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Hovenweep National Monument

Colorado National Parks

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### Hovenweep: The West's Fabulous Deserted Valley

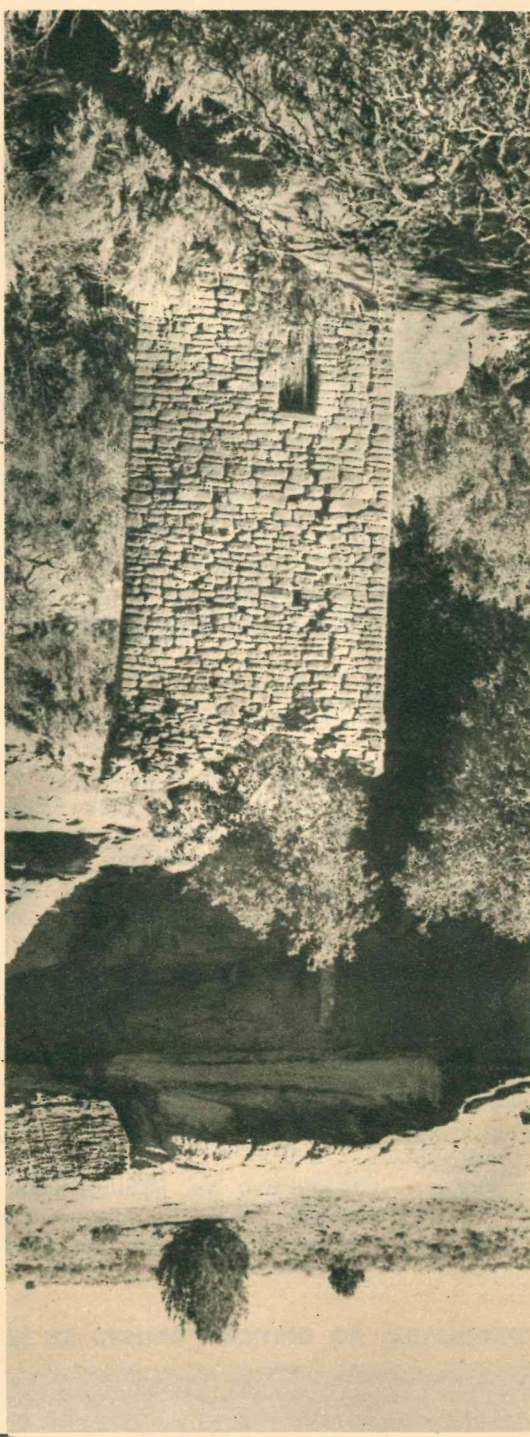
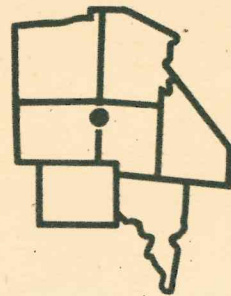
National Park Service of the United States

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By RICHARD KLINCK

Photos by George T. Henry



**SQUARE TOWER HOUSE** is one of the most unusual stone constructions to have been built by cliff dwellers.

**C**R AVE the unusual? Then wend your way south in Utah across the empty miles of sand and rock until you have reached the place the Ute Indians call the "Deserted Valley" . . . Hovenweep National Monument. There, out in the loneliness of Sage Plain, deep within San Juan County are held some of the West's closest secrets. And to penetrate the veil of mystery that covers them is an adventure long to be remembered.

As a more or less forgotten member of the National Park System, Hovenweep boasts of a temporary ranger in residence during the summer, but is left to its slumbering nine months of the year. Perhaps an average of one hundred visitors a month go there. They represent a hardy group of adventurers who have searched for, and found, something different. To join that group you'll have to scan a map of southeastern Utah most carefully to find the road that eventually leads to Hovenweep. Even then you may miss it. It's that elusive. And it requires a somewhat adventurous spirit to tackle the kind of roads that allow the only entrance onto Sage Plain.

In this land where emptiness assumes such gigantic proportions the past is always more real than today can ever be. For so much of what has happened before still clings there. Escalante crossed this country from the south, saw Hovenweep, but gave it only the slightest reference in his diary. Even long before this a legend tells of how the Aztec chieftain Montezuma escaped from his Spanish captors and fled to the north, out of his native Mexico and into the American Southwest. As the tale goes, those who pursued him first recovered his sight at Montezuma Creek, to the west of Hovenweep, and then took the Indian captive again at Recapture Creek a little farther to the west. Spanish padres and men of conquest, lusty gold-seekers, restless red men and lonely white shepherders have all brushed against the haunting specter-filled Deserted Valley since its original inhabitants left their homes for a destination that has never been determined.

Imagine, if you can, several of our

