



CANYON de CHELLY

National Monument • Arizona

These awesome canyons sheltered prehistoric Pueblo Indians for 1,000 years and served as an ancestral stronghold of the Navajo Indians. With its beautiful, steep-walled canyons and many ruins of prehistoric Indian dwellings nestled below towering cliffs or perched on high ledges, this monument typifies the colorful Southwestern Indian country. Adding to this atmosphere are the present-day Navajo Indian homes that are scattered along the canyon floors.

The Canyons

The name *De Chelly* is a Spanish corruption of the Navajo word "Tsegi," which means roughly "rock canyon." The Spanish pronunciation "day shay-yee" has gradually changed through English usage, and the name is now pronounced "d'SHAY."

The Spanish name of the chief tributary of Canyon de Chelly, *Canyon del Muerto*, means "Canyon of the Dead." It received its name in 1882, when a Smithsonian Institution expedition under James Stevenson found the remains of prehistoric Indian burials in this canyon.

The Rio de Chelly rises near the Chuska Mountains close to the Arizona-New Mexico line and winds a tortuous course westward, emptying into the Chinle Wash just west of the monument. Except for the last few miles, the Rio de Chelly and its tributaries are enclosed by vertical-walled canyons which range in depth from about 1,000 feet to only 30 feet at the mouth of Canyon de Chelly proper.

The streams of this region flow during the rainy seasons and during the spring runoff of mountain snows; at other times they are dry.

Sandstones, chiefly the De Chelly formation of Permian age, laid down more than 200 million years ago, compose



A TRAIL INTO THE CANYON



MUMMY CAVE RUIN

the canyon walls. The reddish hue of the cliffs varies in intensity with the time of day.

Indian History

In the canyons are ruins of several hundred prehistoric Indian villages, most of them built between A. D. 350 and 1300. The earliest known Indian occupants constructed individual, circular pithouses, so called because the lower parts of the dwellings were pits dug into the ground. Their chief weapon was a spear-throwing device, now called an atlatl. Not until later did they use the bow and arrow. They grew crops of maize and squash and made excellent baskets, sandals, and other woven articles; but they did not make pottery. Because of their fine basketry, these earliest Indians are commonly referred to as Basketmakers.

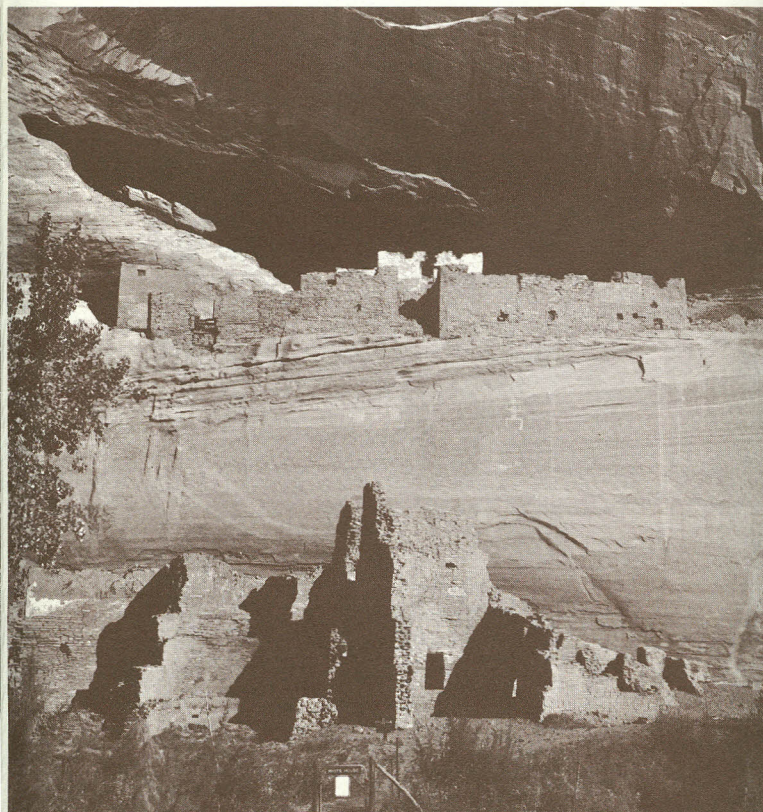
In later centuries, the Basketmakers adopted many new ideas which were introduced into this area, such as the making of pottery, the bow and arrow, and bean cultivation. The style of their houses gradually changed through the years until finally they were no longer living in pithouses but were building rectangular houses of stone masonry above the ground which were connected together in compact villages. These changes basically altered Basketmaker life;

and, because of the new "apartment house" style of their homes, the canyon dwellers after 700 are called Pueblos. Pueblo is the Spanish word for village, and it refers to the compact village life of these later people. Most of the large cliff houses in these canyons were built between 1100 and 1300, during the Pueblo period.

During the 1200's, a prolonged drought parched what is now the Four Corners region of Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. About 1300, the drought, and perhaps other causes, forced the people of Canyon de Chelly and other nearby Pueblo centers to abandon their homes and scatter to other parts of the Southwest. Some of the present-day Pueblo Indians of Arizona and New Mexico are descendants of these prehistoric people.

The canyons continued to be occupied sporadically by the early Hopi Indians of Arizona, also related to these Pueblo people. The Hopi were probably here only during the times when they were growing and harvesting their crops.

About 1700 the Navajo Indians, who were then concentrated in northern New Mexico, began to occupy Canyon de Chelly. An aggressive people related culturally and linguistically to the various Apache Indians in the Southwest, they raided for a century and a half the Pueblo Indian villages and Spanish settlements along the Rio Grande Valley.



WHITE HOUSE



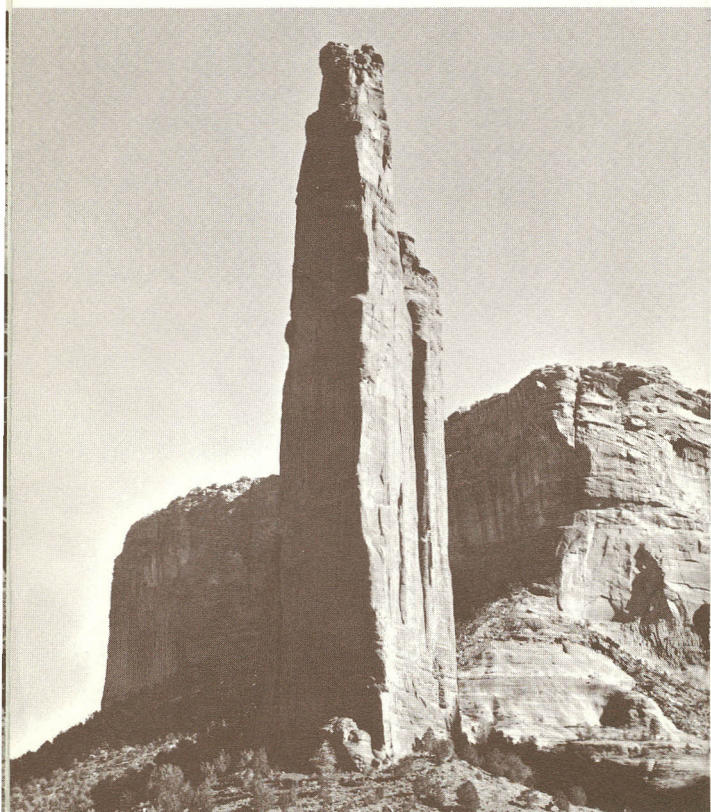
ANTELOPE HOUSE

These attacks inspired the successive governments of New Mexico (Spanish, Mexican, and United States) to make reprisals, and Canyon de Chelly became one of the chief Navajo strongholds.

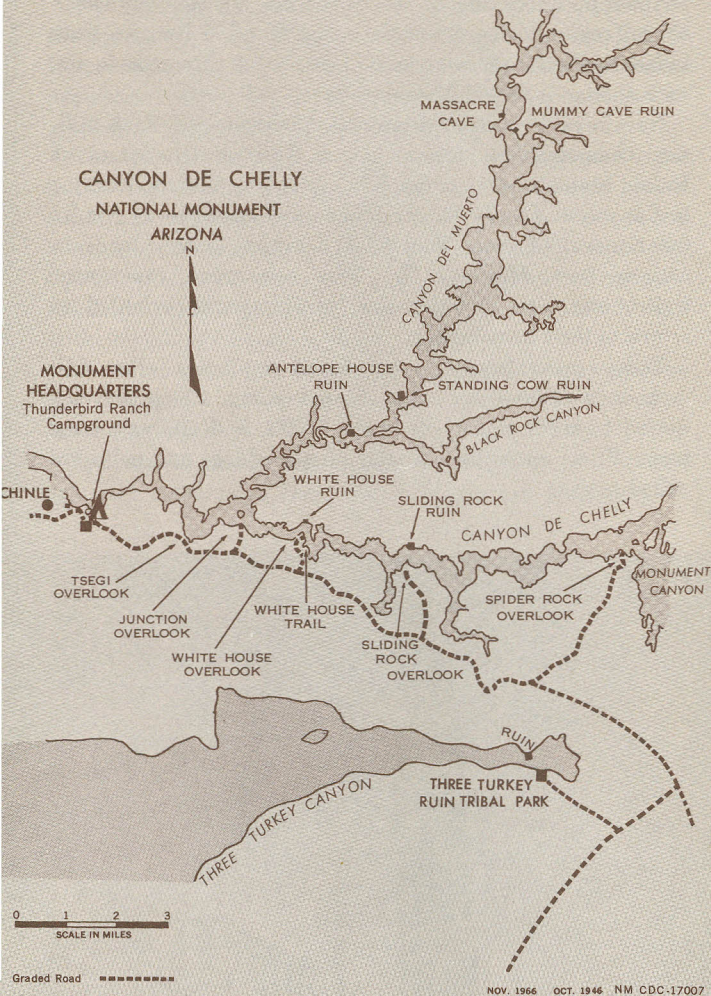
In 1805 a Spanish punitive expedition under Lt. Antonio Narbona, who later became governor of the Province of New Mexico, fought an all-day battle with a band of Navajos fortified in a rock shelter in Canyon del Muerto. Narbona's official report to the Governor stated that 115 Navajos were killed, including 90 warriors. Because of this episode the rock shelter is called Massacre Cave.

Navajo raids continued into the American period. A military campaign was begun, and in 1864 a detachment of United States cavalry under Kit Carson engaged the Navajos in Canyon de Chelly. The raiding was brought to an end by the removal of more than 8,000 Navajos to new lands in eastern New Mexico. This first reservation experiment failed, and after 4 years the Navajos were permitted to return to their homeland.

Today, many Navajos are salaried employees. They still farm in a limited way, but sheep herding, which they acquired from the Spaniards in the 1700's, is declining among them. Their distinctive circular houses of logs and poles are called hogans.



SPIDER ROCK



What to See and Do

RIM DRIVE. The road along the south rim of Canyon de Chelly, almost always passable to automobiles, provides access to five scenic overlook points and the head of White House Trail.

WHITE HOUSE TRAIL. This self-guiding trail leads to White House Ruin, a distance of about 1 mile. At

the visitor center, you may obtain a booklet that explains points of special interest along the trail. A guide is not required for this hike, but you must use the trail to travel to and from the ruin.

SPIDER ROCK. You may view Spider Rock, a spire of sandstone rising 800 feet above the canyon floor, from an overlook 1,000 feet above the canyon floor at the junction of Canyon de Chelly and Monument Canyon.

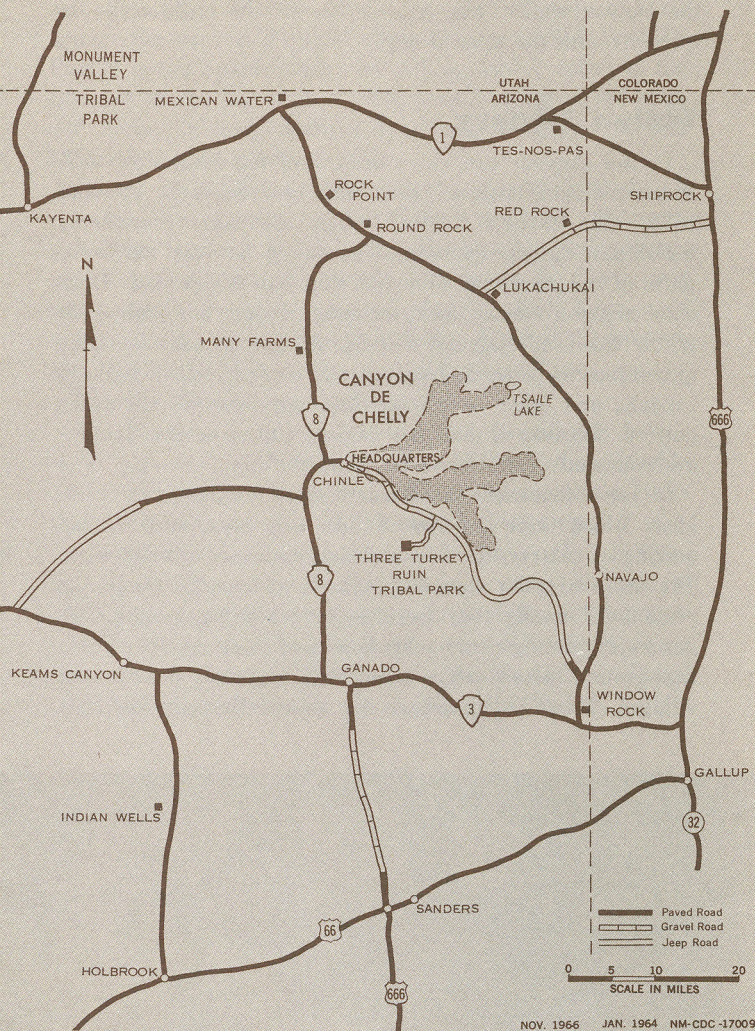
RUINS. The best known Pueblo cliff dwellings in the canyons are White House, Antelope House, and Mummy Cave Ruin. White House, in Canyon de Chelly, is named after a long wall in the upper part of the ruin which is covered with white plaster. Antelope House, in Canyon del Muerto, is so-named for the colorful pictures of antelope painted there by a Navajo artist more than 150 years ago. Mummy Cave Ruin, also in Canyon del Muerto, is one of the larger ruins in these canyons and includes a spectacular 3-story tower house. Late prehistoric Pueblo houses, such as Mummy Cave, almost completely hide earlier Basket-maker pithouses, over which they were built.

PICTOGRAPHS. Many pictographs occur in rock shelters and on cliff faces in these canyons. Some date from the prehistoric Basketmaker and Pueblo periods, but probably the finest paintings are of Navajo origin. The paintings at Antelope House, mentioned above, are outstanding examples of this art. On the cliff face at Standing Cow Ruin, in Canyon del Muerto, is a Navajo painting of a Spanish cavalry unit accompanied by a priest. Here also is the blue-and-white painting of a cow, Navajo in origin, which gave its name to the site.

Travel into the Canyons

For your safety (canyon hazards: quicksand, deep dry sand, and flash floods), the protection of the many fragile ruins, and the respect for the privacy of the Navajos whose land this is, you are allowed to travel in the canyons only when accompanied by a park ranger or an authorized guide. Travel to and from White House Ruin on the hiking trail is the only exception to this regulation. If you wish to hike elsewhere or take your own 4-wheel-drive vehicle into the canyons, the park ranger on duty at the visitor center will help you arrange for an authorized guide and will provide you with the necessary permit.

When conditions are suitable, Thunderbird Lodge offers commercial trips up the floors of the canyons in vehicles especially equipped for canyon travel. Also, horses, with an authorized Navajo guide, are usually available for hire for canyon trips. You may obtain information on these tours at the visitor center.



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To Remind You

Reasons behind the following enforced regulations will be apparent to you. You may not enter the canyons without a guide, pick up or remove any objects, climb or sit on walls of the ruins, mark or carve on walls of canyons or ruins, enter a hogan, or take photographs of Indians without their consent.

Accommodations

All-weather paved roads lead to the monument from all directions. See map in this folder.

Although camping in the canyons is prohibited, excellent camping facilities, including restrooms, tables, and fireplaces, are available at Cottonwood Campground near monument headquarters. Campers are advised to bring their own fuel. Gasoline, groceries, and general merchandise are available every day except Sunday at nearby trading posts.

You can get meals and lodging at Thunderbird Lodge, near monument headquarters. It is advisable to make advance arrangements. For reservations, write or phone Thunderbird Lodge, Chinle, Ariz. 86503.

ADMINISTRATION

Canyon de Chelly National Monument, established on April 1, 1931, and containing more than 130 square miles, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 8, Chinle, Ariz. 86503, is in immediate charge of the monument.

AMERICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.



UNITED STATES
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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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