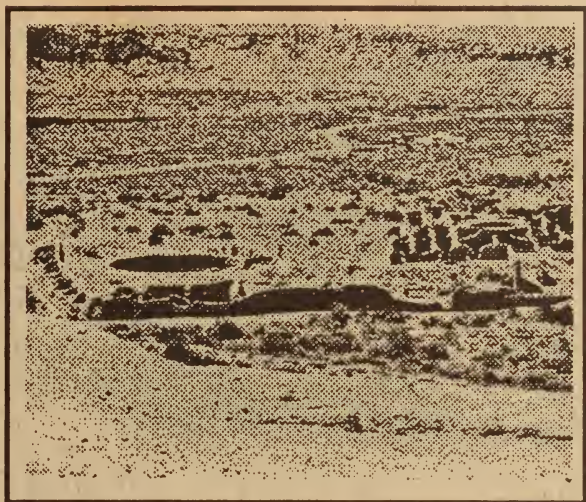


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Southwest Region Parks



Chetro Kell Ruin, Chaco Culture National Historical Park
- New Mexico

Protecting cultural heritage

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Spreading of cremated remains creates dilemma

Entering the soft, grey twilight of the Washington Cathedral, one slips into a pew, the silence disturbed only by the soft sounds of other travelers who have also stopped at this great sanctuary.

They come to look, to pray, to collect themselves, or to seek a restful moment.

Think now of the walls removed. In place of the pews there is a red desert floor, hardened by thousands of footprints. The altar is now a kiva.

Nothing has changed. The space is still sacred, even without ceilings and walls. People still come here for much the same reasons as do the travelers to the Washington Cathedral or to a little church in any small town in America.

But unknowingly, deeply held customs and practices are sometimes violated.

... At Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico early in 1992, a Navajo maintenance crew employed by the National Park Service discovered cremated human remains spread in the "great kiva" at Casa Rinconada.

Navajo belief dictates that the dead must be avoided and their burial places left undisturbed. To expose themselves to locations or things associated with

***'Ancestors are still there
... Spirits are still there.'***

the dead could adversely affect their personal health and well-being. Family members could be affected as well.

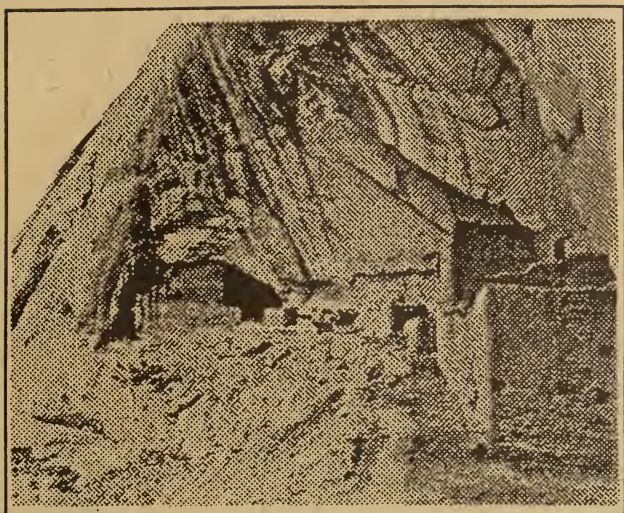
The "cremains" were carefully removed and returned to the family of the deceased.

The incident prompted the Southwest Region of the National Park Service to draft a new policy, which went into effect in 1992.

Permits to scatter cremains will no longer be issued in Southwest Region parks where American Indian sites represent the prominent resource.

Burial permits may be issued for interment only





Inscription House Ruin, Navajo National Monument - Arizona

in established cemeteries. No burials of any kind are allowed outside designated cemeteries.

The Southwest Region encompasses Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and the northeastern one-fourth of Arizona.

Even as the policy was being put into effect, cremated human remains again were spread in the great kiva of Casa Rinconada.

The problem is a serious one that can have an adverse effect on both the Navajo and Puebloan people, as well as on other American Indians.

In the Southwest Region there is a great, ongoing concern for American Indian lifeways and respect for the cultural past, as well as for their current cultural patterns and traditions.

Descendants of the earlier inhabitants still maintain their cultural traditions and ceremonies in the environment of lands and structures administered by the National Park Service. For instance, some of the lands where Navajo now live were once occupied by ancestors of current-day Pueblo people.

Ruins at sites all over the southwest may look

... Intentions are the best, but the results often are in serious conflict with traditional Beliefs of the Indian people.



merely like ruins to the visitor, "but they aren't abandoned by any means," an Indian employee of the National Park Service points out. "Ancestors are still there. Spirits are still there. The Pueblo people still visit, still consider it the same as going to a lived-in place. And there is respect for all these sites among all the Indian people."

Many national parks were created to recognize particular ethnic groups and their cultural heritages. Examples include Cape Krusenstern National Monument in Alaska which exhibits native Eskimo culture, Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park in Hawaii which preserves the native culture of our 50th state, Nez Perce National Historical Park in Idaho which deals with the history and culture of the Nez Perce Indians, and the French Quarter unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve which interprets ethnic populations of the Mississippi River delta region.

In Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and Utah, at least 23 park units were created specifically to preserve aspects of American Indian heritage. Many other units throughout the West also contain the ruins and sacred sites of some of these cultural groups.

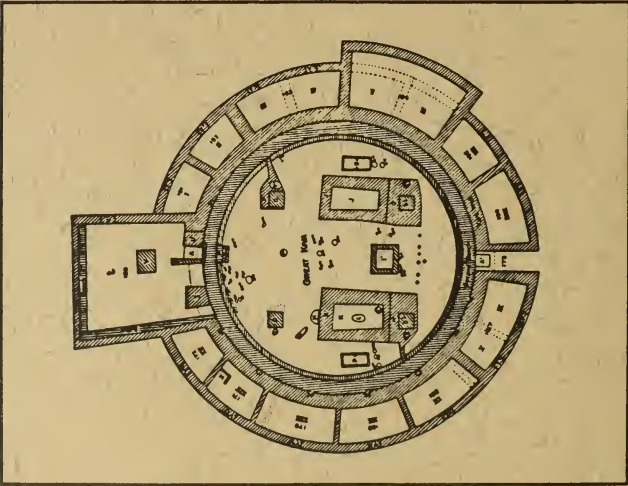
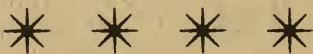
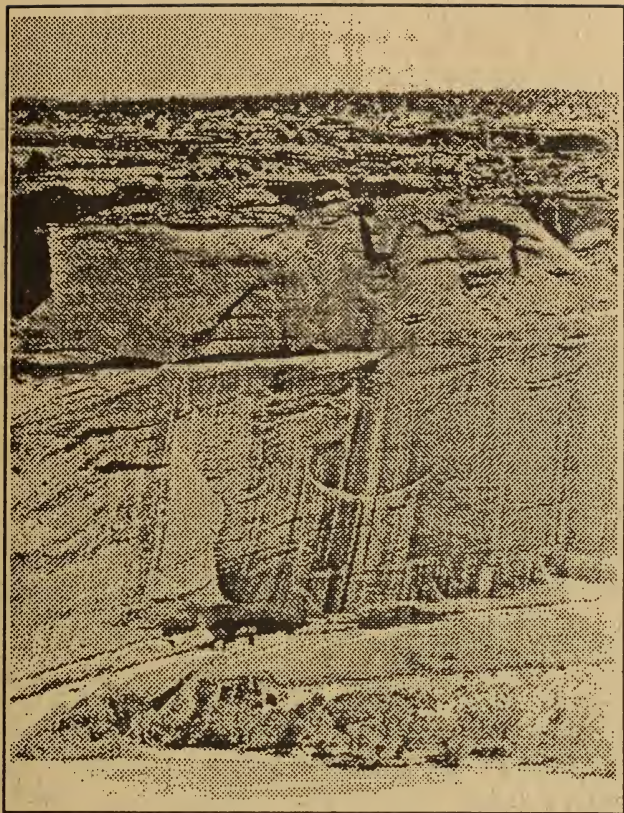
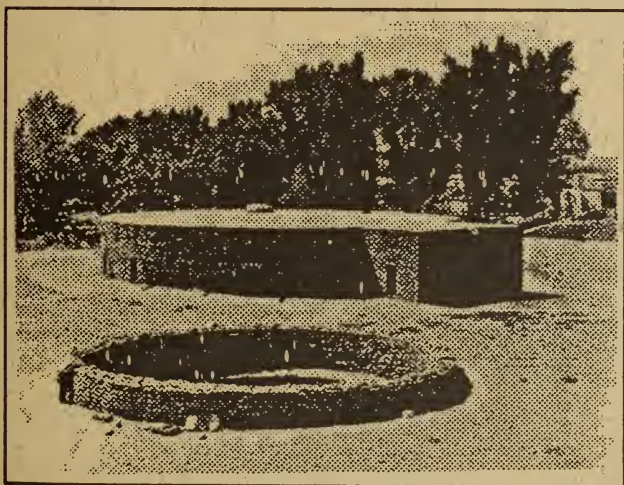


Diagram of the Great Kiva at Aztec Ruins National Monument





White House Ruin sits at the base of the sheer red cliffs in Canyon de Chelly National Monument



View of 12th Century kiva and the reconstructed Great Kiva at Aztec Ruins National Monument - New Mexico



. . . for the benefit and enjoyment of the people

Yellowstone National Park's founding in 1872 marked the beginning of a national system designed to protect America's most precious natural and cultural resources "... for the benefit and enjoyment of the people," (Act of March 1, 1872).

The National Park Service was officially established on August 25, 1916, by the "Organic Act" to "promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas as national parks, monuments, and reservations ... by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

Within the National Park System are more than 350 areas covering about 80 million acres in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Saipan and the Virgin Islands.

Although most Americans are familiar with a number of national parks - such as Yosemite, Grand Canyon and Yellowstone - many may not be aware that places such as the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, the Statue of Liberty - even the White House - are managed as national park units.

The National Park Service is charged with the guardianship of some of our nation's most valuable natural, cultural and historical resources. These resources are inextricably woven into our national heritage and constitute the sights, the scenery, the environments, the people and the events that are the elements of our character as a nation.

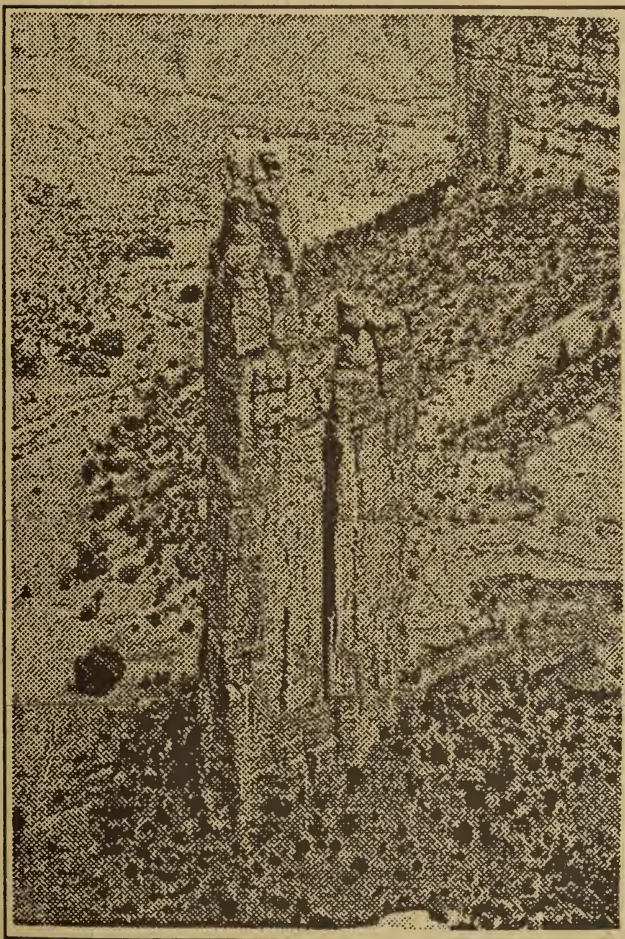
An understandable expression of this elemental link is the desire of some Americans to have their remains interred on park lands. Many units of our National Park System actually contain national cemeteries; others retain established cemeteries of historic communities or have family plots within their boundaries. For instance, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park has more than 100 cemeteries inside its boundaries.

Management of established cemeteries on national park and monument lands falls under federal regulations and policies by which all parks and visitors must abide.

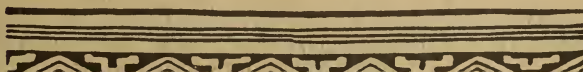




View from Talus House Toward Tyuoni Ruin at Bandelier National Monument - New Mexico



Spider Rock towers over sacred Indian lands in Canyon de Chelly National Monument - Arizona



Southwest Region policy on human burials and the spreading of cremated human remains

National Parks whose primary purpose is the preservation of cultural heritages shall not be used for human burial, except in designated cemeteries .

-- Park superintendents will not grant permits to anyone to scatter human cremation ashes in these parks by any means; for example, spreading by hand at a ground location or dispersal by aircraft flyover.

-- Superintendents are empowered to take the necessary steps to prevent the unauthorized scattering or burial of cremation ashes or any other type of interment outside designated cemeteries.

Southwest Region parks whose primary resources do not relate to the culture and history of American Indian tribes or other ethnic groups, or do not contain evidence of pre-Columbian or historical American Indian cultures must conform to:

- National Park Service Management Policies, 1988 - (Chapter 8:16 - Cemeteries and Burials).
- Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 2.62 - Memorialization).

Inquiries should be directed to the Office of the Superintendent of the park in question.

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