Lake Mead Images Over Time

That was then...

1929 aerial photograph of the Colorado River in Boulder Basin looking to the north just above the proposed site of Hoover Dam in Black Canyon. The photograph was obtained from BOR archives and is credited to Spence Airplane Photos, Los Angeles, California.

This is now.

The same 1929 aerial photograph - with the colors modified. The shades of blue represent the approximate extent of water in Boulder Basin of Lake Mead during 1999 (a water elevation of about 1210 feet above sea level). The shades of brown are the areas above reservoir level.

This image represents how this same area is viewed today using a variety of remote sensing tools. The shades of brown represent exposed land with digital orthophotos draped over a digital elevation model (DEM). The blue areas of the image represent the underwater portion of Lake Mead as mapped in 1999 by the USGS using sidescan-sonar in cooperation with UNLV and the NPS. This imagery is draped over a present day lake floor surface which is a combination of swath bathymetry collected by BOR and a surface derived from pre-impoundment contour information. The reddish-brown area under water is the extent of post-impoundment sediment that has accumulated in the lake since the completion of Hoover Dam as mapped by the USGS using seismic-reflection techniques. The darker the color, the thicker the sediment. Note that the thickest sediment (~30 m) occurs along the old Colorado River channel.