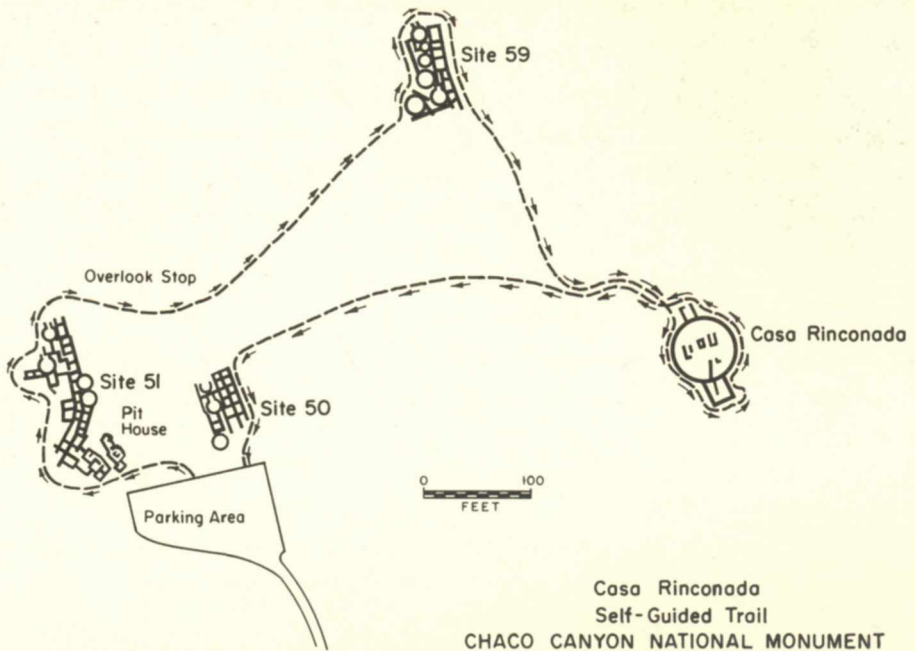


CASA RINCONADA TRAIL



15 CENTS IF YOU TAKE THIS BOOKLET HOME

CHACO CANYON NATIONAL MONUMENT
NEW MEXICO



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The men in the National Park Service uniform are here to help you and welcome the opportunity to make your visit more enjoyable.

CASA RINCONADA TRAIL

The ruins you are about to visit were once the homes of prehistoric Pueblo Indian farmers. They represent distinct phases and types of Indian culture in Chaco Canyon which existed at this location from about A. D. 700 to A. D. 1150. As you make your way along the trail try to visualize this area as it was when stone age people labored here to sustain themselves more than 1,000 years ago.

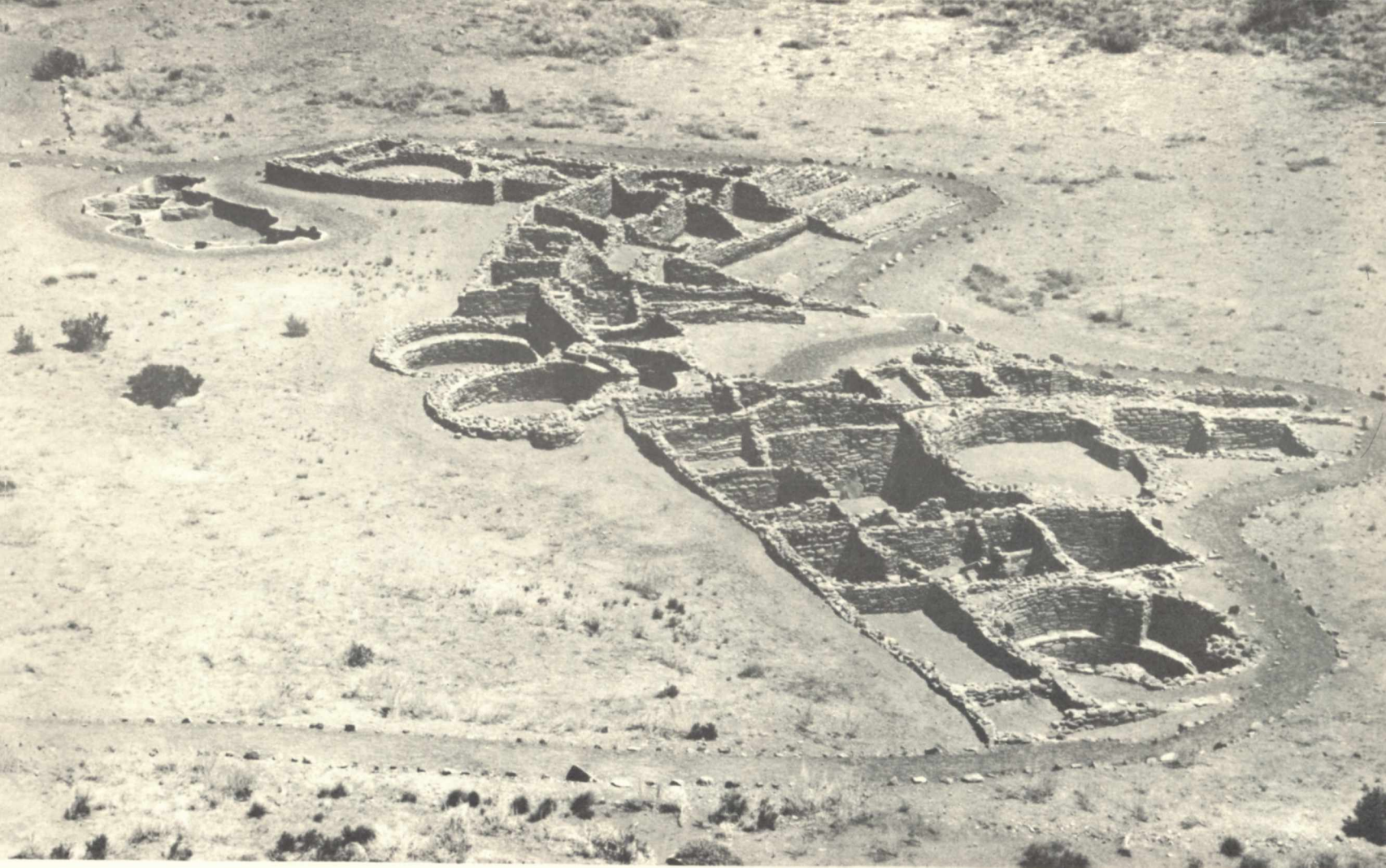
Numbered markers on the trail refer to numbered paragraphs in this booklet which describe features of special interest. The trail is less than one-half mile in length. It involves no climbing and requires only about forty minutes to complete. *Please stay on the trail and keep off the ruin walls.* Your cooperation in preserving these ruins will make it possible for others to enjoy what you will see today.



This unit of stone-lined rooms is the remains of one of the earliest permanent houses in Chaco Canyon. It was occupied by an ancestral Pueblo people called Basketmakers who lived throughout the canyon in the mid-600's and into the 700's A. D. Pit dwellings similar to this were also found beneath portions of the stone pueblos you see nearby.

Probably a family of 5 or 6 individuals lived here. Rooms were added from time to time as the need arose. The walls were vertical; they stood 6 feet above the floor and were made of small sun-dried adobe blocks overlying vertical, mud-plastered slabs. The house had a single flat roof made of main pine beams covered with small poles, vegetation and earth. There was a hatchway in the roof provided with a ladder — the only means of entrance.

The family cooked, slept, and ate in some of the rooms, while smaller adjoining rooms were reserved for the storage of corn, strips of dried squash, tools and garments. Corn and squash gardens were nearby; wild seeds and roots



Site No. 51 and Pithouse on the Casa Rinconada Trail

were collected seasonally to supplement the food sources obtained from cultivated plants and game animals such as pronghorn, deer, rabbits, and prairie dogs were hunted with bows and arrows and throwing sticks, or caught with snares.



This small pueblo of 45 rooms and 6 kivas, was built about 200 years after the pithouse you saw at Marker No. 1 was abandoned. Its general plan and construction confirm the many cultural changes which occurred following pithouse times. The people began to unite into multiple-family units, occupying ground level rooms and well developed ceremonial rooms called kivas. During these same years beans were added to corn and squash as a staple food. Turkeys were domesticated and there were important changes in pottery styles.

Probably no more than 50 persons ever lived in this dwelling at one time. In Chaco Canyon there are hundreds of sites similar to this, many of which were occupied when the large pueblos were at their peak of development. Apparently the population as a whole was a mixture of several Pueblo peoples whose customs, habits, and perhaps even languages differed. The archeological record indicates that the people lived peacefully side by side for many years.



These upright slabs formed a firepit in a small room. Firepits such as this are common in Pueblo Indian ruins. They were used in cooking and to provide heat. Since rooms were poorly ventilated a considerable amount of smoke accumulated as the result of just one small fire.



Notice the walls in this pueblo. The stones were gathered from the slopes at the base of the cliffs, carefully broken, shaped by pecking, then rubbed smooth with stone tools — a laborious task. They were set into small quantities of mud mortar and covered with plaster. Pine logs were placed diagonally across the short distance of the rooms to support roofs composed of slats, reed mats, brush and mud plaster.



The mud and slab remnant you see at the bottom of this room is part of an earlier settlement built one hundred years before the upper rooms were constructed. It represents an intermittent stage of architectural development between pit dwellings and houses built entirely of stone masonry.

Now backtrack to the path and turn right.



The rectangular columns you see at this point once stood free of surrounding masonry and probably supported a roof. Later the spaces between them were filled with stones to form a solid wall. A similar but much more impressive feature is present in Chettro Kettle directly across the canyon.



This small room may have been a rectangular kiva because of the under-floor ventilator shaft and mid-room firepit — two features common to most of the kivas in Chaco Canyon. Nine rooms similar to this were found in the earliest portion of Pueblo Bonito and square kivas are still in use among the modern Pueblo people living along the Rio Grande, at Zuni in New Mexico, and in the Hopi villages of northern Arizona.



The kiva (see opposite page) is a unique architectural form and has no exact counterpart in other parts of the world. Archeologists have learned that the early pithouses were gradually deepened and modified to serve primarily as ceremonial meeting places while nearby living rooms were built at ground level. Eventually kivas, similar to the one you see here, were incorporated into the clusters of rooms.

Secret societies met in kivas to perform specialized rituals concerned with such matters as curing, rain-making, hunting, and fertility. But kivas were more than this, for in them men wove simple cotton garments on crude looms, and people gathered from time to time to retreat from the extreme cold and smoke-filled air of living rooms.



*Courtesy National Geographic Magazine (c) National Geographic Society
"Kiva Life"*

Please follow the trail to No. 9, a few yards west.



To your left is an exposure of dark shale which is part of the geologic Menefee Formation. From deposits in this formation the Pueblo Indians collected light colored clay for pottery and wall plaster, as well as jet, a hard form of coal, for ornaments.

Directly ahead and to your right is an exhibit which depicts the prehistoric settlement pattern.



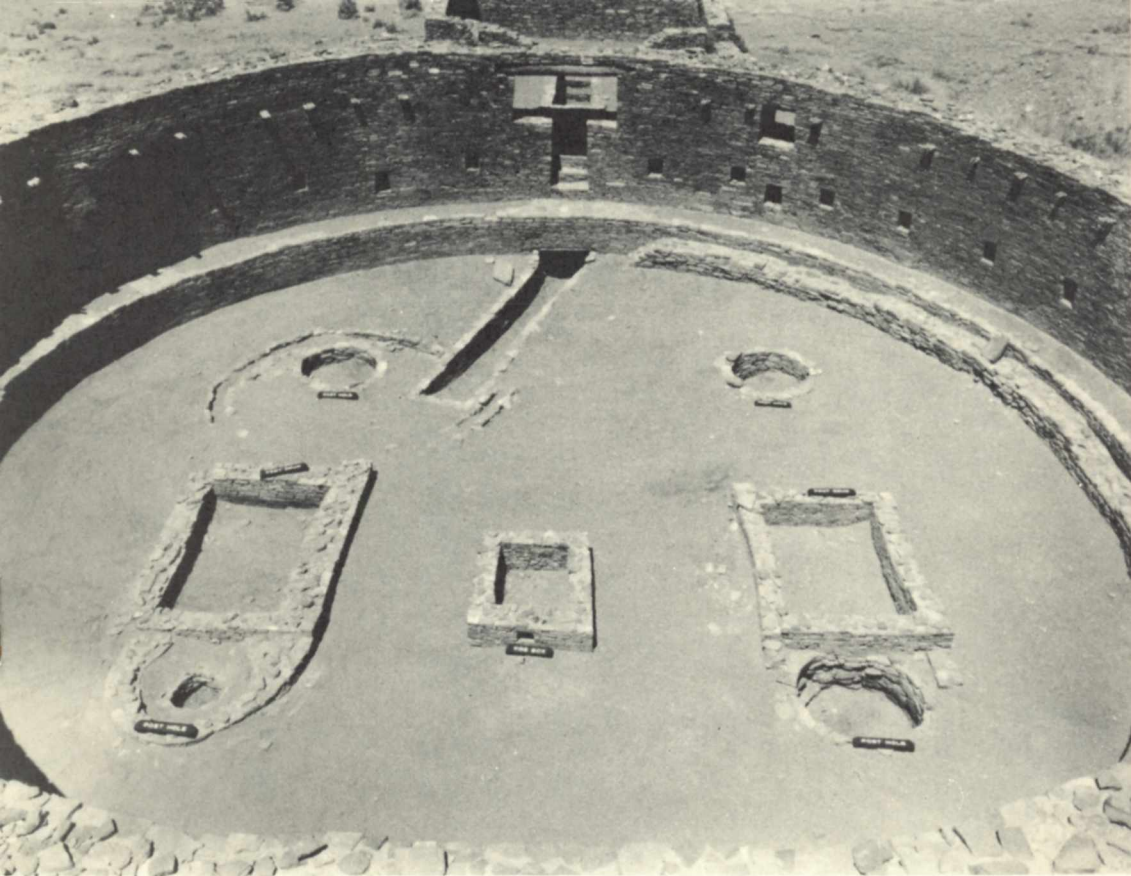
Few ancient dwellings in Chaco Canyon escaped partial or complete reconstruction during prehistoric times. Here are three successive kivas, one placed above another. The lowermost kiva was used for a while, partly razed, filled with earth and trash and another built over it. The second kiva met the same fate as the first. The entire sequence represents about two hundred years of building and rebuilding. While excavating these kivas archeologists left a section of fill in the first kiva to support the two upper structures.



Here are a metate and mano. You are welcome to pick up the mano, or handstone, and move it down the trough of the metate in a rocking motion as did Pueblo women and girls many centuries ago. This will give you some idea of the hard labor required to grind corn kernels into flour.



The people who lived in the small pueblos you have seen on this trail often buried their dead in nearby refuse mounds or in the trash and natural fill of abandoned rooms similar to this. Occasionally infants were placed in prepared burial pits underneath room floors. Burial offerings were meager — a vessel or two, a bone or stone artifact, a few beads, and a grass, reed or yucca mat underneath or covering the body. This practice was markedly different from that at Pueblo Bonito, where numerous elaborate items were found with the dead.



Casa Rinconada

13 This small keyhole-shaped kiva with its bench columns, or pilasters, slab deflector, and above floor ventilator opening, more closely resembles the kivas found in the San Juan and general Mesa Verde regions. This kiva tends to confirm the supposition that there was a partial sharing of customs between the Pueblo occupants of Chaco Canyon and the Pueblo Indians living 100 to 150 miles to the north.

14 This is Casa Rinconada (house without corners) whose inside diameter is 64 feet. It is one of the largest great kivas in the American Southwest and one of two such excavated isolated chambers in Chaco Canyon.

Great kivas are found either in village plazas, or, like Casa Rinconada, on solitary prominences. These magnifi-



Kin Nahasbas, another solitary great kiva in Chaco Canyon.

cent buildings were probably used for ceremonies and meetings of village-wide or inter-village importance. The excellent dark stonework and general plan of Casa Rinconada suggest that it was constructed in the 1000's or 1100's A. D. by people living in one or more of the large canyon villages, but there is a possibility that at one time it served as a ceremonial center for those who resided in the many small pueblos nearby.

Casa Rinconada is truly a monument to its industrious Pueblo builders. Think of the tremendous amount of work involved in its construction, all of which was done with stone and wooden tools and back-breaking labor. Prior to excavation the kiva was a roofless shell with eight deep breaks in the wall. Inside were scattered remains of clay vessels, fragments of copper bells, and a small quantity of turquoise beads. The only evidence indicating the presence of a roof were the rotted ends of four logs, 2 feet in diameter, found in the post holes. Presumably the roof was

Casa Rinconada from north doorway looking across to south doorway.



supported by four vertical timbers 12 feet in length over which were other timbers forming a central square framework. The space within the framework was covered with rafter poles while other rafters joined the framework with the kiva wall. Lighter poles were laid across the rafters at right angles. These were covered with juniper slats, and bark and mud plaster. There was a ladder access hatchway in the roof.

The square masonry features near the south post poles may have been sweatbaths, plank-covered foot drums, or receptacles where corn and bean plants were grown during winter months to insure, through ritual, a plentiful crop next summer.

On the far side of the kiva is a sub-floor passageway which leads from the north antechamber underneath the north entrance and extends into the kiva floor. It was probably roofed. Some archeologists speculate that it was a

Casa Rinconada, north entrance and subterranean passageway leading to antechamber room.



secret entrance and exit for ritual participants. The stone-lined trough at the end of the passageway — the only feature of its kind found in a great kiva — might have been the foundation of a brush enclosure which concealed participants until the time was appropriate to make a sudden, mysterious entrance onto the floor of the kiva as though from the very center of the earth where some of the modern Pueblo deities are thought to dwell.

In the wall are 34 square niches, at regular intervals above the bench. These might have been depositories for ritual ornaments and jewelry as in the Chetro Kettle great kiva.

The small poles in sets of three near the top of the wall may once have supported a narrow storage shelf or could have served as anchor for a thick layer of wall plaster.

Try to envision Casa Rinconada as it might have appeared when in use. Undoubtedly the walls were covered with painted plaster (blue, yellow, red, or white). Priests, or others initiated for such service, squatted on the floor, intoning chants which recounted the creation of the world and man's emergence from the underground spirit realm, while shadows, cast by flickering firelight, danced on the great log roof.

Perhaps during public ceremonies, the low, wide bench was crowded with awed onlookers — men, women, and children. In all likelihood some of the ceremonies, similar to those for which Pueblo Indians are today famous, were performed here at Casa Rinconada.

The trail now returns to the parking area.

PLEASE LEAVE 15 CENTS IN THE BOX PROVIDED, IF YOU WISH TO TAKE THIS BOOKLET HOME

We hope you have enjoyed your trip on the Casa Rinconada Trail. The rangers are here to assist you in any way they can and will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF CHACO CANYON

The population of Chaco Canyon, so far as has been determined by archeologists, declined sharply in the late A. D. 1100's. In the 1200's, when farming conditions permitted much less food production, small groups of Mesa Verde type people re-occupied some of the existing small Chacoan houses or built new dwellings of their own. Occupation of the area by these people was largely confined to the upper reaches of the canyon on cliffs or mesas. By about 1300 A. D., however, the entire region was vacated.

The Navajo people, whom you see in the vicinity today, moved into this area with Pueblo Indians from the Rio Grande. This took place in the early 1700's. It was a time of unrest and population shifts. Pueblos and Navajos were under pressure from the Spanish, who had recently reconquered New Mexico, and from marauding Utes and Comanches. Bands of Pueblos and Navajos, therefore, sought mutual protection by jointly establishing cliff-top settlements and fortified compounds on the mesas surrounding the canyon. Eventually most of the Pueblos returned to their home villages. The Navajos, and a few Pueblos who had intermarried with Navajos, continued to occupy the region as they do today.

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If you are interested in the work of the National Park Service and in the cause of conservation in general, you can give active expression of this interest and lend support by alining yourself with one of the numerous conservation organizations which act as spokesmen for those who wish our scenic heritage to be kept unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Names and addresses of conservation organizations may be obtained from the rangers.

OTHER ARCHEOLOGICAL AREAS IN THIS REGION

Aztec Ruins National Monument	Aztec, New Mexico
Mesa Verde National Park	Cortez, Colorado
Hovenweep National Monument	Cortez, Colorado
Bandelier National Monument ...	Los Alamos, New Mexico
Pecos National Monument	Santa Fe, New Mexico
Canyon de Chelly National Monument	Chinle, Arizona
Navajo National Monument	Tonalea, Arizona

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