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D I N E B I K E Y A H

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INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

diné bikéyah "The Navajo's Country", is primarily a guide book and gazetteer of the Navajo country and adjacent regions. While but a fraction of the Navajo place names have been listed, those given have been selected as most important and interesting to government employees, students, and travelers. Furthermore, it is hoped that diné bikeyah now using the official Indian Department system of writing the Navajo language, will make it possible to standardize and crystalize into universal spelling a number of Navajo geographical locations which are now confused by a wide variety of incorrect spellings.

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Fort Defiance, Arizona
February 1, 1941.

CANONCITO-CANYON DE CHELLEY

fence are still to be seen at this place. There are many ruins, some possibly early Navajo, in this region, and others identified by Dr. H. H. Mera, of the Laboratory of Anthropology, as the Governor Phase of the 'amasazi' and apparently much earlier than the Navajo sites.

CANONCITO. Navajo: to'hajilleche', Drawing water from a well. Day school (U.S.I.S.) and home of small isolated group of Navajos. Located in rolling country west of the Rio Puerco of the East; some 7 miles north of U.S. Highway 66, 30 miles west of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

A small band of Navajos live here on allotted land, separated by as much as 75 miles from the main body of the tribe who call this off-shoot group the dine'ana'i, Enemy People, or the to'hajilleche', Drawing Water From A Well People. Local informants tell the following story of their origin:

"The Dine'ana'i lived in the Cebolleta and Mount Taylor country, having remained there when the main tribe pushed westward to Canyon de Chelly. They later allied themselves with the Mexicans and acted as spies and guides against us. Later, to get nearer to the Mexicans, they moved to Canoncito for protection."

Some informants, however, state that some of these people are also descendants of Navajos who escaped on the journey to Fort Sumner. Others say that they are a band who stopped there on the way back in 1868.

These people dress very much as do their fellow-tribesmen to the north and west, and their ceremonial activities do not seem to be particularly distinctive. Their rugs are of a rather poor grade. Eastern Navajos say their witches come from the Canoncito people.

CANYON DE CHELLEY (Pronounced de Shay) Navajo: tséghi, In between the rocks. Extensive, steep-walled canyon system draining into Chinlee Wash at Chinlee and extending generally eastward for 40 miles to headwaters in Lukachukai, Tunicha and Chuska Mountains. CHINLEE at mouth of canyon, headquarters for various governmental activities relating to canyon. Canyon de Chelly Soil Conservation Service demonstration area.

Spanish explorers regarded this vast canyon system as an impenetrable stronghold of the Navajos. Few, if any, Spanish expeditions dared to enter the upper canyons with their steep walls rising to heights of from 200 to 850 feet. Full exploration did not occur until the winter of 1863-64 when Captain A. F. Pfeiffer and Captain Asa B. Carey of the First New Mexico Volunteers swept the entire canyon system of its Navajo occupants, killing twenty-two in their ruthless campaign.

CANYON DE CHELLY

As closely as can be determined, the canyons were settled by Navajos in the early decades of the 17th century. Ruins indicate that 'Anasazi' folk lived here as late as the 13th century; and, though not definitely known, it is suspected that this occupation may have extended back into the early centuries of the Christian era. The so-called Basketmaker phase of the 'Anasazi', whose residence in the southwest is known to have been as early as 2000 B. C., left numerous remains in this region.

In the early 1700's, the refugee Hopis, as well as some Jemez Indians, came to the region for permanent water after a drought in their own country, and brought peach trees to the Navajos. They merged with the Navajo population to become the Ma'ideshgezahnih clan.

In the many alluvial flats and small rincons of the Canyon de Chelly are some five hundred acres of cultivated land yielding valuable crops of corn, melons, squash and peaches. Nearly four hundred people farm in the Canyon de Chelly proper and in the tributary CANYON DEL MUERTO. In the winter people camp on the wooded canyon rim owing to a lack of fuel in the bottoms.

Ch'inli. The numerous roads leading into the Canyon converge at a low gap in the red sandstone. The Navajos call it Ch'inli, Water Outlet, a name which later came to be applied to the government settlement at the mouth of the Canyon. From the fifty-foot walls at the Ch'inli the road gradually leads upward, hemmed in by six-hundred-foot sheer walls at whose base lie small alluvial flats. These are dotted with cottonwoods whose lush green contrasts vividly with the browns and reds of the cliffs.

First Ruin. Some 4 miles up the canyon on the left is the First Ruin clinging inside a rocky cave. Passing up the canyon the roads fork, the one to the left entering CANYON DEL MUERTO, the most important side canyon of the system, and the one to the right leading onward up the main canyon.

White House Ruin. So-called after a yellowish-white room perched high above the ruin proper, 2 miles above the forks in the main canyon. This cliff ruin was occupied by Anasazi folk between 1065 and 1275 A. D. It is divided into two sections, the lower one clinging to the base of the eight-hundred-foot canyon wall--at this point red with vertical black streaks--and the upper one perched above a thirty-foot sheer face. This ruin was visited in 1849 by First Lieut. James Simpson, and sketched by Edward M. Kern, artist, of the Brevet-Colonel Washington's expedition to CHINLEE. The first scientific excavations of the site were made in 1893 by Cosmos Kindelieff, archaeologist for the Smithsonian Institution, who called the ruin Casa Blanca following Simpson's notes. Some thirty years later Earl Morris of the Carnegie Institute carried on further excavations.