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Mesa Verde National Park

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### Prehistoric Dwellings: Efforts to combat vandals of artifacts at Mesa Verde

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DENVER, Col., (Special Agent) — The Colorado women are going to try and save the prehistoric ruins of the state from the depredations of vandals, and at the same time try to add to the world's stock of knowledge concerning those remarkable people, the cliff dwellers. With these objects in view the Colorado Cliff Dwellings association was organized the first part of this month. The association has been regularly incorporated under the laws of Colorado, so that it may legally acquire and hold property. It is now the intention of the women to acquire title to the ruins of the cliff dwellers, either by purchase or by a grant from the state, which it is believed will be glad to hand these famous ruins over to the women for care and preservation.

The association is not a hastily formed one. On the contrary, it is the outcome of nearly three years of agitation and education of the women of the state. In October, 1897, Mrs. Mahlon D. Thatcher, then president of the State Federation of Women's Clubs, appointed a committee of women who had for years been personally interested in the protection of the state's prehistoric heritage to act with the federation and clubwomen as a special committee for the spreading of knowledge concerning the ruins, the collection and preservation of relics, and the ultimate bringing forward into the light of today of the wonderful old ruins which have been so long shadowed by the cliffs in the Rio Mancos canyon. Since its appointment the committee has had visions of work done by it which would present to the world antiquity of far greater interest than any now known in the old world, and with a setting of deep canyons, rugged mountains, and great stretches of blue mesa land—a park containing a museum of unknown antiquity.

The constitution adopted contemplates an unlimited membership of women. The association is formed on the lines of the Mount Vernon and Mary Washington associations. The directors are called vice regents, and there are twenty-one of them. An initiation fee of \$2 was voted, with an annual due of \$1. There is also a life membership, costing \$100, entitling the holder to a gold badge. The life membership may be hereditary in the female line, either lineal or collateral.

The constitution having been adopted, the officers were elected as follows: Regent, Mrs. Gilbert McClurg, Colorado Springs; first vice regent, Mrs. W. S. Peabody, Denver; recording secretary, Mrs. J. D. Whitmore, Denver;

The area of the park covers a tract of 6,000 square miles, extending from "the four corners" into Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. Therefore, the tract of land most valuable for a park has been a grave question at issue with the committee. They have had an accurate and comprehensive map made of the section called Mesa Verde, the green tableland, in the southwestern corner of Colorado. It is their wish to include in the park that portion of the mesa and adjoining canyons which contains the most ruins.

It should be understood that Mesa Verde, the probable location of the future park, is a strikingly singular divide between the Mancos and the Montezuma valleys. Throughout its extent it is gashed and seamed by innumerable deep canyons and ravines. The uplands are crowded with forests of pinon trees in such close array that one finds it difficult to pick a passage through them. Ruins of the houses of the mesa-dwellers are thick upon the plateau.

The canyons, which split the divide into tongues and islands of precipitous rock, are lined with the houses of the cliff dwellers. The sides of the canyons are sheer walls of yellow sandstone, ranging in height from 600 to 1,000 feet. As a rule, the dwellings stand fifty or a hundred feet below the rim of the heights, in a sheltered recess overhung by beetling masses of rock. In a great many instances it is impossible to climb to the houses from the bottom of the canyon. Most of them have to be entered from the top of the cliffs. There are no definite roads or trails leading to them, and the difficulties to be overcome, and the dangers to be dared in visiting the cliff houses are many. The difficulties and dangers only show how necessary it is to build roads and trails and a rest house, so that people with great enthusiasm but little strength may visit the ruins.

The Cliff Palace and the Spruce Tree house are two of the cliff houses included in the tract set aside for the park. The Cliff Palace is 450 feet long, eighty feet high, eighty feet broad, and contains 127 rooms on the ground floor, and accommodations for probably 1,000 people. The Spruce Tree house is only a short distance from the Cliff Palace, and is one of the most finished specimens of prehistoric architecture yet found. A visit to one or both of these ruins would repay one for almost any amount of fatigue, and the Colorado Cliff Dwellers' association intends to be the pathfinder for the delicate enthusiast as well as for the brawny relic hunter.



## Colorado Women Will Try to Save Prehistoric Dwellings.

Special Correspondence of The Inter Ocean.

DENVER, Col., May 31.—Women of Colorado are going to try and save the prehistoric ruins of the state from the depredations of vandals, and at the same time try to add to the world's stock of knowledge concerning those remarkable people, the cliff dwellers. With these objects in view the Colorado Cliff Dwellings association was organized the first part of this month. The association has been regularly incorporated under the laws of Colorado, so that it may legally acquire and hold property. It is now the intention of the women to acquire title to the ruins of the cliff dwellers, either by purchase or by a grant from the state, which it is believed will be glad to hand these famous ruins over to the women for care and preservation.

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of the association will be held open for six months. Committees will be appointed, and the association will set to work at once to raise money, secure members, and lay the foundation for a state park.

The area of pre-historic ruins in the Southwest covers a tract of 6,000 square miles, extending from "the four corners" into Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. Therefore, the tract of land most valuable for a park has been a grave question at issue with the committee. They have had an accurate and comprehensive map made of the section called Mesa Verde, the green tableland, in the southwestern corner of Colorado. It is their wish to include in the park that portion of the mesa and adjoining canyons which contains the most ruins.

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