D-12

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
LIBRARY
Denver, Colorado

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY
of the
BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON
NATIONAL MONUMENT

Richard G. Beidleman
Colorado College

1965

"....we feel that this Monument is one
of the gems of the Service."

--Paul R. Franke, 1936

PLEASE RETURN TO:
TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER
DENVER SERVICE CENTER
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ON MICROFILM

B&W Scans
6/9/2004

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWARD i

I. THE INDIAN PERIOD 1

II. THE EARLY REGIONAL EXPLORERS 11

Rivera 11

Escalante 11

Gunnison 13

Fremont 21

III. EXPLORATION OF THE BLACK CANYON 25

IV. GUNNISON RIVER DIVERSION PROJECT 46

V. THE MONUMENT ESTABLISHMENT 78

VI. "THRU THE BLACK CANYON" by Mark Warner (1934) 107

VII. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE MONUMENT: 1933-1965 . . 131

VIII. THE MONUMENT BOUNDARIES: 1933-1955 139

IX. MONUMENT CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE: 1933-1955 . . 155

X. THE MONUMENT AND FEDERAL WORKS PROJECTS: 1933-1938 . 166

XI. THE MONUMENT AND VISITORS: 1933-1955 172

XII. MAJOR AND MINOR OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS: 1933-1955 . . 185

Grazing 185

Hunting 188

Water Procurement 190

Accidents andd Rescues 195

Wildlife Management and Insect Control 196

Fire Protection 199

Prospecting 201

Vandalism and Other Violations 201

XIII. THE MISSION 66 DECADE: 1956-1966 208

FOREWARD

The following administrative history of Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument is based upon a variety of sources. Most important, perhaps, have been the documentary materials on Black Canyon at National Archives in Washington and the various monthly reports at Black Canyon itself and in the Superintendent's Office at Colorado National Monument (now Curecanti, Colorado and Black Canyon in Montrose). The monthly reports include reports by the rangers (both North and South Rim in some cases), reports by the supervisory rangers, reports by the superintendents, and special reports. Also a valuable source of information have been the regional newspapers, especially the old Montrose Enterprise and the contemporary Montrose Daily Press. A variety of pertinent magazine articles and books have been referred to, and personal communications, both written and verbal, with some of the historic figures associated with Black Canyon have afforded an enrichment of source material.

No history can be complete, and this one is no exception. However, the broad canvas has been painted for Black Canyon, with many of the major and minor details sketched in. Years ago Assistant Superintendent Paul R. Franke must have looked forward to that day when this history would be compiled.... "Remember," he wrote the two Monument rangers who in 1938 were writing the area's monthly reports, "the narrative report is also the history of the monument and years later it will be necessary to refer to it."

CHAPTER I

THE INDIAN PERIOD[1]

Indians had never exerted much direct impact on the country which eventually was to become Black Canyon National Monument and indeed were long gone by the time the Monument was created in 1933. This, however, had been their realm for generations before the penetration of the first white men; and at least the Utes' claim to the land was to have an indirect significance which has lingered years after the last Indians disappeared.

Obviously there were aborigines in the area, if not at the canyon itself, prior to the advent of the Utes. Folsom spear points have been found in the region, and there are many ancient pictographs and petroglyphs. Certainly a Fremont culture existed regionally, while numerous (30-40) rock shelters are known whose origin is obscure but which at any rate are not Pueblo.[2] Unfortunately for the history of the Monument, few of the above finds were made within its boundaries.[2a]

The University of Colorado's Anthropology Department has carried out an archaeological reconnaissance in the Uncompahgre Valley, as well as east of the Monument in the valley of the Gunnison River which will be inundated by reservoir water; and these findings should be available in late 1965. But regardless of new finds, no earlier Indian group will supplant the Utes in terms of regional importance.

Linguistically, the Utes, like the Paiutes, were Shoshonean and farther back were related to the Uto-Aztecan stock which also gave rise to the Aztec, Pima, Papago, Hopi, and Comanche. The

Utes had always been a Rocky Mountain-Great Basin tribe, unlike the Great Plains Cheyennes and Arapahoes, deadly enemies of the Utes, who came southwest into Colorado from Central Canada and the northern Great Lakes states prior to 1800.

The Utes were short, stocky, muscular, becoming portly in middle age. They were reputedly good looking for Indians but were generally dirty and filty, according to some observers, and so dark-skinned that the Cheyennes referred to them as "Black Faces" or "Black Indians." The Utes called themselves "Nunt'z," meaning "The People," and the mountain country which they occupied they named "The Shining Mountains." The word "Yutah," referring to them, eventually became corrupted to "Ute."

Historically there were three geographic bands of Ute Indians in the Rocky Mountain-Great Basin country, the group most closely associated with the Black Canyon area being the Uncompahgre or Tabeguache (pronounced Tabewatch) band.[3] These Indians spent their winters along the Uncompahgre (originally "Acapagad'r," meaning "where the red light shines on the water;"[4] the valley of the Uncompahgre was known as the "Valley of Fountains") and Gunnison (=Tomichi) Rivers between present-day Montrose and Grand Junction, especially in Shavano Valley south of Montrose, traveling into the higher mountain country in pursuit of deer and other game during summers. This was their main contact with Black Canyon, which was known as the "place of high rocks and much water."[5] They were more or less wanderers in historic times, and hence it is difficult to assess the aboriginal population of the group. It has been estimated at from 1000 to 3000 individuals at the time of first contact with whites; in

1845 it was estimated at 4500, 5000 in 1850.

Prior to contact with white man, the Utes are presumed to have been village-dwelling sedentary Indians, although not agriculturally inclined like the Pueblo Indians to the south. They were a mountain hunting tribe, well known for their prowess with bows and arrows, and later guns. Their bows, of juniper, pine, or other native woods, were six-footers, the arrows two to four feet long, made of shrub branches such as serviceberry tipped with flint or obsidian, later with metal. A good Ute hunter could shoot arrows about as fast as a white man could shoot bullets from a revolver, with deadly accuracy up to 200 feet.

The Utes primarily hunted for deer and rabbits, secondarily for elk, antelope, and bighorn sheep; and these forays undoubtedly took them to the vicinity of Black Canyon. They were superstitious, however, and believed that no one could follow the river through its dark chasm and come out alive. Hence, their activity presumably was restricted to the rims, where their scattered artifacts have been found, and this activity was only on a periodic basis. There was an Indian trail into Red Rock Canyon, and the main crossing of the river was done at that point, when necessary.

Presuming that the Monument area was primarily used as a casual hunting ground during summer and fall by the Utes, it is interesting to conjecture on the hunting techniques used here. Deer, the common big game, may have been killed in a drive, like that used with bison on the Great Plains. The animals were driven into deep pits within sagebrush or other brush

enclosures and then slaughtered. Remains of what may have been deer enclosures (= "game traps") have been found in the Serpent Point area and elsewhere on the canyon's North Rim. Undoubtedly deer were also hunted individually by stalking. Rabbits were generally hunted communally. They were driven into nets, burned out of brushland cover (as might have happened in the Black Canyon brushland), or chased with dogs. Jack rabbits were occasionally hunted on horseback.

The meat of animals killed would be cooked over coals, broiled, or jerked. Rabbit meat, to be boiled, was put into waterproof baskets in which the water was heated by hot rocks. The broiled entrails of the larger mammals were considered delicacies. Some hides and smoked meat were taken to Denver the latter half of the last century for barter.

The Utes, unlike the Pueblo Indians to the south, made some use of fish for food, though apparently doing limited or no fishing within the confines of the Black Canyon out of deference to superstition and inaccessibility. In the valleys to north and south, however, fish may have been caught in willow weirs or shot with arrows, eaten fresh or boiled, or boned and dried for winter use.

The Utes were not agricultural Indians and made relatively little use of plant material as food. They did partake of fruit in season, especially the serviceberry and chokecherry which abound in the canyon area, probably used the Gambel's oak acorns, yucca fruit, camas and other roots, the large seeds of rice grass, undoubtedly other plant material as well. For example, they used _Nicotiana attenuata_ for tobacco. Special baskets were made for collecting and processing plant materials. If not eaten fresh, fruit would be dried and then stored in

baskets in underground pits. Chokecherries were often mashed with the pits and dried into balls for later use. Pemmican, a winter staple of the Indians, was made from dried serviceberries or chokecherries, fat, and venison, formed into blocks. Pinyon nuts were undoubtedly used by local Indians, being parched in hot ashes and then shelled. Any grinding of nuts and acorns was done by means of metates or mortars and mullers, a Great Basin technique.

With the availability of Spanish horses by at least 1640, the Utes were able to make hunting forays into the bison country of the Great Plains, and their material, though not social and religious, culture began to assume the nature of the plains tribes. As a case in point, the lance, a seven-foot stock tipped with flint, came into use both for hunting and in war. The quest after bison brought the Utes into conflict with the Arapahoes and Cheyennes, and frequent skirmishes took place. The Utes were considered brave and excellent warriors, alert and aggressive, and warred not only with the tribes above but also with the Navaho, Kiowa, Apache, Comanche and Shoshoni. Locally, there developed occasional antagonism between Utes and encroaching whites, especially in the second half of the last century.

Originally, the Utes lived in tepees covered with elk hide or in brush-covered frame wickiups, the latter especially during summer months. As they began to assume Great Plains traits in later years, they began using bison hides for tepees. The Utes were notoriously poor tepee builders, their nickname among neighboring tribes being "Bad Lodges." Their tepees were

smaller than most Great Plains tepees, with fewer and shorter poles, a larger smoke hole, and a higher door. The foundation for the tepee was four poles, usually of aspen which would have been available in the Monument area, with a total of eleven poles for support of the covering and two poles to regulate the smoke hole. Since the Black Canyon region was undoubtedly used for transient hunting, it seems unlikely that any extensive tepee villages were ever pitched here, but brush wickiups may have been used.[5a] Certainly in the valleys to north and south both tepees and wickiups were employed, and tepee rings have been reported not too far from the Monument.

For clothing in the early days the Utes depended upon deer, elk, antelope, and mountain sheep hides and rabbit pelts. Strips of rabbit fur were sewn together to make wraps and also for blankets. Blankets and robes were also made from elk and deer hides. The big game pelts were dressed by the women and made into clothing. The flresh was removed with rough fleshers, then the hair scraped off with a deer-shin bearing tool. Next the hides were wetted, stretched, dried, rubbed with wet deer brains, and finally smoked or softened by pounding with a stone.

The men wore shirts or robes, deerskin leggings, breech-clouts and elkhide moccasiens unless on war raids, when they wore only the breech-clouts and moccasins. Head gear was worn only at ceremonials. The hair, never cut, hung in two braids on their chests. The women wore belted leather gowns extending below the knees, moccasins and leggings, and

basket caps. They wore their hair unbraided. With the availability of buffalo, that hide came into common use for many items of clothing, such as moccasins made from the hide turned hair-side in.

For housekeeping, the Utes wove good baskets of a variety of sizes and shapes from willow. Those used for water were water-proofed with pinyon pitch, some of which might have been obtained from the Black Canyon pinyon groves. Wooden bowls were occasionally used, probably made of cottonwood. Limited quantities of poor grade pottery were also utilized. The Utes were accomplished at making a variety of buckskin pouches which were often nicely decorated. Utensils such as awls, hide scraper handles and knife handles were made of bone or horn. Among the Utes, the women made the clothing, provided utensils for the lodge and household, cooked the meals, looked after the children, and were primarily concerned in camp-moving. Meanwhile, the men hunted, made raids into enemy territory, wrought weapons, and conducted most of the ceremonials.

In 1861 the Gunnison band of Utes was given an agency at Conejos by the territorial governor of Colorado, and Lafayette Head was appointed the first agent. The Treaty of 1863, ratified the next year, set the Uncompahgre Utes on a reservation which included the present area of the Monument as well as other Colorado country west of the continental divide. This treaty, signed by ten of the Tabeguache leaders including Ouray, guaranteed that the Utes, in exchange for land given up, would receive from the federal government 150 cattle annually for five years, 1000 sheep annually for two years, then 500 sheep

a year for three more years if during this period the Indians showed an interest in ranching and agriculture. There was promise to furnish a blacksmith and to give the band $10,000 a year in goods and $10,000 in provisions for ten years. On all of these promises the government defaulted.

The Treaty of 1868 united the Ute bands, and Chief Ouray was named by the government to head the nation at $1000 a year salary.[6] In all, the Utes entered into eight treaties with the United States Government during this period. By 1882, shortly after the local region had been thrown open to white settlement, most of the Colorado Utes had been moved to reservations in Utah, thus curtailing direct Indian influence in the Black Canyon region.

In retrospect, it would seem likely that the main use the Utes made of the Black Canyon area was for hunting and perhaps some collection of plant materials. They did use Signal Hill, south of the Monument near the West Portal of the Gunnison Diversion Tunnel, for exchange of signal fires in years gone by; and there has been an unlikely rumor that the fire scar on the North Rim's Fruitland Mesa dates to a fire set by Utes to drive out the white men.

Strangely enough, the Utes' most significant impact on the Monument came long after the Indians' departure. The Ute Indian Treaty of June 15, 1888, guaranteed the Utes a remuneration of $1.25 an acre for any new disposition of the land under the Public Land Laws. When the original Monument establishment was being considered in the early 1930's,[7] and when later boundary changes were contemplated, the specter of this provision was to keep the memory of the Utes' and their former "happy

/9

REFERENCES

1 - Unless otherwise noted, the following account of the Ute Indians as a cultural group is based upon a synthesis of information from the references below.

Beals, Ralph L. 1935. Ethnology of Rocky Mountain National Park. 27 pp. National Park Service, Berkeley.

Brigham, Lillian R. 1931. Historical guide to Colorado. Colorado Society of the D.A.R., Denver.

Bureau of American Ethnology. 1910. Handbook of American Indians north of Mexico. Bur. Amer. Ethno. Bull. 30 (Part 2).

Cropley, George I. 1950. Colorado's mountain Utes. Colo. Wonderland 1(6): 20-23.

Daniels, Helen Sloan. 1941. The Ute Indians of Southwestern Colorado. Durango, Durango Public Library.

Dawson, Thomas F. 1919. The Ute Indians before the appearance of the White Man. The Trail 12(2): 5-10.

Douglas, Eric H. and J. A. Jeancon. 1945. The Ute Indians. Denver Art Museum Leaflet No. 10.

Emmitt, Robert. 1954. The last war trail. 333 pp. Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Forbes-Lindsey, C. H. 1907. Exploring the Gunnison Canon. World's Work 14(5): 9376-9378.

Hafen, LeRoy R. 1952. The Indians of Colorado. 52 pp. State Historical Society of Colorado, Denver.

Jocknick, Sidney. 1913. Early days on the western slope of Colorado. 384 pp. Carson-Harper Company, Denver.

Lowie, Robert H. 1954. Indians of the plains. 222 pp. McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York.

Opler, Marvin K. 1940. The Southern Ute of Colorado. In: Acculturation in seven American Indian tribes, Ralph Linton, editor. A. Appleton-Century, New York.

State Historical Society of Colorado, Ute Indian Museum exhibits and brochure, Montrose.

Stewart, Omer C. 1942. Culture element distributions: XVIII, Ute-Southern Paiute. Anthropological Records 6(4). University of California Press, Berkeley.

Rockwell, Wilson. 1956. The Utes: a forgotten people. 307 pp. Sage Books, Denver.

Zingg, Robert M. 1938. The Ute Indians in historical relation to proto-Azteco-Tanoan culture. Colo. Mag. 15(4): 134-152.

2 - Personal communication from Dr. Robert Lister, Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado, April 19, 1965.

2a- Two Folsom points and "various rock inscriptions" were found on the North Rim near the Monument's west boundary in September of 1939. - Monthly Report.

3 - Later incorporated into the Middle or Cochetopa Agency.

4 - According to Escalante, "...by the Yutas called Ancapagari (which according to the interpreter, means Laguna Colorado) because near its source there is a spring of red water, hot and bad tasting." - Bolton, Herbert E., 1950. Pageant in the wilderness. Utah Hist. Quar. 18: 150.

5 - National Park Service Report, November, 1937. MCR-RB, National Archives.

5a- A wickup site was found at the west end of the North Rim in September of 1939, and tent poles were found in August of 1940 in the same general area. Also, just under the rimrock overlooking the west end of Bostwick Park a possible burial site was discovered in September, 1963. - Monthly Reports.

6 - This treaty guaranteed the Utes their land "as long as the rivers might run and grasses might grow."

7 - See Chapter V, "The Monument Establishment."

CHAPTER II
THE EARLY REGIONAL EXPLORERS
Rivera, Escalante, Gunnison and Fremont

If history could be rewritten, it would be much more exciting for Black Canyon's to have had the first white explorers of the region reach the chasm rim rather than merely skirt the uplift. But from Rivera's entry into the Uncompahgre Valley in 1765, over a century was to pass before history could truthfully record such an event.

Juan María de Rivera's expedition of 1765 was probably the first in the vicinity of Black Canyon.[1] On orders from Tomás Vélez Cachupín, Governor of New Mexico, the party had left Santa Fe searching for mineral riches, prospected the western San Juans, and eventually came down the north slope of the Uncompahgre Plateau into the river valley near today's Montrose.

Following the Uncompahgre River northwest, the expedition skirted the western end of the Black Canyon uplift to the junction of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre Rivers near the present-day town of Delta, where on the south bank an encampment was made in a meadow. Here, reportedly, Rivera cut a cross on a "second-growth" cottonwood together with his initials and the year of the trip. After sending two men across the river (mistakened for the Colorado) to look for Yuta (=Ute) Indians, Rivera turned his group around and proceeded back the way he had come.

In late summer of 1776 Franciscans Fray Francisco Atanasio Domínguez and Fray Silvestre Vélez de Escalante and their small party, with a Yuta guide named "Atanasio" in honor of the leader Domínguez, came northeast off the Uncompahgre Plateau and struck the Uncompahgre River (=Río de San Francisco) about five miles south of present-day Montrose.[2] This was not entirely strange

country, inasmuch as the expedition was familiar with Rivera's journal and included one man who had already been in the area. Escalante prophetically noted that where the expedition first saw the river "....there is a meadow about three leagues long with excellent land for crops, opportunities for irrigation and everything needed for the establishment of a good settlement."3

The next day, August 27, the party moved downstream along the west bank of the Uncompahgre River, with the Black Canyon uplift in view to the right, crossed the river several miles below today's Montrose, and camped for the night in a cottonwood-edged meadow about three miles north of Olathe. On the 28th the expedition left the river and cut cross-country around the end of the uplift, striking the Gunnison River (=Río de San Francisco Javier=Rio del Tomichi) several miles west of its junction with the North Fork, near the site of Austin. The group camped that night in a bend of the river where there was some pasturage, naming the spot "Santa Monica;" then on the afternoon of August 30 crossed the Gunnison River "in which the water reached above the shoulder blades of the horses" and proceeded northeast to the North Fork of the Gunnison (=Rio de Santa Rosa de Lima), at about the location of Hotchkiss. From here the expedition crossed northeast over Grand Mesa, leaving the Black Canyon area.

Thus Escalante and his men circled much of the Black Canyon from south by west to north, fording water which had emanated from the gorge; but never realized what rugged scenery they had circumscribed.

Around 1837 Fort Uncompahgre was constructed just below

the junction of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre by Antoine Robidoux, French trader from St. Louis; and for the short time before it was burned by Utes, the fort served as a congregating point.[4] But if anyone from here penetrated to the Black Canyon gorge, the event was unpublicized.

In 1853 John Williams Gunnison and his party, like those before, skirted the Black Canyon uplift but failed to reach the gorge. However, inasmuch as Gunnison's name is closely associated with the present Monument, it is worth delineating in greater detail this man and his expedition.[5]

John Williams Gunnison was born on November 11, 1812, in Goshen, New Hampshire, a small village in the Sunapee Mountains. In the spring of 1833 he was appointed as a cadet at West Point, commencing his studies on July 1, 1833. When he graduated in June of 1837 as Cadet No. 892, he ranked second in his class of fifty.

Feeling that "the interests of individuals should yield to the interest of their Country," Gunnison accepted a commission as second lieutenant on July 1, 1837. He was shortly ordered, as an ordnance officer, to Florida where at the time there was trouble with the Seminole Indians. During the course of this tour of duty he explored many of the unknown lakes and rivers in this semi-tropical wilderness. The next year he was transferred to the Corps of Topographical Engineers for whom he carried out surveys both in Florida and Georgia.

On April 15, 1841, he married Martha A. Delony whom he had met in Georgia. Shortly he was sent to Green Bay, Wisconsin, to carry out a survey of the Wisconsin-Michigan boundary. He was

engaged in a survey of Lake Michigan in 1842 and continued surveys of the Great Lakes into 1848.

In April of 1849 he received surprise orders to proceed to St. Louis and there join an expedition bound for Utah Territory. His job was to commence a survey along a new and unknown route from Fort Hall on the Oregon Trail to the Mormon settlement at Great Salt Lake, obtaining all information possible about the Salt Lake Valley and making charts of the country.

This expedition was under the command of Captain Howard Stansbury. When the company left St. Louis, Gunnison was sick and had to be transported on a bed in the large spring wagon used for carrying instruments. He reached Salt Lake on August 23, 1849, and, having recovered from his illness, went up to Fort Hall and later superintended the party which explored Utah Lake and its vicinity over a three-month period.

During the winter of 1849-50, which Gunnison spent at Salt Lake City, he made a thorough study of the Mormon religion and began preparations for his book "The Mormons or Latter-Day Saints in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake." On occasion he also assisted the Mormons in their encounters against the Indians.

With the arrival of spring, Gunnison commenced a survey of the eastern shore of Great Salt Lake. By the end of August, 1850, the survey was completed and the expedition headed east for home. During the course of this return trip, Gunnison was thrown from his horse and severely bruised, after his horse had been accidentally shot. Otherwise the journey was without incident.

By January of 1851 Gunnison was back in Washington, engaged

in making maps of the expedition's travels. Subsequently, he and Stansbury compiled the official report for the Great Salt Lake expedition.

At the close of the 31st Congress in 1852, an appropriation was made for a survey of a railroad route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. On March 3, 1853, Jefferson Davis, then Secretary of War, ordered such an expedition to be made through the Rockies after a plan by Senator Benton. The senator had advocated a transcontinental railroad between the 38th and 39th parallels.

Benton tried to engineer John Charles Fremont, his son-in-law, into command of the expedition, but Secretary of War Davis appointed Gunnison, who now held the rank of captain. He was ordered, by telegram from J. J. Abert of the Army Office of Chief Engineers, to make a survey through the Rocky Mountains by way of the Huerfano River, over Cochetopa Pass "or other accessible passes," into the region of the present-day Gunnison River, the Green River, west to the Sevier River, returning north to Lake Utah, through the Wasatch Range to South Pass and Fort Laramie, then east to Washington.[6]

This expedition outfitted just below the mouth of the Kansas River, about five miles from Westport. Gunnison's staff consisted of Lt. E. G. Beckwith, second in command; R. H. Kern, topographer and artist; J. A. Snyder, assistant topographer; Sheppard Homans, astronomer; F. Creutzfeldt, botanist; Dr. James Schiel, surgeon and geologist; and Charles Taplin, wagon-master. In addition, there was a military escort of thirty non-commissioned officers and men under Brevet Captain R. H. Morris.

The party started out on the Santa Fe Trail on June 23, 1853. Gunnison hoped to prove the practicality of a wagon road across the Rockies, and to this end included in his entourage sixteen six-mule-drawn vehicles, a two-horse ambulance which eventually had to be drawn by four mules, and a four-mule carriage for carrying instruments.

The expedition proceeded up the Arkansas and Huerfano Rivers, over the Sangre de Cristos, and to Fort Massachusetts. Here an experienced guide, Antoine Leroux, was procured from Taos to lead the expedition westward out of the San Luis Valley.

On August 29 Gunnison divided his company into two parties. The main group headed west over Cochetopa Pass while Gunnison went north over modern-day Poncha Pass to near the site of Salida before returning to rejoin the larger party. Incidentally, the name "Gunnison Pass" was given to Poncha Pass in 1855 by Lt. Beckwith.

From Cochetopa Pass the expedition traveled northwest towards the Gunnison River, known to contemporary explorers such as Gunnison, Fremont, and Marcy as the "Grand River." The Utes called it "Tomichi," the Spanish explorer Escalante the "Rio de San Javier." The modern name "Gunnison" was given to the river in 1861 by Governor William Gilpin, Territorial Governor, who had commissioned the mapping of Colorado.

By September 6, 1853, the party was encamped on the banks of the Gunnison River near present-day Gunnison. From this spot they traveled west along about the same route as the modern highway, reaching Lake Fork (Rio de la Laguna) on September 9.

Travel through this country was becoming rugged. Several steep mesas had to be ascended and ~~desednod~~ descended, one descent being over 4000 feet. At this point the wheels of the wagons had to be locked and ropes were attached to the wagons to keep them from overturning. To cross the Lake Fork a road had to be constructed, the project taking the greater part of a day.

Beyond Lake Fork more ravines and mesas had to be traversed, before reaching the first branch of Cebolla Creek (Cimarron). At this point the company encountered several Indians, to whom Gunnison gave presents.

Shortly after crossing Cebolla, the men found further travel along the river impossible because of the increasingly precipitous canyon walls. Consequently they turned southwest, reaching the broad, semi-arid Uncompahgre Valley on September 15. During this section of travel the party was under constant surveillance by the Ute Indians, who not only followed the expedition but camped nearby every night, never ceasing their noise-making. Transportation problems were vexing, too. Roads had to be constructed and crossings made for the wagons.

The Black Canyon, which had forced the company's detour, drew the following comment from Beckwith with respect to its passage by the proposed rail line:

> "....But from the continuance, for so great a distance, of vertical rocky walls along the river, ranging from 80 to 1,000 feet and more in height, upon which the road must be carried, and which can be cut only by blasting, and, from the deep side-chasms to be passed (as described by Captain Gunnison on the 7th instant) only by the heaviest masonry, it is evident that a railroad, although possible, can only be constructed in the vicinity of this section of Grand river, at an enormous expense.

From the Uncompahgre Valley Gunnison, like his predecessors, proceeded along the Black Canyon uplift and then on northwestward to the Colorado River and across Wasatch Pass to the Sevier River on October 17. He concluded here that a new mail and military route from Taos via Fort Massachusetts had been achieved but that it was not a good route for a railroad.

In mid-October an exploration of the Sevier River country was begun. At an encampment about sixteen miles from Lake Sevier on October 24 the command was divided to facilitate investigation of the lake region.

The next morning a small detachment including Gunnison, Kern, Creutzfeldt, John Bellows, a group of seven enlisted personnel, and Mormon guide William Potter left camp to investigate the lake. The men went down the Sevier River in a southwesterly direction for eleven miles, finally encamping at a point where the stream flowed in an east-west direction. Since entering Sevier Valley, the party had seen numerous Indian signal fires but expected no trouble from the Indians, Despite this fact, a guard was maintained throughout the night at the field camp.

Shortly after dawn, so the story goes, a band of Parvain Indians fell upon the white men while at breakfast, surprising them with rifle fire and arrows from a nearby willow thicket. Gunnison was killed by a volley of arrows as he rushed from his tent, shouting to the Indians to hold their fire, that he was their friend. Not a member of the expedition was able to return fire in the confusion.

Four escaped, and one of these brought news of the attack

back to the main camp. A runner was dispatched to Salt Lake City to notify the territorial governor, while a party was hastily organized to return to the scene of the ambush. Twenty-four hours later the massacre site was reached. Scattered about were the bodies of Gunnison, Kern, Creutzfeldt, Potter, Bellows, and Privates Caulfield, Liptrott and Merhteens, mutilated almost beyond recognition by the Indians and wolves. Because of the state of the bodies, no attempt was made to bury them at the time, although within a few days they were buried by a passing party of Mormons. This failure to bury the dead became a source of severe criticism during the investigation of the massacre.

Some contemporary mystery shrouded the attack. A number of people postulated that Gunnison's book on the Mormons may have encouraged members of that sect to incite Indians to make the surprise attack. Others claimed that the Mormons themselves, disguised as Indians, did the killing. In 1894 an Indian version of the massacre was finally obtained,[7] and according to this version the massacre was in reprisal for the killing of an Indian leader by emigrants in 1853. The details are sufficiently different from the account given above to warrant inclusion here.

Gunnison's party was encountered on October 25 by a band of Indians including Moshoquop, whose father had been bur murdered in 1853. Some time after midnight the Indians surrounded Gunnison's encampment; and it was agreed that the attack would begin upon the firing of a signal gun as the first rays of the morning sun struck the camp.

A few minutes before sunrise, the cook lighted the campfire. Kern and Creutzfeldt were standing by the fire, the corporal and his men were taking care of the horses some distance away, while Gunnison was washing his hands and face at the nearby river. Alerted by the click of a gun hammer, Gunnison was not killed in the initial attack, but Kern, Creutzfeldt and the cook were. Gunnison emptied his gun at one of the Indians but failed to hit him. The corporal and a companion took to their horses and escaped, as did some of the others; and Gunnison, after ascertaining that nothing could be done for the murdered men, sought refuge in a willow thicket.

Several hours later he was discovered there by the Indians, lying full length on the grass with several arrow wounds in his body. Gunnison raised his hands, palms up, in a silent appeal for mercy. The Indians present made no move to kill the captain; but suddenly an Indian renegade named Jimmy Knight appeared on the scene and without a word shot him.

After the massacre, the surviving members of Gunnison's expedition continued on under the leadership of Lt. Beckwith, who later prepared the official report of the ill-fated survey.

Eventually, orders were given for the perpetrators of the massacre to be arrested and tried. Eight Indians were brought up for trial at Nephi City; and though the judge charged the jury to find the defendents guilty or not guilty of murder, the jury acquitted five and returned a verdict of manslaughter against the remaining three, such sentence being punishable by only three years' imprisonment in the Utah penitentiary.

Gunnison's remains, nothing more than a forearm bone and

a lock of hair, were buried in an unmarked grave at Fillmore, Utah. In 1954, attended by appropriate ceremonies, a monument was erected at this grave. The site of the massacre, meanwhile, had been marked for many years by a juniper post. On Memorial Day, 1927, a new memorial of black lava was unveiled at this site by the local American Legion, Daughters of Pioneers, and Boy Scouts of America, the bronze arrowhead-shaped inscription plate set to face the setting sun.

Gunnison's name is well remembered in the western country through which he passed. In addition to the Gunnison River, his surname is associated with Gunnison County and its county seat, with Gunnison Island, the largest in the Great Salt Lake, with the Gunnison prairie dog, the Gunnison sego lily, and with many other places and things. Indeed, his name is intimately related to the Monument's: Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument; and of late has become part of one of the South Rim's most sublime overlooks, Gunnison Point. Yet neither from this point nor any other did John Williams Gunnison gaze into the shrouded depths of Black Canyon.

Only a few months after the Gunnison massacre, in mid-winter of 1854, John Charles Fremont led his fifth expedition of twenty-two men, including the first official photographer, Solomon N. Carvalho, ever attached to an exploring expedition, into the Uncompahgre Valley.[8] These explorers had periodically seen signs of the earlier Gunnison party--the wagon road cut through the conifers of the high Rockies, the crosses blazed on trees, and wagon wheel tracks on occasion--and even ran into Lt. Beckwith and other survivors of Gunnison's expedition in

Salt Lake City. But although Carvalho did scale a bald-topped mountain to photograph, standing waist-deep in the winter snow, "a panorama of the continuous ranges of mountains around us.... while the Grand River [Colorado] plunging along in awful sublimity through its rocky bed, was seen for the first time;" there is no indication that this panorama included a glimpse of the Black Canyon abyss.

Thus it was that the earliest explorers of western Colorado, like, unfortunately, many modern travelers, came within a piñon jay's flight of the rims of Black Canyon but missed the spectacle of one of the narrowest, deepest clefts in the world.

REFERENCES

1 - Hill, Joseph J. 1930. Spanish and Mexican exploration and trade northwest from New Mexico into the Great Basin - 1765-1853. Utah Hist. Quar. 3(1): 3-5. There are variations with respect to the year of Rivera's expedition, but 1765 seems correct.

2 - The account of the Domínguez-Escalante expedition is based upon the following: Bolton, Herbert E. 1950. Pageant in the wilderness. Utah Hist. Quar. 18: 38-44, 150-155.

3 - One hundred and thirty-three years later almost to the day (September 23, 1909) the Gunnison River Diversion Project was dedicated by President Taft; and the Denver Post headlined "Taft Opens Tunnel That Will Make Desert Bloom." See Chapter IV: "Gunnison River Diversion Project."

4 - Rockwell, Wilson. 1956. The Utes: a forgotten people. Sage Books, Denver.

5 - The account of Gunnison and his expedition is based upon the following, except as otherwise noted: Mumey, Nolie. 1954. John Williams Gunnison. Colorado Mag. 31(1): 32; Mumey, Nolie. 1955. John Williams Gunnison, the last of the western explorers. 189 pp. Artcraft Press, Denver; U. S. War Department. 1853. Gunnison and Beckwith's Expeditions, 38th & 39th Parallels & the 41st. Pacific Railroad Surveys Vol 2; Dictionary of American Biography; National Cyclopedia of American Biography.

6 - The official orders, as reported in the Gunnison-Beckwith report, p. 10: "Under the 10th and 11th sections of the military appropriation act of March 3, 1853, directing such explorations and surveys as to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi river to the Pacific ocean, the War Department directs a survey of the pass through the Rocky mountains, in the vicinity of the head-waters of the Rio del Norte, by way of the Huerfano river and Coo-che-to-pa, or some other eligible pass, into the region of Grand and Green rivers, and westwardly to the Vegas de Santa Clara and Nicollet river of the Great Basin, and thence northward to the vicinity of Lake Utah on a return route, to explore the most available passes and cañones of the Wahsatch range and South Pass to Fort Laramie."

7 - Gibbs, Josiah F. 1928. Gunnison massacre--1853--Millard County, Utah--Indian Mareer's version of the tragedy--1894. Utah Hist. Quar. 1(3): 66-75.

8 - Carvalho, S. N. 1860. Incidents of travel and adventure in the Far West; with Col. Fremont's last expedition across the Rocky Mountains. Pp. 80-96. Derby & Jackson, New York.

CHAPTER III

EXPLORATION OF THE BLACK CANYON[1]

It took more than the mere quest for adventure to entice the first white men down the churning white waters of the Gunnison River where it rushed through Black Canyon!

In the decades before the turn of the century, so one story goes, there was a French settler, F. C. Lauzon, living in the Uncompahgre Valley.[2] His holdings comprised forty barren acres which were watered by a dribble from the fluctuating Uncompahgre River and by erratic downpourings from short-lived storms. Lauzon knew of the Gunnison River, entrenched in its rock-walled canyon to the north, and after long cogitation he became convinced that its bountiful waters could be diverted into the arid Uncompahgre Valley by means of a judiciously placed tunnel and system of connecting canals.

Probably many of the local ranchers and farmers, including Lauzon, had come to view the waters of the near-by but inaccessible Gunnison River with proprietary anticipation in the late nineteenth century. Irrigation had come into vogue in the Uncompahgre Valley about 1875, the first crop being hay for shipment to the southwestern Colorado mines.[3] Availability of water by irrigation ditches, starting about 1884, made possible the raising of other crops and fruit trees. However, water resources of the valley soon proved inadequate under the increased demand. Much of the agricultural land was abandoned and many a valuable house was deserted. Those settlers who remained naturally began toying with the idea of

diverting the greater flow of the Gunnison into their own valley by means of tunnels and canals.

If a tunnel were to be constructed, it was imperative that the canyon be surveyed to ascertain the best location for such a project. Up to 1882 the Black Canyon had generally been considered as impassable, and little specific information was available about it. The local Utes occasionally crossed the river within the present national monument area, especially at Red Rock Canyon, but reputedly felt that anyone going downstream would never come out alive.[4] Gunnison had avoided the canyon in 1853, by-passing it to the south and west as had Escalante before him in 1776. In 1874 the Middle Division of the Hayden Survey skirted the north rim of the canyon throughout its length, establishing several survey stations within the present extent of the BLCA National Monument. Someone with this party reportedly gazed into the gorge and declared it inaccessible.[5] At one time an unidentified geologist who had been lowered 1000 feet into the chasm commented that "no man could go farther and live."[6]

The winter of 1882-83 saw the first successful, though partial, survey carried out within the canyon.[7] By this time the Denver and Rio Grande Railway had completed its line from Gunnison into the Black Canyon to Cimarron, the first passenger train passing to the end of the tracks on the morning of August 13, 1882.[8] One hundred twenty-one tickets had been sold for the opening run of the fifteen-mile stretch of canyon, good publicity having been insured by giving free tickets to members of the press. The Gunnison Boys' Band

accompanied the excursionists, making the canyon walls echo with its music. The last mile of tracks, costing more than the entire line through the Royal Gorge, had taken a year to build. The terminus, Cimarron, was nothing more than a tent city at this time, with only one log house on the townsite.

Early in December, 1882, Byron H. Bryant, in charge of construction for the Uncompahgre Extension of the Denver and Rio Grande, received a telegram from the line's chief engineer, J. A. McMurtrie, asking him to undertake an exploration of the Black Canyon from Cimarron at the end of the road downstream to Delta. Immediately Bryant organized a surveying crew with C. E. Telvirer of Aspen in charge, and including H. C. Wright, transitman, James Robinson, Levelman, Gunder, topographer, McDermott as rodman, Usher as head chainman, and a pack train outfit headed by Charles Hall.

The party left Grand Junction on December 12, and proceeded up the north rim of the Black Canyon to Crystal River, about five miles downstream from Cimarron, where it encamped high above the river. A few days later the men started their line downstream from Cimarron, spending their first night with an old frontiersman and contemporary of Kit Carson and Jim Bridger, Captain Cline, who had a home up the Cimarron and who claimed to have run the Gunnison in a canoe some years before, a most unlikely feat.

Bryant expected to make the survey through the canyon in some twenty days, and the party was provisioned for that period. As it developed, the work took from sixty-five to sixty-eight days, about

ten days of which were spent in moving from the north to the south side of the canyon when further movement along the north side became impossible because of steep walls and open water.

Every morning the workmen would leave their rim camp and clamber down into the chasm depths, returning to the rim that evening. This arduous procedure left little time for actual surveying, as one might judge from Bryant's account of the daily routine:

> One of our camps was made on precipitous side of the range, 500 feet below top, and daily task consisted of climb of 500 feet to top of range, a climb down a much more precipitous slope 2600 feet to river, a scramble up or down river to our work, when we would do such work as time would permit, and then climb up 2600 feet and down 500 back to our camp.

This type of activity was wearing on the men. When the transfer was made from the north to the south rim, all but three of the crew quit. These three, Gunder, Robinson, and Wright, with Bryant, completed the survey while Charles Hall continued to take care of the camp and pack train. The party had to go downstream from Grizzly Gulch (within the present Monument area, said by some to be a corruption of "Griswell's Gulch") on the North Rim to Delta, then back up the South Rim until the Grizzly Gulch portion of the canyon was again reached.

For about forty days the four ran the transit, the level, both ends of the chain, carried the leveling rod, and took the topography. The river was partially frozen, and the men would have to jump back and forth from ice fringes across swirling, frigid water. Some of the ice bridges which spanned the river would raise the water level from five to eight feet above the downstream side.

Robinson was good at working on the ice, so fearless that he often had to be restrained from taking chances. Gunder was good at the wall climbing. After a hard day in the canyon, Wright would often talk in his sleep about imaginary hazards. "Sometimes it was the safety of his transit that troubled him, and sometimes he would dream he had met with an accident and broken an arm or a leg and would give us minute instructions as to how to care for him."

The survey was finally completed early in the spring of 1883. From the results, it was evident that use of the canyon downstream from Cimarron for a railway line was impractical. However, this first survey might have suggested to some that water diversion was a feasible idea, and that the canyon could be conquered.

Preliminary irrigation investigations, except on a minor scale, were too expensive to be supported by local subscription, despite some interest. In 1894 a man named Richard Whinnerah made a survey for a tunnel along what today is the present line of the Gunnison Tu-nel.[9] The next year, Lauzon promoted an election to secure funds for a diversion tunnel from the Gunnison River, but the vote was against the proposition.[10] During this period attempts were made to interest the Colorado legislature in supporting a diversion project, but to no avail.[11] Independent surveyors were very naive about the cost of such a project, one estimating that $75,000 would pay for seven miles of tunnel, a mile of heavy cut, and a hundred-foot dam across the Gunnison River.[12]

Around the turn of the century, two men made special examinations which proved of value. In August of 1900, Delta County Surveyor John A. Curtis took a survey crew up to Red Rock Canyon "to ascertain just the condition which exists with regard to getting water from the Gunnison into this valley."[13] Also, a surveyor from Montrose, W. H. Fleming, had run level lines across the divide between the Gunnison and Uncompahgre Valleys at chosen points.[14]

In order to obtain funds to support a tunnel project, an appeal had been made to the Twelfth Session of the Colorado legislature which met in 1899. On January 28, Senator W. S. Buckley introduced Senate Bill No. 310, "for an act to construct, maintain, and operate a state tunnel in Montrose County, Colorado, and for the use of unemployed convicts in constructing the same and making appropriations therefor."[15] This bill was referred to the Committee on Labor. On March 1, the bill was tabled "for the reason that there are no funds available for such purpose and that the enterprise is deemed to be impracticable."[16] Buckley objected strenuously to the pessimistic suggestion of the latter phrase, and it was finally struck from the record.[17]

Sponsors of the water diversion project were only momentarily set back by the defeat of the request for legislative support. The Montrose Enterprise urged "each citizen to put in a good work when he can."[18] In late June of 1900, John Masters, an Idaho capitalist, arrived in Montrose to investigate the possibility of putting a dam and power plant near Red Rock Canyon which would furnish power for the mines of Ouray. With respect to the project, Masters told local officials that "his company must have at least a quarter of a million

dollar investment in prospect to take hold of it in earnest."[19] This investment never proved forthcoming.

Western Congressmen were busy pushing the local irrigation and diversion project, especially Representatives Shafroth and Bell, and Senator E. O. Wolcott. The latter promised to introduce a bill into the United States Senate to build the tunnel and canals, at the instigation of a local farmer, John E. Pelton. There was some thought at the time that this would be construed primarily as a political move, since Wolcott was coming up for re-election.[20]

Late in the summer of 1900, a party of five volunteers decided to tackle a survey of the Black Canyon to see if water diversion would actually be feasible.[21] The leader, William W. Torrence, later to be called the "Father of the Gunnison Tunnel," was at the time superintendent of the Montrose Electric Light and Power Company. His companions included John E. Pelton, a Montrose farmer and local lake resort proprietor, J. A. Curtis, the Delta County Surveyor and civil engineer, M. F. Hovey, Montrose farmer and one-time miner, and E. B. Anderson, a Delta rancher. All except Torrence were married and had children. Hovey, the oldest, was fifty-five.

In September of 1900 these men were ready to tackle the river. Headed by Pelton, they took the train for the mouth of Cimarron Creek, therailroad company transporting them free. Going down-river from there, the men planned to reach Red Rock Canyon within four or five days. If they had experienced too rough a journey by this time, they would climb out there, leaving the boats to drift downstream to the North Fork; otherwise they would accompany the boats through the entire length of the canyon.

Their equipment included two boats, City of Montrose and John C. Bell (after Congressman Bell), of stout oak frames, bound with iron and covered with canvas. The boats were supplied by John Pelton from his private lake. They had tins of meat, vegetables, and hard tack sufficient for a month's trip. Cameras, surveying instruments, including an aneroid barometer, pocket compass, and surveyor's chain, and notebooks were protected in waterproof tins. On September 5, at 10 o'clock, after all was packed, they signaled by revolver shots to watchers above that the expedition was underway.

On the first day, the men had to carry boats and provisions on their shoulders past many bad stretches of the river, and by evening had journeyed only three-quarters of a mile. Next day, about two miles from the starting place, the John C. Bell parted its line, struck a rock and sank, carrying with it many provisions and equipment, including Torrence's field glasses. Only the blankets, which floated, were saved. That night the men found refuge in a cave above the water, where they cooked their evening meal over a driftwood fire.

Next day they continued in the one remaining boat. About eleven miles down the canyon, wet from the rain and river water, they rendezvoused with a party under Mr. Denniston who came down from the rim. After a long respite, the men returned to the canyon on September 25 to continue the trip. It was optimistically conjectured that "the rest of the trip which is not so rough will probably be made in a few days."[22]

Periodically during the course of the trip, friends had been watching for the party from the canyon rim above. When they

finally spied them for the first time, the watchers shouted and fired shots to attract the attention of the five men, but the roar of the river drowned out the salutations. At last, they sent a cascade of rocks down the canyon slope which did alert the men below. Excitedly the voyagers looked up and waved, then collapsed on the shore for half-an-hour, glancing up occasionally and waving at their well-wishers.

About four weeks from the date when they first entered the canyon, the men gave up the venture. They had come only some fifteen miles, the last four in five days, had been without adequate provisions, and now the men were confronted with what appeared to be an impassable cascade blocking their passage. The canyon had narrowed to about thirty feet, the chasm walls rose perpendicularly 2,000 feet overhead, and the river was cascading over falls after falls. Anderson and Hovey tried to go downstream a ways to survey, but their boat nearly swamped and they narrowly missed being propelled over a cascade. To proceed farther, the men all agreed, would result in almost instant death. Disheartened, Torrence wrote in his notebook, "With our present equipment we can go no farther. The Black Canon is not impenetrable. If I get out of this scrape alive, I shall come back."[23]

Scouting around, Torrence located a steep ravine which seemed to give access to the north rim in the vicinity of the present Narrows. The men rested, and that evening they ate up the remaining food. Next morning at eight they left the "Falls of Sorrow," as they named the rocky cascade upstream from the Narrows (now known as Torrence Falls), and started the long scramble upward. They roped together and, using the spike-shod transit tripod legs as

alpenstocks, they slowly made their precarious way, one after another, up the canyon wall. By noon they had scaled a thousand feet. In the afternoon one of the company could hardly be restrained from jumping into the chasm. Finally, at 3:30 in the afternoon the rim was reached. The men were exhausted, covered with dust, parched, hands cut, lips swollen, eyes bloodshot. Even then, they were still in wild, uninhabited country and had to hike fifteen miles before they encountered William McMillen's ranch on the Muddy, where they could procure food. From there McMillen transported them to a place where they could make connections for Montrose, which they reached on October 1.[24]

During these days of exploration, friends and relatives of the five men had maintained a vigil on the rim, hoping for an occasional glimpse of the intrepid river-runners. Towards the end of September, not having seen the explorers for some time, the watchers finally feared the worst and were making preparations to screen the river where it left the canyon to the northeast to recover the bodies, when the men were reported safe.

This partial exploration of the canyon by river served to bolster the interest in irrigation possibilities of the region. In 1901, Meade Hammond, State Representative from Delta, introduced a new Gunnison Tunnel bill (House Bill No. 195) into the Colorado legislature, Thirteenth Session, "a bill for an act to construct, maintain and operate State Canal No. 3, in Montrose and Delta counties; the creation of a board of control; the use of convict labor in constructing the same; the issuance of certificates of indebtedness; providing for the sale of water, and making an appropriation for