TONTO

NATIONAL MONUMENT
ARIZONA
Tonto National Monument, containing about 2 square miles of picturesque desert hill and canyon country, was established by Presidential proclamation in 1907 to protect the outstanding cliff dwellings here. The southern Arizona group of Pueblo Indians, builders of cliff dwellings in this area, were not too different from the present day Hopi and Zuni. They have been named Salado (Spanish for salty) because they lived near the Salt River.

The cliff dwellings were occupied during the 1300's, a period determined by annual growth rings in timbers used in construction of the buildings. A single tree-ring date of A. D. 1346 is recorded from the Tonto ruin.

Before occupying the cliff dwellings, the Salado Indians lived in the valley proper, where the remains of many of their houses are still visible. The cliff dwellings appear to have been built as defensive sites when the valley villages became the object of attack by enemies. Eventually, around A. D. 1400, the Salado people left the region, probably because of continued trouble at the tops of the mountains. Near the tops of the mountains, cliff dwellings and other nearby prehistoric villages could still be traced. The nearest dependable water was a seep or spring a half mile up the trail, and is fully lighted in the morning, especially during daylight hours, but exterior shots are best in the morning.

The Cliff Dwellings

On both sides of the Roosevelt Lake Basin are many long canyons leading up into the mountains. Near the tops of some of the canyon walls are cliffs in which shallow caves are located. The cliff dwelling seen from the Tonto parking area is located in a natural cave in the quartzite cliff. A good trail, a half-mile long, with a rise of 350 feet, leads to the ruin.

A cliff dwelling is a pueblo of rough masonry walls of adobe clay used as mortar and plaster, and native rock as a filler. The walls were laid up in courses 2 to 3 feet in height. When these walls were built up about 6 feet high a ceiling of juniper or pinyon poles was laid across the room, one end resting on the wall, the other on a center beam supported by an upright post. A substantial layer of saguaro ribs was laid across the poles, and this was covered with a 3- or 4-inch layer of adobe. A similar roof on the second-story rooms further protected the dwelling.

When complete, this dwelling had about 25 rooms.

How the Salados Lived

The nearest dependable water was probably a seep or spring a half mile up the main canyon from the dwelling. The farm lands were located in the Salt River flood plain 2 to 4 miles distant and at about 1,000 feet lower elevation. Water, fruit trees, and vegetables were grown and meat secured by hunting, all to be carried up the trail to the cliff house. Corn, maize, beans, squash, and cotton were raised. When the valley was flooded by construction of Roosevelt Dam, the old irrigation canals built and used by occupants of the Tonto cliff dwellings and other nearby prehistoric villages could still be traced.

In addition to cultivated foods, the Indians gathered mesquite beans, cactus fruits, and many wild nuts and berries. Undoubtedly they hunted wild game for a meat supply, as deer bones have been found in the cliff dwelling, and the other small animals, as well as birds, were also available.

Stone bowls, and possibly wooden digging tools, were used in the farming. The roof beams of the dwellings were cut with stone axes, and the adobe walls may still be seen on beams in place in one remaining roof. An incomplete bow with a yucca fiber string and a bundle of reeds around the bow was found with a burial in 1950. A number of stone arrowheads have also been found.

Manufactures

The Salado people were excellent pottery makers and weavers of cotton textiles. Their painted pottery of red, cream, and black, and some of the storage vessels having a capacity of as much as 60 gallons. Cotton textiles were made in a variety of weaves and color combinations. Embroidery, open work, diamond twills, and gauze weaves were among the types made, and dry thread was black, red, and yellow were used to create complex designs. A considerable amount of good quality cloth of plain weave was made for everyday use. A specimen of this is the one used as a wrapping on the child burial found in 1950, which is now on display in the museum.

Sandals and mats were woven of yucca fibers; the yucca leaf was also shredded and spun into strong cordage. Beargrass was used for mats.

Ornaments were made of turquoise and several varieties of shells. The shells are from the Gulf of California, hundreds of miles to the southwest, indicating the distance over which objects were carried by trade even at that time. A small but excellent and representative collection of prehistoric Salado tools, utensils, and weapons is on display in the museum.

Photography

The cliff dwelling faces nearly east and is fully lighted in the morning, especially from about 8 to 10 a.m. By noon, the face of the cliff is in full shadow. In the evening, photography in the area is possible during daylight hours, but exterior shots are best in the morning.

The Museum

Tonto National Monument was transferred to the National Park Service in 1933 from the Department of Agriculture.

How To Reach the Monument

If driving from Phoenix, take U. S. 89 to Mesa, then U. S. 60-70 to Apache Junction, where you turn left on State Route 260.

The mesquite, paloverde, Mohave-ｆακτορ, and jojoba predominates to make the harshy desert chaparral cover. Many of the plants are labeled for identification. You may obtain further information on plant life and archeology from the monument staff.

View from cliff dwelling across Roosevelt Lake to the Sierra Ancha.
Utensils and implements used by prehistoric inhabitants

Route 88, the Apache Trail, to Roosevelt. The monument visitor center is just 3 miles beyond. Average driving time: 4 hours. From Globe, take State Route 88 to the monument entrance, which is 28 miles away. Average driving time: 50 minutes.

Visitor Use Fee
A nominal fee is charged for admission to the ruins. All National Park and Monument fees are deposited as revenue in the U. S. Treasury; they offset, in part, appropriations made for operating the National Park System.

Season and Facilities
The monument is open all year, with the most comfortable weather between late October and the first of June. Picnic facilities are available in the monument, but no camping is permitted. Food, lodging, and camping facilities are available at Roosevelt.

A self-guiding trail leads from the parking area to Tonto ruin. Near the parking lot is the short, self-guiding Cactus Patch Trail.

Administration
Tonto National Monument is administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Roosevelt, Ariz., is in immediate charge.

Mission 66
Mission 66 is a program designed to be completed in 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.