

OPENING: FOOTAGE OF WAGON TRAINS (PIONEERS WALKING), SOD HOUSES, DUGOUTS, VARIOUS PIONEER TRAPPINGS, ETC.

PHOTO: AL WETHERILL

NARRATOR: In 1887 a rancher named Al Wetherill, while looking for strays in the valleys below the grand mesas of the Southwestern Colorado Territory, discovered a series of ancient cliff dwellings built high in the sides of the imposing mesas.

PHOTO: CLIFF DWELLINGS\ WETHERILL.

WETHERILL: "I looked up and saw the towers and tops of the buildings of Cliff Palace. In the blue dusk and the silence, it had all the appearance of a mirage. The solemn grandeur of those outlines was breathtaking. I walked in close and stood looking up at the ruins in surprised awe. This discovery surpassed my wildest dreams."

NARRATOR: The surprised rancher had discovered evidence of a people who had settled in the North American West centuries before Anglo pioneers arrived in the area.

It is generally believed that the ancient builders of the cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde came to the West from the East, across the Bering Strait; eventually settling among the mesas of the desert Southwest.

PHOTO: UTES.

Later, the semi-nomadic Utes settled in the area. However, they avoided the abandoned cliff houses, preferring to live in the valley below, near the rivers and streams.