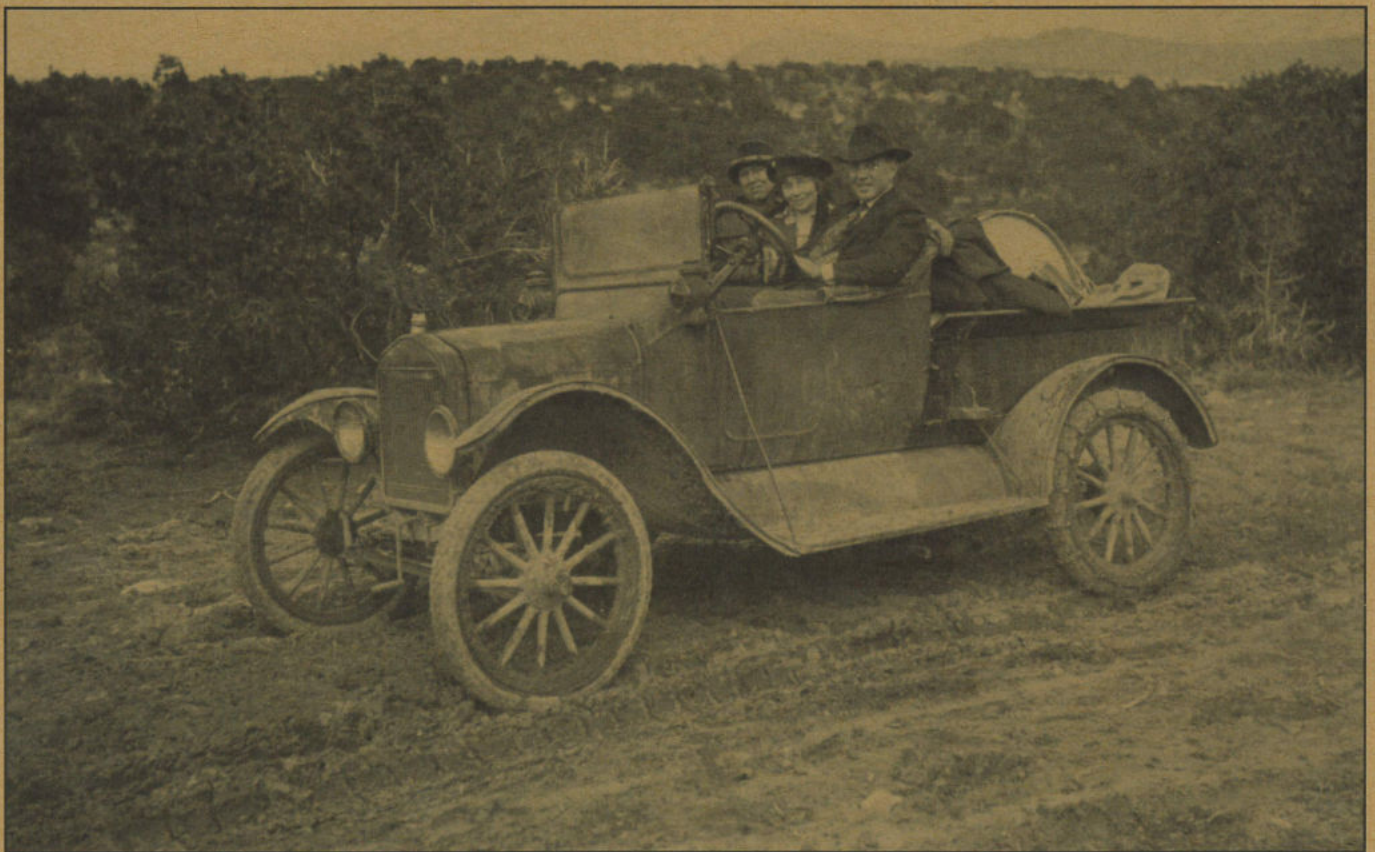


# Canyon Legacy

Journal of the Dan O'Laurie Canyon Country Museum

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Spring 2003 Volume 47



## Rugged Roads





**Journal of the Dan O'Laurie  
Canyon Country Museum**

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## Within...

In this issue, we are lucky enough to be able to present historical research as well as other information to help answer many of those questions that are often asked about the regional roads. Not just "how to get there from here," but why you should want to get there, what made the road important in the first place, or why is the road still viable? From both the perspective of earlier periods of our development to the current and possibly future usage, our roads are one of our most important links to the rest of the world, both then and now. They are the funnels that pour the tourist dollars into our communities and the Yellow Brick Roads that lead to vistas, dreams and expectations that can only be fulfilled in canyon country.

Although the *Legacy* has contained various articles in the past about particular roads, we hope this issue provides new insight for our readers. For other interesting articles relating to roads in those past *Legacys*, see also: Volume 8 on transportation, including a specific article on the Grand River Toll Road (the "River Road"), Volume 10 discusses some of the routes used by trappers and explorers with an article about the Spanish Trail, Volume 28 has a story about the "Jumping-off Place" along present-day Highway 191, and in Volume 41, you'll find the story of the building of the La Sal Mountain Loop Road.

Additionally, a new magazine, *American Road*, will spotlight the history of Highway 191 in its premiere debut issue scheduled for the spring of 2003. This article, by writer and well-known historic highway artist Jerry McClanahan, should be of particular interest to area residents and uses vintage photographs along with an original map by McClanahan which will accompany the piece.

Finally, the Dan O'Laurie Canyon Country Museum will be hosting a temporary exhibit March-April 2003 which will highlight the history of the road through Moab Canyon as part of the plans for the highway's projected renovation.

I hope you have a great trip through this issue!

- Rusty

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### Mission

The mission of the Dan O'Laurie Canyon Country Museum is to preserve and display artifacts and information, and to promote research and education which accurately reflect the natural and cultural history of the Moab area.

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# Canyon Legacy

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**Front Cover:** The Hammond family is shown enjoying an outing on the earlyroads.  
Photo — Dan O'Laurie Museum, Eardley collection

**Back cover:** The old Moab Canyon road was steep, and often muddy and difficult  
to negotiate during bad weather. Photo—Dan O'Laurie Museum, Stocks collection





# THE SALT LAKE WAGON ROAD ACROSS GRAND COUNTY

By Lloyd M. Pierson



Typical section of Salt Lake Wagon Road south of Cisco. (All photos courtesy of author Lloyd M. Pierson)

The Salt Lake Wagon Road was the first named road which carried wheeled vehicles through this part of Utah. Its origins began with the north branch of the Old Spanish Trail, the route used by pack trains between New Mexico and southern California. The north branch began in Taos, climbed the Rocky Mountains at Cochetopa Pass west of Saguache, Colorado and followed the Gunnison River to a crossing of the Colorado at present-day Grand Junction, Colorado. From here it followed along the base of the Book Cliffs with occasional diversions down to the Colorado River for grass and water. Crossing the Green River at any one of the several fords, it progressed up through the San Rafael country, south through Castle Valley and westward over the Wasatch Front, eventually passing present-day Las Vegas and terminating in the Los Angeles basin.

This basic route was determined

by landforms, Indian trails, water, fuel and grass. The route and its branches also were determined by location of Indian groups, and the settlements in California (1770), Utah (1847) and New Mexico. Branches of the trail in Grand County ran north up Westwater Canyon, Thompson Canyon, Diamond Canyon and West Salt Creek Canyon, Colorado through the Book Cliffs to give access to the Uintah Basin. These were used mostly by Indians and mountain men while the traffic east-west to California and Salt Lake City and return followed along the base of the Books. The southern branch of the trail, the main trail according to some, joined the northern branch some 12 miles east of present-day Green River, Utah near a location called Floy Junction or Little Grand(e) Station on the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad which was built through Utah in 1883.

The first recorded wagons on the

route, which would have required some sort of preparation to the land, especially in crossing arroyos and streams, was the Slover-Pope party in 1837, immigrating from New Mexico to California over the north branch.<sup>1</sup> The wagons may have been the two-wheeled Mexican-style carretas, as many in the party were native New Mexicans. In 1842, Antoine Robidoux was reported by Preacher Joseph Williams as leaving a wagon cached at the western side of Cochetopa Pass.<sup>2</sup> The wagon was pulled by oxen, another New Mexican trait.

Apparently dragging a wagon over the route of the Old Spanish Trail was not too successful because, until the U.S. military got involved building roads, these seem to be the only recorded attempts on the eastern stretches of the trail. The western length of the Old Spanish Trail saw use by wagons once the Mormons settled in Utah in 1847.

The year 1853 had three expeditions involved in determining a possible route for a transcontinental railroad between the 38th and 39th parallels of latitude. Edward F. Beale's outfit was a pack train, as was John C. Fremont's, which got to future Grand County in January, 1854. Captain John W. Gunnison, however, led a full-fledged military operation with seven surveyors and scientific men, 32 military troops, 18 wagons and guided by Antoine Leroux, mountain man who guided them as far as the southern branch of the Old Spanish Trail.<sup>3</sup> Gunnison was also accompanied by a geologist, topographers, artists, a botanist, and an astronomer, as well as their Mormon guide, the wagon master, and the military men.<sup>4</sup> In general, Gunnison followed the tracks of Beale who preceded him by about three months. Beale, in turn, was following the Old Spanish Trail's north branch once he got to the San

Luis Valley in Colorado. Because the wagons needed smoother terrain, Gunnison deviated here and there from Beale's trail. William L. Chenoweth, of Grand Junction, Colorado has identified Gunnison's crossing of the Colorado River at present-day 30.8 Road where an arroyo exists to allow access to the river from the high banks on the south side of the river. The arroyo and crossing are on the eastern extremities of Grand Junction.<sup>5</sup>

It took Gunnison from September 18 to September 30, 1853, to cover the ground between Grand Junction and the Green River. Following the Colorado River as closely as they could, the expedition worked its way westward. Chenoweth's research finds Gunnison camping on Salt Creek; then he continued west to Coal Draw, southwest of present-day Harley Dome, proceeding down it to Westwater Creek and the Colorado River at what is now the Westwater town site. Here they rested for three days, allowing the stock to graze and recuperate. While they were resting, Leroux, the guide, was out finding the southern branch of the Old Spanish Trail. Leroux left Gunnison at Westwater and, although he informed Gunnison of the location of the Old Spanish Trail, the guideless group may have erred in finding the trail, accounting for the long detour south from a direct line to the Green River Crossing.

From Westwater they moved west, camping at spots near Nash Wash, present-day Crescent Junction, and junction of the north and south branches of the Old Spanish Trail.<sup>6</sup> On the 30th, they reached the Green River, crossing it October 1 on a ford about five miles below the mouth of Desolation Canyon.<sup>7,8,9</sup> Once across the river Gunnison deviated from the Old Spanish Trail, going northwesterly almost to present-day Wellington along the face of the Book Cliffs, then turning south to join the trail again at the south end of Castle Valley.<sup>10</sup>

Gunnison's route and trail received a good deal of publicity via the map makers of the day. This was partly due to the publicity connected with his death at the hands of some of the natives in western Utah and a detailed report, one of the first, written by Lt. Beckwith, on a part of the world little known at the time.

However, his trail and route seems not to have been much of a "road" even though Gunnison was making a way for his wagons. Gunnison had Capt. Morris with 30 soldiers out in front building roads for the sixteen wagons, one ambulance and an instrument carriage he had brought with him.<sup>11</sup> The report tells of seeing to the south of their route "a majestic shaft... and chimney rocks were almost hourly presented...resembling ruins of immense churches and dwellings, and... resembling the ruins of mighty cities of adobe buildings."<sup>12</sup> They were seeing formations in what is now Arches National Park and this was the first description of these natural attractions.

Jacob Heinrich Schiel, geologist and surgeon with Gunnison, gives a more vivid description of some of the trials they had with the wagons. "The wagons had to be dragged up one by one to be let down on ropes with no less effort on the other side of the pass."<sup>13</sup> They did do much work cutting ways through timber, cutting down banks at streams and moving boulders but they seemed not to have made any dugways which may have eliminated dragging the wagons around. All in all, it is best to consider Gunnison's efforts as a partial road upon which others may have expanded. It certainly set the framework for future road and trail builders along his route.

Gunnison's route proved its usefulness that same year it was made as Gunnison was followed by two parties of stockmen with sheep and cattle and immigrants for California accompanied by 13 wagons. Some of the party had carriages and Charles W. McClanahan, the leader of the group, was very enthusiastic about the route's compatibility to wagons and carriages.<sup>14</sup>

In 1854 Brigham Young sent out a party to explore southeastern Utah, perhaps in response to the previous year's attention from the U.S. government. Certainly his knowledge of southeastern Utah came partially from Gunnison's people, some of whom had spent time in Salt Lake City after the so-called massacre. W.D. Huntington reported in an article for the *Deseret News* for December 28, 1854, his use of Gunnison's "trail" to within 25 miles

of Grand River [Colorado] which he reported as, "a tolerably good one, but the country has little or no wood, grass, or water." This would have meant that he left what he considered Gunnison's Trail at about Floy Junction where the north and south branches of the Old Spanish Trail met. He was accompanied by eleven white men, one Indian and five wagons.<sup>15</sup>

The next year, 1855, the Elk Mountain Mission was sent from the Manti, Utah area by the Mormon hierarchy to establish a mission and fort at present-day Moab, Utah to proselyte the Ute Indians living there. The group consisted of 38 men with 15 wagons and with supplies enough for an extended stay. It is not clear from the diaries how closely they followed the Gunnison Road, as they called it, but it is mentioned. Inasmuch as brothers of W.D. Huntington were in the group they probably followed much the same route as the 1854 exploring party.<sup>16</sup>

Camp Floyd, near present-day Fairfield, Utah, was established by the U.S. Army in June of 1858. The next month Col. William Wing Loring left Camp Floyd for Fort Union, New Mexico. He was to obtain much-needed supplies from this major supply depot and determine the shortest road from Camp Floyd to it. The Mormons had destroyed much of the Army's supplies the previous winter in Wyoming in what was called the Mormon War. Loring had 50 wagons and 300 men, members of Company K and detachments of Companies H and G Mounted Rifles. In general, he was following the route of the Old Spanish Trail over the Wasatch into Castle Valley making some road with his 300 troops as he went. Antoine Leroux, his guide, pointed out Gunnison's road up White (or Price) River but indicated no remains of the road existed. Loring suggested in his report that a road could be made up the White (Price) River to the Salt Lake Valley by way of Spanish Fork and Provo.<sup>17</sup>

Loring and his troops marched 13 miles the day after crossing the Green River at Gunnison's ford and camped at what he called, "13 Mile Spring," which appears to be in Horse Canyon where maps<sup>18</sup> show a seep today. The next day, August 9, 1858, he passed through Green River Gap



between Horse Mesa and Hatch Mesa, camping somewhere on Whipsaw Flat, probably on Thompson Wash south of present-day Thompson's Springs. Somewhere along this stretch of road Loring struck the Mormon trail which "left Green River where we did, but takes a long circuit to a spring 15 or 18 miles south of our road and more distant."<sup>19</sup> More likely this trail was made by Indians and mountain men as no known movements of Mormons in this easterly direction at this time are known. It would have followed the general alignment of later roads to and from the Moab area, especially from Valley City. The spring was most likely Brink or Upper Courthouse.

On August 10, they marched to within 2.5 miles of the Colorado River. On the next day they apparently spent some time at the river at McGraw Bottom and camped at what later became the Cisco pumping station and river takeout for boaters. Next day they camped at the site of future Westwater on the river. Leroux, Loring's and Gunnison's guide, directed Loring to stay south of Gunnison's road from Green River because of sand and lack of water on Gunnison's road. Since Leroux left Gunnison before they went beyond the junction with the Old Spanish Trail, it must have been this section of Gunnison's trail along the Colorado River he was referring to.<sup>20,21</sup>

From Westwater, Loring followed the river and managed to get the entourage trapped in a canyon trying to get out of the Colorado River canyon, most likely Rabbit Valley, requiring his 300 troops to work two days, August 13 and 14 "to cut a road on the side of a mountain ridge."<sup>22</sup> August 15 they marched some 17 miles to camp 1.5 miles from the river, probably on West Salt Creek below present-day Mack, Colorado. Crossing the Colorado River at 28.25 Road [miles from Utah border] arroyo in eastern Grand Junction, Colorado as Chenoweth has suggested,<sup>23</sup> Loring and his troops headed south and east over the Old Spanish Trail to New Mexico arriving at Ft. Union on September 13.<sup>24</sup>

The military began to take a great deal of interest in establishing roads and routes out of the Salt Lake Valley. In early 1859, Capt. James

H. Simpson was ordered to explore for road locations west of Salt Lake City to the Carson Valley, Nevada and later to examine a new route to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas by way of Loring's trail. He accomplished the road to Carson Valley but never got around to the latter road.<sup>25</sup>

Next year, 1860, a military expedition left Camp Floyd headed for New Mexico. They, too, decided the shortest route lay on the route of the Old Spanish Trail. Rather than go clear to Salina, Utah to pick up the Old Spanish Trail, they decided to take Loring's suggestion and build a road up Spanish Fork Canyon.

Col. E.R.S. Canby led members of the 5th Infantry and companies A, F and H of the 10th Infantry over Soldier Summit, across the Green River and Grand County to Fort Garland, Colorado. The 7th Infantry, companies G and I of the Second Dragoons and the rest of the 10th Infantry went to Ft. Garland from Camp Floyd via Fort Bridger and Ft. Laramie, arriving at Fort Garland about the same time as the other troops.<sup>26</sup>

Companies E and F, 5th Infantry, under Capt. Henry R. Selden with 120 men, left Camp Floyd on May 9, 1860 to build a road up through Spanish Fork canyon and down to the Green River crossing which was called in the reports, "Loring's Crossing," the same one Gunnison established at the mouth of Desolation Canyon. On some maps the road over the Wasatch was called "Selden's Road."<sup>27</sup> The rest of the troops were split up into various columns, some up to two marching days ahead of the main column, others up to two days behind. The latter seem to have been the wagons which accompanied the troops. They left between May 19th and the 31st, most arriving at Fort Garland on July 28.

The road builders had a camp 90 miles from Camp Floyd which would have put them somewhere near present day Helper on May 31. The rest of the troops camped at "Salt Creek" (Saleratus Creek?) the same day. Other camps reported, usually the last reporting day of the month, were at Cisco Landing and Westwater, next on the Grand River probably near Salt Creek or the

Gunnison after crossing the Grand near Grand Junction. Details are lacking for specific campsites and the route of travel but they must have been following Loring's trail/road.

Canby had been ordered to find a short route to Santa Fe from Camp Floyd. One year previously, Capt. Macomb had led troops from Santa Fe to find a wagon road and explore the country toward Utah. He got as far as the canyonlands near the junction of the Green and Colorado Rivers.<sup>28</sup> In order to find the shortest route between New Mexico and Utah, Canby was ordered to send an exploring party up the Dolores River to the juncture with the Old Spanish Trail and Macomb's route.

On June 24, while camped on the Colorado River at the Westwater area, Canby ordered Lt. Donald C. Stith with Company H, 5th Infantry to explore the Dolores River. Stith was guided, reluctantly, by Daniel Jones and his brother-in-law, S.B. Moore. Moore, incidentally, had been a member of the ill-fated Elk Mountain Mission's effort to settle in Moab. The exploring party crossed the Colorado at Dewey and proceeded to take ten days to get to the Big Bend of the Dolores. They only reached the Dolores at two spots and determined no wagon road was feasible.<sup>29</sup>

The War Between the States and Utah's Black Hawk War kept traffic in southeastern Utah to a minimum until 1872.<sup>30</sup> During the Black Hawk War, in July, 1865, a militia group under Col. Reddick N. Allred chased a group of Indians over Soldier Summit on the "Military Road" but apparently gave up the chase at the Green River.<sup>31</sup>

The Hayden Survey of the Territories sent two parties to southeastern Utah in 1875 and 1876. Their excellent map is the first to detail and call the road built by the military the Salt Lake Wagon Road.<sup>32</sup> In Grand County it shows the wagon road touching the Colorado River at the Cisco Landing and the Westwater area with roads extending south from the main road to McGraw Bottom. For the benefit of settlers wishing to contact settlements in southern Utah, Gannett described the Salt Lake Wagon Road.<sup>33</sup> "From the ford [on Colorado River at Grand Junction] the road follows the Grand pretty closely for 20 miles; along this portion of the route the river is in a

broad bottom, where wood is plenty, water accessible; but, except in a few places, grass is scarce. At a point 20 miles from the ford the river enters a low canon, and for 30 miles (by the road) it cannot be reached. The road winds among the hog-backs 2 or 3 miles back from it. Where the river can be reached there is plenty of wood, and a mile or thereabouts from it good grass, but little or none at the river [Westwater]. Then there is another drive of 15 miles before the river can be again be reached, and here wood and grass are both scarce [Cisco Landing]. At this point the main wagon-road finally leaves the Grand, striking off in a course generally west toward the Green River, which is distant 65 miles from the Grand at this point. A branch of the road, however, continues down the river 12 miles farther, to a point where water is accessible and there is plenty of good grass and wood [McGraw Bottom]. Thence by a northerly course this branch rejoins the main road.

"Between the Grand and Green Rivers there is no permanent water along the route. Still, rain-water is found at several points in holes, where it remains for several days. Grass, also, is very scarce along this portion of the route."

Historical documents are lacking but the wagon road must have gained much importance with the settling of the Ouray, Colorado area and the establishment of an army post and Indian reservation near present-day Montrose. One group of prospectors, including Preston Nutter and Alferd (also written as Alfred) Packer, the cannibal, is reported as having come across northern Grand County in 1873 with a wagon, suggesting use of the Salt Lake Wagon Road.<sup>34</sup> A stage line, the Meserole and Blake Stage Coach Company,<sup>35</sup> was reported to be in operation between Ouray, Colorado and Salt Lake City in 1876. Undoubtedly it used the wagon road.

When Rollin Reeves established the boundary

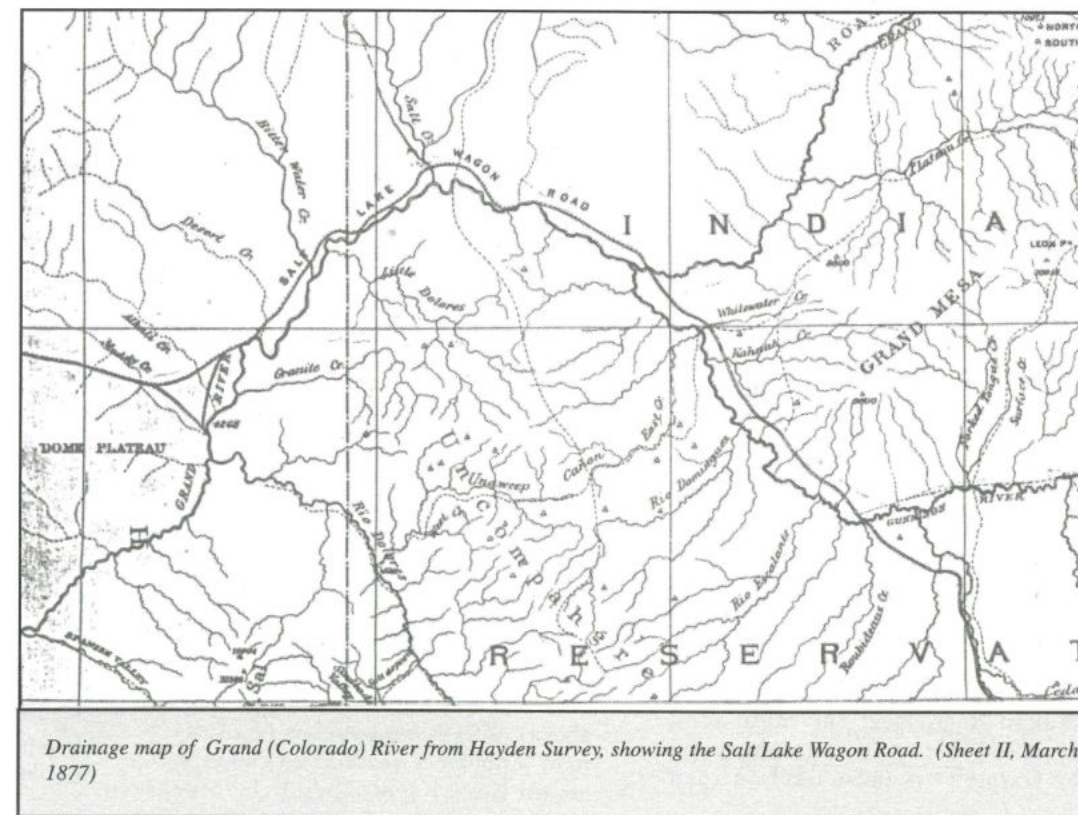
line between Utah and Colorado in 1878, he encountered the Salt Lake Wagon Road at his milepost 148 + 73.20 chains.<sup>36</sup> A primitive road still shows at this point on the Bitter Creek Well 7.5 minute Quadrangle.<sup>37</sup> Reeves and his escort, members of Company K, Ninth Cavalry (the Buffalo soldiers), used the Salt Lake Wagon Road to get to and from the army post at Fort Garland near Alamosa, Colorado. Reeves says that the Salt Lake Wagon Road was in better condition than the road to Big Bend on the Dolores that he crossed further south. He also reported it had been "considerably traveled and worked" and that it was the main thoroughfare between Utah and Colorado and had been made by the military.<sup>38,39,40</sup>

When the Utes were moved out of the Grand Valley in 1881, General McKenzie brought large boats to get them across the Colorado River. Jocknick<sup>41</sup> says they were left in place and used many years. He also pictures a ferry crossing the Colorado with Indians, apparently illustrating the boats the army used. This, of course, would have made the road more attractive and usable.

In 1885, on a re-survey of the boundary, Allan D. Wilson put the road at Milepost 147 + 53.46 chains.<sup>42</sup>

Just how much the Salt Lake Wagon Road was used prior to the building of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad in 1883 is little known. Certainly the railroad cut into use of the Salt Lake Wagon Road and probably caused abandonment of sections of it as the railroad switched from narrow gauge to standard gauge in 1890 and the abandoned narrow gauge was used as a wagon and later an automobile road.<sup>43</sup>

The Salt Lake Wagon Road shows up on some maps of the period and later. A Colorado map from 1885 shows it as the only road providing access to the new town of Grand Junction.<sup>44</sup> Even as late as 1910, the plat of the Henrylyn Orchards Colony of Westwater, Utah shows the Salt Lake City Wagon Road on the south side of the D&RGW standard gauge railroad tracks running through the town and colony.<sup>45</sup> The wagon road was apparently still in use from Westwater to give access to the abandoned railroad at Excelsior, an old narrow narrow gauge station site where the main east-west highway was located, and on in to Grand Junction. This road shows up as a county road in the official state highway map of 1910, too.<sup>46</sup> Much of the road is still in use today as part of the Kokopelli Bike Trail. Bikers



Drainage map of Grand (Colorado) River from Hayden Survey, showing the Salt Lake Wagon Road. (Sheet II, March 1877)

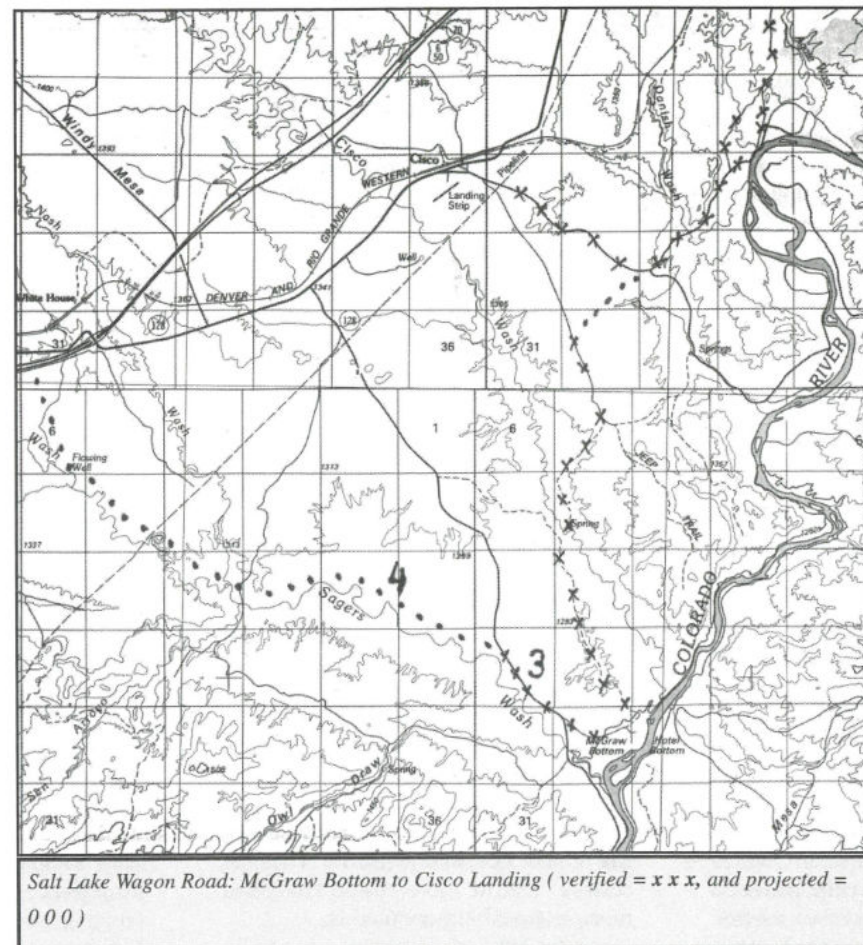


are warned that between Rabbit Valley and Westwater the route is an "old stage coach road" and to be aware of old wooden culverts that eat bike wheels.<sup>47</sup>

Between Westwater and the Cisco Landing, C.H. Dane's 1927 geologic map shows a good road on the south side and paralleling the standard gauge D&RGW Railroad.<sup>48</sup> A road that is not shown on later maps is one indicated as the "road to Salt Lake" on the 1894 General Land Office plat<sup>49</sup> running between Cisco Landing and Westwater one mile southeast of the road on Dane's map. Its westward extension shows up on the 1902 GLO plat as the "Road to Colorado" and is also indicated on the 1910 plat of the next township. However, the road apparently was replaced about 1910 by one more closely paralleling the railroad.<sup>50</sup> An on-the-ground survey in the fall of 2001 was unable to find evidences of the 1894 road.

The route of the Salt Lake Wagon Road west of the Cisco Pump House and Landing is not well delineated on old maps. It seems to have headed directly west from the Cisco Landing, perhaps on the alignment of the present road to Cisco. Further west, it apparently has lost its identity with all of the highway and railroad construction over the past one hundred years. It most likely followed the approximate route of old Highway 50&6. In our survey of the old narrow gauge D&RGW Railroad, we found extraneous wooden box culverts for a single-lane road in the flats between the present railroad and the highways, southeast of Thompson's.<sup>51</sup>

The extension of the Salt Lake Wagon Road from the main road down to McGraw Bottom as detailed by Gannett is most likely a road



between the Cisco Landing road and a road shown in the 1902 GLO plat<sup>52</sup> as the Cisco to Richardson Road which continues southward as a north-south road running from Cisco to McGraw Bottom.<sup>53</sup> This shows on the USGS Cisco 15 minute quad as a primitive road for 3 1/2 miles south of Cisco and then a jeep road for the rest of the way.<sup>54</sup> This was the principal road from Richardson and Dewey as shown by early GLO plats.<sup>55</sup> An on-the-ground survey shows that the present-day remnants of the road disappear at the south end of the alignment.

The present state highway 128 between Dewey-McGraw Bottom and a junction with old Highway 50&6, two and one half miles west of present-day Cisco, is most likely the western section of the triangle down to McGraw Bottom which got the traveler back to the main route of the Salt Lake Wagon Road, although the alignment has changed somewhat over the years (number 3 on the map above). Another possibility is a faint road (number 4 on the map) spotted on an aerial photograph by Ber

Knight, local road explorer, heading northwesterly from McGraw Bottom on the north side of the Sagers Wash and Pinto Wash drainage, joining the east-west road alignment just west of the White House siding on the present-day Union Pacific Railroad.<sup>56</sup>

A road does show on Knight's alignment on a 1941 map of the area made in response to proposed dams on the Colorado River. More than likely, however, the road is a proposal to replace those flooded by the prospective Dewey Dam.<sup>57</sup>

In our field research to locate the Salt Lake Wagon Road we found that the events of the past 150 years have led to

many, many roads in the area traversed by the wagon road. Old roads and recent tend to look much the same out in the Mancos Shale. They also disappear and are replaced, sometimes, as shown by the two versions of the U.S. Geological Survey quads, 7" and 15", in as short a time as 30 years. Cartographers for the quads had different ideas of what constituted a road and a jeep trail. We found jeep trails in better condition than mapped roads.

The older maps, General Land Office township plats and various geologic and commercial maps were all of some help. Even they presented problems as roads the old GLO plats indicated did not appear on later maps leading one to believe some of the stories about contract surveyors doing their platting from local bars instead of out in the field. One particular road that puzzled us was the 1894 road entitled "road to Colorado" that appeared on the GLO plat for Township 20 South ; Range 25 East but, try as we could, we were unable to locate a sign of it in the

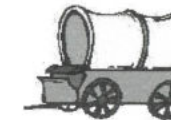
field. It most likely was the Salt Lake Wagon Road when it existed.

The road located by William Chenoweth from Westwater into Colorado is certainly the Salt Lake Wagon Road. It is the one section that was longest lived due to the settlement at Westwater. Another section of road that we feel is most likely an original stretch still in existence is the road and jeep trail leading southwesterly from the primitive road extending due south of present-day Cisco. The entire road from Cisco south is listed on one GLO plat (1902) as "Cisco to Richardson" and on another (1911) as "Road Dewey to Cisco". Richardson was a postoffice and ranch settlement founded in 1885,<sup>58</sup> while Dewey, a crossing of the Colorado River below McGraw Bottom and the mouth of the Dolores, came about as a ferry crossing about 1895 to serve ranchers and miners in the area.<sup>59</sup>

A primitive road leading to the Green River Gap from the west land beyond may well be the original alignment of the wagon road as laid out by Loring and Canby.<sup>60</sup> After the settlement of Blake, the forerunner of Green River, Utah, the wagon road evidently moved to that crossing of the Green River about 1878.

The Salt Lake Wagon Road and its principal makers, Loring and Canby, have had little written of them and their contributions to

eastern Utah and western Colorado. Certainly, further research will hopefully produce greater detail on this important road through what, until the 1880s, was a little-known part of the world. After the Mormons settled Salt Lake City, it must have provided them contact with the mining areas in the San Juans, as indicated by some sources. What other importances it may have had for them remains to be found but there are mentions of Mormon roads in the region.<sup>61</sup> The people in Westwater seem to have appreciated it. The box culverts on the road in May Flat indicate a continued and significant upkeep of the road. Those living in the Richardson-Castle Valley-Westwater region used it to get to Grand Junction and points east.



Lloyd Pierson has spent many hours in the field researching the historic roads, byways, and railroads of southeastern Utah making him one of the leading experts in this area. While technically retired, Lloyd continues to produce significant works regarding his research about these topics.



Wooden box culvert of type used on Salt Lake Wagon Road between Westwater and Grand Junction in later days.

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# WHEN WAS MOAB, "MOAB"?

by James H. Knipmeyer

In the several histories that have been written about the town of Moab and/or Grand County, all of them dwell at some length on the minor "controversy" concerning the reasons for the name and the actual meaning of the word itself. Most seem to agree that the name has a Biblical connotation and refers in one way or another to the ancient land of Moab mentioned in the Old Testament and lying to the east of the Dead Sea. However, another point of contention not covered in these his-

tories, with the exception of that done by Faun McConkie Tanner, is just WHEN the name Moab was first bestowed.

Most of the facts concerning the naming of Moab have been taken from accounts made many years after the fact. Postal department records show that the town was given a post office on March 23, 1880. When petitioning for the post office, however, the early residents had to submit a name. According to all accounts a committee of six men was appointed and the name Moab chosen.

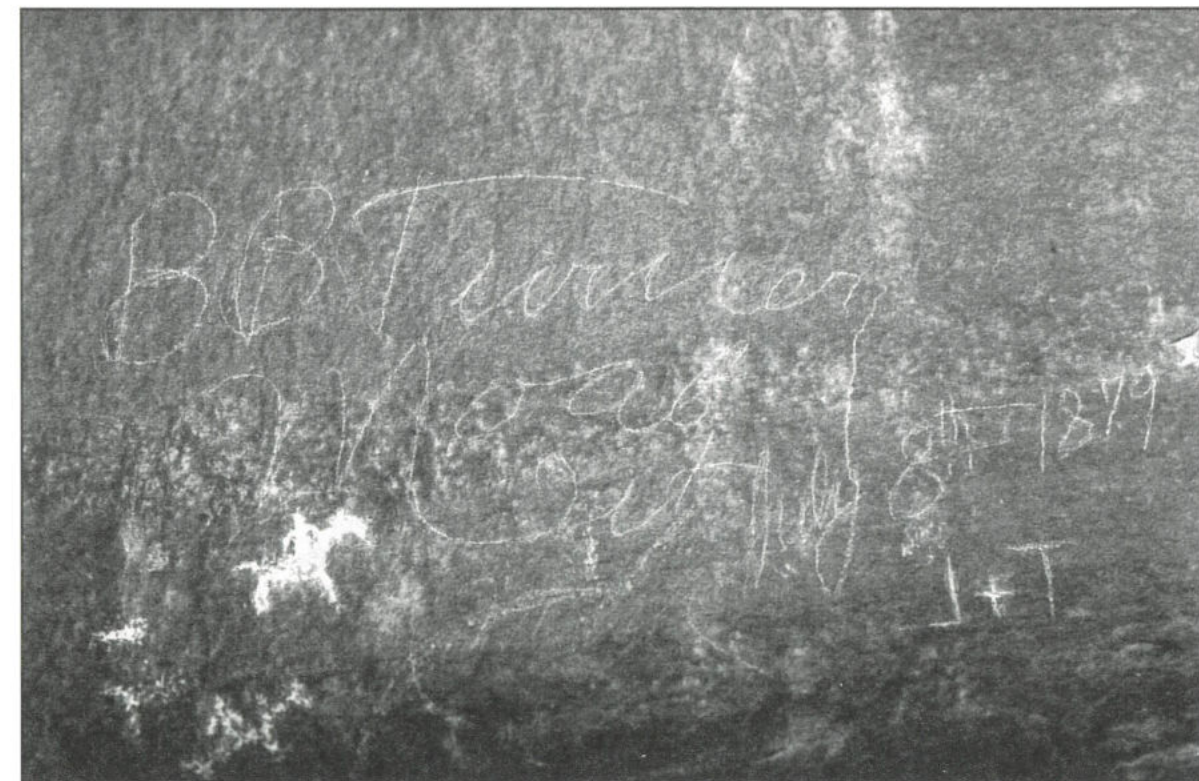
But Ms. Tanner, in her book The Far Country: A Regional History of Moab and La Sal, Utah, states that "Moab was first placed on the map with its PRESENT (author's emphasis) name when a regular mail route was established between Salina, Utah, and Ouray, Colorado." Importantly, this was said to have been in March of 1879, one year before the granting of the post office. Unfortunately, Ms. Tanner does not say on just what map or maps, the name Moab was shown. So here remained a little-known point of contention of dates: was the name Moab originated in 1879, or in 1880?

Recently, the author of this article discovered a piece of evidence which

would seem to indicate the earlier date. In June of 1997, while recording and photographing old, historic inscriptions at Courthouse Rock north of Moab, I found a faint carving on the west side of the huge sandstone monolith reading, "B B Turner Moab Ut July 8th 1879." Courthouse Rock rises just a short ways southeast of a spring of the same name, which undoubtedly would have been a water stop on the Salina-Ouray mail route. I have not been able to identify B.B. Turner, but there were several Turners living in the Moab area during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

This inscription would seem to show that the settlement in lower Spanish Valley was known to at least some by the name of Moab as early as mid-1879, and that perhaps the committee of six in the spring of 1880 did not so much as come up with the title Moab at that time, but rather simply adopted an already preexisting name.

*Jim Knipmeyer is a retired science teacher in Lee's Summit, Missouri, who has been interested in the history of southern Utah for over forty years. He now spends most of his time traveling and writing.*



*The very light "B B Turner" inscription with the name of Moab and dated 1879 as photographed by the author.*



# Climb to the Clouds: the Road to Miners Basin

by Rusty Salmon

If you have ever left the heat of the Moab Valley and climbed into the La Sals on a hot day, you have appreciated what those real estate people are always talking about....location, location, location! This was not the hard-rock miner's intent but, as one observes the sites of many of the mines, it is easy to see that a large percentage of them are in some of the most beautiful spots on earth. One such place is Miners Basin, a classic boom-and-bust mining venture.

Another thing to consider, though, is the accessibility to such locales. Not only the altitude and its winter weather conspired against those who would divest these mountains of their treasures; at one time just getting there was a large part of the struggle. But a man named George Hepburn wanted to change all that.

George Hepburn was born in Potsdam, New York, on 4 July 1832. At the age of 16, he apprenticed in the printing business with an uncle in Cleveland, Ohio, who was the editor and founder of a newspaper



The Hepburn cabin was photographed by Thomas McKee (r) who is often seen in his own pictures. Photo courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.

called the *Plain Dealer*. But George was apparently a wanderer at heart and, after serving a brief stint in Washington as the paper's reporter, he moved West as so many other young men of that era were doing.

Settling first in Omaha, Nebraska, he became involved with a local militia group to fight the Sioux but that was a short-lived adventure. By May of 1856, utilizing the skills he had learned in Cleveland, he became the editor and publisher of the Omaha *Nebraskian*. Also, in 1856, he became active in politics as a Democrat and joined the International Order of Odd Fellows, a fraternal group which had been in existence for over 100 years. These eventually became some of the most stable associations George Hepburn had over his lifetime.

By mid-1857, George had left the *Nebraskian* and partnered with another Democrat to put out the first edition of a new newspaper, the *Omaha Times*. The Panic of 1857, however, put severe strains on the young business and George was experiencing the first of his bad luck



In this McKee picture, cropped for a close-up view, George Hepburn is seen in front with a cup in hand. Photo courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.

which would be inexorably tied with the monetary problems of the country. By 1858, he was wiped out financially and had left the paper so he drifted west to the Pike's Peak gold rush to try his hand at yet another occupation.

Over the next several years George convinced not only his brother Edwin (who had taken George's place as apprentice to the uncle in Cleveland) but also a cousin, Charles, to join him in the West. The three traveled to Denver and points beyond, prospecting in many places and following the reported gold strikes across Colorado Territory. None of the three was involved with the military during the Civil War, but somewhere between 1862 and 1864, George became employed at Fort Garland in the San Luis Valley as a millwright and carpenter. This was also apparently his first attempt at road building because in May of 1864, he joined with two others and formed the "Sangre de Cristo Wagon Road Company" to build a toll road. There is no record that the road, which would have connected the Fort to the main road that ran between Denver

and Fort Union, New Mexico, was ever built, though.

George and Edwin also learned about being cattlemen during this time period, although in a very limited way, primarily buying and reselling the beef to the Fort or moving small herds short distances to Denver for resale. Then George decided to get into public life and in 1865, he ran, but was defeated, for the office of state senator. He became, instead, the postmaster and later a clerk for the District Court.

In 1867, George moved to Pueblo to help a friend build a house and was said to be an "expert in adobe bricklaying." Continuing his efforts in mining ventures, he also ran a gristmill, was elected as the Pueblo County probate judge and expanded into real estate, buying 70 lots in what would eventually be downtown Pueblo. These he sold too cheaply though, ending any promising career in land sales.

In 1871, George got back into printing by establishing, again with partners, the Pueblo Printing Co. which soon put out the *Pueblo People*. But, once again, Lady Luck refused to smile at George and the Panic of 1873 resulted in yet another loss of a newspaper, despite George's attempts to buoy it up, again using his personal financial wealth.

Other major changes in George's life during this time included marriage to Rebecca Emily Dotson in 1872, and the births of their daughter Rose in 1873, and their son Peter Gray in 1875. Peter, however, died before reaching the age of five. Still involved with politics and civic affairs, George was elected County Commissioner in 1873, a delegate to the Democratic Territorial Convention, and was on several committees. He continued to dabble in property sales, both in Pueblo and nearby Cañon City. But by 1887, his wanderlust, financial woes, and disappointments in life resulted in his leaving his daughter and wife, although the couple



Looking down the Hepburn Road where it takes off from today's Miners Basin Road.

were never officially divorced.

All during the previous years George had continued to prospect during the summer months, often with an old friend, Henly R. Price, and Henly's son, Bill. The three had various levels of success and also owned a blacksmith shop that George operated near Ouray. They were just expanding some promising claims when the Panic of 1893 wiped George out financially yet again. But Hepburn and his friend's son Billy were not discouraged and by 1896, found themselves in Utah at Miners Basin at the beginning of another boom.

George Hepburn was involved in

the locating and development of many claims with various partners – the Double Standard, MIF Lode, Skylark Lode, Castle Grand Placer, the Golden Sceptor, the Star Lode, Rock of Ages, New York Lode – to name just a few. They dug tunnels, shafts and pits for the mines, and constructed ditches, flumes, a windlass and an arrastra (a primitive ore-crusher) to handle the ores being brought out.

Within two years the group of men working there had organized to form the Miners Basin Mining District. Hepburn, at age 67, was not only the oldest prospector but possibly the most respected in the district. As he got older, his young partner Billy Price did more and more of the work and even a nephew, Earl, came to help out.

The growth of the Basin, however, required accessibility. From the very inception of the *Grand Valley Times*, the Moab newspaper established in 1896, editor Corbin, a resident of Castleton, championed the need for better roads. His particular complaint was the lack of a road up the river to Castleton and points beyond in the mining district. When voters turned down funding for such a road, a toll road was authorized by the county commissioners. Road



The Hepburn road is still very distinct in many places in spite of fallen aspen trees. Photos were taken by author during a mapping trip to verify the road's location using GPS technology.





Dave Vaughn, Grand Co. Roads Dept., is seen walking along the Hepburn Road. Note the rocks stacked to reinforce a section of the road.

crews started work in late September of 1897 and many of the miners, including Hepburn who did the blacksmithing, worked on the crews. They were obviously out of the Basin mining business during the winter months and this should have provided them with an extra income. By the end of the year, however, Samuel King, the entrepreneur builder, had run out of money. Hepburn, representing himself and his fellow miners, filed a lien on the road to get the men's money. In



An old cabin's remains located along the original road bed.

October 1898, with funding renewed, new road crews began grading the River Road and wagons could pass through to Moab by July 1899.

George wasn't about to become involved in the River Road again, however. He had managed to convince the Miners Basin residents to start work on their own road in September 1898, and, using their assurances that part of the work would be donated, he convinced the county commissioners to bankroll his project and put \$150 towards the project. The unfortunate timing of the renewed River Road work (and the accompanying winter paychecks) began to draw away his workers, though, and in February 1899, George received only half the pay, \$75. In return, he promised to make improvements and widen the road more as soon as the weather allowed and he could get more help. The rest of George's money was received when the commissioners approved it in June of 1899.

By July 1899, there were 27 cabins in Miners Basin, as well as amenities such as a grocery store, 2 restaurants, 2 saloons, livery & feed stable, shoemaker's shop, mining office, mining recorder's office, Dr Richmond's office, post office and a Sunday school. The population soared to almost 70, twelve of whom were women. It was fortunate for us that a now-famous photographer from Colorado, Thomas McKee, also had claims in Basin. His pictures, which he offered for sale at the turn of the century, comprise the photographic record of the residents and the growth of the little town.

But George's luck was once again turning fickle. The Panic of 1907 curtailed the boom of Miners Basin and its low-grade ores and effectively rang a death knell for the aspiring little community. By 1910, only 9 voters' ballots were sent in from the town.

Bill Price,

always as optimistic as Hepburn, stayed with George and they continued to spend their summers working old claims in Basin and wintering in town, usually having enough in gold to tide them over until the next season. Known locally as "Uncle George," Hepburn was still active in both the Democratic Party and his Odd Fellow fraternity. In 1920, at almost 89 years of age, he was the honored guest in Salt Lake City at the annual Odd Fellow state convention and was also the Noble Grand of his lodge at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the order in Utah. The *Times-Independent* stated that he was not just the oldest member, but had also been an actual member of Odd Fellows longer than anyone else in the state and that only a few members in the entire U.S. had been members longer.

A short time later, 25 Aug 1920, George Hepburn died in Moab, a town he had come to love almost as much as Miners Basin. His obituary referred to him as an extensive reader, deep thinker, and someone who was involved with current affairs and was an authority on history and politics.

George Hepburn's Miners Basin Road was still seeing use as others, such as Gordon Fowler, continued to live in or visit Miners Basin. The road was always problematic because of the steepness of the climb and the narrowness of the valley, not to mention the run-off from the deep winter snows. Finally, in 1946, Gordon Fowler and the County road crews built the current version of the Miners Basin road, still picturesque but constructed with the modern automobile in mind.



The Old Spanish Trail originated in Santa Fe and, arcing northward into the Colorado Plateau, crossed the sage plains and dropped off the benchlands of southwestern Colorado into East Wash Canyon, called *Cañon Pintado* in journals of the 1859 Macomb Expedition, in southeastern Utah. The Trail exited that canyon's mouth about four miles northeast of Church Rock, a namesake dome of sandstone visible from present-day Highway 191.

From there, some travelers would have departed the canyon toward the right, north, heading for "La Tinaja" (The Tank), a giant water-filled sandstone pothole, just south of the prominent red monolith, Casa Colorado. Obtaining water from this deep rock cistern would have necessitated a vigorous bucket brigade in order to satisfy the thirst of any number of men with horses, much less herds of livestock.

Therefore others, with droves of horses and sheep, would have taken a straighter route out of the canyon and, crossing the alignment of the present highway, headed toward the verdant spring-fed pool, "Ojo Verde" (Green Eye), in upper Hatch Ranch Canyon, with its adjacent grassy meadows. Beyond La Tinaja and Ojo Verde, travelers from either water hole would have passed near Looking Glass Rock, a landmark standing more than one hundred feet high whose opening gathers afternoon sunlight to focus onto the shadowy interior of the massive cave behind it, much like a hand-held magnifier, or "looking glass." From there, travelers would then have continued generally northward toward the next major water source, Cane Springs, nowadays confusingly referred to as *Kane Springs*.

Disappointing though it might be to some romantics, the Spanish Trail traveled no farther directly west at this point, not even to the bend in the Colorado River known as "Spanish Bottom," which was most likely an Indian route but used also by outlaws. Although there were, indeed, earlier variants of the Old Spanish Trail to the east of the ultimate Trail route, none of these approached the Colorado River gorge downriver of Moab Valley.

# Roads and Transportation

by Terby Barnes

Adapted from the book titled "Canyon Country CANYON RIMS RECREATION AREA" by F. A. & M. M. Barnes, from section on "Roads and Transportation."

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From Cane Springs, the Spanish Trail then traveled northward in a line not varying much from that of the present highway to Moab Valley where it crossed the Colorado River and continued northward, then generally westward, eventually arriving at Los Angeles. The Spanish Trail, from where it emerged from East Wash Canyon to where it crossed Cane Creek, lies largely within the Dry Valley District of Canyon Rims Recreation Area.

When the western territories were annexed in 1848 by the United States, following its war with Mexico, American exploration and settlement brought gradual improvements to the various useful travel routes in Utah Territory, including those sections of the Old Spanish Trail that crossed canyon country. Various users made improvements to the stretch between Moab and the south end of Dry Valley, where the Trail turned southeast into East Wash Canyon, and made new trail from there on to Monticello and points south. Stockmen made the Moab-to-Monticello route via Dry Valley usable for the movements of herds of cattle and sheep. Later, teamsters labored to construct roadways that their wagons could negotiate.

"Butch" Christensen, 90 years old at this writing (1991), remembered riding freight wagons with his father from Moab to Monticello, and described in detail the route the road took. The first problem came while driving down the steep grade into Cane Creek Canyon where the remnants of the tortuous old road, and an even older trail, can still be seen. The trail descends steeply into Cane Creek Canyon to

the east of the present highway, while the old road skirts the cliffs above the highway to the west.

The second problem came at Muleshoe Canyon where, even now, the remnants of the two old roads, both crossing about one-third mile upcanyon of the present highway bridge, are still visible. The older trail crosses the canyon just below the remnants of the bridge abutments of the old road.

Then came The Nipples, Coyote Wash (La Sal Junction), Looking Glass Rock, Hatch Wash, and finally, Mail Station Draw, which name derived from the place where the two mail route riders, one from each settlement, would swap the padlocked mail sacks they had tied to their saddles, then head back the way they had come. The confluence of Hatch and Mail Station Draw was chosen because it had water, an absolute necessity for the horses. The next reliable source was at Peters Spring, at the summit of Peters Hill. From there, it was a relatively easy haul to Monticello.

The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad through Thompson's Spring was completed in 1883, finally connecting remote canyon country to the rest of the world.

In 1910, the Allred Transportation

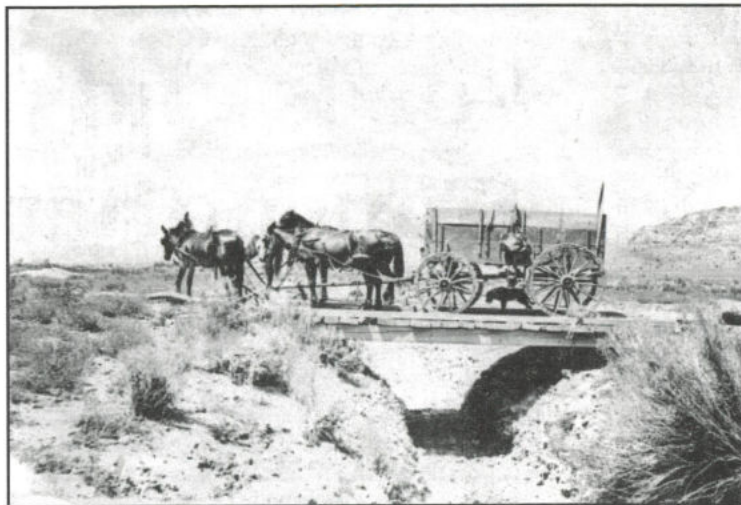


Company started operating a post and passenger service from Thompson to Moab and, two years later, extended its services to Monticello. For the first couple of years the company used only horses, offering minimum facilities which included Studebaker buggies, stations at several lonely sites on the long passage, and "canned goods and crackers .... as standard emergency rations" Fare from Moab to Monticello was four dollars, entitling a passenger to carry up to forty pounds of luggage. Besides the occasional tourist, the stage carried salesmen, politicians, Forest Service officials, theatrical performers, and, now and then, members of Moab's booster club.

Before 1912, visitors to Natural Bridges National Monument coming from the north and west were met at the train at Thompson and taken by stage to Moab. From there, it was necessary for them to travel by private conveyance to Monticello, sixty miles farther. At Monticello, saddle horses and pack animals were secured for the trip to the bridges. The extension of Allred Transportation services to Monticello must have been a welcome convenience to even these hardy travelers.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt signed a proclamation designating the La Sal Mountains as a forest reserve, and the following year, he completed the process by creating the Monticello Forest Reserve, thus establishing an important conservation and reclamation presence in the area.

In 1916 the Forest Service, recognizing that natural wonders were the area's main attraction, published a tour guide extolling the beauty of canyon country while downplaying the inconvenience of its frontier conditions. Colorful names were assigned various pieces of road. The route from Moab to La Sal, and thence to Paradox, built in 1917, was dubbed the "Rainbow Route." By 1929, the road from Moab to Monticello was known as part of the "Navajo Trail," passing through "a scenic panorama of rare charm and beauty" where "vari-colored cliffs, green-garbed hills, solitary monoliths and wide valleys conspire to make a journey of ever



A freight wagon rests on a bridge constructed over a wash. Photo - Dan O'Laurie Museum, Walker collection

changing interest." In fact, the federal highway through Dry Valley was at one time designated as part of the "Great Circle of the Southwest Tour," encompassing seven national parks, six national monuments and dozens of scenic wonders.

Although the first graveled road across Dry Valley was built as "Federal Aid Project A" in 1926, and a few improvements were added in the early 1930s, much of the route between Moab and Monticello was not considered comfortable for automobiles until the late 1930s or early 1940s. In the mid-1940s, parts of the road were paved, but it was not until the late 1940s and into the 1950s that some difficult sections — the Cane Springs dugway, the stretch between Hole 'n the Rock and La Sal Junction, and the Peters Hill grade — received their paved surfaces.

There were few other improved roads in the present Canyon Rims Recreation Area until the 1950s, which saw a boom in uranium prospecting and mining. Suddenly the backcountry was laced with hardscrabble trails providing these hardy and persistent miners access to their claims. Bulldozers pushed aside countless tons of sand, dirt and rock, scratching their way to remote pinpoints of radioactive promise. These agile monsters climbed impossibly steep inclines to reach sites where mine shafts were dug with great effort. Many of the present backcountry roads and ORV trails in Canyon Rims Recreation Area are remnants of that frantic uranium-mining period.

A number of roads and trails in use today in this rugged area were also later developed by oil companies in the course of their seismographic surveys and test drilling. By way of upper Indian Creek Canyon, a long road was built to reach the mouth of Lockhart Canyon and Lockhart Basin. And, as writer David Lavender pointed out, the new roads opened up a world of scenery.

"From Al Scorup's ranch on Indian Creek you can drive now to the rock jungles of the Needles where no white woman had ever been. Or you can bounce out of Cottonwood Canyon, skirt the red-and-white layer-cake formations of Salt Creek, climb dizzily past the deep loveliness of Dark Canyon, and so reach White Canyon"

When Al Scorup first visited Dugout Ranch on Indian Creek in 1918, there was no road to it and he had to cross the creek fourteen times to get there. In 1929, he built a road on the north side of Indian Creek so he didn't have to cross the creek at all. In 1944, he built a straight, graded road and put in culverts for twenty-two miles. That part of the road that is now Utah 211, from U. S. 191 into the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park, was paved in 1965.

Update: during the year 2002, in excess of 55,000 automobiles were clocked in at the Park entrance station.



Terby Barnes and her husband Fran are the publishers of Canyon Country Publications and have produced many books, maps, and articles about the region.

## THE MIDLAND TRAIL: AN EARLY AUTOMOBILE ROAD THRU GRAND COUNTY by Lloyd M. Pierson

The automobile age came rather rapidly to the United States after the turn of the 20th Century. At first, autos were mainly confined to the streets of towns and cities. Soon, however, the freedom to visit places previously only available by train or by arduous horse-drawn vehicle means became an attraction and inducement too tempting to ignore. Aficionados of the mechanical beast organized, demanding "good roads" to replace the wagon ruts, sand and mud holes of the countryside.

The "Good Roads" movement sprang up in many communities as they realized the economic benefits to be gained from ease of travel with improved highways. It made economic sense from the businessman's standpoint and certainly improved the chances of developing a tourist business. Auto makers wanted to sell more cars, too, and joined in the clamor for good roads.

It was these motivating factors, plus the realization that one also had to get to the public trough before someone else claimed all the attention, that brought about the Midland Trail. Pressure was put not only locally but at the state and federal level for laws and tax money to obtain the aims of the "Good Roads" people. Utah's Road Commission was formed in 1909 and replaced the county commissions who had been in charge of trying to upgrade and finance the state's roads.<sup>1</sup>

The 1910 official map of state roads indicates a state road from Thompson, south through Moab and passing through Monticello and Bluff, to end up at no particular destination along the San Juan River. Also shown are county roads crossing the county from Green River to Cisco along the Denver and Rio Grande

Railroad and then to the state line by way of Cisco Landing. Another county road ran from Cisco down the Colorado River to Moab with a spur to Castleton. There was no indication of surface construction on any of these roads. West of Green River, Utah no road at all is indicated, just the railroad.<sup>2</sup>

By 1912 Chambers of Commerce, Automobile Clubs, Commercial Clubs, the Automobile Manufacturers Association, American Automobile Association, and auto enthusiasts were planning and organizing to obtain cross-country roads. One obsession was the idea of a transcontinental road that would set the standards for others. Among the first, if not the first, was the Midland Trail concept.

The route of the Midland Trail vacillated over the years but its beginnings were when the Denver Chamber of Commerce sent "veteran" road scout, A.L. Westgard to find a route between Denver and Salt Lake City in early November 1912. In company with Grand Junction and Colorado "Good Road Boosters," Westgard led the party from Grand Junction through Cisco, Thompson, Green River and on to Price, eventually winding up at Salt Lake City. Along the way the party organized units of the National Midland Trail Association.<sup>3,4</sup> Grand Junction and Price seemed to be especially enthusiastic. The local Moab weekly paper, the *Grand Valley Times*<sup>5</sup> ran the headline, "Great Highway to Cross County."

The trip was not without problems as they managed to encounter a rainy period. Thirty hours were spent getting from Grand Junction to Cisco. They had the mud chains on before they got to Fruita. Bridges were

constructed of salvaged railroad ties. Crossing washes was a hazard, too. They returned by train rather than attempt the desert route again.<sup>6</sup> The Mesa County commissioners had built a road from Grand Junction through Mack to the state line in 1912 but Utah had yet to reciprocate.<sup>7</sup>

Other interests in the country organized the Lincoln Highway movement, engaging several monied people and companies. In July, 1913 a group sponsored by the Indiana Automobile Manufacturers and the Hoosier Motor Club of Indianapolis toured the Midland Trail route with the idea of making it the Lincoln Highway. Price, Utah, when informed that the party of 25 cars and 75 people would not go through their town because there was no road through Price Canyon, decided to build one. A local organization was formed to raise money; \$50,000 was pledged locally and the Salt Lake Commercial Club also raised \$25,000 for the construction.<sup>8</sup> It was all to no avail, however, because even with all the wining and dining, the Lincoln Highway organization decided to bypass even Denver and go through Wyoming to get to Salt Lake City.<sup>9,10,11</sup> However, the Midland Trail and the Lincoln Highway did share the same route west of Salt Lake City to Ely, Nevada.<sup>12</sup>

The boosters in Moab apparently were made aware of the fact that the Lincoln Highway would not go through Grand County because, with all the talk about it, they continued to focus on the Midland Trail and its possibilities. Moab was feeling left out because it appeared that the trail through Grand County would follow the route pioneered by A. L. Westgard. Various plans were offered to get the designated road through Moab. Most involved

The first experimental four wheel drive vehicles were made by Badger (1906) but Olin took over and was producing them commercially as early as 1910. He changed the name to "FWD" but the car was fondly referred to as "the Battleship."



coming down the Colorado River from Dewey.

While local boosters were producing their own plans for the route of the trail, the state legislature designated the trail route in January, 1913 as going through Cisco, Green River and Price. Fifty thousand dollars was appropriated for construction of outlying sections of the road; \$27,000 to be expended in Carbon County, the remainder to be used in constructing the trail from Green River to the Colorado line.<sup>13</sup>

Locals, via the *Grand Valley Times*, jumped on the issue to tout their favorite routes which mostly included getting the Midland Trail to pass through Moab, with the resultant economic boost the town seemed to always want and need. Knox Patterson, local lawyer, tried to stimulate Moabites into starting a campaign to bring the trail down the south side of the Colorado River coming by way of Picture Gallery, Colorado where a road already existed in to Grand Junction. Only 30 miles would be added to the trail and only the section of road between Picture Gallery and the Dewey Ferry would need much work according to Patterson. From Moab he suggested using the Moab-Thompson stage road for 25 miles to where it intersected a new road survey between Elgin and Moab just located to serve oil and gas interests in the Klondike field.<sup>14</sup>

Support for this route came from H.E. Blake of Elgin, Utah in a letter to the editor. He indicated the proposed route over the old narrow gauge Denver and Rio Grande Western right of way was less picturesque than the canyon route.<sup>15</sup>

Stirred by the articles in the paper the Moab Commercial Club, which had been dormant during the previous 12 months, sprang to life to take up the banner for the canyon route of the trail. County citizens, Dr. J.W. Williams, Forest Supervisor H.A. Bergh, Thomas E. Kitson of Fisher Valley and Knox Patterson were designated to be the Road Committee to sell the idea of the river route.<sup>16</sup>

The pot was really boiling in the next issue of the paper. The editor,



Wooden culvert on the Midland Trail on Narrow Gauge right-of-way. (Photos courtesy of author, Lloyd M. Pierson)

L.L. Taylor, stressed that the river route was almost a straight line while the old railroad bed was not and it went through country that was prone to being muddy after rains. John Otto, father of Colorado National Monument at Fruita, declared in a letter to the editor that Grand Junction was preparing a road to Coates Creek in Colorado and from there it was a short distance to Anderson's Ferry. He opted for the road to go through Hotel Bottom on the south side of the river and directly west from there to Valley City and Green River. M.M. Warner Jr. wrote in to plug the river route, stressing lack of mud and better scenery. In this the mud could be a big factor, as the railroad went across the Mancos shale flats at the base of the Book Cliffs and it is renowned for its tenacity after a good wetting.<sup>17</sup>

State officials had already determined where they would spend their monies on the Midland Trail with little or no local input. It would go from the Colorado State line to Cisco, Thompson's, and Green River, on to Price, Spanish Fork and Salt Lake City.<sup>18</sup> Yet, in the same paper, Knox Patterson held out hope that the route could be gotten by Moab as he claimed the state engineer had indicated the northern route was a temporary one. The route and the

road bed were still in a preliminary stage which gave the locals hope for changes.

In April, 1913 the state engineer said the Midland Trail would be ready for the auto convoy coming from Indiana to study the Lincoln Highway in July.<sup>19</sup> A few weeks later, a member of the state road board and state treasurer, Jesse D. Jewkes, was telling the Moab road group that there would be an investigation of the proposed route through Moab before the trail became permanent.<sup>20</sup> This seems to have been political hyperbole to placate the locals as he also managed to chew them out for lack of support for the trail, according to the paper. This latter was not true, of course, as the Moab community had been very supportive of the trail. They just wanted it to come through Moab.

Following the old narrow gauge right-of-way, the Midland Trail was reported as almost to Cisco the first of May under the supervision of country road supervisor J.P. Miller.<sup>21</sup> John Otto continued to plug the Anderson Ferry route while the cost estimates of the northern route led to speculation that the state would consider the Moab route. In spite of the fact that he was building the state's route of the trail, J.P. Miller recommended that Otto's route from Cisco to Anderson's Ferry, crossing the Colorado River there and over Piñon Mesa and No Thorofare Canyon to Grand Junction was a better situation.<sup>22</sup>

I.T. Miller, the county road supervisor, built a road from Anderson's Ferry, located just down the river from the Cisco Boat Landing and Pumphouse, to the Colorado line, a matter of 12 miles. Apparently this was on the east or south side of the Colorado River as the paper reported that there were still 8 miles to be made between Dewey and the Dolores River.<sup>23</sup>

The route of the Midland Trail was apparently solidified by its use by the Indiana group in July, even though it was still a primitive road, for little is heard about the trail later in the summer and early fall of 1913.<sup>24</sup> One more distraction took place in October, 1913 when Grand

Junction found out that Montrose, Colorado was in the planning stages for a road to Moab via the Paradox Valley. This stimulated Grand Junction's support of John Otto's route and development of a plan, called the Union Trail, for a road that would take off from Otto's route heading for Phoenix, Arizona.

For a short time Grand Junction supported the Midland Trail passing through Moab, then for some reason dropped it, ruffling the feathers of the *Grand Valley Times* editor L.L. Taylor.<sup>25</sup>

This seems to have ended the controversy over the route of the Midland Trail. Only a mention of a lost tourist party from Indiana in the summer of 1915 who wound up in Moab while using the Midland Trail is found in the local paper.<sup>26</sup> Moab's automobile tourist business had started.

The next year, 1916, a classic guide book for the Midland Trail was printed in Grand Junction by the Midland Trail Log Book Company. It covered the trail, described its location, hazards, equipment needed, sources of automobile supplies and, in general, was a very detailed road guide, if one's odometer matched the one that set up the distances. One could drive from Washington, D.C to San Francisco, California without the fear of getting lost. Included were

side trips and alternate routes. The trail was logged both ways, east and west, so the reader did not have to confuse left and right turns and other problems of trying to read the guide backwards if it only went one way and one was going the opposite direction.<sup>27</sup>

The National Midland Trail Association had organizations set up in each state where it ran. Grand Junction, Colorado was the location of the general offices, a coup for the young railroad town. On the westbound itinerary the traveler was advised in Grand Junction that it was a day's drive to Green River or Price. Further advice was not to start out after a rainstorm, bring 4 gallons of water in water bags, inspect chains, block and tackle and shovel. The Midland Telephone Company would provide portable telephones to tie into the line which ran along the roadway if needed in an emergency. The traveler was further advised that Utah was maintaining the road and bridges and concrete dips were under construction.<sup>28</sup>

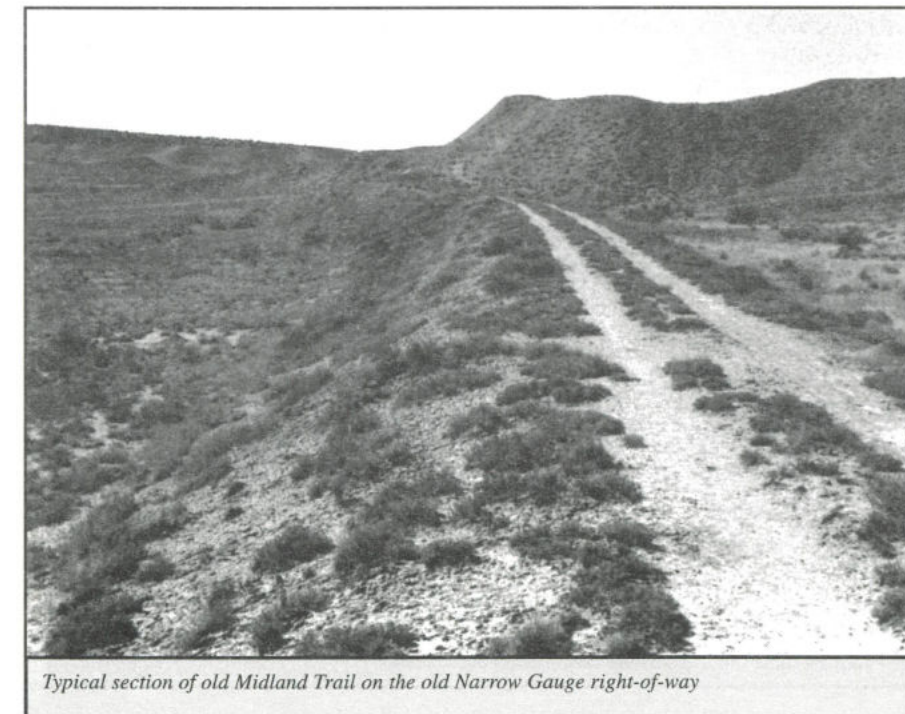
At the Colorado-Utah state line the road came down a long hill, much like later U.S. 50 & 6, with a short bridge and then a crossing of Bitter Creek where the possibilities of a new bridge were noted. The traveler then got on the old narrow gauge bed and stayed on it, "with one cut off and two short detours," then down an even grade to Westwater Creek. The narrow gauge

had been built in 1883 and abandoned in 1890 when the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad went to a standard gauge. The old narrow gauge had a gentle grade but with many loops up draws to accommodate the small light weight engines' inability to climb steep grades.

Crossing the creek once again the traveler got on the railroad bed, crossing the three branches of Cottonwood Creek about where the present-day road goes. Eight miles later the traveler left the old railroad bed, headed south, crossing the standard gauge and into Cisco. From Cisco it was westerly, crossing Cisco Wash and heading northerly, getting on the old bed and crossing the standard gauge to pass south of White House Siding, much like the present railroad maintenance road does today. (Note: reconnaissance on the ground shows this section to be quite typical of the trail at this time, with narrow road cuts, steep embankments and several bridges and culverts made of old railroad ties.)

From White House to Thompson's, the road intertwined with the standard gauge, the trail using parts of the old narrow gauge right-of-way. Beyond Sagers some 7 miles, the trail crossed the standard gauge heading northerly and circled around and crossed the standard gauge at Thompson's coming from the north. The trail then went down the road from Thompson's to Valley City on the present road which is probably an improved version of the original. Valley City was described as deserted but with a large frame house. The traveler was admonished, "DO NOT MISS THIS TURN," which took him across Crescent Flats to Little Grande, or Floy, Junction where the I-70 exchange west of Crescent Junction is located today. The old railroad bed was once again used as a road way until a crossing of the standard gauge was made east of Elgin. This crossing seems to have occurred just east of the tunnel crossing on present day 50 & 6. Once in Elgin, the new (1910) Green River Bridge was used to get into Green River.<sup>29</sup> Thus the Midland Trail went through Grand County.

[One last note. There seems to be some confusion in the trail guide in the area of White House as the two



Typical section of old Midland Trail on the old Narrow Gauge right-of-way



versions seem to read differently. We have used the westbound one and hope that some stalwart might figure it out on the ground someday.]

The guide book talks of some signing of the trail with markers with two six-inch bands of orange with a six-inch band of black in between. The road, especially on the sections using the old narrow gauge right of way, was a narrow one-way affair, very apt to be a muddy mess after a rain. Arroyo crossings were a hazard, steep, apt to be muddy at the bottom and, if recent rains had cut the banks back, a chore to cut a roadway down and up the sheer sides of the arroyo. Although telephones were available to tie into the local telephone line to get help, it was a long way between towns and facilities across Grand County. If one had to pass another car, it was advised to do it in one of the railroad cuts lest one slid off the narrow right of way.

As time went on, there were many other named trails to compete and complement the Midland. The trail south to Moab was called the Sandrock Trail and from Moab south, the Rainbow or the Navajo Trail.<sup>30</sup> The Midland also became part of the Pikes Peak Ocean-to-Ocean Trail.<sup>31</sup> Mileage signing apparently was not part of the Midland Trail program as the Southern California Automobile Club was reported as marking roads in southeastern Utah in 1924 with metal signs.<sup>32</sup> One of these from Floy Junction is in the Dan O'Laurie Museum in Moab.

In the early 1930s with the adoption of the federal numbering system for highways, the old names for the routes lost their importance.<sup>33</sup> By then the road had been upgraded and straightened, some bridges and culverts built and stretches graveled. Today it still has a name, as Highway I-70 has been dedicated as the Blue Star Memorial Highway by the Utah Association of Garden Clubs. A sign, little noticed, at the Thompson I-70 highway visitor center attests to this.

The movement to bring about good roads certainly stimulated the various local booster groups and eventually state and federal governments so that roads were improved, travel increased, the economy was enhanced and we now can zip from coast to coast without a stop light or a rut, little adventure and a lot of boredom.



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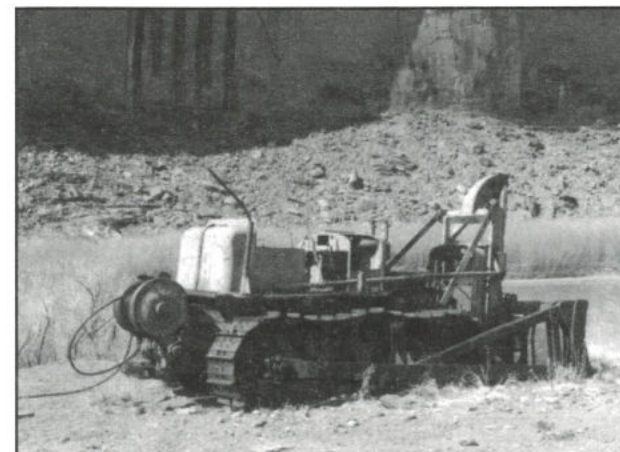
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Narrow Gauge railroad trestle converted to auto bridge

# READING THE ROADS

by Ber Knight



End of the road for this abandoned 'dozer at Hey Joe Canyon (All photos are courtesy of author Ber knight)

There are many ways to enjoy visits to the countryside. We often view great vistas, savor intimate canyons, marvel at the flowers, eavesdrop on the wildlife, or puzzle over ancient rock art. Not the least of such activities is speculating on the human history that may have left clues in the form of remains from ranching, mineral search, and mining. Among these clues are the old roads. I often wonder why a road is there or why it is that particular alignment - sometimes even why there are two roads when one would have served any purpose I can imagine. Some roads are marvels of determination to get up and down a treacherous cliff, and I wonder if they were carefully planned or whether the boss simply said, "Joe, hop on the dozer and make us a road from here to there." (Some old-timers say the latter was probably the more likely.)

Some observations, imagination, and consideration of the nature of past activities can come close to answering some of these questions. Ignoring the big roads that seem designed to get people through the county as quickly as possible, most roads are remnants of ranching and mining activities, and the quantity of roads confirms that mining held the most promise of acquiring wealth.

Some of the old roads have literally gone to seed, but others have evolved into a new life form, often exchanging functions between livestock and mineral activities. Most of the new uses, however, have been recreation-related - access to scenery, connections to various types of trailheads, and recreation simply for the fun or challenge of travel.

The complex topography of the canyon country almost assures that the main transportation routes have evolved from earlier routes, perhaps animal paths or foot trails that were the only reasonable route to get from one place to another. The Shafer Trail in Canyonlands National Park is one example. When I look at the line of cliffs that define the Island in the Sky, I am impressed that even a rock climber could get up or down - then we see a road that makes the connection! We are not surprised at the story that it was a foot trail that became a rough four-wheel-drive trail before its more easily-passable incarnation today (though the details of the alignment must have changed considerably).

The inferred history of lesser roads that may connect, or even fail to connect, to others is often more obscure. We are probably not far wrong to assume that every road was created for some purpose. Even so, I recall an area of local mining activity near Klondike Bluffs where I began to think the miner didn't own a family car - I can imagine him telling the kids, "Climb on the bulldozer; we're off for one of your mother's picnic lunches."

The majority of Grand County's roads had origins in mineral exploration. Subsequent uses of the roads depended on how successful

the exploration was. Roads for seismographic study or core drilling were usually intended for merely one episode of use, but could lead to well drilling, pipeline construction, mine excavating, or ore hauling.

## Oil and Gas

Oil and gas exploration (in the old days of less regulation) left many seismograph lines that are distinguished by their arrow-straight alignments. The lines were constructed barely adequately to get their equipment through. The traditional procedure is to detonate small explosive charges that send sound waves into the earth. The sound waves are detected by a string of geophones that can compare the relative times of transmission between the source and the detectors. From this information the distance traveled via reflecting rock layers can be measured and the locations of underlying rock structures can be



Grasses fill in straight seismograph line



deduced. Positioning the geophones in straight lines facilitates this determination.

The telltale straightness of a road almost assures the seismograph origin. Another clue sometimes appears in the form of short spurs on each side of the road for "shot-holes" where shallow holes were drilled for explosive charges. When the line came to an obstacle such as a canyon or ridge, a bypass was constructed. When you follow such a road and find yourself at a cliff, you can usually backtrack to find the bypass. Usually, but not always. I think of an area on Dome Plateau where strong roads are seen on both sides of Tub Canyon, but the only bypass is miles around the canyon.

These old seismograph roads often extend many miles, but don't expect an obvious "destination." Most often they unceremoniously end at the edge of a mesa. On the other hand, you can be assured that there was an access road at one or more points along the line. Only recently have helicopters been used for access to seismic exploration.

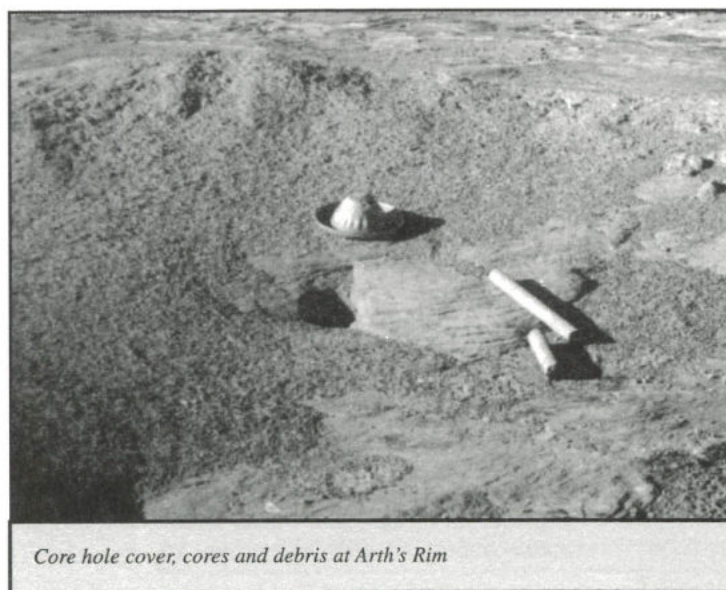
In some cases the seismograph lines have found new uses for further oil development, mining, livestock activities, or recreation. In other cases, the lack of use has allowed erosion and new vegetation to reclaim the paths that were completely cleared of vegetation originally. The new vegetation, however, is likely to be rich in opportunistic plants rather than the older growths like blackbrush. These vestigial roads are often best seen from the air or a distant viewpoint; their straightness makes their presence more obvious. (Much of the recent seismic surveying is done by use of large trucks that vibrate the ground. These trucks can use existing roads or may travel cross-country leaving tracks but no roads. My observation is that the fresh tracks are ugly, but that they recover rather



Ore loading chute at Yellow Cat Mesa Mine. Mine openings and core holes are above the chute.

quickly and are far less of a disturbance than the bladed roads.)

When seismic studies suggest prospects for recoverable oil and gas, exploratory wells may be drilled. These wells are often thousands of feet deep and utilize lots of much larger equipment than the seismograph runs (which used small truckloads of geophone lines and often small auger drills for shot-holes). Drill roads are recognizable by their width and alignments that were designed to avoid sharp turns or steep grades. They are not likely to follow seismograph lines except on flat terrain. They often follow the general paths of other existing roads but may be re-aligned. An example is the Entrada Bluffs road south of Dewey, where the wide road still has reflective markers to mark the road for truck traffic; a more winding path



Core hole cover, cores and debris at Arth's Rim

of the original road is visible in several places.

A more recent example is the Gold Basin road in the La Sal Mountains where the drillers completely re-routed the lower part of the road. What was a 4WD trail is now access for winter sports in the mountains.

The practiced eye may recognize a drill road anywhere, but the sure sign is the drill pad, a large area that has been leveled for the drill rig. Some drill pads have been "rehabilitated" by

recontouring the surface and scattering large rocks, but they are still recognizable. Almost all drill pads have the requisite pipe sticking out of the ground. (Drillers are required to case the wells in some way to avoid cross-contaminating water tables.) You would expect the drill pad to be the end of the road, but some searching will sometimes reveal continuation of an original, less-developed road — and a further challenge to figure out why it was there.

The oil and gas roads sometimes give clues about the longevity of roads that are out of use. In some soils and terrains, the change in vegetation marks roads for a long time. Often one can follow a constructed road clearly in brushy land, but it may disappear in grassy meadows, only to reappear where serious blading was needed to cross a wash. In places like the flat lands north of Cisco, numerous pipes from old drill holes are seen but without any visible evidence of the roads that were needed for the drill rig access.

#### Hard-Rock Mining

Men have been digging stuff out of the ground for a long time. In Grand County there has been little surface mining — except "mining" for the rock itself, especially for road construction.

Subsurface mining has involved primarily gold, coal, copper, vanadium, uranium, and potash. Of these, vanadium and uranium (which often appear in the same ores) account for most of the roads. You know you are in prospecting country when you see stakes and claim markers, which are typically 4-by-4 posts often holding cans or jars with claim information.

The early stages of exploration and staking claims surely used vehicle access, but these casual tracks have long since healed. As exploration and mining became more vigorous, core drillers were the road builders. Their equipment was smaller than for oil drilling but they needed decent roads for their rigs. They spun hollow bits several hundred feet into the ground to bring up samples — cores — of underlying rock. Cores were usually laid out in trays where the rock could be examined and the depth measured. Cores and trays are seldom found; I suspect that drillers were careful not to share their hard-won information with other prospectors.

Core drill sites can be recognized in several ways. One strong clue is a road that ends abruptly in flat land with no obvious destination. Look for a pile of lighter colored soil, "drill mud" and rock residue. The hole may not be evident if there is much soil covering bedrock, but it may be covered with a flat rock or a steel cover that resembles an upside-down hat. Personally, I can't resist dropping a small rock into the hole and counting seconds for the thud or splash. If the hole is intact, three to ten seconds is typical for core holes. (Open oil-drill pipes are rare but I found one that counted 30 seconds.) Watch out for the occasional open core hole where the dirt has slid into the hole leaving a wheel-size funnel that puts an ordinary pothole to shame. (I broke a spring bolt in one of them.)

In some areas, it is common to find core holes with cement plugs holding wooden stakes, which may still have tags with identifying numbers. These distinguish the core holes from speculative searches; one can imagine that the mining

company developed a map of the ore body from these cores. A prime example of a "forest" of such core holes is the mesa between Sevenmile and Corral canyons. The mesa is above one of the most productive uranium mines in the county (known as the Cotter mine or "Shinarump mine" on some maps).

The most active mines often had three levels of roads. (It should be noted that few local mines had vertical shafts for access. Miners made use of nature for vertical digging and entered — often discovered — the ore bodies on cliff slopes.) The upper level of roads was for core drilling, usually on a mesa top. The second level was for construction of adits to tunnel into the ore body and it may originate above or below the mine. The lower level was for loading ore. The loading chutes between the mine openings and the lower level are among the most common remains of these cliff-slope mines. Nevertheless, the cliff-slope mine roads are mostly out of use. For one thing, hardly anyone wants to go the mines. For another, they usually can't — the erosion that formed the cliff slope continues and wipes out the roads with rockfalls and gullies.

The ore-removal roads have lasted longer. They were built for heavy trucking and extended to main highways. An example is the spectacular cliffside road that drops 600 feet into Spring Canyon. It provided access to many productive cliffside mines on both sides of the Green River, including the ferry that crossed the river, and it was well constructed and drained. Since the mining days the road suffered the hardships of erosion, but occasional maintenance kept it usable for two-wheelers and 4WDs. Recently, it was added to the county Class B road system and is routinely maintained, perhaps near its original condition. It has become popular for 4WDs, ATVs, motorcycles, and bicycles to reach riverside roads up and down the river, perhaps to explore the eroded mine roads on foot occasionally.

#### Ranching

Raising livestock has been the county's most durable industry. Except for the people who wanted simply to get from one side of the county to the other, ranchers built the original roads, even though they may have begun as four-foot-drive routes. To be sure, they didn't have the resources to build the grand roads the mineral industries did, but they were first. Once the grand roads were available, of course, ranchers used them for transporting themselves and their livestock.

The roads that are peculiar to the ranching industry are the fence lines and stock pond roads. We often see tracks along fences where vehicles have been used for construction or maintenance, but these are developed into roads only occasionally where the routes are useful for transportation.

Roads to stock ponds are developed similarly. Construction of dams usually involves a bulldozer that had to make a way to the site, but that route was not necessarily more than "cat tracks." The bulldozer needs only to cross the country and occasionally cut away a ridge or cut through banks of washes to get there. Better development of the road often has been needed for maintenance access or for the rancher to check his cattle and perhaps distribute salt blocks. I have made many out-and-back explorations that turned out to be "dam roads."

It is hard to mention roads and fences without considering gates. We road users need to be aware that fences are meant for livestock management on both private and public lands. Sometimes they define private boundaries where "posting" may deny access, but some "rights-of-way" allow public access across posted private land. In any case, the "rules of the road" dictate that gates should be left open or closed as found. Rigid gates with hinges and simple closures are rare. Wire gates are sometimes masterpieces of ingenuity with levers of wood or even rebar to facilitate secure closure. Other times the road user may need to muster full

The U.S. Army, who had been experimenting with 4-wheel-drive to help replace their horses, finally started purchasing and using FWD trucks in 1916 in response to attacks across the Mexican border by Pancho Villa.

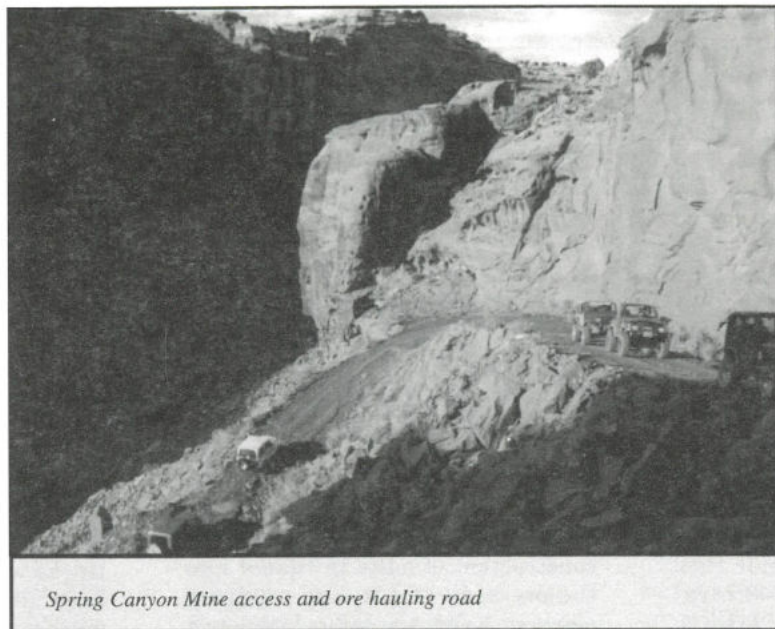


strength and some wire technology to open or close the gate. Personally, I have made a lever tool that helps avoid getting out the hand winch. In any case, it is very bad etiquette to drive over the wooden parts, and it is always wise to wear gloves because the fence wires and closure loops may be barbed wire.

### Washbottoms

Reading washbottom roads is a special case. When miners or ranchers sought passage in rough terrain, nature did a good deal of grading in the form of dry washes. A little blade work sometimes makes a wash passable for long distances. But nature can just as well reclaim these roads with one quick storm. Not only is evidence of blading lost, but new rocks and holes make former paths impossible. Evidence of road construction can completely disappear in some places, yet remain strong in others. It is often hard to tell if a washbottom road ever existed. For example, some current topographic maps show washbottom roads in the Book Cliffs area (where flash floods are often severe) yet I have given up after some distance of bone-jarring creeping without finding any evidence of a road. In other washes that have no mapped roads, I have explored wondering if I might be the first one. After preparing to turn around at a looming rock choke, I found well-bladed bypasses. Of course, that doesn't always work; some broad, smooth washes can turn narrow, rocky, and impassable when different rock layers are reached.

Most of the tributary canyons of Labyrinth Canyon have been used for mining access. Off-again, on-again roads were once well constructed in Taylor, Mineral, Hellroaring, Hey Joe and Tenmile canyons, and while they are still usable by 4WD, some ingenuity may be needed to find a useful route. Be forewarned that nature frequently deters travel by adding patches of quicksand, especially in Tenmile Canyon.



Spring Canyon Mine access and ore hauling road

### Road Conditions

One can expect that all of the roads were once suitable for travel without extraordinary equipment. I figure that the original road builders, however, weren't thinking decades ahead. After all, they had the construction equipment near at hand and could fix washouts as they occurred. It was only when frequent uses such as well drilling, ore hauling, and general transportation developed that we see water-bars and culverts to control drainage. Now the counties perform regular maintenance on a designated set of roads, the Class B roads, and the rest of the roads are in the hands of the users. And "hands" is correct; the BLM has set policies that repairs by users be limited to hand tools (including on-vehicle winches) unless permission for machine repairs is obtained.

County maintenance of the B-roads is done routinely or as needed after damage, but a storm usually hits many roads and repairs may not be immediate. We observe that conditions are sometimes marginal for the county's goal of passability by 2-wheel-drive vehicles. In fact, a buddy and I often declare that we recognize the work of an imagined grader operator that we call "high-blade Charlie." Seriously, don't expect roads to be top notch all the time.

The rest of the roads, however, seem to be nearly in their original condition - most of the way. The parts that have been modified by nature may require vehicles modified from their original condition as well, if they are passable at all. It is interesting to find machine-constructed bypasses around washouts that must have occurred frequently during the original use of the roads. Small user-made bypasses are often seen and are sometimes puzzling until you see that the original route

has signs of a former puddle. Sometimes the bypasses seem to make no sense at all unless to avoid a minor bump.

Recreational users often revel in the challenge to cross canyon country terrain. But I think their efforts pale in comparison with those who first built and used the roads. If those cliffside switchbacks seem frightening, think of the "cat-skinners" who pushed the rocks around to make the road. Talk to an old-timer and see if you don't get some good stuck-and-stranded stories.



*Ber Knight and his wife Charlotte independently selected Moab for continuation of their vacations when Ber retired in 1983 after 35 years with RCA as an electronics engineer in the East. Their love for exploring the country has led to GPS plotting onto topographic maps all the roads he could find in Grand County, the San Rafael Swell, a good deal of San Juan County, and some of western Colorado.*

# The Old Dead Horse Point Road and Side Trails

by Jack Bickers

A great many years have passed since my second-grade teachers spent several class periods telling us of their wonderful trip to Arches National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park. The two of them took a bus trip from Houston. They loved what they had seen and I hoped that some day I would get to see the wonderful arches and the deep canyons. I was deeply impressed and later blessed. I, too have been privileged to see these and much, much more since 1962. It is all grand, and, as many of us who "came here by Jeep" say; we were thoroughly "canyon-kissed" long before becoming permanent residents.

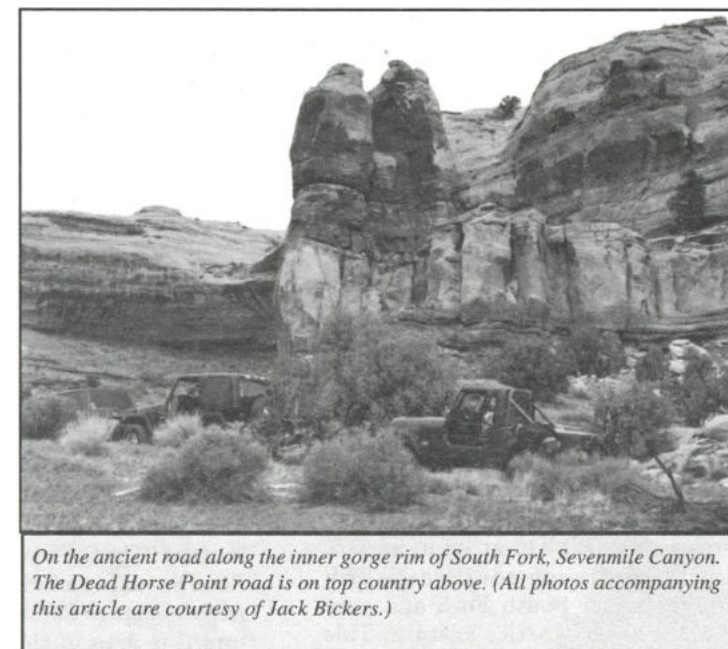
The Dead Horse Point Road (SR 313) was completely and beautifully redone in 1990-91 with extra width, gentler grades and bicycle lanes added. The switchbacks' portion coming up West Fork of Sevenmile Canyon is a fine example of modern highway engineering. The turn-outs, scenic views and sideroad junctions are very well done.

The road is about 22.5 miles in length. Since mile-posts on state roads begin at their south or west ends, these mile-markers come up in reverse order on the left and the first one seen is 22 as one travels toward Dead Horse Point at mile zero. Some of the most important sideroads are: (1) Dubinky Well Road (mile 14, a right turn), (2) Mineral Bottom/White Rim Trail (mile 10.3, branches right), (3) Gemini Bridges Road (mile 9.4, goes left), (4) Island in the Sky District of Canyonlands National Park (a paved right fork at mile 7.9), and Long Canyon Road (at mile 6.7, forks left and heads eastward, down the canyon to SR 279). There are about 40 side roads of great importance to some people and varying importance to others. Every

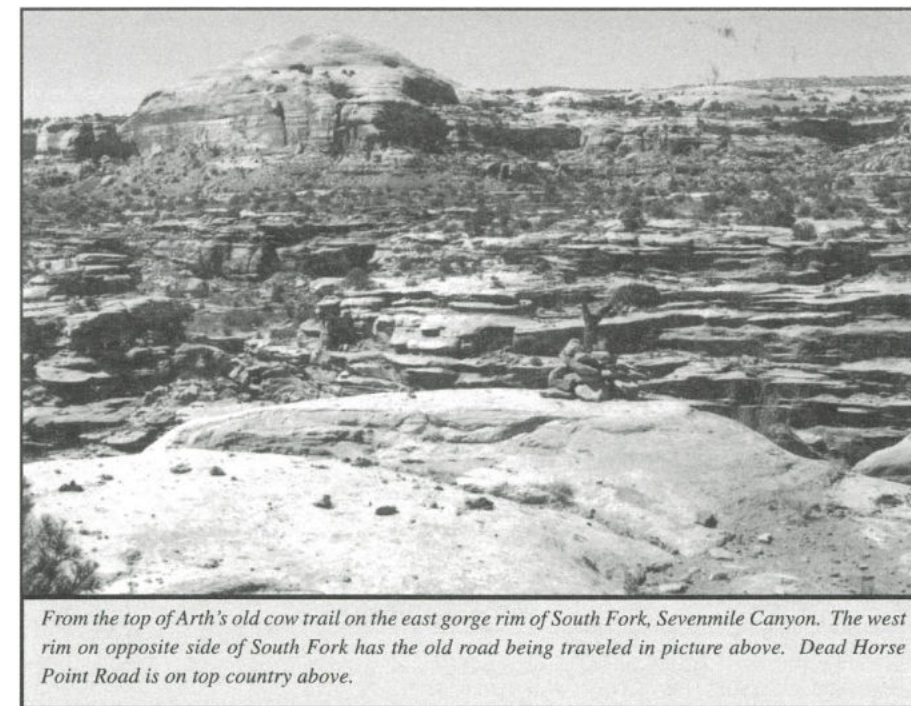
one of them, whether short, long, maintained or primitive, leads to interesting historical places and astounding scenes most people will never have time to enjoy.

It is said that 1953 was the year of the great changes in the Dead Horse Point Road. Originally, this road *did not* turn south off US-191 into Sevenmile Canyon. It *did not* come up the switchbacks of West Fork of Sevenmile Canyon. If one finds an old 15-minute map of "Moab, 1954," he will see that the road ended

northward at about the present-day mile 18. The Dubinky Well Road came up from Blue Hills Road. This old route hit today's SR 313 at about mile 13.7. It was the way to Dead Horse Point and Gray's Pasture; today's Island in the Sky. This was later squared up to intersect SR 313 at mile 14.



On the ancient road along the inner gorge rim of South Fork, Sevenmile Canyon. The Dead Horse Point road is on top country above. (All photos accompanying this article are courtesy of Jack Bickers.)

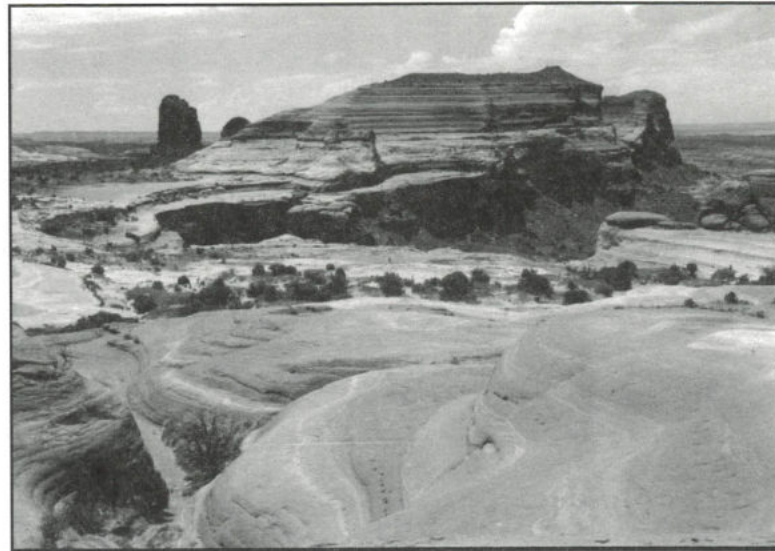


From the top of Arth's old cow trail on the east gorge rim of South Fork, Sevenmile Canyon. The west rim on opposite side of South Fork has the old road being traveled in picture above. Dead Horse Point Road is on top country above.



This junction of the old highway had two other connections. One went to a tramway cable made for drawing up water from a natural seep pond in a fork of West Fork of Sevenmile. It can still be visited today.

Another branched down to become an even more ancient road along South Fork's inner gorge rim. This route is still useable to 4WD vehicles. It goes farther along the rim and crosses West Arm (not West Fork) of upper Sevenmile. There is an old road rejoining this segment to the present-day SR 313 at its mile 15.5, but it continues southeastward, crosses upper South Fork and goes into the heart of Arth's Pasture. This was the route that Arthur Taylor used to reach Arth's Pasture. It can still be done by 4WD today. This is the only road crossing South Fork Canyon *anywhere* along its course. It is very interesting and has many side trails of its own and some grand hiking destinations. Many off-highway travelers connect with this



Main feature of the Rainbow Rock Rims. This can be reached by hiking or driving (4WD) off Dubinky Well Road.

route at "The Ribbon Tree," on Gemini Road by taking a fork northward. The Arth's Pasture Road was the only one into this area in the first quarter of the century. The "Gemini Road" leaving SR 313 at mile 9.4 is quite an old road into the area itself, but what is used nowadays for entry of Crip's Hole and Gemini Overlooks was built by oil drillers in the mid- to late seventies. These are maintained by Grand County Road Department — all the way down into the Bull Canyon

complex, Little Canyon and the North Face Dugway to US-191.

Old maps show that Mineral Bottom Road left SR 313 by going southward on the Island in the Sky Road two miles, then turning right. Now it leaves the highway at mile 10.3, but the old way is still often used because of road connections to interesting scenes such as Whitbeck Rock, Beehive Butte and views of Moses and Zeus.

Arth's Pasture roads were considerably changed due to uranium core drills on Arth's Rim and oil searches through the entire Arth's/Bull/Big Flat areas. Several wells pump near the highway along miles 12 to 11. Another well has been pumping since 1967 about a mile north of the boundary of Dead Horse Point State Park along the Long Canyon Cut-off road. Arth had a cow trail down from Arth's Pasture into South Fork Canyon probably before any early roads were established. It is still possible to drive (4WD) from Arth's Pasture Road to this trailhead and hike down into South Fork. Good rock hikers can even come up to Dead Horse Point Road from the bottom of the canyon. Off-highway vehicles can drive up South Fork about two miles and find the cow trail's bottom end.

The Dubinky Well Road's routing is somewhat different from its original way when it was part of the Dead Horse Point route. In the beginning, it was all known as "Dead Horse Point Road." From Moab, the new route switchbacking up through West Fork is about 15 miles shorter and saves about 45 minutes on good but unpaved road. Those with off-highway vehicles are richly rewarded, however, if they do take the Dubinky route. Then, by taking side trails to the west, they can visit the Rainbow Rocks, the Rainbow Drainways Overlooks, the four west point overlook roads, or hike the old prospect road down to Levi Well Road. Roads east go into Little



An old prospect along the old road to the rim overlooks. This is a rough old trail but it is often driven or hiked to the beautiful rim overlooks west of Dubinky Road.



Rainbow Drainways views. This is reached from another old drillsite road west off Dubinky Road. It is less than a mile to the beautiful rim overlooks, half driving (4WD), half hiking.

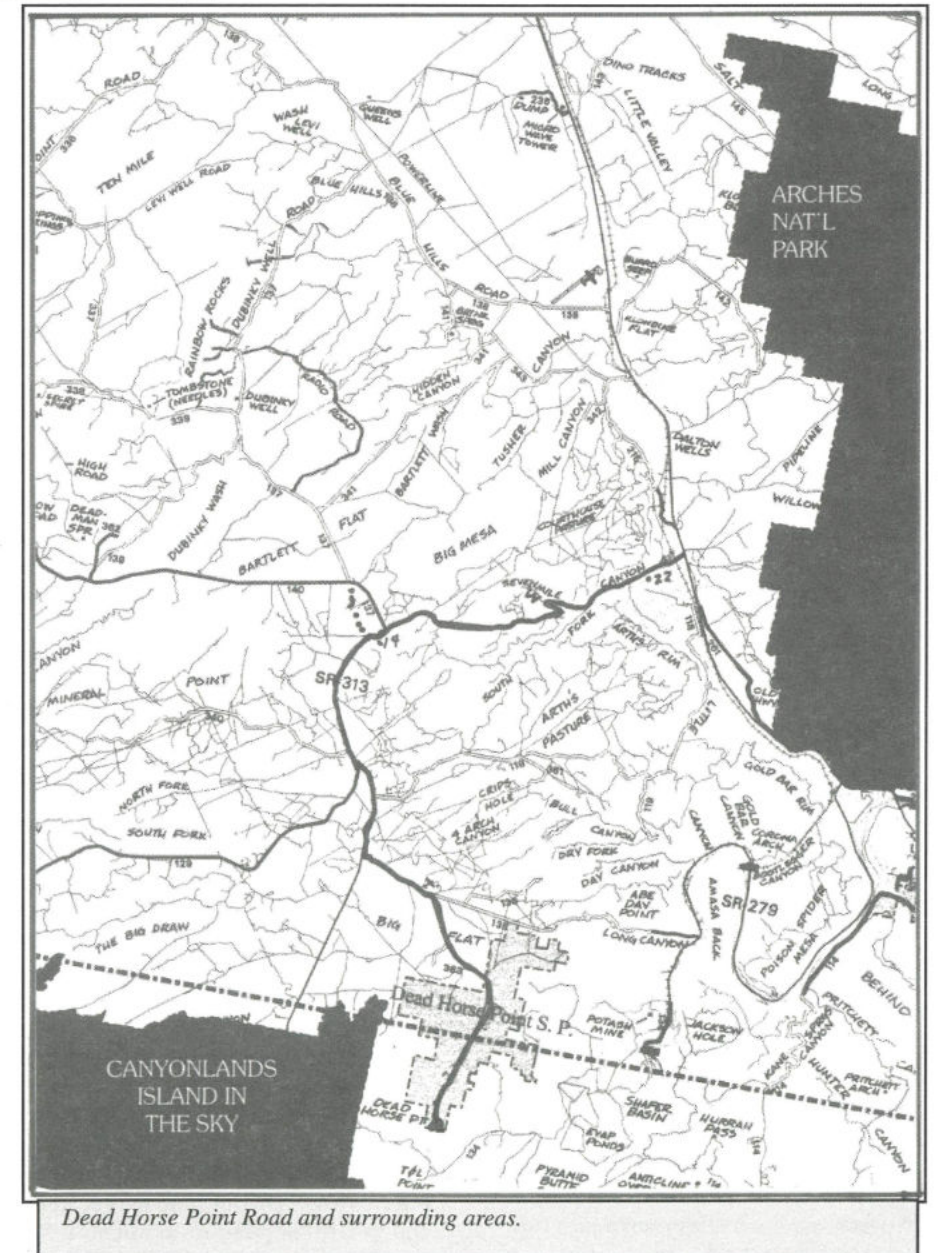
Mountain Spring, Grass Valley (upper Tenmile, believe it or not), and rough old trails southward up to Radio Road. Radio Road is a prominent, rough alternate and scenic 4WD route off the mid-section of Dubinky Well Road. It provides beautiful views into Hidden, Lunar and Bartlett Canyons. Mineral and oil seaches created this route along a fault line with many branching trails and some surface mining areas.



My thanks to Ray Tibbetts, Jimmie Walker, Sam Taylor and Kenny Allred (R.I.P) for their recollections. People traveling these roads should take all backcountry travel precautions. I do not claim accuracy of statements herein nor give guarantees of personal safety or rescue. They are on their own.

Jack Bickers first came to Moab in 1962. After 30 or more pleasure trips to the area, he and Pat retired early and built their home here in 1981. He has written for Canyon Legacy, and has had numerous backcountry travel articles in Moab's newspaper, The Times-Independent, and several in Four-Wheeler magazine. He has also published four trail guidebooks on local trails.

He has some segment maps that he can copy for those interested on the sideroads mentioned above and his trail guidebook, Forty Grand Trails from Dead Horse Point Road, gives many of the details. He is always happy to hear from others who can add more detail to facts about the old roads of the area.



Dead Horse Point Road and surrounding areas.



# The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly— Those Early Roads! by Jack West

*Jack West grew up in northern Utah and was running gas stations from the time he was 17 years old. His oral history, recorded by son Jim West, described many of the early road conditions that Jack and others had to deal with during the "boom years" after his work brought him and his family to Moab. Jack's love of the area and his interest in promoting it to outsiders is evident in these excerpts from his biography. This part of the story begins in Provo where Jack operated a Conoco station and lived with his wife Helen and their two children.*

About 1946, one of my customers was a man whose company's business area covered all of southeastern Utah down to the Arizona line and the Colorado line, through Green River, Moab, Monticello, and Blanding. He kept telling me about how wonderful this country was

I had almost forgotten that the Scorups, who owned the Dugout Ranch, lived in a house in Provo and they were customers of mine. They had also been talking about how beautiful this country was and they kept wanting me to come down to Dugout and visit them, but I never did. I just felt like it was so far away that it wasn't worth the trip down to Moab.

## The Good

But this fellow finally convinced me, and one day in May of 1947, I decided to come as far as Moab with him. We came to Moab and stayed overnight at the old Canyonlands Motel that had the Canyonlands Café. The next morning we went up the Colorado River up to the Bouldens' Ranch. It was just before sunrise and, oh boy, I was so impressed! It was just fantastic. We spent some time there and then came back to town and he took me out to Dead Horse Point in his passenger car. It was all just dirt road then and it wasn't even graveled. You had to take off by where the present airport is to get in there.

Within two weeks, my wife Helen and I were back here with another couple. That's how impressed I was with the country! We had a big old '40 Buick with tires that were a little bit oversized and it was a big old car. We drove out to Grandview Point in that car the day after we arrived. When we came back to town and told people we had been out to

Grandview, they wouldn't believe us. They said that there was no way we could make it out through that sand and back in a passenger car. But I had pictures to prove that we did get out there.

The next day we went out to Dead Horse Point. You could just get to the narrows then. We had to hike out to the Point, but it really made an impression on both of us. So, from then on, every year until we moved down here, we would come at least twice a year. We didn't have a Jeep and just went where we could in the passenger car, and we took a lot of the hikes.

In the meantime, I'd had offers to switch over and work for Standard Oil. I told them that they had to have something better than just another service station for me to be interested. In December of 1955 they let me know that they had a "bulk plant" for me. I asked where and when they said, "Moab," I was immediately interested and they wanted me to start right away.

When we first came, the road north of Moab, up the canyon, had not been completed. We still had to come in on the old road that had that so-called "Dead Man's Curve" in it, just a little narrow two-lane highway on the east side of the canyon. It came into town and had not been extended beyond Center Street. There was no road south across Mill Creek. You had to turn east because of Mill Creek at Center Street, and then it came up through town and went out through Spanish Valley. We came in the middle of the boom and with no housing.

Taking over the bulk plant was quite a venture because Charlie Steen had discovered his big uranium claim in '52. By the time we got here, the town had gone from about 1,200 people up to about 10,000 and most

of those people were miners and prospectors. We had plenty to do. We started out with deliveries to the mines, small mines, and promoters, and a lot of the trips were just spectacular. It was better than being a tourist. We had trips into Lisbon Valley and we did a lot of trips into the La Sal Mountains. We also had to make some deliveries through La Sal, up into some of the mining and logging country.

## The Bad

Many of the trips with those big trucks were on roads that were just practically trails. We had some rough going, but we made it. The road up the river at that time hadn't been really graveled or graded. When we first arrived, just above the river bridge in the high water during spring, we had to go through water at least a foot deep to get to Castle Valley and those areas when we had to make deliveries. One of the main places up there was Polar Mesa. About that time, they were working on Castle Valley road, because I delivered the diesel and gasoline to the contractors there. From the head of Castle Valley, it was just a dirt road on up to Polar Mesa. Those roads were so rough, I don't know how the equipment hung together.

But I remember one particular trip. It was in the winter in January and I was taking the load up to Polar Mesa. I went early in the morning so the road would be frozen and I got just off the head of Castle Valley onto the old road and spun out. It was covered with ice. Of course, that big truck had big duels on. We had twin double chains to go on them and that was a major job to install those. But, as soon as I spun out, I knew I had to put them on. I got the chains out, got under the truck and the first thing I did under there, before I even

got the chains straightened out, was cut my head on a bracket that was holding the fender. The blood was starting to run down the side of my head into my eyes and I didn't have anything, not even a clean rag to wipe it off with. I got it under control and fought with those chains to get them on. Each chain weighed 50-60 pounds, and it's hard to untangle chains and get them on. But I did it and made the trip. I had to leave them on all the way up to Polar Mesa and back. When I got up on the top, the snow was about 4 feet deep. They had created the road with their own little graders to get to the different mining locations. That was the type of adventure we went through to get the deliveries made.

One time, one of my guys drove up to where someone was doing some contouring for the Forest Service, up behind the La Sals. He got up there to the delivery but got stuck and just couldn't get out. But they had a big Cat and various equipment up there so they hooked onto him with their big tractor. By the time my truck got back, the front bumper had been torn completely off and the truck was all banged up.

## The Ugly

Then, while this boom was on, they were also down working on the potash. The potash had been blocked out and they started working on the mill down there. I had to make deliveries to them. There was a road down the river on the other side, but to go that twenty miles it would take over two hours and it was tough. Sometimes the road was out and you couldn't even get down through there. There was water up over it in some spots. It was just across the talus so we would have to go over on Big Flat and down Shafer Trail and then come into Pennsylvania Drilling from that side. We had to back up two or three times to make it with those big trucks around Shafer Trail. Those were rough trips. On one particular trip my son Jim was riding along with the driver and it was wet and slippery. He had Jim get out and walk because, if the truck went over the side, the driver was hoping he could jump quick enough to save himself!

One time, I heard a Shell tank truck go by, not a transport but just a

tank truck. The closest Shell bulk plant was Cortez, Colorado. I thought that Shell must be doing some drilling out there somewhere and he was delivering because they buy from their own supplier. Pretty soon the truck came back and passed on by. A couple of hours later, the phone rang and it was Shell Oil calling from Cortez, Colorado. They asked me, "Can you deliver down under the White Rim below Grandview Point?" I told them we could deliver by going down the Shafer Trail and that we went down there quite often. Then I asked about the truck I'd seen earlier in the day. He said, "Yes, he got to the top of Shafer Trail, looked down, turned around, and came back to Cortez." And he used some real expletives. He said, "I will never deliver to a location like that!"

## But Enjoying It All!

Another activity that involved these backcountry roads not too long after I came here, happened when we got acquainted with Bates Wilson and Lloyd Pierson out at the Arches. Bates was Superintendent and Lloyd was the Chief Ranger. We were concerned about people not knowing where to go when they got in the backcountry. So Lloyd would grout out the signs and then paint the letters white. He did signs for Dead Horse Point and Grandview Point, Looking Glass Rock, and up the river to Fisher Towers. Those were the main ones. We had the sign on the highway at the turn-off. I would take a flatbed truck and we would haul the signs out, take shovels and picks and bars, and put them down right where they were visible. Ray Anderson and I put up the first sign pointing towards Dead Horse Point before the highway department ever put anything up. Then, on the way out to Dead Horse, we had some arrows pointing up, to let people know they were on the right road. We also had signs at the juncture between there and Grandview Point and Dead Horse Point. We just did this on our own. Lloyd would make them, with

Bates' permission, and Ray and I would take them out and set them. The ones out by Looking Glass Rock really helped people and we had the only sign on the highway there for years before the highway department finally put in signs. But that was a real fun adventure, and it let us see some of the country again in addition to benefiting the area.

One of the main reasons we started coming to Moab was the beautiful scenery. We came down in our passenger cars, and there were a lot of places to go even that way. But shortly after my brother Ray arrived, he bought a CJ-5 Jeep. That gave us access to some of the backcountry. Other friends had a Jeep Utility Wagon and a Scout and Lloyd offered to guide us into some of this country. The Canyonlands National Park hadn't been established. The new road into the Arches from this end hadn't been built.

Lloyd consented to guide us and the first trip he took us on was with two or three different outfits and we went up Lavender Canyon. We camped up by Cleft Arch and had a fantastic trip. Then, the next one was down to the Bridges National Monument. That was before there was anything in there, just a road that was practically 4WD. It was a truck road into the head of the canyon where the bridges were. Then Lloyd took us into the Fiery Furnace. On that trip we parked and camped down off to the side of the road into Salt Creek. Nothing had been improved. There was just a dirt road into that area. Then we hiked up to the head of the Fiery Furnace area and let ourselves down on a rope with Lloyd, of course, guiding us. The next trip was into the Maze. Those longer trips were where my flatbed came in handy because the CJ-5's and even the utility wagons were really small. You just couldn't carry enough equipment and food to take more than one person. So I would take the flatbed and load all the stuff on it and go to a base camp as far as we could drive it. Then we would go from there on day-trips in the 4WD rigs.

We got into the Maze, down into the Barrier Creek, and we drove

*When the Army decided it needed a light 4-wheel-drive scout car to replace the accident-prone motorcycle, the Bantam Car Co. won the initial bid. Ford and Willys Overland had better production lines though and soon took over production. The basis for the design for the original "Jeep" was Willys Overland's 1930s Whippet.*





People line up waiting for an early Jeep Safari to begin, ~1967. Photo courtesy of Dan O'Laurie Museum, CC collection.

down in, which you can't do anymore, and out of the east side. Boy, that was rough going. When we went over Elephant Hill for the first time there were about four CJ-5's on that trip and I took the flatbed out as far as I could towards the bottom of Elephant Hill. That Elephant Hill was just a disaster with ten and twelve inch jumps as you went up and no automatics, so everything was shift work. What a job that was! But, within the first two or three years, with Lloyd's guidance, we had really started to cover the country, and it was just fabulous.

In the meantime, I had gotten well acquainted with Ross Musselman who was an old time guide. He moved here from Monticello and he had a fabulous shop and had dinosaur bones and all kinds of rocks from the area there. One night in the late sixties, Mrs. Musselman called and said that Ross was out of town but that she had people coming over for coffee and my wife and I were also invited. So we went down, Helen and I, Harold Jacobs and his wife, and Mary Williams (Mitch was out of town). We got talking about what we could do to promote the four-wheel driving in this area in the rough backcountry and we discussed all the good places to go. There were a few trails that

we knew that people could go if they had a leader. Mary Williams came up with the idea about starting guided jeep tours. They had a couple of old jeep utility wagons and they were going to have people come and follow them, hence the name, Tag-Along-Tours. But, the way it turned out, that didn't work because people would lag back a half a mile. So they immediately switched over to having the equipment and they started taking tourists themselves.

As a result of our conversation that winter night, though, we all decided we shouldn't stall on a similar community plan and that we'd start that spring, in April. That was about two months away and that was the birth of the Jeep Safari. We had some publicity and staked out a couple of trails like the one up to Pritchett Arch. We had our first Jeep Safari with about fifteen or twenty jeeps and we guided them on two trails. Then the following year we got more publicity out on it and you know what happened. It has gone crazy! But that was the beginning of the Jeep Safari, that meeting at Musselman's.

The next year, I pioneered the Poison Spider Trail with some BLM guys. In addition to that and Behind

the Rocks, I also helped pioneer the Kane Creek Trail, instead of going over Hoorah Pass. I led at least one trail for the Jeep Safari for three or four years and those were really fun. You had to take care of all of the needs of the people following you.

During the years that I was in Rotary Club, we also started having Rotary Safaris. It would be a three or four day trip with the Rotary Club and guests, local or from out of town, would come along. We had a lot of fun on those. We didn't go into any of the real backcountry, but we made trips into the Needles, White Rim, and places like that. Those Rotary Safaris were really good and I think the last one we had was at Davis Canyon.

I can just sit and think of places that I have camped around the area, from the Book Cliffs to the Bridges, the Maze, and up in the mountains. We went into the Needles when it was still open and you could get in there with a vehicle, over the Elephant Hill. We pretty well covered the Canyonlands National Park area long before it was designated as a Park, and we had some fun experiences.

I always thought this country was so beautiful that everybody should see it. That was my idea in Chamber work and Travel Council and all the other things I got involved in; that this was just too pretty not to have everybody see it. I have always really enjoyed it!



Jack retired in 1984 and still lives in Moab, having coffee with many of his friends on a daily basis. He also visits with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who live in Bountiful and Layton, Utah.

# The Grand County RS 2477 GPS Project

## Or....

### What We Learned About Grand County in 100,000 Miles by Dave Vaughn

WHAT IS RS 2477?

Revised Statue 2477, otherwise known as RS 2477, was adopted by the United States Congress as part of the Mining Act of 1866. The name comes from its placement in a reorganized version of the U.S. Code. It's a very short law, just one sentence, that says "the right of way for the construction of highways across public lands not otherwise reserved for public purposes is hereby granted." These rights-of-way were granted to a political subdivision, usually the counties. In Utah, the state and the counties claim full and undivided interest in these rights-of-way, which means both parties own them equally. So, any public land that wasn't set aside for coal reserves, National Parks and Monuments, and so on, was open to the construction of roads (highways, in the parlance of the day).

RS 2477 was repealed in 1976 with the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). FLPMA stated that the repeal of the law did not affect existing rights-of-way granted under RS 2477 and they still remain valid. Then, over the years, administrative rules came into being attempting to define what constitutes a "road." These rules were never enacted by the U.S. Congress, which means that these rules could not overrule the original grant by the Congress. Some people say it's now a question of Constitutional Law.

#### GETTING THE BASICS

In any case, you'd never think that something that sounds so dry and boring could ever be very interesting except as a source of endless arguments. But, in 1999, the State of Utah started providing grant monies to the counties to acquire

global positioning system (GPS) technology to start documenting these rights-of-way. Grand County has been involved in the project from the start. We have really learned a lot about Grand County after logging more than 6000 miles of roads and taking about 20,000 pictures. We've found everything from Native American ruins to mobile home ruins, old mines, graves, old vehicles and parts, and on and on.

One of the first things we did once we had the necessary equipment was to hire Rick Showalter as our GPS person. Then came the supporting cast; the volunteers that rode and continue to ride along to help. People like Harvey Merrell, who was the first to go along and who offered many useful suggestions, and then Jack Bickers was recruited for his knowledge of the local backcountry. Jack continues to ride one day a week unless he is otherwise occupied. Bill Hughes, another volunteer, usually rides regularly when he's in town. Others who have helped are Hans Weibel, Dick Winzenreid, Jim Salmon, Werner Wucherer, Tom Henrie, Frank Nelson, Jerry McNeely, Don Bunge, Tim Higgs, Mike Johnson, Ken Heli, Bill Kent, and Jimmie Walker. Ber Knight provides transportation in those areas our vehicles couldn't traverse. He also provided his maps with all his GPS work

marked on them that we used as a guide for our work.

It's amazing how many times we find roads we missed the first time through an area. As we ride along and we see another one, we ask, "Why didn't we drive this before?" It was either that we didn't see it, we weren't sure the vehicle could make it, or we weren't sure we wanted to drive it. We started out with a 4WD Blazer rental car. That made it through the first four months until it drowned crossing the Dolores River ford. Then we tried a rental Jeep from Moab Off Road until an old Bronco became available. Then a used Bronco from the Sheriff's Office became available and we're on the second of those now. Our estimated overall driving distance must be close to 100,000 miles by now.

#### NOW TO THE GOOD STUFF...

One of the more interesting finds was the wreckage of an old drill rig out on the Cisco Desert. All we found

Oil drill wreckage (Photos courtesy of Grand Co. Roads employees, Dave Vaughn and Rick Showalter)





were the wooden shafts, about a foot in diameter, and a large wooden spool. We checked with several people and nobody knew for sure what it was, but the opinion was some type of drill equipment. If anyone out there has a better idea, let us know! This site is about five miles southwest of Cisco near the confluence of Sagers and Pinto Washes.

If we had collected all the old 4x4 wooden claim posts we saw, we could have kept Moab in firewood for at least a couple of years. It was our conclusion that the real money made during the uranium booms was selling these posts and other supplies to the miners and prospectors, just like it was in the days of the gold fields. The miners seemed to eat quite good, judging from the cans we found. It looks like



they also used a lot of condensed milk since that type of can seems to be the most common. It's amazing what you find lying around out on the desert after this long. You can tell which mine was operated by Mormons. All the bottles are either cola or root beer. Those mines operated by Gentiles usually have a healthy assortment of beer and whiskey bottles. At least that's our theory and we're sticking to it!

Speaking of mines, it's amazing what was used to shore up some of the holes. You know some rancher was missing some fence posts or someone was using whatever they could find or afford as shoring material. Some of the holes are big enough to drive a dump truck into and that could be exactly why they're so big. Others are barely big enough

to crawl into. There are old buildings still standing made of everything from railroad ties to WW II-vintage mortar ammunition crates. Some have siding of tin, asphalt shingles, or none at all. Many still have old newspaper or magazine pages as wallpaper. In a few places it looks like the mine itself was enclosed as living space. They certainly make Charlie Steen's old camper look pretty plush in some of these cases.

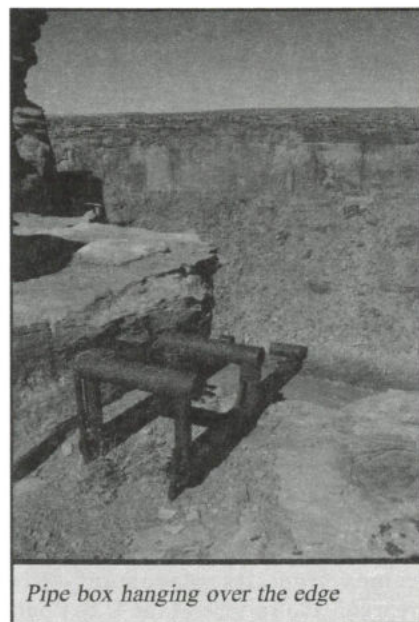
Another interesting place is on the northwest side of the far end of Mineral Point. Steel cable, perhaps as much as several thousand feet of it, is strung out all over the area. Right on the rim is a pipe box made to keep the cable from rubbing on the rock. It was rather dizzying to look over the edge here and see about 20 feet of cable still attached and swinging in the breeze with the

Green River 700 feet below. Apparently, according to Harvey Merrell, there used to be a water pump down on the river and a pipeline was suspended from the cables up to the rim to supply water to a drilling operation up on the point. It took the fellow about seven hours to make the round trip down to start the pump and back to haul the water. One of the wells that they drilled is still marked by a sign made from

steel with the lettering burned through with a torch.

Geologically speaking, I'd say that some of the areas that were the most interesting to me were the exposed faults visible north of Moab and in the Dolores Triangle. Another locale that was impressive was the manganese deposits north of Tenmile Point. The area has strange-looking calcium carbonate pillars that appear almost man-made. The lands around the manganese deposits also contain hematite and other iron minerals. It all adds up to a very odd-looking landscape. It's also amazing how many places we found rocks with petrified wood or bones exposed in them.

There's an area northeast of Ruby Ranch called the Tenmile graben. It's a region with faults on



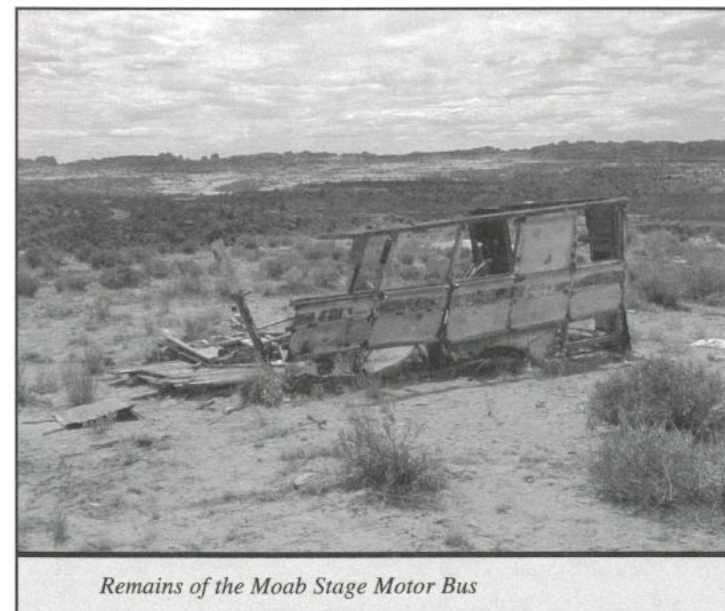
Pipe box hanging over the edge

both sides about a mile apart that runs from the Dee Pass area northwest to the Green River. The faults are very visible in aerial photos. There are many outcrops of white quartzite along the fault as well as many other interesting features. Several springs and seeps dot the vicinity as you get closer to the Green River. One of them was actually a drill hole for either salt water or gas. One of the old wells that you can still see was drilled by the American Salt Company in the 1920's.

The interesting things we "discovered" was one benefit of the work. Another important part was the amazing places we saw and the scenic beauty of Grand County. It's hard to beat the view from Red Gap in the Dolores Triangle when it comes to how much country you can see. But, you could say the same about Steamboat Mesa, Polar Mesa, Dry Mesa, North Beaver Mesa, South Beaver Mesa, or Top of the World. We have our own Painted Desert located in several places in the county; south of Crystal Geysers, east of the Blue Hills road (that's why it's named that), the Yellow Cat area, or the area south of Cisco. The mountain vistas are marvelous; Taylor Flat, Fisher Valley Overlook, the Pinhook dugway, or the Castle Valley Overlook. The only thing I can compare to the view up and down the Colorado River canyon from Dry Mesa is the Grand Canyon. Then there are all the many wonderful



viewpoints along the Green River and Labyrinth Canyon; Deadman Point (all three points), Mineral Point, Tenmile Point, and Trin Alcove. There were balanced rocks and rocks with no names that we gave names to just as a handy reference. Some landmarks we even renamed, the most recent of which is the Bride in a side canyon from Little Canyon on the way to Gemini Bridges. I swear, if you really look at that tower it looks like Mrs. Butterworth of maple syrup fame.



Remains of the Moab Stage Motor Bus

Although names suggested included the chigger, the peep, the pygmy, and the bug, a character in the comics who could go anywhere and do anything was named Eugene the Jeep and the name "Jeep" had already been used occasionally when referring to larger 4WD trucks. Soon President Roosevelt, King George, and Princess Elizabeth were being escorted in them and the Hollywood movie stars used them in convoys to raise money for the war effort. The 4WD craze was here to stay!

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN...

It wasn't all scenic and beautiful though. The gas fields on the Cisco Desert are some of the most confusing and boring places around. Even there we found an old railroad bridge that had beautiful masonry work done on the stone. We were told later that the stone had been quarried near Grand Junction and hauled to the site. You look at those old rail beds and think of all the labor that went into that work, and it traverses the width of Grand County from the Colorado line to Green River. Another old trail that we found parts of is the Salt Lake Wagon Road which was pushed through in 1854 (see Pierson's article, this issue- Ed.). It also crosses the county via the Cisco Desert. In some places this road was probably improved to make early stage roads. At least some of the sections between Thompson and Green River appear that way.

In Yellow Cat there are so many old roads crossing this area that it's almost impossible to go anywhere without driving or walking on something that was once used as a road to service all the mines in the region. There was even a 1960s or 70s vintage mobile home at one of the

mine locations with cast iron plumbing and 2x8 sub-flooring. I once found a Led Zeppelin "Houses of the Holy" album cover at that spot. Its residents must have been younger than we normally think miners and prospectors were. On the south edge of this area,

almost in Arches National Park, we found the remains of the famous Moab Stage Motor bus in an advanced stage of deterioration. Why would anyone take such a vehicle to so distant a place? Well, the views are fantastic, it was shelter from the elements, and there was the Yellowbird Mine operating nearby at one time.

There are many historical inscriptions around the county. The Robidoux panel at the junction of Hay and East Canyon at the bottom of the Book Cliffs is one of the most colorful and easy to access. There are also several Denis Julien inscriptions in the county. The only one we saw during this project was the one in the mouth of Hell Roaring Canyon. The cowboy glyphs such as the "Tex-Mex Rock" near Yellow Cat are more primitive.

The project has been most fascinating to me as an amateur historian and rock hound. We saw a lot of interesting country and learned a lot about Grand County history. We have plans to make the scenic photos available on CDs. In the future, the data collected for this project will become public information and hopefully will be useful to our community.



Dave Vaughn has worked for the Grand County Road Department for about 5 years. He and his wife, Diane, were both originally from the Midwest but are now concentrating their energies on their home and property located in Castle Valley. They have enjoyed moving here from Bountiful, Utah, and are active in various clubs and organizations.



## FLAT PASS - MOAB, UTAH

by Sunny Isaacs

Listening to the silence in the air,  
Watching waters flowing over the falls,  
Winter sun declining,  
Behind a curtain of cumulus clouds.

Early spring, still a chill in the rocks.  
Late afternoon, reflections everywhere.  
Rocks standing tall, guarding the valley  
Stretching below as far as the eye can see.

Roads meandering, crossing now and then.  
A patch quilt design, laid out by mindless men.  
High above Ken's Lake I sit and look for refuge.  
To take a quiet moment from the day.

To daydream and see in my mind's eye  
A time when families in wagons plied along.  
Their homes and all they did possess  
Pulled by horses striding two abreast.

Their dreams of finding a promised land.  
A place where they could make a stand.  
The long journeys end in sight.  
The end of day, the fading of the light.

### From the Desk of the Editor:

#### Butch Cassidy was Here — Historic Inscriptions of the Colorado Plateau

(James H. Knipmeyer, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, UT 2002, xiii +160 pg. Illustrated)

Twenty five years and 1600 inscriptions after deciding to locate and photograph old historic signatures, Jim Knipmeyer has fulfilled a dream and authored a book documenting his pictures and research. His collection of these names, dates and sometimes other pre-1900 literary jottings was governed only by his self-imposed rule that they should use an established alphabet and written language. The other major component of this ongoing investigation was the establish-

ment of his exploratory boundaries, which contained the area known as the Colorado Plateau.

In authenticating these incised, scratched, painted or charcoaled names, he has provided the reader with an interesting view of the history of the region composed of enjoyable and concise thumbnail sketches. In seventeen chapters illustrated with absolutely wonderful photographs, he offers insights into the exploration and wanderings of the Spanish, Mexicans, and early Americans and describes various trappers, cattlemen and Mormon pioneers who left a written record of their presence for Mr. Knipmeyer to record. His history contains not just that of Moab and Green River but also the more extensive history of the Colorado River and includes great discoveries like that of Rainbow Bridge. Those searching for gold, silver, or oil are discussed as well as those hunting a different treasure; Mr. Knipmeyer devotes an entire chapter to the historically-important culture-

hunters like the Wetherill brothers and their procurement of artifacts and relics. They technically fell outside of his time line but their importance in the area made the inclusion of their story necessary.

The title is based on four known Butch Cassidy inscriptions, most of which, if not all, are spurious (to use the author's words). It is hoped that this book will not be relegated solely to the Wild Bunch archives because of a title which links this extensive research primarily to an outlaw folk hero rather than all the other extraordinary people who wandered through this rich area.

by Rusty Salmon

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