

Collector's Journal

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2012 Chaco Culture National Historical Park Quarter - New Mexico

Twelfth in the America the Beautiful Quarters Collection

Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico is featured on the second of five coins issued in 2012 in the America the Beautiful Quarters series. It is also the twelfth coin overall. Each coin in the series honors a National Park or other national site in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia or one of the five overseas U.S. territories.

This is the second multi-coin U.S. Quarters series, following the 1999-2009 State Quarters. The previous coins honored the states in the order in which they joined the Union – from Delaware in 1787 to Hawaii in 1959 – followed by the District of Columbia and the territories. The America the Beautiful Quarters, on the other hand, are issued in the order in which the featured locations became national sites.

Each coin is struck for circulation at both the Philadelphia and Denver Mints. The two distinct coins are identified by a small “P” (Philadelphia) or “D” (Denver) mint mark under “In God We Trust.”

Of the 56 coins that will eventually make up the complete collection, 18 will feature National Parks. Many states, especially those in the south and east, have no National Parks. Instead, those states will honor sites such as National Historical Parks, National Forests, National Military Parks, and National Monuments.

Chaco Culture National Historical Park is one of the largest and most important pre-Columbian Native American sites. Once the center of a thriving civilization in northwestern New Mexico and the Four Corners area, Chaco Culture was built by the Chacoan people between 850 and 1250 AD. It includes the ruins of multi-story buildings known as “great houses” that were the largest structures ever built in North America until the 1800’s.

Another distinctive feature of the Chaco Culture site is the



presence of massive circular structures known as kivas. It is believed that kivas were used for ceremonial or religious purposes. The modern Pueblo people of the American Southwest are descendants of the ancient Chacoan people, and the kiva remains part of the Pueblo culture.

President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Chaco Culture a national site in 1907, and it became a National Historical Park in 1980. It was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987.

The central image on the reverse of the Chaco Culture National Historical Park Quarter is a view of two kivas at the Chetro Ketl complex. Chetro Ketl is one of the largest great houses ever built by the Chacoan people. Covering an area of about three acres, it included more than 400 rooms as well as the kivas. Also shown is a wall at Chetro Ketl and the north wall of the canyon in which Chetro Ketl is located.

The image that appears on the coin was one of four proposed designs created by artists at the U.S. Mint. Two of the other designs also showed kivas and other structures at Chaco Culture, while the fourth highlighted the natural beauty of the region.

The Chaco Culture National Historical Park Quarter was released by the U.S. Mint in April, 2012.

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