

The Canyon de Chelly and tributary canyons are great erosions in the Defiance Plateau. Canyon de Chelly is twenty miles long and varies in depth from a maximum of 800 feet to 30 feet at the mouth of the canyon. From the air it seems as though the earth split open, and it is only from above that one can see the full beauty of these canyons as they twist and turn across the pinon studded terrain. During most of the year, the canyon beds are dry sand, running water only with the spring run-off, and in times of heavy rains. Silt is gradually filling the lower parts of the canyons. At the time that photographer Ben Wittick made his picture of The White House, in 1882, the bank was thirteen feet lower than it is to-day.. Sites of early pit houses have been found beneath the deposit on the bed of Canyon del Muerto. Within the canyons some 340 odd ruins have been located dating from early Basket Maker period to late Pueblo. The most ~~known~~ <sup>known</sup> ruin is The White House, built in a cave high in the ~~canyon~~ wall of Canyon de Chelly. From the air it is like a jewel set in the cliff, where it gives scale to its spectacular surroundings. Since the early eighteenth century, Navahos have lived within the Canyons, farming the small tracts of arable land along the talus slopes. It was from these Canyons, that Kit Carson drove the belligerent navahos of 1860, and took them on "the Long Walk" to Bosque Redondo on the Pecos River in New Mexico where they were <sup>treaty</sup> held for four years. Following the ~~treaty~~ of 1864, the navahos returned to their former homes throughout the present reservation, and <sup>some</sup> again inhabited the Canyons de Chelly and Del Muerto, where <sup>they</sup> ~~many~~ are still to be found to-day.