

INTRODUCTION

NAVAHO! For two hundred and fifty years that name has filled the minds of many people with a variety of emotions

fear, apprehension, pity, responsibility, admiration, & respect! Who are these people to arouse such a complexity of thought? Where did they come from, what are they like, what do they do?

The known history of the Navaho is short indeed. Ethnologists tell us that in all probability the Athabascan speaking people, of whom the Navaho are the largest group, were one of the last migrations to reach the North American Continent from Mongolia, crossing Behring Straight. Just when these migrations took place has not yet been determined. Wandering gradually down the Rocky Mountain Region, the Athabascans established themselves in what seem widely separated areas:- In British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Northern California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Oklahoma. Unquestionably they were a migratory people for many centuries. Present historians believe that one group of these people came into the North Central part of our present state of New Mexico at some time between A.D.800 and A.D.1200. This region, lying west of the Chama River and north of the little town of Cuba, is known as "Old Navaho Land", an area including part of the present day Jicarilla Apache Reservation. The Apaches too, are Athabascan speaking people, and are considered cousins of the Navaho.

When these early wanderers came into our Southwest, they encountered the Pueblo People, Indians of a very different type, who had been living in this part of the world for many ~~centuries~~ preceding centuries. Apparently none of the Spanish Conquistadores of Coronado's time encountered these Navaho people, - they may have been a relatively small group living in a remote area. The first Spanish reference to them are the words of Father Geronimo Zarate-Salmeron, who wrote in 1626 "The Apache Indians de NAVAHO, who are very great farmers, for that is what the name 'NAVAHO' signifies - 'Great Planted Fields*****'. A great change came to the Navaho, however, when, in the seventeenth Century they acquired both horses and sheep. This acquisition was to change them from farmers to roving stockmen. ~~For~~ ~~the~~ ~~they~~ ~~dis-~~ card their knowledge of farming for it has moved with them as they expanded their living area. They became expert horsemen and whenever they wished to increase their stock ~~and~~ they boldly raided the Pueblo and Spanish settlements driving off ~~more~~ animals and often taking women and children as well. For more than two hundred years the Navaho from the west and the Comanche from the plains country to the east were the terror of the Pueblo and Spanish settlements along the Rio Grande in New Mexico. During the latter part of the eighteenth century the Spanish, through bribery, held the Navaho from the severe raids of the past, ~~but~~ with the death of the Navaho Chief Antonio, ~~in about 1800~~ who had held his people in check, the old raids began more

vigorously than ever.

Archaeologists tell us that by A.D. 1712 some Navaho people were living in the Canyons de Chelly and Del Muerto, those spectacular canyons on the western slope of the Cuska Mountains in approximately the center of the present Navaho Reservation. The assumption is that many Navaho had moved west from their original Old Navaho Land even as far as the Grand Canyon. Little proof has yet come to light giving the exact location of the habitat of these semi-nomadic people. Unquestionably they moved about, as they have done within our historic knowledge, seeking good grazing ranges and small areas to farm. ^{as} They have never been the closely knit community living people ~~like~~ their Pueblo Indian neighbors ~~are~~.

Shortly after Antonio's death, at the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the Spanish ~~sant~~ an expedition out to quell the raiding Navaho. The soldiers came to the rim of Canyon del Muerto and seeing Navaho people in a cave across the Canyon, fired their small canon into the cave. It so happened that the Indian men from this group were all away on a hunting expedition, with the result that only women and children were killed in this attack. So it was that Massacre Cave and Canyon del Muerto received their names. From that time the Navaho were, of course, at war with the Spanish, and raids flared anew. Less than twenty years later came the ~~xxxxxxx~~ Mexican War and with it a greatly weakened government in the New Mexico area. Soon followed the war between the United States and Mexico and on May 14th, 1846, General Stephen W. Kearney entered Santa Fe proclaiming sovereignty of the United States over all citizens, including Indian Peoples, of this vast Southwest area.

The Navaho of course, understood little of such changes in government and knew little if anything of the United States. At this time our forces were few in the New Mexico area. Even so, Colonel Doniphan was sent on an expedition to Bear Springs (now Fort Wingate) to make a treaty with the Navaho. This venture was useless and during the next three years five military expeditions were sent out in an effort to stop the Navaho raids. All of these were of little avail in so vast and rugged a country where the Indian people scattered and kept in hiding. In 1851 Fort Danby (now Fort Defiance) was established right in the heart of the most hostile area, but the garrison was small, and efforts to subdue the Navaho fruitless. This ineffectual gorilla war continued for ten years, the Navaho (and the Southern Mescalero Apaches) raiding continually the settlements and stock ranches along the Rio Grande as well as the Pueblos of Zuni and Hopi. In 1861 the military forces from Fort Defiance were withdrawn to participate in the Civil War action along the Rio Grande. With all the attention of the Federal military forces united to throw back the Confederate Army from the Santa Fe region, the Navaho were once more left to their own pursuits. In June 1863, Brigadier General James Carleton, stationed at Fort Union, New Mexico, signed a General Order- an official declaration of War against the Navaho. Gen. Carleton sent Lieutenant Christopher (Kit) Carson with 1000 troops to the Navaho Country to subdue these people. Kit Carson had orders to destroy crops and kill stock only, and thus reduce the Navaho to starvation and subjugation. It was soon after the dispatch of these troops that General Carleton decided that, in his opinion, the only solution to the Navaho problem was to move the entire tribe to a new location,