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BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON

NATIONAL MONUMENT

A BRIEF HISTORY

of the

BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON

NATIONAL MONUMENT

1936

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A BRIEF HISTORY
of the
BLACK CANYON OF THE GUNNISON
NATIONAL MONUMENT
by Platt Cline
Ranger, South Rim, 1936

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument was created by proclamation of former President Herbert Hoover on March 2, 1933. In an airline, it is located approximately 175 miles southwest of Denver and 105 miles north and slightly east of Mesa Verde National Park. The South Rim of the Canyon is reached by a road leading north off of highway U.S. 50, about seven miles east of Montrose. The distance from U. S. to the Monument boundary is seven miles. The North Rim is reached by a road which turns off of U.S. 92 3 miles south of Crawford, and the distance from the highway to the Monument boundary is about 10 miles.

Early in the fall of 1933, the National Park Service began the construction of scenic rim drives along each side of the canyon. While these drives are in sight of each other in many places, the shortest route from one rim to the other, by car, is about 36 miles. The reason for this is that, in order to go from one rim to the other in a car, it

is necessary to entirely flank the canyon, either on the east or west. Up through the 1936 season, there has been constructed approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles of scenic road on each side of the canyon.

While a bridge connecting these two drives would be entirely feasible from an engineering standpoint, and while such a bridge would make both sides of the canyon easily accessible to visitors, it is believed that such a project, from the point of view of the ideal National Park and Monument visitor, would be undesirable. A bridge, no matter how carefully planned and constructed, would undoubtedly detract considerably from the natural, rugged beauty of the canyon.

The entire length of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison is approximately 55 miles, about ten miles of which is embraced by the Monument boundaries. To date, the Monument comprises 11,157.76 acres. The canyon traverses parts of Gunnison, Montrose, and Delta counties, but the area which constitutes the Monument is all in Montrose county.

The extreme eastern portion of the Canyon has been known to lovers of scenic beauty for many years, and the D. & M. C. R. R. has a scenic line that passes through a portion of this section of the canyon. As far back as 1889, we find William Thayer writing a brief eulogy of the canyon in his book, *Marvels of the New West*. (Pages 6,7,8,9.)

It was of this eastern portion, rugged and beautiful, it is true, but far inferior in beauty to the area now constituting the Monument, that Arthur Chapman wrote of in the Railroad Red Book:

THE BLACK CANYON OF THE GUTTISON

The Lord, He smote a race-course here, two hundred fathoms deep,

All lined with frowning crags of black, piled granite heap on heap

And then He loosed the waterway and bade his horses leap.

And so they rush, with snowwhite manes, where sun's rays seldom glance;

Ah, how their foam-flecked heads are tossed, and how those white manes dance!

And he who seeks to ride those steeds has not a feather's chance.

The ages come, the ages go, and cities dot the plain;

And then the cities vanish, as the dust yields to the rain,

But still the Lord's white horses race between those black walls twain.

Despite the fact that Mr. Chapman has his geology slightly twisted, as he has the canyon built before the water was turned in, and despite the fact that a feather's chance of surviving in the rush of water in the canyon would be much greater than the chances of surviving of almost anything else, the

little poem is included here because it is probably the very best of the few attempts at poetry so far written about the canyon.

The Gunnison River, one of the major streams of the Western Slope of Colorado, and an important tributary of the Colorado River, has carved the Black Canyon out of a mountain of hard, metamorphic rock to a depth of from 1725 to 2724 feet, and with a width at the top of from 1000 to almost 2000 feet. The width of the bottom varies from 40 feet, "The Barrows", to 300 feet. The Gunnison River has its origin between the 38th and 39th parallels, flows in a general northwesterly direction, and is formed principally by the union of Taylor and East rivers, joined below their confluence by Tomichi creek.

"Tomichi" is the name by which the original inhabitants of the region, the Uncompagre band of the Ute tribe of Indians, called the river. Despite the questioning of a number of persons who speak the Ute tongue, the meaning of the word has not been definitely determined. One resident of Mancos, who has had considerable commerce with the Southern Utes, and who is said to be able to speak the language fluently, states that the word means "a place of high rocks and much water." As there some doubts as to this man's reliability, his translation of the word is being

passed on for what it is worth.

No doubt the Indians had explored the entire canyon years before the first white man gazed into its depths. Arrowpoints and knives have been found along both rims of the canyon in recent years, undoubtedly lost by Ute hunting parties many years ago.. Several Montrose county pioneers have told me that the Black Canyon area was a favorite hunting ground of the Utes.

It is known that the Indians had two crossings of the canyon, one in what is now known as "Red Rock Canyon", the trail used by the hunters and warriors, and the other at the "River Portal" of the Gunnison Tunnel, called the "Squaws crossing" because it was less difficult than the warrior's crossing, and was usually used by the squaws and children. Both of these crossings are within the Monument.

With the coming of the white settlers, the Utes were gradually forced out of the area by a series of treaties, until finally, in 1881, they made their last stand in the Uncompahgre valley "not far from the ridge of black hills which form the southern boundary of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument." according to Rev. Mark T. Warner of Montrose, in his article in the Colorado Magazine for May, 1934. The Uncompahgre Utes were finally forced completely out of Western Colorado and into Utah, where they are

now confined in a reservation.

Despite the fact that white men had undoubtedly seen the Black Canyon at least as early as the first half of the 19th century, it remained for Captain John W. Gunnison's expedition in 1853 to make the first printed reference to it. The river has been named for Captain Gunnison. We shall have occasion later to refer in greater detail to Captain Gunnison and his ill-fated expedition.

Eighty-eight years before Captain Gunnison first viewed the river, it had been visited near its confluence with the Uncompahgre, near the present town of Delta, by a Spanish expedition from Santa Fe. According to Jerome C. Smiley, on page 19 of his Semi-centennial history of the State of Colorado, Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, 1913: "But the earliest known extended exploration of that quarter of Colorado (San Juan area) for any purpose was made in 1761 by Juan Maria (de) Rivera, in company with Joaquin Lain, Pedro Mora, Gregorio Sandoval, and others ---- After entering and examining the district drained by the upper reaches of the Rio San Juan ---- they moved on westward to the Rio La Plata ---- leaving this stream, Rivera and his companions went northward into the valley of the (Uncompahgre) river, down which they made their way to a place a short distance below the union of (the Gunni-

son and Uncompahgre rivers). So far as there is any known record, they were the first white men who visited the (Uncompahgre valley). If Joaquin Lina was the guide for the party, which it appears he was, Smiley was mistaken in giving Rivera credit for taking the first party into the area.

Joaquin Lina, mentioned above, seems to have been a professional explorer and guide, or perhaps, a prospector. It is very probable that he had visited the area, possibly on several occasions, before.

It is reasonable to suppose that Rivera kept a journal of his expedition, but it has either long since been destroyed or lost. Considerable time has been spent by the writer, over a period of two years, in an attempt to learn more about Rivera and his book. Many book dealers, both in this country and in Europe, have been contacted, and several authorities on early Spanish explorations in the Southwest have been questioned, but Rivera is still known of only by Escalante's references to him in his own journal made 15 years later, on an expedition that traced parts of Rivera's route. A few paragraphs further along in our narrative, and we will let Escalante tell himself what we know about it.

Early in the 1770's, Father Junipero Serra, in charge of the Missions in Northern California, urged

that a thorough exploration be made of the area between Santa Fe and Monterey, California, in order that the great Spanish and (Roman Catholic) empire of the west and southwest could be properly held against the French, who were gradually moving into the territory.

As a consequence of this, Silvestre Velez de Escalante, Ministro Doctrinero of Quni, accompanied by Atanacio Dominguez, Visitador Comisaro of New Mexico, and nine others, five of whom were soldiers, set out from Santa Fe for Monterey, in California, on July 29, 1776.

Escalante says, in his journal, a translation of parts of which is reprinted in J. R. Harris' Catholic Church in Utah, Pages 143-4: "August 26: (the day before having been ^{sent at a camp round} named Lain Spring, in honor of the guide above mentioned)----- and having entered the pleasant valley of the River of San Francisco, called by the Yutas the Ancapagari, which the interpreter tells us means Colorado Lake, from the fact that near its source there is a spring of reddish water, hot and disagreeable to the taste. The plain through which this river runs is broad and level and a well travelled road passes through it."

On the 27th, the party moved down the Uncompahgre, in a general northwesterly direction: "having travelled a short distance we met a Yuta by the name of

Gurdo, with his family. We spent some time with him, but, after a lengthy conversation, came to the conclusion that there was no information to be gained from him; and we had simply suffered from the heat of the sun, which was very intense, while we were talking to him. We continued our journey over the plain, and having travelled two leagues to the west, we crossed the river, and passing through a grove of shady poplars and other trees, which grow here along its bank, we climbed a small hill and entered upon a plain void of verdure, and covered with small stones. Having pursued our way down the river three leagues and a half to the north northwest, we pitched our camp in another fertile spot near the same river, which we called the San Augustine el Grande (Saint Augustine the Great) and on each bank of this river we found abundant pasture, and much black poplar timber. Today, six leagues."

"Farther down the river, and about four leagues north of this plain of San Augustine, the river forms a junction with a larger one, called by the people the River of San Javier, and by the Yutas the River Tomichi (north fork of Gunnison). There came to these two rivers in 1761 Don Juan Maria de Rivera, crossing this same range of the mountains

---- The place where he camped before crossing the river, and where he said he cut the figure of the cross on a young poplar tree, with the initials of his name, and the year of his expedition, are still found at the junction of these two rivers on the southern bank, as were informed by our interpreter, Andres Muniz, who came with the said Don Juan Maria the year referred to, as far as the ---- mountains, saying that although he had remained behind three day's journey before reaching the river, he came last year (1775) along its bank with Pedro Mora and Gregoria Sandoval who had accompanied Don Juan Maria in the expedition I have referred to. They said that they had come as far as the river at that time, and from that point they had begun their return journey; only two persons sent by Don Juan Maria had crossed the river, to look for Yutas on the shore that was opposite camp, and from which point they returned ----."

It will be noted that Escalante says that the "Tomichi" or Gunnison, as it is today, was called by his people the San Javier (or Xavier). This would indicate that the area was comparatively well known.

From the point on the river above mentioned, Escalante and his party pass into Utah, and out

of our narrative.

It is quite likely that Spanish explorers visited the Gunnison River late in the 18th century and early in the 19th, but it remained for the demand for beavers for the tall beaver hats worn by the stylish gentlemen of Europe and America to bring about the next serious exploration of the Gunnison and its tributaries, in the 3rd and 4th decades of the 19th century.

Antoine Roubidoux, a Frenchman from St. Louis, Mo., established a trappers supply and indian trading post in the early years of the 1830's near the present town of Delta, a short distance below where the Uncompahgre River joins the Gunnison. Unquestionably, some few of the many trappers who made their headquarters at Ft. Roubidoux, (one of whom was Kit Carson), must have at least attempted an exploration of the Black Canyon, as they trapped every stream and creek in the locality. However, there is no historical record of any such explorations, nor is there any but very scarce data concerning the Fort and Roubidoux himself.

It is believed that Fort Roubidoux was destroyed by the indians about 1844. The rapidly diminishing demand for beaver pelts eventually resulted in the departure from the area of the romantic, unchronicalled colorful "Mountain Men."

According to Warner, quoted above: "In the fall of 1842 we find Marcus Whitman, a pioneer missionary to the Indians of the Oregon Territory stopping on the Gunnison River while making his memorable winter trip on horseback across the Rockies and plains to Washington, where he presented before President Tyler and others the case of Oregon. Whitman stopped at Houbi-doux's trading post on the Gunnison where he secured a guide, thence pushed on over the mountains during the winter of 1842-43 following generally the trappers' trail to Taos, New Mexico, Bent's Fort and on to Washington."

During 1853, three expeditions visited the Gunnison River, the first being led by Lt. E. F. Beale, who followed the Gunnison River westerly on his way to the Pacific coast, to which place he had received an assignment as Indian agent.

The next expedition in 1853 is one which concerns us most, being led by Captain John W. Gunnison.

Early in 1853, in June, a party was organized, as directed by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, to "explore and survey the pass through the Rocky Mountains in the vicinity of the headwaters of the Rio del Norte, by way of the Huertano 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 northwardly to the vicinity of Lake Utah on a return route, to explore the most available passes and canones of the Wasatch range and South Pass to Fort Laramie."

The party was organized under the command of Captain John W. Gunnison, and First Lieut. E. C. Beckwith, second-in-command, a topographer, astronomer, surgeon, geologist, botanist, etc., with about 30 non-commissioned officers and soldiers. Due to the fact that Gunnison was killed by indians before the expedition was completed, the journal was written by Lieutenant Beckwith. His is an excellently written narrative, and well worth the reading by anyone interested in the early explorations of the west and southwest.

Gunnison's expedition was made for the purpose of surveying the most feasible route for a trans-continental railroad.

No difficulties were encountered until the Black Canyon was reached. "The march in the forenoon of September 5th brought us to Coochetopa creek, a fine rapid little stream of twenty feet in width." Moving down the Coochetopa, the party encamped in the evening of the 6th at its confluence with the Gunnison River,

which Beckwith calls "Grand River". In later years the Black Canyon was called the "Grand Canyon of the Gunnison" even well into the 20th century, notably on Bureau of Reclamation Maps. Beckwith continues: "A fine clear stream of cold water, one hundred feet wide and three feet deep, flowing rapidly over a paving stone bed." Of the physical conditions encountered on the Gunnison during the next day's march, which was down its course, Beckwith says:

"On each side of the river today, and, as we can see, for some days ahead, the banks rise rapidly towards the precipitous sides of the mesas, which extend back from fifteen to twenty miles from the mountains ---- while the current of the river is rapid, and the descent very considerable, these tables seem to preserve the same absolute level, and consequently become more elevated above the river as it descends. They are judged to be, today, 1,200 feet above it, and not less than 1,500 twenty miles west of us ---- Captain Gunnison rode in the canones (Beckwith spelling) several times during the day. He says of the first, 'that it would require blasting one-third of the distance for the construction of a railroad, and solid masonry, with many arches for culverts on the whole line ---- a stupendous work for an engineer.'"

No further attempt was made to travel down the

river, and the party turned southwesterly and moved out into the Uncompahgre Valley. Descending that valley, the party camped September 18 slightly below the union of the Uncompahgre and the Gunnison.

Here, Beckwith, again referring to the Canyon, "which we have been so many days passing around" says: "The Difference of elevation between the head of the canon and our camp (that of the 18th), a few miles below its termination, on the Uncompahgre, separated from Grand (Gunnison) river by a level bottom only, is 2,077 feet; and as the distance between these two points by the river does not exceed seventy miles ---- of which, perhaps, sixty preserves its canon character ---- the average descent will vary but slightly from thirty feet to the mile. (Note: USGS figures, 1934 exped., show that in the ten miles of canyon in the Monument, the average drop is over 100 feet., varying by miles from 40 ft. to 260 ft.) "But, from the continuance, for so great a distance, of vertical rocky walls along the river, 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

(Gunnison) river at enormous expense ---- for the accurate estimate of which, situated as the work is at so great a distance from civilization, where not only laborers, but their subsistence, must be transported by land carriage nearly 1,000 miles, and where scarcely a stick of timber has been seen for the succeeding 150 miles, suitable for a string-piece for a small temporary bridge, or even a railroad tie, it is not too much to say, no data exists, nor will until such a labor shall be undertaken."

Gunnison's party passed on down the river to the Colorado River, and from thence into what is now the state of Utah. After crossing the Wasatch Mountains, they came to the Sevier River, on which stream, about twenty miles above lake Sevier, Captain Gunnison and several others of the party were killed by Indians early in the morning of October 26th. (1853)

The third, and last expedition to the Gunnison in 1853 was made by a party led by Gen. John C. Fremont, (misnamed the "Pathfinder"; he always followed routes taken by other explorers). This expedition was also for the purpose of scouting a railroad route to the Pacific coast. In this, Fremont's fifth, and last into the West, he followed generally the course taken by Captain Gunnison.

through the area. Fremont was following Gunnison's expedition by about three months.

The next visit to the Gunnison river of which we have a record was a direct result of the defiance of the Federal Government by Brigham Young, head of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or "Mormons" in 1857. The Mormons refused to permit a garrison of Federal soldiers to enter the territory of Utah as body-guards for the Federal officers for the territory appointed by the President. This was the famous "Mormon War", in which there were no casualties. Captain Marcy, an officer of the 5th regiment of U.S. Infantry, a part of General A. S. Johnson's "army" in the war, was directed, in November, 1857, the troops being then camped at Ft. Bridger, to take 40 enlisted men and proceed by the most direct route to New Mexico for supplies. Marcy set out on the 24th, with his soldiers and a number of "Mountain Men" as guides, among whom was "Old Jim" Baker, noted frontiersman and scout.

Arriving from the west in the Uncompahgre Valley, the party was met by a large party of Utes, the chief of whom gave them some excellent, sound advice; not to attempt to cross the Coochetopa pass at that season. Marcy, however, ordered his party forward, and they pressed on to the east, suffering terrible

hardships in the deep snow and freezing weather. Part of the route they traversed was that of Fremont and of Gunnison 4 years before. The party finally reached Ft. Massachusetts and safety.

Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden, making a geologic and geographic survey of Colorado Territory in 1873 for the Federal Government, explored and studied the vicinity of the Canyon, but, as far as is known, no member of his party entered the great chasm.

Despite the fact that several authors state that Hayden termed the Black Canyon inaccessible, I have not been able to find a statement by him to that effect in U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of Colorado and Adjacent Territory, 1874, Hayden.

The next expedition into the area, and the only one, up to that time, that made a thorough exploration of the canyon, is that of B. F. Bryant and party, for the D. & R. G. R. R. in ¹⁸⁸³ 1883. Because of the fact that Bryant's report has never been published, except in the Montrose Daily Press, copies of which are very scarce, rather complete quotations from the report are included in this paper:

CANYON OF THE GUNNISON RIVER, March 17, 1883.
Camp on the North Fork. By B. F. Bryant.

"In accordance with instructions received from you,

I left Delta on the 12th of December, 1893, with a party of engineers to explore the Grand Canyon of the Gunnison below the mouth of the Comarcon. We arrived on Crystal Creek on the 17th, and on the 18th started our line down the river from Sta. 4525 of Norton's location, continuing his elevation and numbers. We ran an angle line from magnetic course without back sights and laid it on the ice as far as practicable. The ice was treacherous from the first, and the men frequently broke thru into the river, but we were able to continue until December 28th when we were stopped at Sta. 5246 by open water and a perpendicular cliff that it was impossible to climb over. Nothing could be gained by crossing the river as there was a similar point on the opposite side a little lower down.

The weather was very cold, and we waited three days, thinking that sufficient ice would form to enable us to pass the cliff. During that time we explored two gulches leading from the top of the canyon to the river, at points about 1½ to 3 miles below the end of the line, and found it was possible to climb down thru both, but when we attempted to go up the river to the end of our line our way was barred by open water and rapids. At the end of 3 days I decided not to wait longer for ice, and on January 1st broke camp and moved to the mouth of Smith's Fork of the Gunnison where we arrived on the 4th.

"On the 5th, started a line 1,600 feet above the mouth of Smith's Fork and ran down the Guadalupe to Sta. 629 plus 25 where we tied up with Bartlett's line from Delta at Sta. 441 on January 8th. On the 9th, moved to Delta, discharged one-half my party, obtained a new supply of provisions, and on the 16th left Delta with 4 men to return to the canyon, where we arrived on the 17th, this time camping on the south side of the canyon as my observation on the last trip had shown me that the canyon was much more accessible from that side.

"On the 18th recommenced work at Sta. 0, 1,600 ft. above the mouth of Smith's fork, and ran up the river to Sta. 1002 plus 23 where we were stopped by the river entering a narrow gorge between two nearly perpendicular granite walls 1000 to 1200 ft. high. We carried our instruments out of the canyon and into it again above the gorge. (This gorge evidently is the "Barrows"). Took up our line at Sta. 5346 where we abandoned it in December and continued it to 5327 plus 61. From this point we triangulated thru the gorge 712 feet to Sta. 5334 plus 73 equals 1002 plus 23, completing the line through the canyon on the 12th day of February.

"The total length of line run by us is 44 34--100 miles. Our starting point, Sta. 4625, is 66-100 of a mile below the bridge across the Guadalupe at the mouth of the Cimarron, and from Sta. 441 of Bartlett's line

to Delta is 8 54-100 mi., making the total distance from the mouth of the Cimarron to Delta 58.54 miles, of which 45 is canyon.....the total cost of the 44 34-100 miles (for a railroad) would be \$2,451,700., or \$55,293. per mile.

"This estimate is crude in the extreme as you will realize, but I am inclined to think it will cover the cost of a line through the canyon."

Early in 1901 the people of Montrose County succeeded in interesting the newly formed Bureau of Reclamation in the problem of whether a tunnel from the bottom of the Black Canyon to the Uncompahgre valley would be feasible for irrigation purposes. For much of the material concerning the trips into the canyon at that time we are indebted to Barton J. Marsh's book, The Uncompahgre Valley and the Gunnison Tunnel, Published in 1909, and long since out of print. Marsh is as often as not unreliable in his narrative, and we must take parts of his melo-dramatic story with a grain of salt. noting from Marsh:

"Early in 1901 J. E. Felton, J. A. Curtis, W. F. Hovey, E. B. Anderson and W. A. Torrence entered the canyon about one mile above the Cimarron Station, taking two boats and supplies for 30 days. Men were stationed along the rim to signal and take work to the families of the men. The second day they lost one boat attempting to cross a waterfall. That night they slept in a cave.

Five days passed before they were sighted by men on the top. At three different places they found natural bridges across the river, formed by immense rock slides, which had some time during the past ages fallen into the canyon, thus causing the water to force its way under the great mass of fallen stone.

"They were confronted by a canyon twentyfive hundred feet deep and only twenty-eight feet wide (he evidently refers to the "Barrows", 40 ft. in width) with perpendicular walls, worn by the action of the water as smooth as glass, and language cannot describe the terrific force with which the restrained torrent found egress through the narrow outlet.

Behind them pressed the racing torrent,
Before them boiled its seething tides,
Above them towered such walls of granite,
That wild goats could not scale their sides.

"They named the narrow place the "Falls of Sorrow" bade farewell to their tried and worn and boat, and, having spent twenty-one days in travelling a distance of fourteen miles, they began their ascent out of the mighty depths of the Black Canyon at about eight o'clock in the morning. They toiled and climbed all day, night finding them far from the summit, with no place to stop for a period of rest. (The writer of this paper came out of the canyon immediately below the "Barrows" in August of this year in exactly one hour; and the same time has been made on several occasions, and beat on several occasions also.) Not until half past nine that night

did they at last stand on the summit, exhausted and almost famished from hunger."

The first scientific party sent into the canyon by the Bureau of Reclamation was made the same year as the above, and consisted of Professor A. L. Fellows of the B. of I. and Mr. J. W. Torrence of Montrose. In August of 1901, when the water was low and warm, and with light packs of essentials and instruments, the two men entered the canyon.

The most interesting adventure that befell them was the catching of a mountain sheep. Marsh, whom we quoted above, tells the story:

A (Mountain sheep) went bounding away over the rocks and cliffs, where it was impossible for man to even get a footing, and another ran in between two jutting rocks. Torrence ran to the opening, just as the animal made a plunge to get out, and it fairly leaped into his open arms. Then began a mighty struggle for the mastery. The wild sheep was between the two men and apparent starvation, and with all the strength of his untamed nature the desperate animal sought to escape. After a long struggle, Torrence succeeded in stabbing it to death, and they at once prepared a feast from a portion of the carcass. Perhaps never before in the history of man's knowledge of this animal had anyone succeeded in catching a full grown mountain sheep alive in his arms."

Shortly after Torrence and Fellows' trip through the canyon, the Bureau of Reclamation started work on the great Gunnison Tunnel, which was formally opened in 1909 by President Taft.

In 1918, the Bureau of Reclamation sent an expedition through the canyon to ascertain the amount of inflow. This expedition was conducted by engineer I. J. Foster. The passage required four days.

The wonders of the canyon were almost forgotten until the 1920's, when the Lion's Club of Montrose, at the suggestion of ^{Douglass} Ed. Lytle, farmer and rancher whose property bounded the canyon on the south, in several places, visited the area, and later publicized it.

Finally, in 1932, Rev. Mark T. Warner, to whom I have already referred above, as chairman of the "Black Canyon Committee" of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce, took steps to secure the necessary maps, etc., required by the National Park Service for a preliminary investigation of a proposed National Monument.

A U.S. man was sent to investigate the area, as to its possibilities and worth as a National Monument, which led directly to the creation of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument on March 2, 1933.

In 1934, the U.S.G.S. made a survey of the Black Canyon, under the leadership of Mr. Robert O. Davis.

This trip took five days, and while the going was extremely rough, the trip was made without undue discomfort. The notes of this expedition, to the best of my knowledge, have not as yet been published, but some figures giving elevations have been made available through the courtesy of Rev. Mark T. Warner.

(The figures refer to feet, at the top and at the bottom of the canyon, at various points along the 11 mi. traveled by the party. "Tri" signifies triangulation station.)

5524	East Portal tri
5474	River
1250	
5342	Rock Pt. 1.07 mi. E. of E. tri.
5422	
1920	
8150	Rock Pt. seen from Lupit
6230	rock upstream.
1820	
6042	Lupit rock
6272	
1770	
7550	Narrows
5125	
1725	
7751	Bridge Site
5931	
1330	
7956	High Point (Mt. Op. side, 7917)
5356	
2300	
8301	Warner's Pt. tri
5577	
2734	

The following figures show the drop in feet per mile of the Gunnison River through the Canyon, from River Portal to Red Rock Canyon.

Mile	Drop in Ft.	Mile	Drop in Ft.
1st	40	7th	260
2nd	40	8th	140
3rd	75	9th	50
4th	55	10th	40
5th	110	11th	40
6th	200		

Total-----1050 in 11 mi.

The following miscellaneous figures may also be of interest:

5325	River Portal elevation
5472	Red Rock Canyon elevation
1750	Drop for total distance travelled.

Elevation above Narrows on Crawford side, 7843

12 mi. of river drops 80 ft.

Last elevation on Gunnison River, 5425 ft., 1100 ft below water level at dam at East Portal of the Gunnison Tunnel.

In this brief paper, I have not attempted to give a complete history of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison and the surrounding area, but have attempted simply to give, in as few words as possible, some of the historical high-lights of this most interesting area.

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