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COMMENTS:

General overview of the sites in the Canyon. Includes image of "Yellow House."

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1940 The Great Houses of Chaco Canyon. El Palacio 47: 164.



THE GREAT HOUSES OF CHACO CANYON

A GROUP OF ruins representing the greatest architectural flowering of the ancient inhabitants of America, north of Mexico, is found in Chaco Canyon, in northwestern New Mexico. The canyon is reached from Thoreau on Highway 66, by a fair dirt road, sixty miles, or from the Albuquerque-Farmington highway.

The great community houses of Chaco, some of them originally five stories high, were built of sandstone blocks laid in courses of varying thickness. They stood in the midst of a desolate plain, the Navajo desert, now incapable of supporting any population except the wandering Navajo. Here are twelve large community houses, smaller talus units, many small mounds, and in connection with the houses are numerous sanctuaries, stairways, and passages. Nearby are fields, trails, slight evidences of ancient ditches, and the indications are that the population depended mainly upon agriculture for subsistence.

The best known of the Chaco ruins are Chetro Ketl, Pueblo Bonito, Hungo Pavi, Una Vida, Wijiji, Peñasco Blanco, Kin Biniola, and one of the smaller ruins, Yellow House. Several are owned by the School. The University owns others, maintains an archaeological station, and conducts summer field schools. The remainder of the ruins are owned by the federal government, which constituted the area a national monument in 1907, and maintains a custodian.

A visit to Chaco Canyon gives one an opportunity to see something of the Southwestern desert, and the very interesting people who have inhabited it for several centuries, the Navajo. This is the largest of all surviving Indian tribes in the United States, numbering nearly fifty thousand people. The Navajo present one of the finest physical types on the continent. They are largely pastoral, and add to their incomes by weaving and trading the famous Navajo blankets.

A section of Yellow House, one of the smaller Chaco ruins, is pictured in the unusual photograph taken from the cliff above, on the opposite page.

