

# The Southwestern National Monuments, 1918–1956

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## A Long Beginning

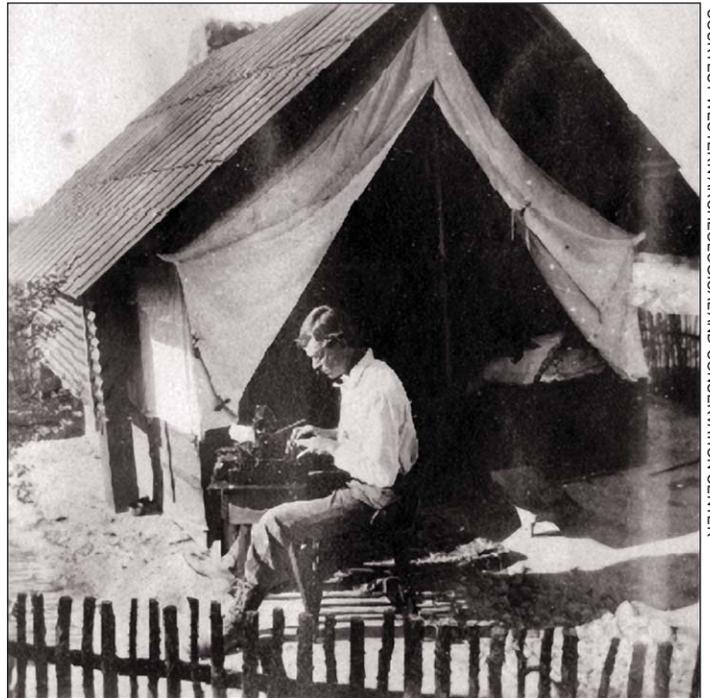
The national monuments of the American Southwest have a unique administrative history within the National Park Service. The creation of both the monuments, themselves, and the administrative arm that would oversee them from 1923 to 1956 (known as the the Southwestern National Monuments, or SWNM) coincided with important developments in how the U.S. Government shaped and administered lands and sites as significant historic and natural resources.

Two such developments, the 1906 Antiquities Act and the creation of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1916, were crucial to the creation of the southwestern national monuments. The protection of significant archeological sites in the Southwest and other parts of the country from natural and human-made calamities became a concern at the turn of the twentieth century. Recognizing the contribution of such sites to America's prehistoric past, Congress passed the Antiquities Act of 1906. Unlike parks, which were designated by Congress, the act specifically allowed the president of the United States to declare an area or a site a national monument, which expedited the process. Ten years later, in 1916, the NPS was created under of the Department of the Interior to oversee lands designated as national parks and national monuments.

The beginnings of the SWNM swirl around these two key pieces of legal history. The legacy began in 1901, when a native Missourian, Frank Pinkley, arrived at Casa Grande Ruins National Reservation and forever changed the landscape of American southwestern monuments. Offered the custodianship of Casa Grande by his uncle, then the Arizona General Land Office Commissioner, Pinkley eagerly accepted the post (Schneider-Hector, 2003, 15). With a modest tent as his home, Pinkley lived and breathed life at Casa Grande, where he was in charge of protecting the ruins from encroachment by vandals and livestock.

Pinkley's main concern for the ruins was their preservation. Though he had no formal training, he took seriously his oath to protect the ruins by learning how to repair and stabilize them as they aged. Pinkley also educated himself about the

## OVERVIEW



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Frank Pinkley at his typewriter, Casa Grande Ruins, 1918.

historical and archeological significance of the ruins so that he could interpret the legacy of Casa Grande to its visitors.

For the next decade and a half, Pinkley dutifully cared for Casa Grande, ensuring its protection while slowly cultivating important relationships with its visitors. In 1915, Pinkley decided to enter politics, taking a position in the Arizona state legislature. After this unsuccessful stint, Pinkley was asked by NPS Director Stephen T. Mather to return as the custodian of Casa Grande. Pinkley obliged and in 1918, the same year Casa Grande officially became Casa Grande Ruins National Monument, he returned to his beloved post.

## Flourishing Years: 1920s

Pinkley's passion for Casa Grande strengthened with the passing years. Beyond being a devoted custodian adept at caring for and interpreting "his" ruins, Pinkley was also a vociferous advocate of national monuments at large. In the burgeoning years of the NPS, Pinkley relentlessly pursued its leaders in Washington for the necessary funds to continue the work of protecting the monuments in the Southwest. Time and again, Pinkley's requests fell on deaf ears, as the NPS

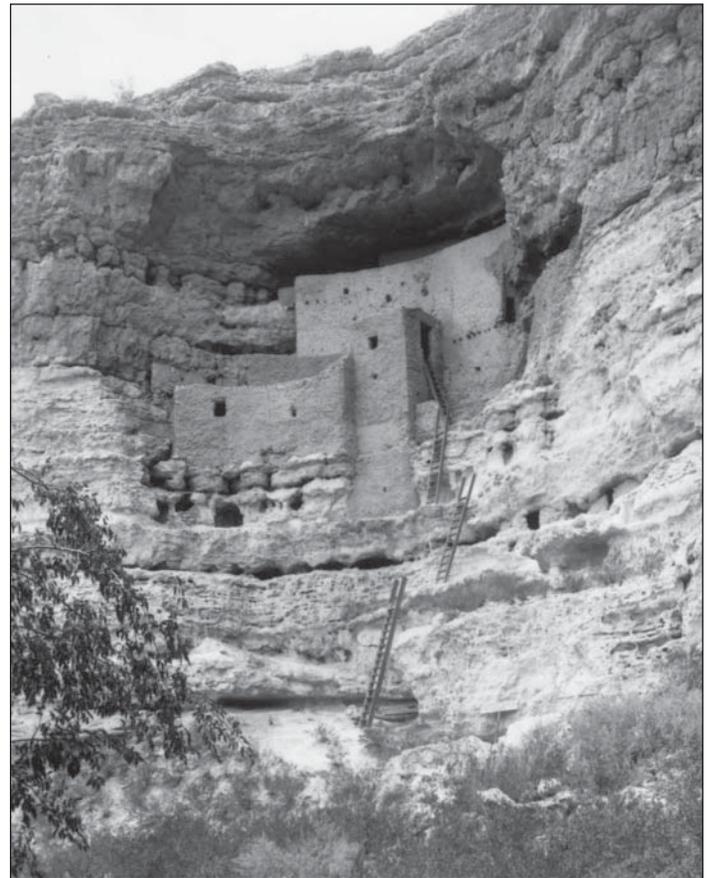
preferred to fund the development and acquisition of national parks, instead. During this time, however, more and more sites were becoming national monuments. By 1923, there were 28 national monuments assigned to the NPS, half of which were found in the southwestern U.S. (Rothman, 1986, 86). With the growing number of monuments, the NPS was facing serious administrative issues concerning who would look after them. Consequently, the NPS established the SWNM as the administrative arm over the southwestern monuments and appointed Pinkley as its superintendent in October 1923.

As superintendent, Pinkley was responsible for coordinating the management of national monuments in the Southwest. He oversaw administrative duties for monuments in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. In addition to being as vigilant as ever in asking Washington for necessary funds to improve the conditions of the SWNM, Pinkley also found a platform from which to express his views on the significant differences between a national monument and a national park. Pinkley believed that monuments were primarily educational and contained “a natural exhibit of nation-wide historic, prehistoric, or scientific value” (Schneider-Hector, 2003, 116).

NPS



Two-story section of Upper Cliff Dwelling, Tonto NM.



NPS/GEORGE A. GRANT

Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Castle National Monument, 1929.

A park, Pinkley believed, was primarily inspirational because of its “surpassingly scenic area” (116). Because the primary objectives differed, the administration of the two, according to Pinkley, also should differ, specifically as it related to visitor services. The national monument, believed Pinkley, should capture and engage the curiosities of the visitor, while the park should allow visitors to explore on their own.

## Monthly Reports

While Pinkley was not shy about sharing such views publicly, he also had an internal method of documenting his opinions, alongside accounts of the care and protecting afforded his monuments. Just after Pinkley resumed his custodial post at Casa Grande in 1918, he began writing monthly reports. In 1923, with more than a dozen national monument sites, such as Montezuma Castle, Tumacácori, Gran Quivira, and Aztec Ruins under his supervision, Pinkley assigned the writing duties to his 14 custodians.

The monthly reports not only documented administrative activities but also captured the early social history of monuments, monument families, and SWNM staff associates.

The reports covered all aspects of events and conditions at the monuments and provided insight into the individuals and families who lived and worked there. Topics generally included living conditions and ongoing efforts at ruins stabilization and preservation of monuments. From 1941 to 1956, the reports took on a more “official” layout, style, and tone, with more standardized topics covered in a more limited format.

## An End: 1930s–1950s

In spite of limited funding from Washington for the SWNM from the late 1920s through the 1930s, Pinkley was able to conduct monument business as usual. Under his watchful and caring eye, visitation to the monuments increased and helped to generate ancillary funds. Despite an increase in visitation, the conditions of the monuments and ruins generally were stable, largely due to the hard work and expertise of the custodians who tended to them under Pinkley’s supervision. Pinkley and his custodians also developed important standards and guidelines in such areas as resource management, interpretation, and museum curation. During this period, there was a strong emphasis on the work of naturalists, such as Natt Dodge and Dale King, who explored and attempted to understand the natural resources of the monuments.

The dedication of the SWNM custodians and others intimately involved in their caretaking often assuaged Pinkley’s worries about the protection of the monuments. As



NPS/GEORGE A. GRANT

SWNM Headquarters at Casa Grande National Monument, 1933. Left to right: Frank Pinkley, Hurst Julian, Custodian Hilding Palmer, Ranger Frank Fish, Martin Evanstad, and Robert Rose.

the years progressed, Pinkley sought more formalized training for “our outfit,” as he affectionately referred to his extended SWNM family of workers (Schneider-Hector, 2003, 125). In 1940, SWNM custodians attended the first-ever “School of Instruction” to train them in accordance with NPS policy and to “provide uniform policies to facilitate the operations of the Southwestern National Monuments,” (Schneider-Hector, 2003, 124). After delivering a rousing opening speech to his outfit, Pinkley died suddenly of a heart attack.

Though the “School of Instruction” carried on for another few years, the passing of Pinkley and the imminence of World War II dampened the administrative strength of the SWNM. Shifts in national and regional administrative styles by the NPS also contributed to the organization’s slow end. By 1943, SWNM moved its headquarters to Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 1952, the headquarters returned to Arizona, this time to Globe. By 1957, the SWNM had been abolished as the formal administrative unit for national monuments in the American Southwest.



NPS

East side of Casa Grande, 1900

NPS



Back wall of Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Canyon NM.

## The Archival Legacy of the Southwestern National Monuments

The legacy of the SWNM is a rich one. The activities of its men and women over the course of three and a half decades is significant to understanding the contributions of the SWNM to the Southwest in general and, more specifically, to the day-to-day administration and protection of the national monuments and ruins under its watchful eye. Two collections at the Western Archeological and Conservation Center in Tucson, Arizona, provide an in-depth and robust historical account of the SWNM.

The first collection, *The Southwestern National Monuments Monthly Reports 1918–1956 Index* (ACC WACC-01404 CAT WACC 21119), provides a general index for accessing the monthly reports. Arranged in alphabetical order, the collection contains dozens of indexical entries into the reports. Entries range from individuals such as Horace M. Albright, second director of the NPS, to specific parks, to topics such as tree-ring dating. Through the Learning Center of the American Southwest website, this collection, with the accompanying monthly reports, is available for research.

The second collection, *Administrative Records Southwestern National Monuments ARG 10 1920–1975* (ACC WACC-00681 CAT WACC 3184), contains records pertaining to the administration of the SWNM. Record types include correspondence, memoranda, reports (including naturalist and archeological reports), various ephemera, and bibliographies. The collection also documents the emergence of the Southwest Archeological Center,

which, in 1958, took control of archeological and historic preservation projects for many of the monuments. This organization was later renamed the Arizona Archeological Center (1972) and then the Western Archeological and Conservation Center (1981).

## The Southwestern National Monuments

This list represents the monuments that were under the administration of SWNM between 1923 and 1956:

**Arizona:** Canyon de Chelly, Casa Grande Ruins, Chiricahua, Coronado, Gila Cliff Dwellings, Montezuma Castle, Navajo, Organ Pipe Cactus, Papago Saguaro (since abolished), Petrified Forest, Pipe Spring, Saguaro, Sunset Crater Volcano, Tonto, Tumacácori, Tuzigoot, Walnut Canyon, Wupatki

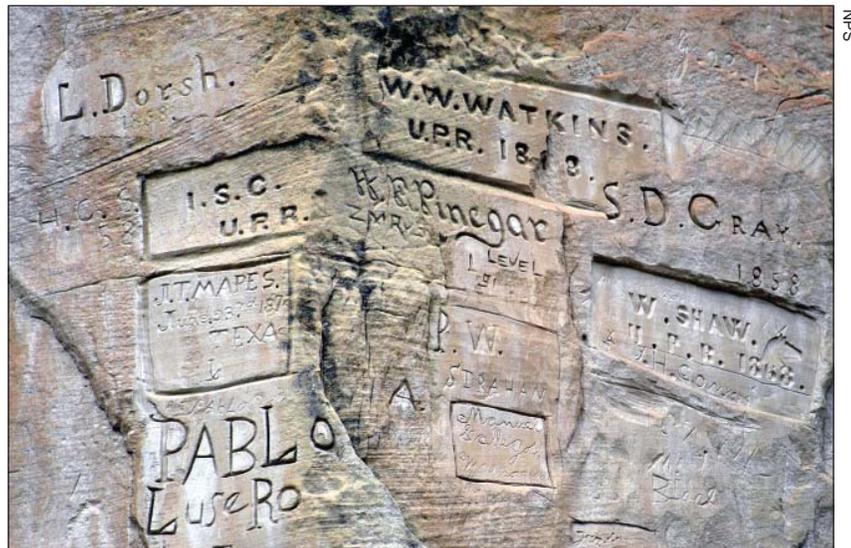
**Colorado:** Great Sand Dunes, Yucca House

**New Mexico** Aztec Ruins, Bandelier, Capulin Mountain (now Capulin Volcano), Carlsbad Cave (now Carlsbad Caverns), Chaco Canyon (now Chaco Culture National Historical Park), El Morro, Gran Quivira, White Sands

**Utah:** Arches, Hovenweep, Natural Bridges, Rainbow Bridge

## Works Cited

- Rothman, Hal. 1986. *Forged by One Man's Will: Frank Pinkley and the Administration of the Southwestern National Monuments, 1923–1932*. *Public Historian*, 8(2):83–99
- Schneider-Hector, Dietmar. 2003. *Sundipped Memories of Frank Pinkley*. Hillsboro, NM, Percha Creek Press.



Inscriptions at the point of El Morro (El Morro NM) include Old Spanish.

NPS