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The River of Sorrows: The History of the Lower Dolores River Valley

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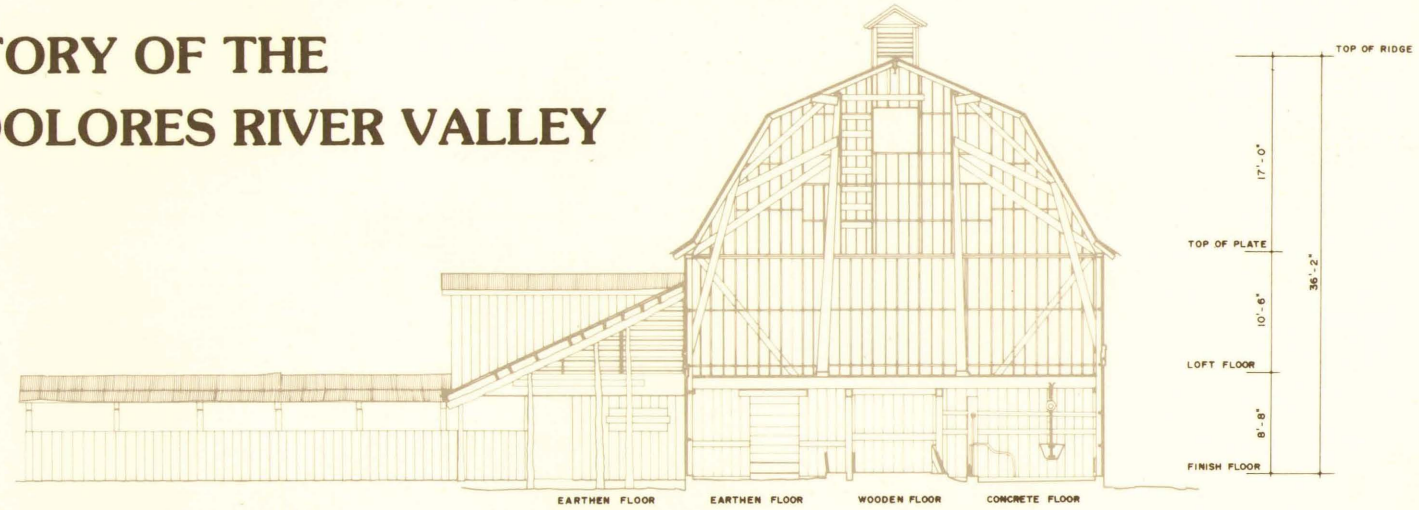
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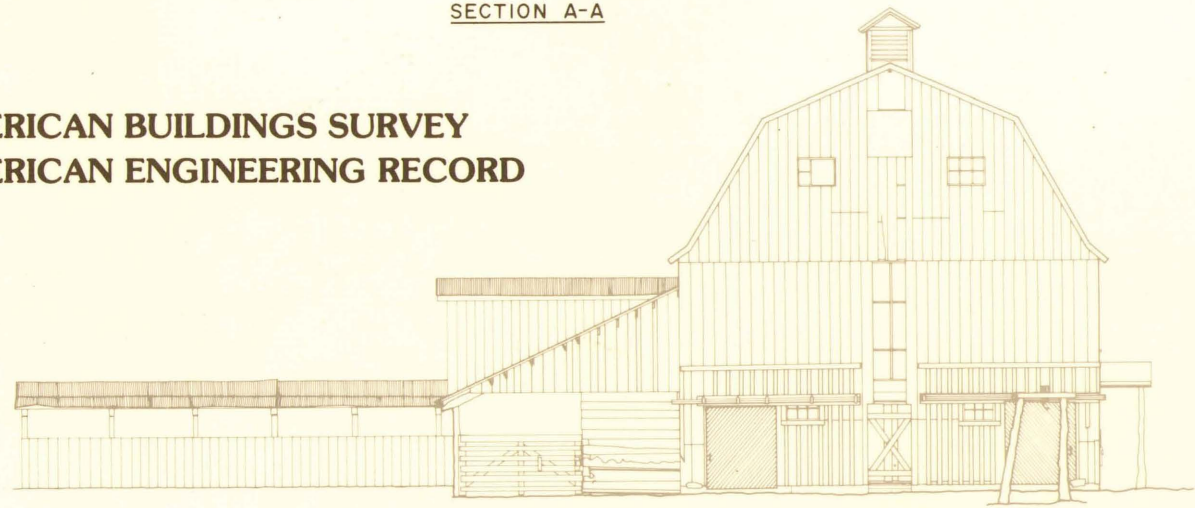
THE HISTORY OF THE LOWER DOLORES RIVER VALLEY

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SECTION A-A

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD



EAST ELEVATION

SCALE FEET 3/16"=1'-0" METERS 1:64

MATERIALS
FOUNDATIONS: CONCRETE
WALLS: WOODEN SIDING
ROOF: WOODEN SHINGLES

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR — BUREAU OF RECLAMATION — NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

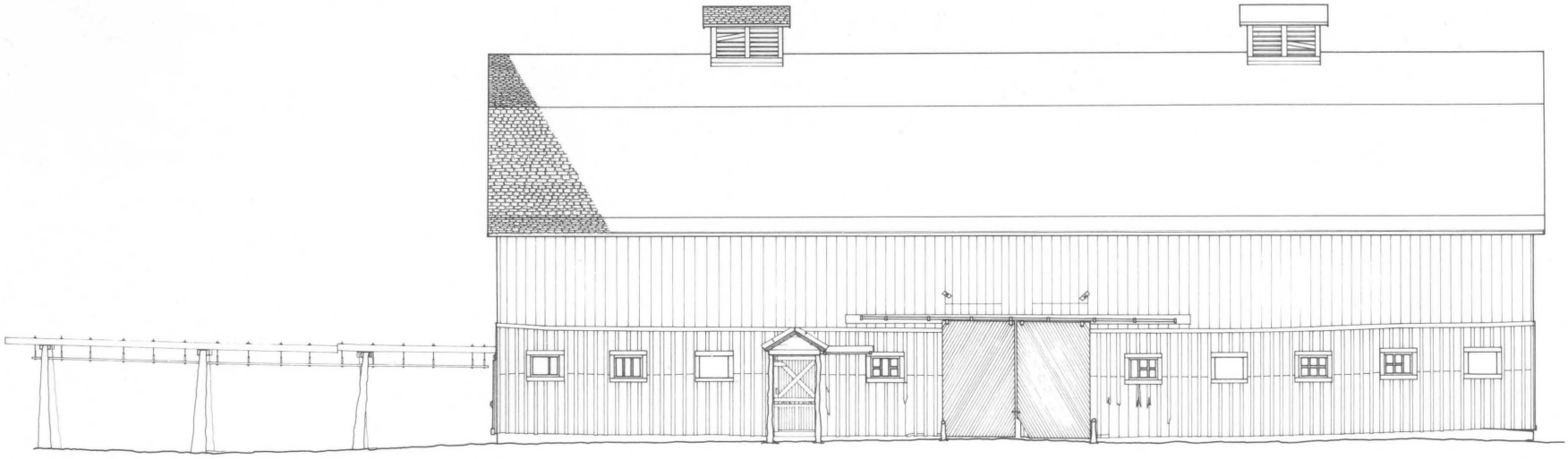
DRAWN BY: DEBRA J. BROWN
DOLORES VALLEY PROJECT, 1981
NAT'L PARK SERVICE, ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY RECORD
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OLD DOLORES HIGHWAY

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
THE RITTER RANCH - BARN
DOLORES VICINITY MONTEZUMA COUNTY COLORADO

SURVEY NO. HABS CO-38

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 8 OF 11 SHEETS



NORTH ELEVATION

SCALE

FEET 3/16"=1'-0"

METERS 1:64

MATERIALS

FOUNDATIONS:	CONCRETE
WALLS:	WOODEN SIDING
ROOF:	WOODEN SHINGLES

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

THE RITTER RANCH - BARN

DOLORES VICINITY MONTEZUMA COUNTY COLORADO

OLD DOLORES HIGHWAY

DRAWN BY: DEBORAH REHN HURST

DOLORES VALLEY PROJECT 1981

NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING RECORD

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

SURVEY NO. HABS CO-38A

SHEET 7 OF 11 SHEETS

THE RIVER OF SORROWS:

The History of the Lower Dolores River Valley



Edited by

Gregory D. Kendrick



U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office

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This history partially fulfills the Memorandum of Understanding No. 1-07-40-S1954 between the Bureau of Reclamation, Upper Colorado Regional Office and the National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office.

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Russell E. Dickenson, Director

Bureau of Reclamation
Robert N. Broadbent, Commissioner

Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Lorraine Mintzmyer, Regional Director

Upper Colorado Regional Office
Clifford I. Barrett, Regional Director

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CONTENTS

PREFACE 5

INTRODUCTION 7

CHAPTER ONE 9
"Valley of the River of Sorrows:
A Historical Overview of the Dolores River Valley."
Duane A. Smith

CHAPTER TWO 23
"Ranching and Farming in the Lower Dolores River Valley."
Linda Dishman

CHAPTER THREE 43
"Eastern Capital and Frontier Initiative:
The History of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation System."
Maureen Gerhold

CHAPTER FOUR 57
"McPhee, Colorado: A 20th Century Lumber Company Town."
Lisa Mausolf

PREFACE

The pages which follow represent the efforts of an Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) team. Comprised of seven students, trained in architecture and history, and supervised by John White, Associate Professor of Architecture, Texas Technological University, the HABS team worked 12 weeks during the summer of 1981 in order to record the Lower Dolores River Valley's history before the valley was inundated by the Bureau of Reclamation's McPhee Reservoir. The project was sponsored by the Bureau of Reclamation and administered by the Rocky Mountain Regional Office of the National Park Service.

HABS conducts a nationwide program of documentation and publication projects which focus on historic and architectural sites and structures. Highest priority is given to those sites threatened with destruction. In many cases, this documentation, deposited in the Division of Prints and Photographs in the Library of Congress, may be the only lasting record of a site's existence.

The summer team was greatly assisted in their research by the previous work of others, most important of whom was Duane Smith, Professor of History at Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado. Two years earlier, Smith produced a solid historic overview of the river valley for the Bureau of Reclamation.* His overview provided the necessary historical framework to guide the team's specific research topics and the national perspective by which to evaluate the significance of individual sites.

The project was vastly improved by the unselfish cooperation of numerous others. The project was conducted under the overall supervision of Katherine Cole, Chief, Division of Cultural Resources, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, National Park Service. de Teel Patterson Tiller, Chief, Branch of Project Review and Technical Assistance, spent considerable time proofing the manuscripts while Pat Kisling, Division Secretary, typed the many drafts. Project funding was provided by the Bureau of Reclamation, Upper Colorado Regional Office. Wayne Prokapetz, Regional Archeologist and Judy Kenyon, Staff Archeologist with the region provided technical assistance at various stages of the project. Tom King, Project Archeologist with the Bureau's Cortez office worked closely with the summer team, ensuring that the research compiled by previous consultants was readily accessible. Robert Righter, Professor of History, University of Wyoming, Robert Z. Melnick, ASLA, Professor of Landscape Architecture, Kansas State University, and Don Stevenson, AIA, provided the academic and professional review of the manuscripts and architectural drawings. Correction of the HABS drawings for this publication was done by J. Keith Everett and James A. Caufield, Architects, National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office. Special thanks should be given to Alex Young, Chief, Division of Personnel, Rocky Mountain Regional Office of the National Park Service, who made hiring of the team a reality.

The four essays are supplemented with photographs taken during the summer of 1981 by Jet Lowe, Photographer with the Historic American Engineering Record, a division within the National Park Service. The historic photographs of McPhee are from the Robert Orr Collection, copy prints courtesy of Gordon Chappell, Regional Historian with the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service and the Colorado Railroad Museum, Golden, Colorado.

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Maureen Gerhold, Pennsylvania State University
Lisa Mausolf, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

*In 1979 the Bureau of Reclamation retained the University of Colorado to produce a historical overview of the Lower Dolores River Valley. The University in turn, contracted with the consulting firm of Centuries Research, Inc., of Montrose, Colorado, of which Duane Smith was a member to do the actual preparation of the manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

Local histories strike a responsive chord in the hearts and minds of most Americans. Whether tracing the family genealogy, following the boom and bust cycle of a Rocky Mountain mining camp or chronicling the progress of a "hell on wheels" high plains railroad town, local histories can provide an insightful glance into the development of the American character. When this look combines an eye for colorful detail with a regional or national perspective, local histories become a valuable archival and public resource.

The history of the Lower Dolores River Valley in southwestern Colorado achieves this historical synthesis. The four essays show how the rugged land itself shaped the valley's past and will determine its future. The very geographical factors which hindered permanent settlement—steep canyon walls, high altitude and poor soil—have today attracted the intense interest of Bureau of Reclamation hydrologists as an ideal site for a storage reservoir.

Duane Smith in his overview, "Valley of the River of Sorrows," traces the slow, yet methodical, historical progress of the valley. Although initially explored by the Franciscan Dominguez-Escalante expedition of 1776, the valley was destined to languish almost a century before settlement. Yet, assured of a thriving market for their goods in the nearby mining community of Rico, a dependable transportation network and psychological security with the removal of the Ute Indians, pioneers began homesteading the valley in the 1870's and 1880's.

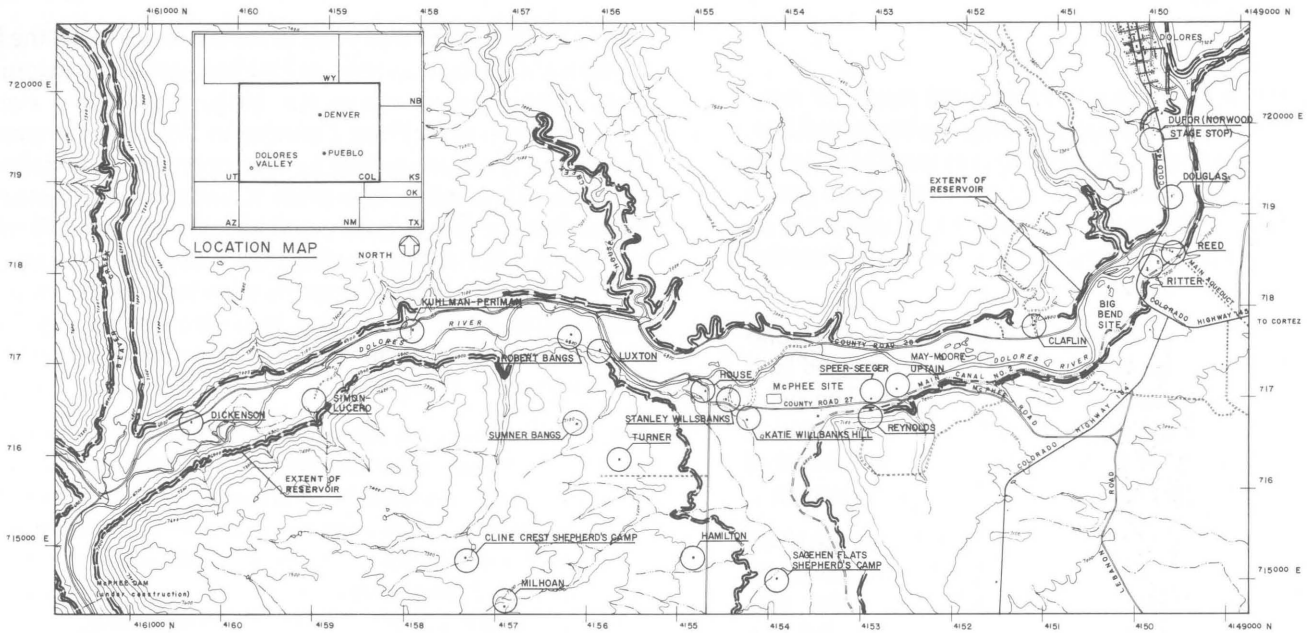
The three essays which follow that of Smith's examine in greater detail the significant historical events and themes within the valley. While settlers south of Dolores lamented the limited acreage available for farming, their neighbors in the adjacent Montezuma Valley faced an even greater challenge. The valley lacked water. Maureen Gerhold illustrates how frontier initiative and technology succeeded in bringing water to the fertile Montezuma Valley. Organized by James W. Hanna, the Montezuma Irrigation System channeled water from the Dolores River through a steep divide by blasting, drilling and excavating a 5,400 foot tunnel and a 4,000 foot "Great Cut." The system represents one of the earliest large-scale, privately funded and continuously operating irrigation projects in the southwestern United States.

Settlement of the lower river valley followed a familiar Western pattern. Hyperbole and frontier "boosterism" were soon stripped away, leaving harsh reality. In the third essay, Linda Dishman relates how pioneers overcame isolation and the limitations of the land itself; their determination punctuated with the continuation of homesteading even after passage of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 which severely curtailed homesteading in the West.

Although agriculture was fated to remain small-scale, the New Mexico Lumber Company's milling operation at McPhee grew at an astounding rate. In the final essay, Lisa Mausolf traces the birth, growth and eventual demise of the company town of McPhee. Founded in 1924, the company town soon became Colorado's most productive lumber operation. Capitalizing on the successful purchase of four million board feet of timber within Montezuma National Forest, the lumber company constructed its mill and town five miles south of Dolores. Like many industrialists locating their companies in isolated rural areas, William McPhee chose to build a company town to house his employees and to attract a more stable work force. The town featured a large stone mill, ethnically segregated housing for more than 1400 employees and the last logging railroad in southwestern Colorado.

The sounds historically associated with the New Mexico Lumber Company mill and town no longer echo through the river valley; and, only skeletal frames of the once numerous homesteads remain scattered along the river valley. The Bureau of Reclamation will build a large reservoir, flooding the valley in order to store the river's waters. By so doing, the Bureau will realize the aspirations held by those first, farsighted entrepreneurs who more than a century earlier, began construction of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation System. The historical essays, photographs and architectural drawings which follow will hopefully provide a lasting testimony to those hardworking pioneers who settled the Lower Dolores River Valley.

Editor



SITE MAP

ADAPTED FROM USGS MAPS DOLORES WEST, COLORADO, 1965 AND TRIMBLE POINT, COLORADO, 1965 QUADRANGLES

CONTOUR INTERVALS: 100 FEET

SCALE 0 1000 3000 5000 FEET 1" = 2000'; .5 0 1K KILOMETERS 1:24000; NORTH

RANCH LOCATIONS IN THE DOLORES VALLEY

THIS PROJECT WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY (H.A.B.S.) OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE'S NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING RECORD, ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE, IN COOPERATION WITH THE SALT LAKE CITY REGION, BUREAU OF RECLAMATION. UNDER THE DIRECTION OF KATHERINE COLE, CHIEF, DIVISION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES, THIS PROJECT WAS COMPLETED DURING THE SUMMER OF 1981 AT THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY FIELD OFFICE, CORTEZ, COLORADO, BY JOHN P. WHITE, PROJECT SUPERVISOR (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY); STEVEN M. WIESENTHAL, PROJECT FOREMAN (UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND); PROJECT HISTORIANS, LINDA DISHMAN (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS), MAUREEN L. GERHOLD (PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY) AND LISA B. MAUSOLF (WELLESLEY COLLEGE); ARCHITECTS DEBRA J. BROWN (VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY), DAVID J. INSINGA (VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY); AND STUDENT ARCHITECT DEBORAH REHN HURST (WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, ST. LOUIS).

THE DOLORES VALLEY, WITHIN THE MCPHEE RESERVOIR PROJECT AREA, WAS FIRST SETTLED IN THE MID-1870'S BY CATTLEMEN WHO WERE ATTRACTED BY THE ABUNDANT GRASSLANDS. HOMESTEADING CONTINUED AT A STEADY RATE UNTIL 1962 WHEN THE LAST PATENT WAS ISSUED. EVEN THOUGH MUCH OF THE RANCHING WAS SUBSISTENCE LEVEL, THE AREA WAS AN IMPORTANT COMPONENT OF THE DOLORES ECONOMY.

DRAWN BY: JOHN P. WHITE
DOLORES VALLEY PROJECT 1981
NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING RECORD
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
RANCH LOCATIONS IN THE DOLORES RIVER VALLEY
DOLORES VICINITY
MONTEZUMA COUNTY
COLORADO

SURVEY NO. HABS CO-35

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 1 OF 6 SHEETS

SHEET # (HABS/HAER USE ONLY)

CHAPTER ONE

"VALLEY OF THE RIVER OF SORROWS": A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE DOLORES RIVER VALLEY

Duane A. Smith

Prologue

El Rio de Nuestra Senora de Dolores, the Spanish called it, River of Our Lady of Sorrows. To later Americans it was known simply as the Dolores River. For centuries the Indians called it home, but by the time the Europeans arrived they were gone. In the two centuries since that unheralded day, the Dolores Valley has been a microcosm of the passing frontier, and, later, the growth of the West. Success and failure characterize its history; it has known sorrows, as well as its share of joys. Across the valley moved the devoted Catholic padre, exploitative fur trapper, searching miner, determined cattleman, fugitive Ute, optimistic town builder, enthusiastic railroadman, hardworking farmer, and noisy logger. Each dug and plowed the land and chopped the trees, while the river rolled on. Now a dam is proposed to slow that river and flood a portion of that valley. This is a part of the historical record of what transpired there before the quiet reservoir waters creep in to cover it forever.

1776—year of war, year of the Declaration of Independence, year of trial for the thirteen barely united colonies fighting against England, the world's greatest power. 1776—year of the first recorded penetration of the Dolores Valley by Europeans. Neither event took much note of the other, but the two initiated a chain of reactions which, a century later, brought settlement to the valley, now part of the bustling United States.

Santa Fe languished a long way from the Atlantic coast, the scene of the fighting, and was literally part of another world—a world dominated by Spanish culture and the Catholic religion, both mellowed by contact with the Pueblo and other Indians who farmed and roamed the Rio Grande Valley. Compared to the revolutionary British colonies, New Mexico seemed unenlightened, tranquil, and submissive, the product of an earlier era. Isolated, economically retarded, militarily weak, sparsely populated, New Mexico took no part in the world war that grew out of the shots fired on the Lexington green that April morning a year earlier, even though mother country Spain reluctantly joined the struggle.

The Declaration of Independence was still unknown on the Rio Grande when, on a warm July morning, a ten-man missionary exploring party headed by two Franciscans, Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Fray Francisco Silvestre Velez de Escalante, left Santa Fe. Their primary goal was to find a route to California and the missions being established there, especially Monterey.[1]

Leaving Santa Fe on July 29, they traveled north to the little settlement of Abiquiu, then started angling northwest. Entering what became Colorado, the little party marched just south of today's Durango and north of Mancos before reaching El Rio de Nuestra Senora de Dolores, very near the present site of Dolores, on August 12. Here the party camped for two days to rest. Turning to their journal:

> On the 13th we made camp, both to allow the padre (Dominguez had caught a bad cold) to improve some more in order to go ahead, and to take a bearing on the polar elevation of this site and meadow of El Rio de los Dolores, where we found ourselves. The bearing was taken by the sun, and we saw that we were at 38° 13-1/2′ latitude. Here there is everything that a good settlement needs for its establishment and maintenance as regards irrigable lands, pasturage, timber and firewood. Upon an elevation on the river's south side, there was in ancient times a small settlement of the same type as those of the Indians of New Mexico, as the ruins which we purposely inspected show. Padre Fray Francisco Atanasio got better, and we decided to continue our journey the following day.
>
> On the 14th we set out from the meadow and Rio de Dolores toward the north, and after a quarter league of travel we continued northwest for one league and to the northwest by west for five leagues over a rather troublesome stretch of sagebrush. . . .[2]

Here Dominguez and Escalante left the part of the Dolores Valley under discussion. They were far from finished; their journey would take them deep into Utah (but never to California) before they were thwarted by the oncoming winter, the unknown distance yet to go, and the ruggedness of the terrain. They returned to Santa Fe on January 2, 1777, having traveled over 1700 miles.

Dominguez and Escalante had not accomplished what they set out to do. No road followed their wandering path, far short as it was of California, and no missions were planted in the land they passed through. They had little enough time even to spread the faith to the Indians they visited, primarily Utes in Colorado. For these reasons, the expedition is regarded as a failure.

However, these men had penetrated a vast, unknown region, the earliest known European exploration of parts of Colorado, Utah, and Arizona. Their daily journal remains the first written description of the area they crossed and the people they visited. They managed this without conflict with the people they visited. For these reasons Dominguez and Escalante deserve the accolade

historian Herbert Bolton gave to their exploit: "one of the most notable explorations" in North American history.[3] That no missions followed in their wake was not their fault; conditions in New Mexico had deteriorated, Spain's power declined, and the missionary efforts dropped accordingly.

Dominguez and Escalante had spent only a short time in the Dolores Valley, yet they correctly forecast its potential. It had "everything" needed for a "good settlement." Time and circumstances had not yet coalesced sufficiently for that to happen.

The days from Dominguez and Escalante to permanent American settlement in the Dolores River Valley covered one century. The difference between the two periods was startling, from horse to railroad and from colony to nation, but the changes in the valley were hardly noticeable. The Spanish and Mexicans left little of permanence on their later trading expeditions; neither did the fur trappers who tramped up the valley to trap beaver in the San Juans.

Far to the east, beyond the crest of the Continental Divide, the discovery of gold in 1858 and the Pike's Peak gold rush of 1859 foretold changes. As early as 1860–61, prospectors ventured into the park where Silverton would one day be and which sat only a couple of mountains away from the Dolores River. Isolation, Ute hostility, and too-small gold pockets ended that excitement, though not the interest in the San Juans as a potential mining region.

In 1869 prospectors actually moved up the Dolores River, to what became Rico.[4] Another decade passed, however, before this mining region got a permanent start. These first men no doubt panned a little in the river near the site of the future town of Dolores. Discouraged by scarce mineral indications in the pan or on land, they moved on and the mining frontier bypassed this portion of the valley.

Thanks to the mining frontier, however, settlement did come at last. Miners and mining camps provided a lucrative market for agricultural products, from hay and vegetables to meat. In their scramble for riches, miners wasted none of their own time in raising crops; they had the money to pay others for supplies, a tempting opportunity for ranchers and farmers to exploit.

Ranchers were the first to settle permanently on the site of the future Dolores dam and reservoir, arriving about 1877, according to the best available information.[5] The area was then part of La Plata County; not until 1889 would it be separated to become Montezuma County.[6] Few spots were more isolated--from the rest of the county, from the neighboring mining districts, and from the whole state. This remained a fact of life until the coming of the railroad in the 1890's. Even with some promotion of the "fine, fertile" valley and the "most magnificent" water courses, the Dolores region failed to attract much interest.[7] As the *Dolores News,* September 11, 1879, forecast, it awaited ". . . the slow march of population and capital to the west. . . ." The wait proved to be a frustrating one.

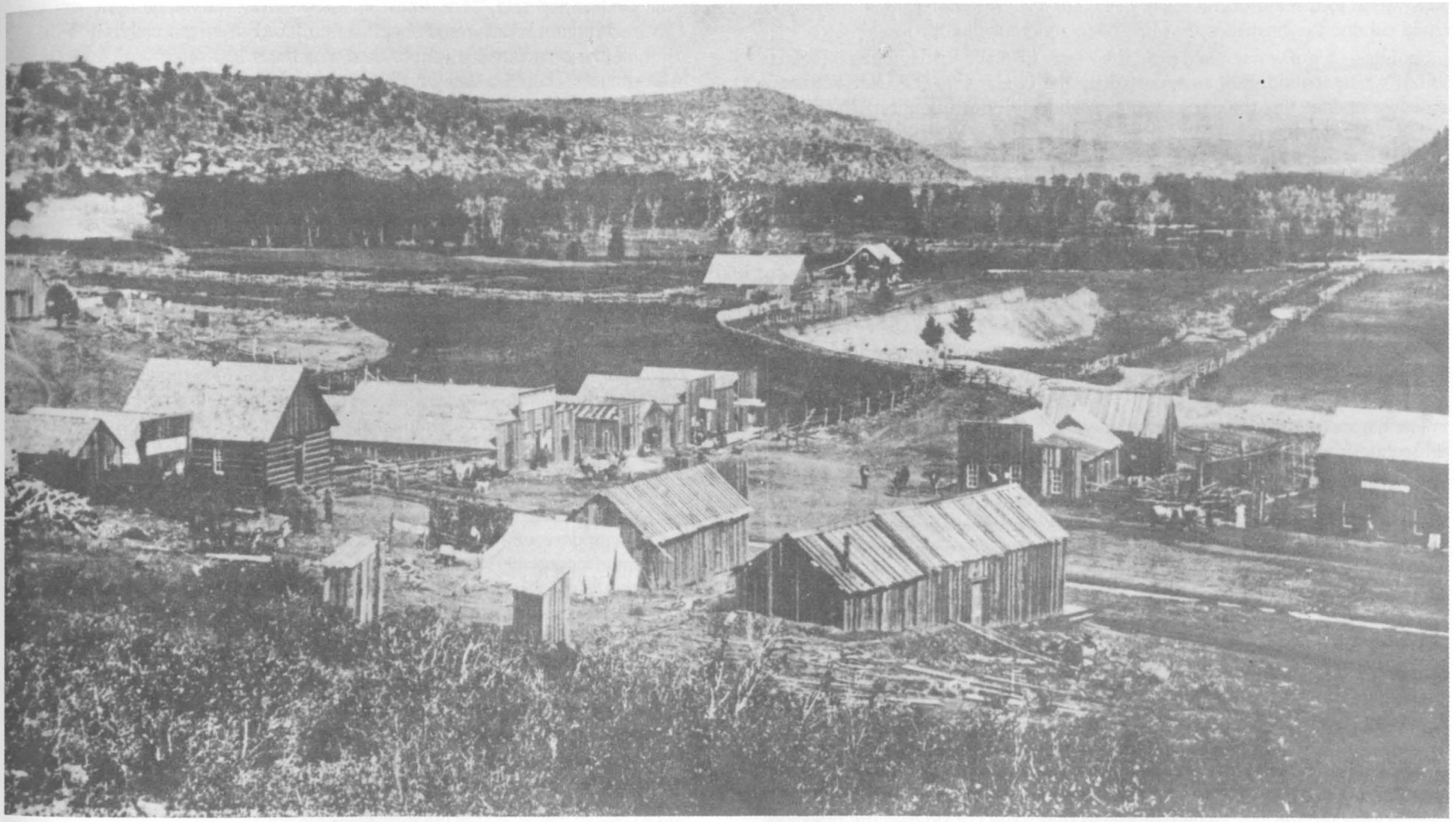
An ambitious project was quickly proposed. The Dolores, Lost Canyon and Montezuma Ditch Company hoped to start irrigation in the region in 1878.[8] Neither settlement, transportation, nor financial resources warranted such development; the project died almost on the planning board. Like other Coloradans of their generation, these early Dolores residents thought big.

Another small hamlet appeared at one of the sweeping bends of the river, not a planned settlement, simply a concentration of people who chose to group together. It assumed the name Big Bend or "The Bend" although the post office was first known as Dolores and was originally located at a local ranch in April 1878.[9] Settlement proceeded slowly; in addition to its isolation, the area was continually threatened by Ute Indians who roamed into the valley to hunt and camp from their reservation just to the south.

Mrs. S.O. Morton, whose husband George became a prominent local merchant, recalled the trials. She and her family came over from Costilla County in 1880, and her initial reaction was anything but good. "To me it did not look like a favorable location for a home so far from what had been my home." They purchased forty acres and started to build a store but gave up and returned to their former home when winter approached. Indian troubles prevented their return to Big Bend for two years. When the situation appeared to be more favorable, they returned and established a general merchandise store.[10] Told that the railroad would reach the settlement within a year, the Mortons and their neighbors were doomed to a decade of disappointment.

The Indian troubles Mrs. Morton described dogged the early history of Big Bend, delaying settlement and tarnishing the region's reputation. Investors would not go where "savages" still lurked. All this land had once belonged to the Utes, who lost title to it after the Meeker massacre and Ute troubles of 1879. The miners never wanted the Utes as neighbors, nor did the ranchers down the valley. "The Utes Must Go" was a familiar cry. They finally went, but not far. Trouble brewed between the "cowboys" and the Utes in the early 1880's, when the whites blamed the Indians for stealing horses, slaughtering cattle, and making a general nuisance of themselves. Albert Puett, resident of the Dolores Valley, wrote the *Durango Record* as early as May 16, 1881, to complain about Ute depredations and plead, "Take them bodily from us. . . ." Neither side was blameless, and the result of this cultural clash was the tragedy known as the Beaver Creek Massacre.

Tension and friction which had been building for several years exploded on June 19, 1885, when a group of Utes was attacked at the mouth of Beaver Creek. The immediate trouble had been brewing for some weeks. The commanding officer of Fort Lewis, a day's ride from the Dolores, had been sending and receiving dispatches regarding possible Indian trouble. Most of the pressure for action by military came from Durango, the region's largest community. It wanted the Utes confined to their reservation, which happened to



The small community of Big Bend reached its heyday in the 1880's supporting a population of 100 people and claiming a variety of frontier shops and saloon. The business community, however, quickly relocated to the town of Dolores when the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad by-passed Big Bend in 1891. (Dolores Archeological Program Records, Dolores, CO)

pass within four miles of the town.[11] Neither the army nor civilian authorities could subdue the hostilities that had been accumulating for too long.

Six Utes—men, women and children—were killed in the daybreak attack by some "white scoundrels," as reported by the Ute agent. The Utes and their agent maintained that the party was a peaceful one; not so, counter-charged the settlers. Apprehension over the attack and the killings lingered for years. Mrs. Howard Porter remembered it as "not a thing to talk of" in those days because of fear of government and Indian reprisals. Years later she called it an "unfortunate affair," an apt description.[12]

The commander of Fort Lewis immediately dispatched troops to the site, accompanied by Ute Indian police, Agent Stollsteimer, and Ute leaders. Other patrols went out to reassure panicky settlers that a general outbreak was not imminent. The revenge killing of a settler and the serious wounding of his wife by a group of Utes put everyone on edge. Settlers in the Dolores Valley fled to the Porter ranch, which contained a stone barn, and other stockmen gathered at Narraguinnep Spring some twenty miles away, where they hastily threw together a log "fort."

The harassed commander of Fort Lewis, Col. P.T. Swaine, received calls for protection from as near as Mancos and as far as Bluff, Utah. He politely, but firmly, declined Colorado Governor Benjamin Eaton's offer to send state troops. Even the Denver press was aroused over the Ute "outbreak." Swaine spent a difficult two weeks checking out rumors, calming Ute fears, and putting out "brush fire" reports that a general Indian war had commenced. His coolness did much to avert that very thing. By early July the panic had subsided and settlers were returning to their homes. Patrols stayed in the field to assure them of the army's continued presence.[13] Now only the recriminations remained.

Settlers who had spent uneasy nights sleeping in the brush away from their cabins or huddled together in makeshift camps were in no mood to listen to discussions of who caused what and why; they wanted the Utes removed from their southern reservations. The local newspapers supported their demands. Editorial comments bristled with anger. Rico's *Dolores News,* June 27, 1885, shouted in support: after all the Indian outrages, ". . . it is no wonder the cowmen took the method they did, and they can only be censured for failing to notify the neighboring settlers. . . ." The editorial in that issue considered the question, "Ought Squaws to be Killed?" It concluded that because they practiced torture and were far more bloodthirsty than the bucks, nothing wrong took place. Editor and publisher Charles Jones harkened back to a similar earlier "battle" and wrote,

> The motto of the frontiersman is, and ought to be 'Shoot to kill and spare nothing.' On that famous and blessed day for Colorado when the Sand Creek fight occurred, Chivington drew up his men in line and said, 'Men, I have no order to give as whom to kill, or whom not to kill: remember our murdered wives and children.' It is the only sensible way to deal with them. . . .

Durango's *The Idea* was hardly less vitriolic, although it called for severe punishment of the white men who instigated the trouble, not because they killed the Utes, but because they failed to warn nearby settlers. "This paper will do as much and risk as much as anybody who hires fighting done, to put down the Indian curse in this country. The Indian atrocities must be stopped." In an extra edition, Tuesday, June 23, the paper got to the heart of the matter in an emotional outburst. "The progressive white people and the lousey, (sic.) greasy Indians cannot occupy this country together." William May, Dolores rancher and county commissioner, concurred in a letter to *The Idea:* ". . . every man to defend his person and property and to shoot every Indian that may be found in the country, no matter what his business may be.[14]

Having thus expressed themselves, the editors and letter writers calmed down, and other topics diverted their attention. *The Idea* took one parting shot on July 4, however:

> Another policy of this paper is to kill every Ute Indian who commits a depredation if it is necessary to follow the red brutes to the door of the agency or the shadow of the dome of the national capitol and to kill every Indian. . . .

One wonders why the newspapers took such a strong position on a minor incident in a generally ignored part of Colorado. Obviously, the old idea that the Utes should go played a prominent role. No one cared where they went, just so they did. Greed and fear stirred trouble, as did cultural differences. Explanations aside, the outbreak damaged the local image and adversely affected investment. Back on June 27, *The Idea* had clearly stated: "The recent trouble has given us a black eye for the years, and the injury that the advertisement abroad will give us is incalculable." Nor was there much love for those who took the Utes' part; in all, it was a typical western reaction to a white/Indian confrontation.

Who was to blame for this deplorable affair? Southwestern Coloradans blamed the government's Indian policy and the Utes. Agent Sollsteimer defended the government's role and lamented "the foul murder" with these words: "An Indian is hardly considered a human being by a certain class of Whites with which this part of the country is disgraced. There can be no excuse for this foul crime, and it will always be a foul blot upon the reputation of this country.[15]

Stollsteimer was right; the cowboys, never really identified, caused the trouble. Swaine pointed out, however, that the government's ration policy of only one pound of beef and 3-1/2 pounds of flour per week per head of a Ute family had forced the Indians off the reservation to hunt. This was most likely

what the Utes were doing when they were attacked, and it probably helps account for the reports of cattle being killed. Swaine, who called the attack "most barbarous," also laid the blame on the cowboys.[16] The Utes did not go, and their relations with their neighbors did not improve. The hostility declined over the years and the Beaver Creek massacre was soon forgotten, despite Stollsteimer's statement to the contrary.

Big Bend returned to normal after the massacre. Even with so much activity centered just a few miles from it, the settlement never attracted much attention from any of the newspapers. Colorado conducted a state census that same year, but the census takers completely overlooked the Big Bend district. This was not unusual; the federal census takers had not appeared in 1880, and not until 1890 did they count the Dolores precinct. In any case, only residents of the valley were listed; Big Bend was completely overlooked.

Such neglect was undeserved. A small settlement slowly grew in the eighties, as evidenced by its business district. *Crofutt's Grip Sack Guide* of 1881 listed one store, called a trading post, which supplied the needs of the people, whose chief occupation was stock raising. The two general merchandise stores of 1884 had become three by 1887, joined by a blacksmith, feed stable, and a saloon. By 1891, the last year of its existence, Big Bend could claim a hotel, sawmill, office of land and canal company and a meat market, while the number of general merchants had slipped to two.[17] Unlike the neighboring mining camps which sometimes boomed and busted in a season or two, Big Bend reflected the steadier, slower pattern of agricultural growth. All evidence supports the conclusion that perhaps slightly more than 100 people lived in and around the community at its peak; the rest of the trade came from adjoining farmers and ranchers. The only time the number may have gone significantly higher was at the time a canal was being built in 1886–88 to take water from the Dolores to the neighboring Montezuma Valley.

Life at Big Bend was generally tranquil. Community activities, particularly Christmas celebrations, centered at the schoolhouse. Church services, conducted by itinerant ministers, were held there as well. Mary Blake, who went to Big Bend in 1885, remembered dancing as the favorite amusement. These lively evenings highlighted the "social season." Occasionally a cowboy would get drunk and shoot out some of the kerosene bracket lamps, which glowed softly over dances and church services. Except for the momentary excitement, Mary seemed unperturbed.[18]

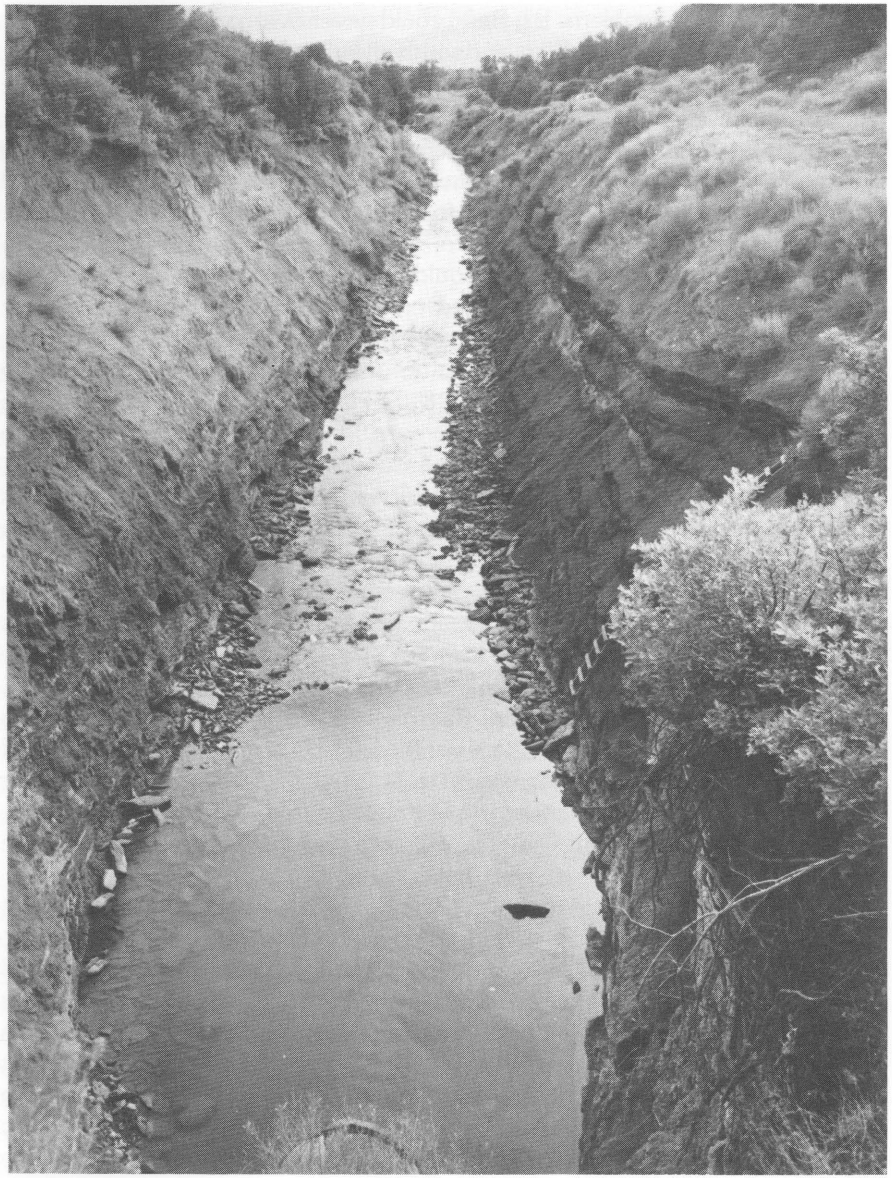
Mrs. W.R. Ordway pictured life as "primitive but comfortable." Mrs. Morton remembered one snow-bound winter when foodstuffs ran short, and a **real** crisis when tobacco dwindled. That shortage "seemed to hit the hardest." Fred Taylor, a hardy rancher and sheepman, recollected the election spree of 1883, which involved a "great deal of drinking," with cowboys lying drunk beside the road, unable to return home.[19]

One of the major problems Big Bend could never overcome was its isolation. Trails went out to Durango, Rico, and south and west into the ranching country. They tested the tempers of the users—the one to Rico reportedly crossed the Dolores River fifty-six times in fewer than fifty miles, all unbridged. The increased time and costs involved in shipping supplies over these trails were evident in the prices of goods. In the fall enough provisions had to be freighted from Durango, the nearest railhead, to last the snow-locked winter months. Only pack horses came through then, and sometimes nothing was able to conquer the drifts. No community could hope to mature with such tenuous transportation; Big Bend was doomed unless it could be improved. Winter prices increased even more, especially when shortages occurred.

Agnes Lupke told of carrying her butter and eggs to sell at Harris' store to supplement the family income. By the 1890's Harris Brothers had become the most prosperous store in town, and Ohio-born John and his brother Andrew the leading citizens. Agnes spoke, too, of the arduous trips to Rico to sell corn, hogs, and vegetables to a community eager for fresh items. These infrequent trips resulted in their returning with supplies purchased from Rico's wider selection and larger business district.[20] Trapping supplemented incomes in the winter during the early years, until it nearly exterminated the local animal supply. This enterprise accounts for the fur buyer who appeared in several of the business directories.

Pioneering at Big Bend was full of the same hard work, loneliness, disease, death, and heartache that accompanied the opening of any frontier. Facilities remained primitive throughout its existence. For example, no doctor could afford to practice there; the solution, at least for a while, was for settlers on the Dolores to contribute a retainer for a Durango doctor to come when needed. The medical situation improved when Cortez was established in 1886 in the Montezuma Valley.[21]

Situated on a high point in the valley, which afforded the settlers a magnificent view, Cortez started with some decided handicaps. It was far from any railroad, planted in a semi-arid land, and devoid of any nearby water supply which could support a significant amount of development. Water was the "lifeblood" of the future; the community could not hope to grow when it had to be hauled from Mitchell Springs at a reported cost of $.25 per barrel.[22] Thus, almost instantaneously with its birth, Cortez came face to face with the most pressing problem of the next fifty years. Transportation, climate, land and economic problems could be overcome in time. Water, however, could not wait. The planning of, and even some work on, a large-scale irrigation and water project antedated Cortez' beginnings. The project seemed simple: to tunnel or blast a cut through the narrow ridge that separated the Dolores River Valley from the Montezuma Valley and let the water through. Work started on a tunnel for that purpose in February, 1886, underwritten by Boston money and promoted by

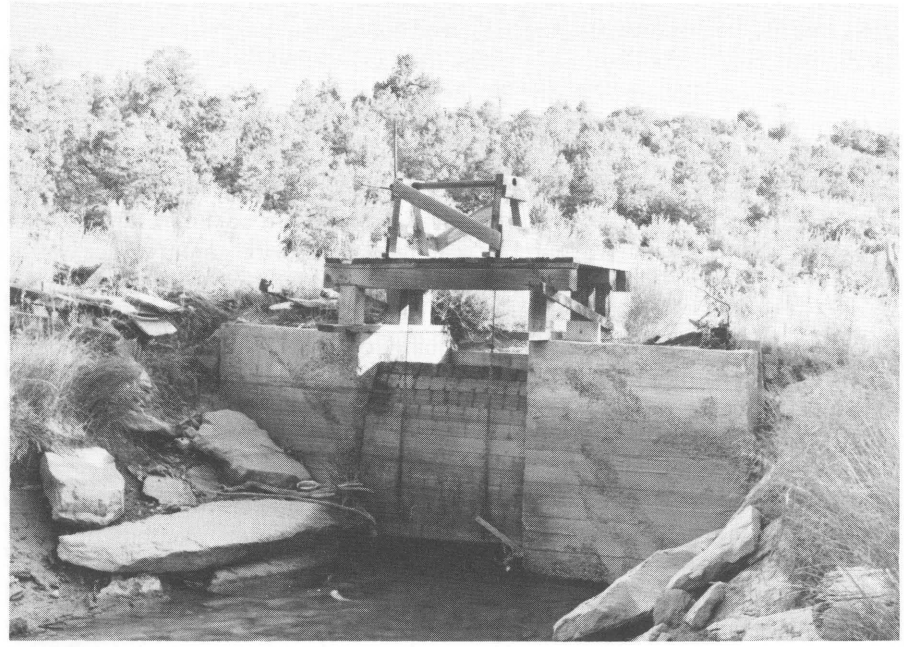


In November of 1885, hardy workers, including nearby ranchers and farmers who would later benefit from the irrigation system, began drilling, blasting and excavating the 5,400 foot Montezuma Valley Water Supply Company Tunnel. The outlet of the tunnel, shown here, was later reinforced in the winter of 1963-64 with steel arches. Sleeping Ute Mountain can be seen in the distance. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

James Hanna. The Montezuma Valley Water Supply Company displayed frontier initiative and faith at its best.[23]

It was one thing to scheme and plan, another to tunnel 5,400 feet through the Dolores Divide. Before the tunnel was completed two years later, the company had been reorganized, and a rival was on the scene to challenge it for the potential market. This rival company, the Dolores Land and Canal Company (known locally as "The No. 2 Company"), blasted and dug a cut through the divide about 4,000 feet long. There were not enough potential buyers for both companies to succeed. Fortunately, the two compromised their ambitions and consolidated into the Colorado Consolidated Lands and Water Company in 1889 before bankruptcy could end both their efforts.

The project was far from completed when water was carried from the Dolores River through the divide to the Montezuma Valley. By 1890 over 100 miles of canals had been built, one storage reservoir partly constructed, others planned, and diverting dams were channeling the flow of water, reported to be 1,300 cubic feet of water per second.[24] The *Durango Herald* was not indulging solely in



By 1890, over 100 miles of canals had been constructed without federal assistance and utilizing both local and eastern capital. Water was channeled and flow regulated with liftgates such as this one. Concrete replaced the wooden liftgate components in the late 1940's. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

journalistic rhetoric when it said of the project in April, 1888:

> Tunneling of Dolores mountain in order to get water over the Montezuma Valley is one of the greatest irrigating enterprises, not only in the state, but in the West and reflects credit upon those who have had the work in charge.[25]

Cortez' new *Montezuma Journal,* on April 23, expressed the feelings of the home folks and offered a toast:

> The event should receive that public and enthusiastic recognition by the people of Montezuma Valley, that its close association with their future interest and prosperity warrants. Let's celebrate, and let it be a novel one by all taking WATER.

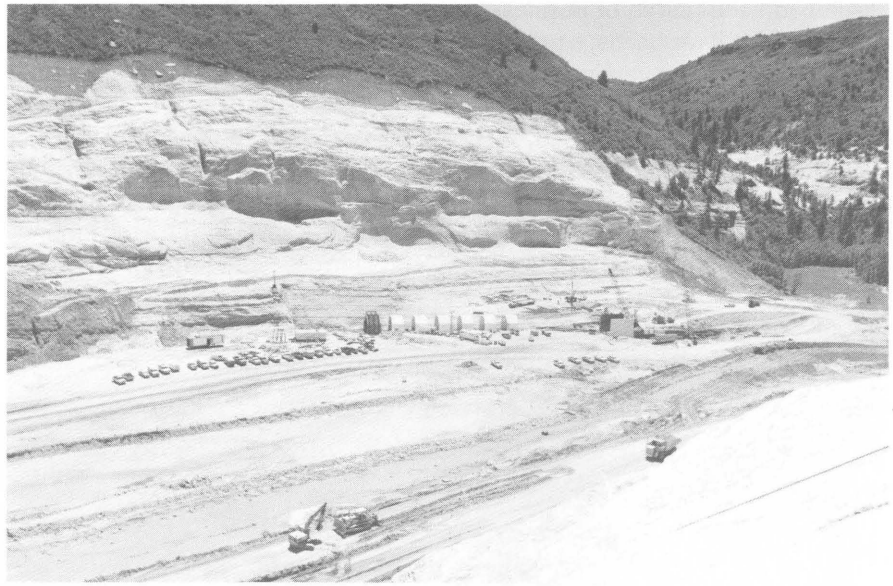
The association between the town of Cortez and the water company was closer than a hasty glance might indicate. The water company and Hanna also controlled the town company, called the Cortez Land and Improvement Company. Hanna, in fact, is given credit for suggesting the name of the community.[26] It was not unusual for the developing company to take advantage of land promotion; the Denver and Rio Grande did the same thing in Durango, as did others elsewhere in the West.

The intent was to have water in Cortez by May 1888, but not until July did it flow to the town. Fred Taylor, an 1880's pioneer, accused the company of being so anxious to get the water there that it diverted $80,000 from ditch building to construction of a three-mile flume to bring the water to Cortez. He felt this shortchanged other phases of the project and led to financial problems, which resulted in the aforementioned merger.[27] Perhaps it did, but the end appeared to justify the means, and Cortez had its desperately needed water.

Mary Blake remembered how they yearned for that water. For the first July Fourth celebration in 1887, local people hauled several dozen trees into town and set them out to make it look like trees were growing there, "just for the occasion." Trees were not only good for shade on that barren mound, they were also a sign of progressiveness and of permanent settlement. By the time water arrived via the ditch a year later, trees had been planted and were being tenderly cared for and watered. Blake recalled, "we put all wash water, even such slop as not too greasy on the trees to keep them alive."[28] They kept those trees, their town, and themselves alive while awaiting that water. Now that it was there, Cortez' crisis was over.

Big Bend's new rival soon surpassed it in every way. The land available for farming on the Dolores was severely circumscribed by the narrowness of the valley and the poor quality of the soil south of the town. While Cortez blossomed into a thriving, progressive farm community, Big Bend began to wither.

Time was running out for it, but it was not Cortez that delivered the coup de grace; the Rio Grande Southern Railroad did that. Rico, and Ophir and Telluride



Construction of the Bureau of Reclamation's new McPhee Reservoir was well underway during the summer of 1981. The construction of the storage reservoir completes the cycle began by those far-sighted entrepreneurs who began the Montezuma Valley Irrigation system a century earlier. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

beyond, desperately needed railroad connections and were able to promise what Big Bend never could, a thriving market for shipments in and out. Otto Mears, San Juan road and railroad builder, matched the opportunity and plans; construction soon followed the survey. At last a railroad connection, but alas, the survey missed Big Bend by two miles up river. Why? "Owing to the topography and the unimportance" of Big Bend, the line went elsewhere. On Thanksgiving Day, 1891, track was laid as near as it would come and then looped up the valley. The first through train from Durango to Ridgeway puffed over the still-unfinished line on January 2, 1892.[29]

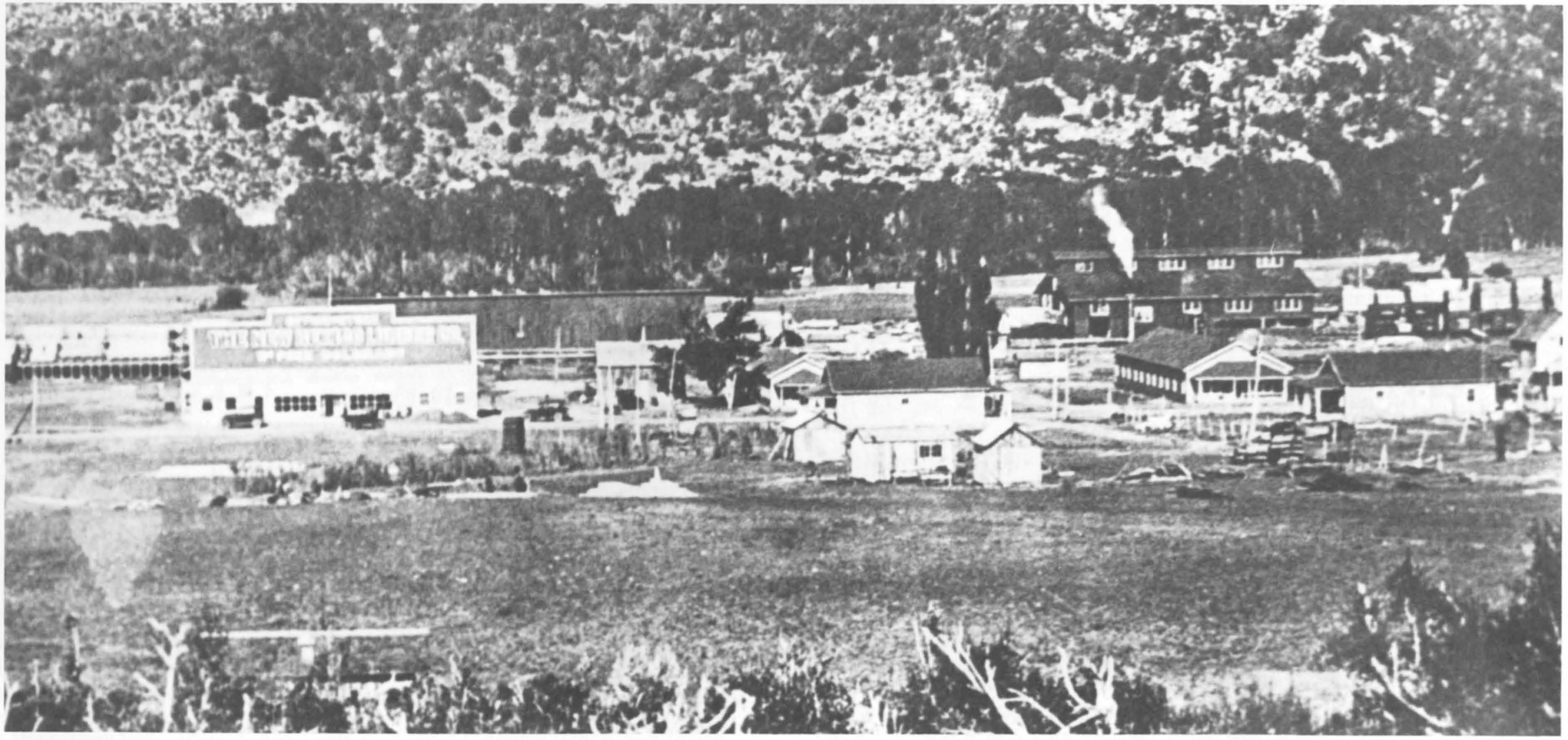
On that same Thanksgiving Day the construction crew laid track through the new townsite of Dolores. Big Bend had nothing to be thankful for; it had been betrayed by its friends, as well as the railroad. The new townsite was owned by railroad officials and the Harris brothers, among others. For the Harrises the step was not unexpected. They had come west to work for William Palmer, founder of the Denver and Rio Grande, and had followed construction of that road before moving to Big Bend. They knew what would happen to a railroad-bypassed community. And they were right. They were joined in the exodus by the entire Big Bend business community, which formed the nucleus of Dolores.[30] The post office came with them, and by mid-summer, 1892, the older

village had been gutted of businesses and residents. Big Bend had joined the ranks of might-have-beens, a promise that faded into the forgotten past. It found plenty of company, even in southwestern Colorado

In the more than ten years of its existence, Big Bend had met the needs of its area. Bypassed by the railroad, it served no purpose. The community never fulfilled the expectations that motivated those first settlers who came slightly over a decade before. Isolation plagued it, growth never came, and investors shied away; more attractive possibilities were always present to lure their money elsewhere. Neither local leadership nor resources could surmount these difficulties. The limited agricultural and range land failed to provide enough support for a thriving local economy. Big Bend was a community whose future never came. The site of the town soon reverted to a meadow. It was later farmed a little but eventually became unrecognizable as having supported a settlement. Such was the epitaph of Big Bend.

The coming of the Rio Grande Southern presaged a new era for the Dolores Valley, one of rapid transportation and connections with the rest of Colorado and beyond. Ranchers and farmers found new markets opening to them, and supplies could be shipped and received with ease. Dolores grew and assumed the role that Big Bend had hoped to win.

Homesteaders moved into the northwesterly bending valley, settling where the earlier hamlet had once been. Some of the pioneer settlers sold out, replaced by optimistic newcomers. Although the railroad's arrival improved some aspects, it did not help the soil; this segment of the valley could not keep pace with neighboring Cortez or the richer land above Dolores in farm productivity.



The New Mexico Lumber Company and its company town of McPhee featured housing for approximately 1400 people as well as a company store, church and school. (Robert Orr Collection)

The Town of McPhee

In the 1920's, industry came to the valley and brought a major change in its cultural profile. The nearby mountains harbored valuable stands of western yellow pine, and lumbermen saw profits if it could be logged, milled, and transported to market. When nearby New Mexico forests showed signs of being logged out of their profitable timber, attention turned to southwestern Colorado. In January, 1924, the U.S. Forest Service announced a sale of four million board feet in Montezuma National Forest. The New Mexico Lumber Company, leaser of adjacent holdings, successfully bid on the timber and then turned to the task of locating its mill.[31]

The mill site selected was five miles from Dolores on the west side of the river. By the end of February crews began arriving from the soon-to-be-abandoned mining community of El Vado, New Mexico, to start work on the new camp. Surveyors, engineers, grading crews, carpenters, and others showed up in the weeks that followed, not only to build the town but also to survey and grade a railroad route and lay tracks from the Rio Grande Southern at Dolores.[32] So much activity was unprecedented in this part of the valley, and it generated excitement throughout the Dolores-Cortez region.

It was estimated that it would take eighteen to twenty years to complete the lumbering operation; once the tracks were completed, work accelerated. Some buildings were transported from El Vado, others contructed on the site. As the town emerged, other crews were establishing logging camps in the timber, and rails stretched out to reach them. Meanwhile, the work at the mill continued unabated in order to have everything nearly complete by the time the logs arrived. The goal was not quite reached when the first log train arrived on September 29. Not until late October was the mill ready, and then it would be more than a month before all the "bugs" were worked out and full operation could begin.[33]

During these first months of the New Mexico Lumber Company's operation the valley was a beehive of activity. A town was established, and the all-important mill constructed. Some discussion ensued about a name; Ventura and Escalante were suggested before McPhee was finally chosen. The community was named for William McPhee, one of the company's owners.

The *Dolores Star* watched all this activity and eventually ran a McPhee column. The Rio Grande Southern was busier than it had been since the early 1890's. McPhee was a company town owned and operated by New Mexico Lumber. It spread out beyond the mill at a beautiful, wide spot in the valley. The site had been selected because of its proximity both to the forests and the railroad. For the next two decades it served as home for the workers and company officials. In August the company-owned store opened and advertised itself as "ready to supply your wants" and pay "top prices" for farmers' produce.



The Montezuma Lumber Company purchased the New Mexico Lumber Company during the Great Depression. Although reducing the company's dependence on railroads, the operation continued to operate and to maintain two rod locomotives which were probably purchased second-hand from the Denver & Rio Grande or Rio Grande Southern Railroad. (R.W. Richardson, Colorado Railroad Museum)

A school was started that fall, and the first "good old fashioned" charivari saluted newlyweds.[34] The social whirl had reached McPhee. When winter arrived, McPhee was a going concern.

The 1920's were generally prosperous years for New Mexico Lumber. After the initial troubles in the mill operation had been resolved, the plant ran smoothly and claimed to be the largest in Colorado. In the spring of 1925 the company reported 41 miles of narrow gauge track running from McPhee to the sites of logging operations. The trackage advanced and receded as new areas opened and older areas closed.

The 1920's may have roared in the large metropolitan areas, but McPhee mostly displayed traits of small-town nineteenth century America, modernized to some degree by the radio and current fads. There being no church building, Sunday School was held in the school, as were the PTA meetings. Eventually a Catholic church was built, but the Protestant residents had to be content with an itinerant minister. One of these men put his finger on a fact of life at McPhee, "...there is in a place like this an ever-changing population." Loggers and workers moved in and out of the region, as they did in other logging areas; there was nothing unusual about this, but it did tend to undermine community efforts.

In August, 1926, McPhee was featured in the *Dolores Star,* along with photographs of the mill town, and logging train. The underlying theme of the article was how proud the people of Dolores were of McPhee and that they felt it had become part of their community. At this time approximately 350 men were on the payroll of New Mexico Lumber, the largest employer in the area, and McPhee had an estimated population of 800. The company had branched out by then to include a coal mine in its operations. Located beside the railroad tracks leading to its Beaver Creek camp, the mine produced about twenty tons per day, all consumed by the company operations.[35]

In these days of prosperity the New Mexico Company proved to be a generous benefactor. Its community spirit was displayed in the "modern well equipped" school and church buildings it provided. The annual company picnic and the McPhee baseball team showed commendable spirit. The company also furnished homes with electric lights, even if they had to be turned out at ten when the generating plant shut down for the night. For two dollars a month for married, a dollar for single men, the company furnished a doctor and dispensary for workers and townspeople.

Charles Artz, long time McPhee resident and company official, reminisced about his years there. The employees received forty percent of their wages in scrip, that being the amount estimated for living expenses per month, plus rent. The remainder was paid in cash. The thin, coin-shaped metal scrip was intended for use in the company-owned store, or commissary, as it was called. The employees were charged cost plus ten percent. What goods were not available there were generally ordered from Montgomery Ward.[36]

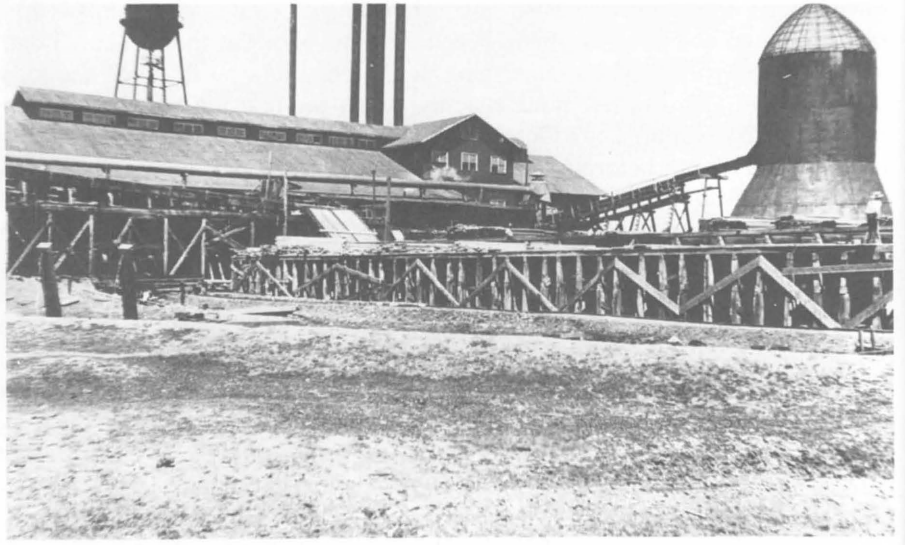
The housing available to the workers varied. The Mexican-American employees rented small homes constructed of unfinished lumber for five dollars per month. The larger and more modern Anglos' homes rented for ten dollars. Both had electricity. Tacit segregation put the Mexican-Americans in their own section west of the mill, called "Chihuahua" or simply the Mexican sector. In the early days of McPhee some Penitente activity apparently occurred, having come directly from El Vado, where the movement had been quite strong. Religious activity, however, centered primarily around the Catholic church, completed in 1929.

Although the twenties generally evidenced prosperity, signs of recession appeared as the decade neared an end. In 1928, William McPhee sold his stock to John Zalaha, who had ambitious plans that included new railroad lines and more production. A year later Zalaha, backed by Chicago investors, purchased the entire company stock and assumed sole ownership. Unfortunately, his plans collapsed soon after the stock market failure ushered in the Depression. The mill closed, Zalaha defaulted on his payments, and the original owners regained control in November, 1930. This reversion could not save the faltering operation and the New Mexico Lumber company slipped into receivership in the hands of the International Trust Company. Not until 1932 was it sold and the mill reopened in August of that year.[37]

The economic morass of the early 1930's was certainly the primary contributor to the end of the McPhee operation. However, the company also found to its dismay that large stands of the timber it had purchased proved too sparse for profitable cutting. Gradual changes in the railroad rates wiped out the advantages McPhee once enjoyed in shipping and closed much of the market. When the depression hit, all these deterrents proved to be too much. The McPhee plant closed and people began to move away.

With the resumption of logging, the population, which had dipped under 500, slowly started to climb again, reaching an estimated 1,400 residents in 1940–1941. So great was the demand for jobs that when the mill reopened in 1932 the *Dolores Star,* August 19, warned readers that only limited numbers of men were needed and preference would be given to former employees. That failed to stem the tide, and the town was "flooded with men seeking employment."

Not until 1935, after a reorganization under the federal bankruptcy law and a name change to the Montezuma Lumber Company, did McPhee take on its former appearance. From then until World War II prosperity prevailed. An astonished 1940 visitor said, "A person would have to see the operation with his own eyes to realize how much lumber they really put out in a day's time.[38]



The lumber mill began operation in 1924 and by 1925 processing 27,445,360 board feet of lumber or approximately 61 percent of the total production for the state of Colorado. (Robert Orr Collection)

A few changes came during the 1930's. In July, 1933, the railroad logging came to an end, replaced by trucks; the branch from McPhee to Dolores continued to operate and was used for years by McPhee residents to travel to Saturday night movies and dances. In 1939 the company endured a brief strike, which ended with a complete victory for management when it shut down the entire facility after the mill workers struck. The non-union loggers, who deplored their loss of pay, put enough pressure on the mill workers, according to Artz, that the latter voted to leave the union. Thus ended the strike.[39]

Chris Gomez, who worked at McPhee during these years, described it in this manner, "I hope that I never have to go back to the lumber business." The wages, he joked, seemed too low for the twelve hours "they gave you" to do a day's work. Yet as he pointed out, the mill was a good place for the uneducated to work—it was "either this or herd sheep." Accidents happened all too frequently; unfortunately, workers had to be laid up more than ten days before they could collect compensation. Also, any breakdown of longer than fifteen minutes were repaired on the workers' time and lost hours had to be made up. "You worked because you had to," said Gomez, "and you earned your wages."[40]

The mill produced "box shook" (precut boards for boxes), material for sash and door factories, railroad ties, and lumber for construction. One thing which hurt McPhee, as Gomez saw it, was the fact that the lumber was handled too many times from tree to finished product.

Despite such problems, the company's future looked promising in mid-1941. Government contracts to supply wartime needs gave it a new lease on life. A spectacular fire on June 30, which gutted the sawmill, ended that possibility. A loss estimated at over $150,000 put the company in dire straights. The promised rebuilding did not materialize, and when a second fire on June 19, 1942, burned the machine shop, the Montezuma Lumber Company seemed to be jinxed. It continued to operate by diverting to smaller sawmills along the Rio Grande Southern tracks. As a result, McPhee played a much less important role in the total operations.

A shortage of labor further hindered company efforts, as higher-paying war industries lured workers away. The "McPhee News" column in the *Star* reported that many families were moving out and only a few were moving in to replace them. But the town's patriotism did not lag. This tidbit appeared in the *Star,* October 30, 1942:

> Boys, did you know McPhee would help you join the Navy? If you have no means of transportation to the recruiting office in Durango call at the filling station and means of transportation will be furnished.[41]

As World War II dragged to a close, McPhee took another fork in its history. In February, 1944, the town and logging operation were sold. The new owners promised far-reaching plans for the enterprise, but these did not include rebuilding the McPhee mill, and it was even hinted that the town might be abandoned. Neither proved to be true. A new mill was built, and McPhee became once more the center of the logging operation.[42]

Such an encouraging turn of events did not alter the fact that time was running out for McPhee. The original estimate of eighteen to twenty years of logging had now passed. Had it not been for the period of nonwork in the early thirties, the area's timber would have been nearly exhausted. The company still was impeded by the quality of that timber, not nearly so good as originally assumed. Indicating the waning importance of the community, the McPhee column disappeared as a semi-regular feature in the *Dolores Star.* Little news of any type about logging or the town found its way into the paper.

The end came in January, 1948, when the mill burned once more. That Monday, January 19, fire did an estimated $100,000 damage to machinery and buildings. Firemen from Dolores, Cortez, and McPhee managed to keep the flames from spreading, but as the *Star* said, "The loss is a serious blow . . . (to the company), to the men who are employed at the mill and to the community as well." Insurance covered only one-third of the value.[43]

The Montezuma Lumber Company decided not to rebuild, but to operate out of its smaller camps nearer the lumbering areas. Dolores became the headquarters of the company, doing to McPhee what it had earlier to Big Bend. The *Star,* February 6, laconically noted that the owners ". . . decided there was no point in keeping a plant going at McPhee any longer. . . ." Once the decision was made they moved fast. Within weeks scrap from the burned mill had been sold, as had the railroad tracks from McPhee to Dolores. Several houses were moved to Dolores, along with some equipment. At the end of March the *Star* reported the demise of McPhee when the land on which the town stood was sold.[44] Several buildings still needed to be dismantled and/or relocated, but that came soon and the town disappeared. The post office was closed in July, 1948, just two months short of its twenty-fourth anniversary.

Lumbering was not finished in the area until 1976, but McPhee's role in it had ended. The pattern it had followed was typical of the earlier lumber operations, in New Mexico, for example. McPhee had been developed after other areas declined; it drew life from their death, to the point of transporting houses to the new site. Then after its usefulness was past, the company abandoned McPhee, moving what buildings it needed and disposing of the remainder. Unlike Big Bend, the townsite is marked by cement foundations, the logging pond, and a small cemetery near the spot where the church once stood. In its day McPhee was a vital factor in the local economy and one of the most important logging operations in Colorado. The mill was one of the most modern for its time, the

1920's. As Chris Gomez mentioned, the mill did provide jobs for the unskilled and semi-skilled, and, after rebounding from the troubles in the early 1930's, was an important factor in supplying work during the Depression.

The story of McPhee is the story of logging operations throughout the West. That it occurred in the twentieth century does not mean that the pattern was significantly different from the nineteenth. The one main difference was the introduction and use of cars and trucks to replace horses and trains. The fact that McPhee was a company town is not unusual, and it did not display some of the worst aspects of the more isolated communities of this type. McPhee was located within a few miles of several other communities, and to its credit, the company did not insist on paying its employees solely in scrip which could be used only at the company store. Like other lumbering communities, McPhee's population was transitory and, even in the prosperous days of the 1920's, much of the local news involved the migration of people in and out of town.

McPhee's passing was scarcely noticed on the state scene, just as its development had been only sketchily followed. Situated in Colorado's southwest corner, neither it nor the region was considered newsworthy. Although appreciated locally, McPhee languished in the larger arena. When the end came, McPhee was only briefly mourned, even by its neighbors, who were caught up in the rush of fast-changing, post-war America.

FOOTNOTES

[1]David Miller ed., *The Route of Dominguez-Escalante Expedition* (Dominguez-Escalante Bicentennial Commission: 1976). Fray Angelico Chavez trans. and Ted Warner ed., *The Dominguez-Escalante Journal* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1976) xiv-xvii. Fray Dominguez was the actual leader of the expedition and Escalante's ecclesiastical superior, but the latter was given credit for writing the journal and leadership by several historians. They actually served as a very effective team and co-authors of the journal.

[2]Chavez and Warner, *Journal,* p. 14. The "Escalante Ruin" might be the site of the one visited. The calculation was too high; actually it was 37° 15'. The party probably crossed the river at the site of later McPhee.

[3]Herbert Bolton, *Pageant in the Wilderness* (Salt Lake: Utah State Historical Society, 1950), p. 127. See also Miller, *Route,* v. Chavez and Warner, *Journal,* xvii.

[4]*Dolores News* (Rico), 28 August, 23 September 1879.

[5]*Dolores Star,* 5 August 1938. Ira Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County, Colorado* (Boulder: Johnson, 1958), p. 50. A.W. Dillon, paper read Pioneers' Reunion, 1908, Colorado Work Administration (CWA) File. There is some indication that settlers failed in earlier attempts.

[6]Frederick Paxton, "The County Boundaries of Colorado," *University of Colorado Studies* (1906), pp. 205 and 212.

[7]Frank Fossett, *Colorado* (New York: C.G. Crawford, 1879), p 538. *Dolores News,* 11 September 1879.

[8]*Rocky Mountain News,* 24 January 1878.

[9]The Dolores post office actually preceded Big Bend, having been established in April, 1878, at a local ranch and later moved. This is why the Colorado business directories refer to it as Dolores throughout the 1880's. Old time resident Mary Taylor referred to it as "The Bend" in a CWA interview in March, 1935; apparently the name was flexible.

[10]Mrs. S.O. Morton Manuscript, CWA File.

[11]Commanding Office District of New Mexico to Commanding Officer, Ft. Lewis, 13 June; General Department of New Mexico to Commanding Office Ft. Lewis, 19 June; and Commander Ft. Lewis to Adj. General, Fort Leavenworth, 19 June 1885, Letters sent and received, June-July, 1885, Fort Lewis Records, Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College.

[12]Mrs. Howard Porter, CWA interview. Report of C.F. Stollsteimer, *U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), p. 15. There are various figures as to how many were killed, as high as 11, but Agent Stollsteimer visited the site soon after and counted six. Although some sources say the head of Beaver Creek, it seems most likely the massacre occurred near the mouth, where it runs into the Dolores River.

[13]Commanding Officer District of New Mexico to Commander, Ft. Lewis, 22, 25 June and 3, 6 July 1885; Col. P.T. Swaine to Major David Perry, 22 June 1885; Swaine to Adj. General, Santa Fe, 21, 27 June and 4 July 1885; 1st Lt. E.W. Casey to Capt. Matt Hooten, 3 July 1885 and to Capt. G. Henderson, 10 July 1885, Ft. Lewis records. Avon Denham, "Narraguinnep Fort," *Colorado Magazine* (March, 1942), p. 78.

[14]*The Idea,* 24 June 1885. This was the weekly edition which quoted comments from the now lost daily editions.

[15]*U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Annual Report,* p. 15. *The Idea, 27 June 1885.*

[16]*Swaine to Adj. General, Fort Leavenworth, 19 June 1885; to Adj. General, Santa Fe, 22, 28 June 1885.*

[17]*George Crofutt, Crofutt's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado* (Omaha: Overland Publishing Co., 1881), p. 92. *Colorado State Business Directory,* 1884–1891 (Denver: Ives, 1884–91). No mention of Dolores was made in issues before 1884.

[18]Mary Blake, CWA Interview, Center of Southwest Studies.

[19]Mrs. W.R. Ordway, CWA Interview. Morton Manuscript. Fred Taylor, "Pioneering in Southwestern Colorado," *Colorado Magazine* (July, 1935), p. 155. Citizens of the Dolores River and vicinity requested the La Plata County Commissioners to establish an election precinct. This request was granted October 1, 1880, La Plata County Commissioners Minutes, 1 October 1880. p. 52.

[20]Agnes L. Lupke, CWA Interview. Taylor Interview. *Dolores Star,* 5 August 1938. *Lillian Hartman's Colorado,* 29 December 1909, p. 16. Freeman, *Montezuma County,* pp. 50–55.

[21]Wilson Rockwell, *The Utes* (Denver: Sage, 1956), p. 323. For an interesting account of the problems of opening the Cortez region, see Bernard Byrne, *A Frontier Army Surgeon* (New York: Exposition Press, 1962).

[22]Sonora Porter, *A Cortez History*, (Cortez Public Library, typewritten), p. 9.

[23]*Montezuma Journal*, 28 April 1888. Hall, *History of Colorado*, 4 Vols. (Denver, Colorado Tinderman Co., 1927) 4:228.

[24]*The Montezuma Valley in Colorado* (Cortez: Colorado Consolidated Land and Water Company, 1890), pp. 37, 40–41.

[25]*Durango Herald*, quoted in *Montezuma Journal*, 28 April 1888.

[26]Hall, *History of Colorado*, 4:229.

[27]Fred Taylor, "Pioneering in Southwestern Colorado," *Colorado Magazine* (July, 1935), p. 157. Born in 1860, Taylor moved to the Cortez-Dolores area after coming to Durango in 1882.

[28]Mary Blake Interview, CWA records.

[29]*Dolores Star*, 17 December 1909. Mallory H. Ferrell, *Silver San Juan: The Rio Grande Southern* (Boulder: Pruett, 1973), pp. 55, 82. Copeland Rohrabacher, *The Great San Juan of Colorado and New Mexico* (Durango: Democrat, 1901), p. 12. Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado* (Chicago: Blakely, 1895), 4:230.

[30]*Dolores Star*, 17 December 1909 and 5 August 1938. *Lillian Hartman's Colorado*, p. 16. *Colorado State Business Directories*, 1891–93.

[31]Gordon Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande* (Golden: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1971), pp. 145–46. Ferrell, *Silver San Juan*, pp. 393–94.

[32]*Dolores Star*, 15 February, 7 March and 11 April 1924. Chappell, *Logging*, p. 147.

[33]*Dolores Star*, 3 October and 14, 21 November 1924. Chappell, *Logging*, p. 147.

[34]*Dolores Star*, 1 August, 5 September, 17 October and 14 November 1924. McPhee was much like other lumbering company towns. See James Allen, *The Company Town in the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966).

[35]*Dolores Star*, 13 August 1926, *The Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), 18 April and 8 August 1927 carried articles on the McPhee and McGinnity Company, which controlled the New Mexico Lumber Co.

[36]Charles Artz interview in Sylvia McClellan, *McPhee, Colorado* Dolores: Star Press, 1966), pp. 5, 6, 18, 19, 29, 32, and Chappell, *Logging*, pp. 154–55. *Dolores Star*, 6, 27 November, 11 December, 6, 13 August, 3 September, 1926, 20 May 1927, and 7 June 1929.

[37]Chappell, *Logging*, pp. 157, 162–63. Ferrell, *Silver San Juan*, pp. 394–95. *Dolores Star*, 7 June 1929, 14 November 1930, 1 January 1931, 10 June and 19 August, 1932.

[38]*Eastern Colorado Leader* (Limon), no date, quoted in Chappell, *Logging*, p. 165. See also pp. 163–64.

[39]*Dolores Star*, 14 July 1939. McClellan, *McPhee*, pp. 25–26. Chris Gomez Interview, Cortez Public Library, 15 April 1974. For the end of the railroad see *Star*, 7 July 1933.

[40]Gomez Interview. McClellan, *McPhee*, p. 19.

[41]*Dolores Star*, 30 October 1942. See also issues 4, 18 July 1941, 9 January, 19 June and 24 July 1942. *Durango Herald-Democrat*, 30 June 1941.

[42]*Dolores Star*, 3 March 1944. Chappell, *Logging*, pp. 165. The new owners were R.W. Cady, Lewis Mack, and W. Whismant. Only Mack was local.

[43]*Montezuma Valley Journal* (Cortez), 22 January 1948. *Dolores Star*, 23 January 1948. Sampling of the *Star*, 1945–47, discovered no McPhee column.

[44]*Dolores Star*, 6 February and 26 March 1948.

CHAPTER TWO

"RANCHING AND FARMING IN THE LOWER DOLORES RIVER VALLEY"

Linda Dishman

Prologue

Permanent settlement of the Dolores River Valley in southwestern Colorado occurred relatively late in the State's history, awaiting the arrival of the railroad and removal of the Ute Indians. Assured of easy access to lumber and the fuel necessary for survival and guaranteed cheap, reliable outlet for products, settlers first began ranching in the valley in the late 1870's. The area experienced a short-lived second growth of economic activity in 1924 with the construction of the lumber company town of McPhee. Restricted by the narrow valley, ranching was destined to remain small scale and family operated.

Homesteading in the Lower Dolores River Valley

The history of ranching settlements within the Lower Dolores River Valley, Colorado was a microcosm of the Western frontier experience. Cattlemen first settled this area, risking attack by local Ute Indians and facing severe isolation. Restricted by the narrow valley, ranching was destined to remain small scale and family operated. The valley and surrounding grasslands which attracted the first pioneers remained the focal point of community existence, even as open rangelands diminished and became regulated. Although local struggles between cattle, sheep and farming interests existed, they never reached the magnitude of other Western settlements. Self sufficiency, a common element of the pioneer experience, remained a dominant theme throughout the history of ranching in the Lower Dolores River Valley due to isolation and other geographical constraints.

Awaiting the arrival of a dependable transportation network and subjugation of the Ute, Southwestern Colorado developed ten to twenty years later than the rest of the state. In 1880, a treaty was signed between the United States government and the tribe establishing a local reservation. Although treaty provisions required all Utes to live on the reservation, many Indians rebelled and did not immediately settle upon the assigned lands.[1]

Establishment of the Ute Reservation coincided with much regional and national publicity concerning the agricultural potential of the nearby Montezuma Valley.[2] Various state and private publications promoted the free natural grasslands and mountain ranges of the area, hoping to entice cattlemen who had overstocked ranges in eastern Colorado and nearby Western states.[3] Although this propaganda proved attractive to many, the lack of an easily accessible market inhibited growth. The establishment of mining settlements at Rico and Telluride, Colorado, however, created a steady local market and induced more people to settle in the Valley.

Settlement of the Lower Dolores Valley began slowly and continued at that pace with only minor deviations. Cattlemen were the earliest homesteaders, arriving in the mid-1870's. The history of ranching and settlement within the area can roughly be divided into four periods, each influenced by technological or economic factors.[4] The first settlers, 1875–1891, encountered rich grasslands and severe isolation. The coming of the Denver and Rio Grande Southern Railroad to Dolores in 1892 marked the beginning of the second period of settlement, 1892–1928, which ended with the nearby McPhee Lumber town's peak year of productivity. Ranching during the third period 1929–1945, experienced the bust and boom cycle of the Great Depression and World War II. The final period, the end of World War II to the present reflected the transition of ranching from a family-run business to agribusiness.

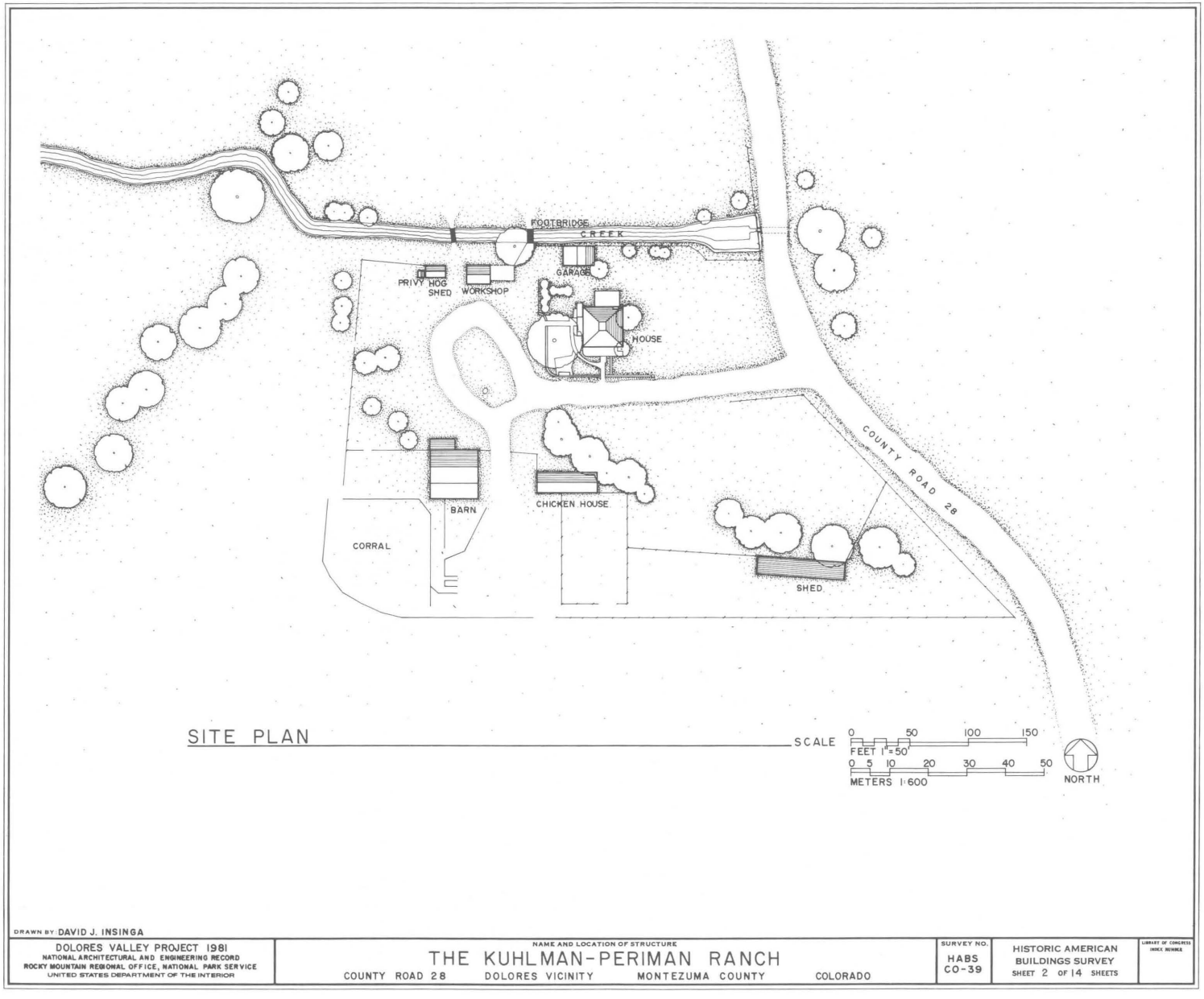
With few exceptions, the ranches of the Lower Dolores Valley remained at subsistence levels, buoyed by times of prosperity and often decimated by periods of economic stress. Self-sufficiency was a major characteristic throughout all four periods, with families supplementing their diets with vegetables grown in plots often located behind the main house.

Since the ranchers struggled to gain a marginal existence from the land, fluctuations in both nationwide and local demand for livestock and produce exerted a great effect. In addition, the availability of marketable ranch products was influenced heavily by weather and technological advances in farming techniques. Finally, the role of the government, both in dispersing land and regulating the use of the public domain, was a major, though often subtle factor in the growth and/or stagnation of ranching within the Valley.

Period 1 Homesteading (1875–1891)

Public lands in the Dolores River Valley were surveyed and opened for homesteading in the mid-1870's. Utilizing the 1820 Land Act and the 1862 Homestead Act, early settlers received patents of 160 acres within the narrow confines of the valley. Assured a constant and reliable source of water, cattlemen quickly secured the best lands along the river bottom, thus ensuring their homesteads the highest survival rate.[5]

Cattlemen were the first permanent settlers in the Lower Dolores Valley. Beginning usually with a small herd, the early settlers faced a life of hardship and isolation. Although most measureable wealth was in the form of cattle; ranchers



August Kuhlman (b. 1852) and his brother, William, were among the earliest settlers in the Lower Dolores River Valley. The German immigrants began this cattle ranch during the mid 1880's.



WEST ELEVATION

SCALE 0 1 2 3 4 5 10
FEET 1/4"=1'-0"
0 1 2 3
METERS 1:48

MATERIALS
FOUNDATION: CONCRETE
WALLS: PITCH-FACE CONCRETE BLOCK
BOILER ROOM, PLAIN CONCRETE BLOCK
ROOF: ASPHALT SHINGLES; CENTER DECK, METAL
FRIEZE: NARROW WOODEN BOARDS
FASCIA: WOOD

DRAWN BY: STEVEN M. WIESENTHAL

DOLORES VALLEY PROJECT 1981
NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING RECORD
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

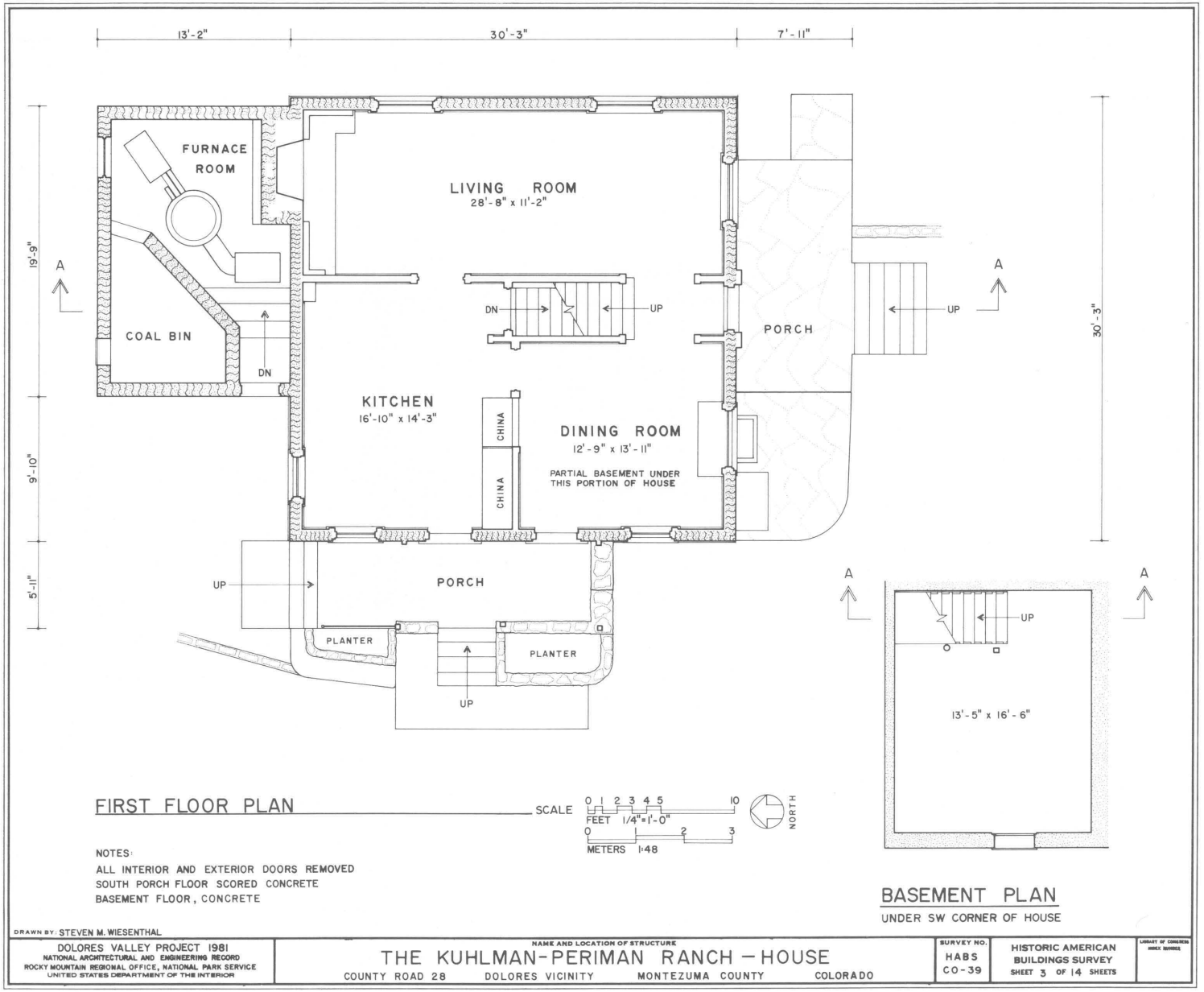
NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
THE KUHLMAN-PERIMAN RANCH — HOUSE
COUNTY ROAD 28 DOLORES VICINITY MONTEZUMA COUNTY COLORADO

SURVEY NO.
HABS
CO-39

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 6 OF 14 SHEETS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Life must have been trying for August Kuhlman's wife, Minnie Eisenhardt (b. 1860) for she spent most winters with her mother and her children in St. Louis, Missouri. To accommodate his growing family and make life more comfortable for his restless wife, Kuhlman built this 2 story concrete block home in 1908.



The design for Kuhlman's house was probably taken from a mail-order catalog. Mail-order catalogs also sold the machines which fabricated the concrete blocks on site. The block's resistance to fire might have been the final inducement for Kuhlman to buy the machine since he had lost several homes to fire.

also trapped beaver, mink and muskrat, their efforts often providing more actual cash than the growing herds.[6] Early ranchers also worked at nearby mines and on railroad and canal construction to supplement their incomes. The Kuhlman brothers, for example, settled at the north end of the Valley and worked at the mines in nearby Rico and Telluride during the winter when their ranch required less attention.[7]

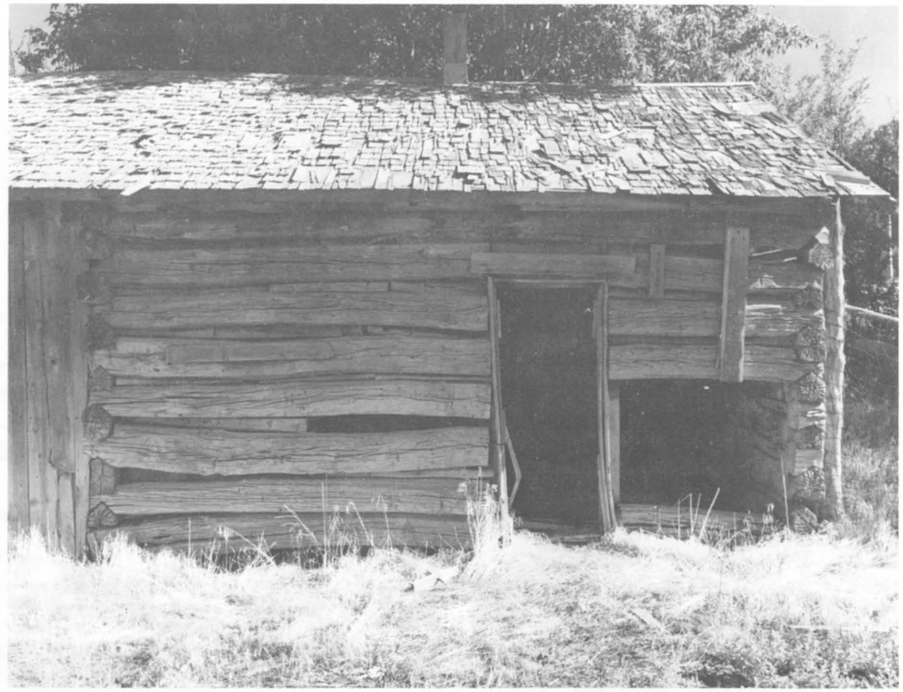
Getting supplies was a common problem through the early years and snow shoes were often the only method of travel in winter months. Record snows occurred in the winter of 1886–87 and it was not unusual for the mountain passes to be closed for at least three months out of the year. Although flour and coffee were often in short supply, wild and domestic meat was abundant. In addition to cattle, most ranches raised hogs and chickens. A few dairy cows were usually kept and wild game provided variation to the rancher's diet.

The range cattle industry generally prospered in southwestern Colorado due to rich grasslands. The Dolores River Valley was no exception. Grasses in this area retained their nutriments when cured naturally. As a consequence, cattle gained weight on the open range throughout the year. In the early years of open range, a quartersection of grassland could support five to six head of cattle and as grasses became overgrazed, more virgin grasslands were simply found.[8]

Small entrepreneurs, who did not have the financial backing of Eastern and European businessmen as did many other Western Cattle concerns, developed the cattle industry in the Dolores River Valley. Early local cattle herds were composed of Longhorn steers from Texas. Tough and wiry, the Longhorn was gradually upgraded by Shorthorns in the 1870's and the Hereford in the 1890's[9] Both of these breeds could also survive the high altitudes and severe winters, and provided a higher quality product. The cattle wintered on the ranges to the west along the Colorado-Utah border and summered in the Upper Dolores Valley along the many tributaries. The ranches provided a home base for all grazing activities, as they were located midway between the two ranges.

The growth of the local cattle industry was dependent upon transportation to distant markets. When the railroad came to Durango in 1881, Dolores River Valley cattle were driven to the bustling town for shipment to Denver and St. Louis,[10] In 1881–1882 a road had been surveyed and partially built between Rico and Big Bend, but not until the 1888–1889 silver strikes in Rico, was enthusiasm sufficient to finish the road.[11] The mining activity at Rico and Telluride stimulated the first economic boom for the Valley. Cattle could now be driven to the towns where a market for beef and fresh produce was high without major weight loss.

Apprehension of Indian attack constituted a pervasive element of the pioneer's lifestyle forcing them to group together or, conversely, abandon their homes during times of tension with the Ute. Even though the Ute had been placed on a nearby reservation, they often hunted outside its boundaries. Occasional skirmishes broke out between the Anglo-settlers and Ute who often killed branded steers instead of wild game.[12] Richard May, a prominent early rancher, confirmed many local settlers' fears of Indian attack when he was killed with two other men in a raid by members of the Ute tribe in 1881.[13] The Kuhlman brothers, members of another local pioneer family, often deserted their log cabin fearing Indians would burn the structure while they slept. Their fears were realized on several occasions when their cabin was burned during the winter seasons while they lived at the mines.[14]



Primitive, yet practical, diamond notched log structures such as this at the Kuhlman ranch were replaced with more elaborate and permanent frame, masonry or stone structures as soon as funds permitted. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

Although most of the early local ranchers raised small herds of cattle, Charlie Johnson proved a notable exception. In 1880, Johnson arrived in the Dolores River Valley with one to two thousand head of cattle and several race horses. Johnson raced horses in Denver, Chicago, Coney Island and Saratoga. In 1885, one of his thoroughbreds, Jim Douglas, broke the mile world record. By 1900, Johnson had acquired 800 acres of land through purchase and homesteading, making him one of the largest landowners in the Valley at that time.[15] He became an important local politician, serving as the first mayor of Big Bend. The town of



August Kuhlman died in 1926 and shortly thereafter the operation was purchased by Albert Seeger. The Periman brothers, Tillman and Reuben, acquired the property in 1932 and added dairy cows to their cattle herd. The cattle barn was typical of similar structures in the valley with its frame shed added later to the original log barn.

Big Bend was an important social and economic focus for early ranching activities until the town was moved to Dolores in 1892.

Cattle provided the initial means to settle the Valley but agriculture soon became an important subsidiary activity. Most early farming began at subsistence level with only limited sales of grain and produce to Rico and Telluride.[16] Timber and sage had to be cleared from the land with a grubbing hoe pulled by a team of horses before cultivation could be undertaken.[17] The early farmers began operations without full knowledge of the land and its resources. Experimentation was common in the first attempts to determine which crops would prosper at high arid elevations.[18] With time, simple irrigation systems were developed, diverting water from the Dolores River to the fields through a variety of earth ditches.

Prosperity marked the first era of homesteading. Although geographically isolated from the rest of the region and state, transportation by road and rail developed quickly.[19] Trade with the mining camps proved profitable and provided employment to supplement the incomes of ranchers. Diversification of livestock and crops as well as self sufficiency were established as important themes within the valley.

Period 2 Homesteading (1892–1927)

Due to political, geographical and economic considerations, the Denver and Rio Grande Southern Railroad bypassed Big Bend, thereby shifting the community focus of the Valley to the new town of Dolores, one and a half miles up river. Pragmatic merchants simply moved to the new townsite and the original townsite soon reverted to grazing lands. The railroad provided easy access to regional and national markets which dramatically boosted production of local ranches. Dolores became a shipping point for the Four Corners cattle industry extending as far west as San Juan County in Utah.[20] Agricultural activity increased, and sheep were first introduced on local ranges during the period.

Homesteads of this era consisted of slightly smaller acreage as new settlers found less desirable lands to patent. While livestock continued as the primary activity within the Lower Dolores River Valley farmers from Kansas and Eastern Colorado began dry farming lands around the valley producing conflict and controversy. Dry farming soon became almost continuous from the San Juan River to Groundhog Reservoir, necessitating the end of unrestricted "open" cattle grazing.[21]

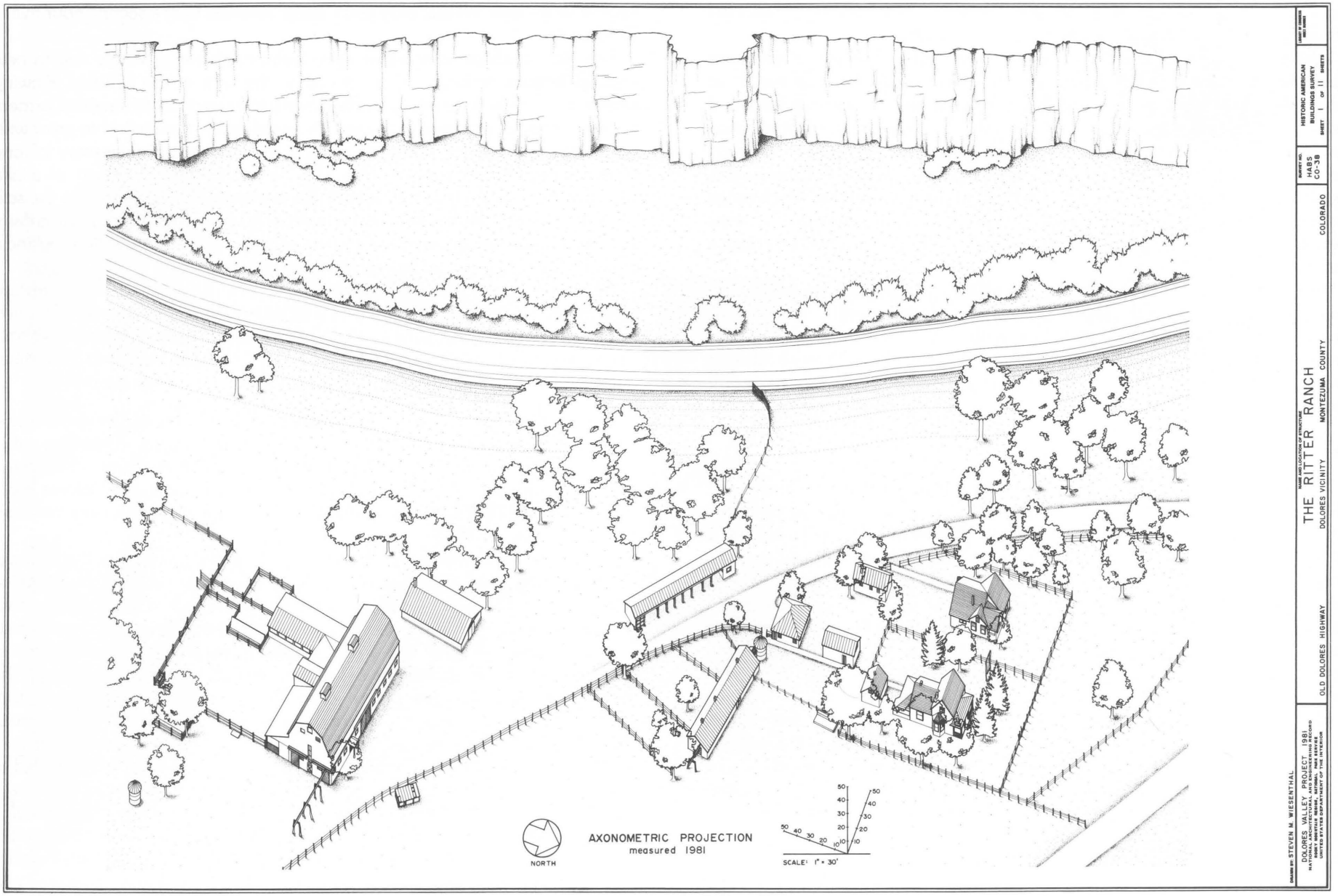
Wheat constituted the major cash crop of this era and county-wide productivity was high, given the comparatively small amount of acreage. In 1898 the Dolores Flour Mill was established producing a flour named "The Pride of Dolores." The availability of local processing accelerated valley cultivation and several years later William May and Charlie Johnson built a second flour mill in Dolores.[22]

The rise of wheat as a major agricultural crop was probably due to new dryland farming techniques introduced at the turn of the century. Plowing twelve to fourteen inches deep and harrowing after each rainfall enabled farmers to retain enough moisture in the soil. Although grain was easiest to grow with this method a combination of cash and forage crops became necessary for long term success. Crop rotation was important and the cultivation of alfalfa provided not only feed for cattle but returned necessary nutriment to the soil. Agricultural publications of the era suggested keeping hogs, chickens and dairy cows to supplement dry land farming since the first years did not often pay and a good harvest was always dependent upon the weather.[23]

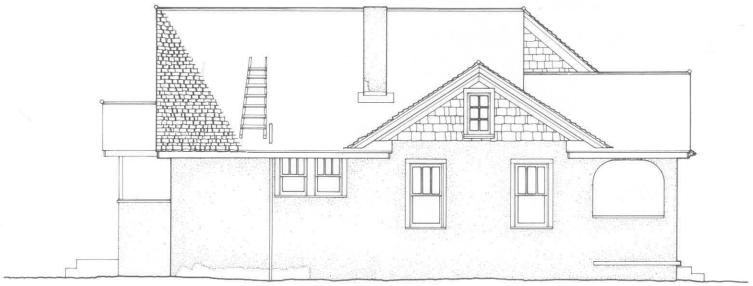
Dryland farming enthusiasm resulted in the introduction of two important cash crops, pinto beans and potatoes which increased the variety of cultivation within the Valley. Pinto beans yielded a high return and could be grown without irrigation.[24] The beans were planted in June and harvested between September and October. Neighbors assisted one another in the harvesting process.

Increased agricultural activity only augmented the serious problems facing cattle ranchers. The open grasslands that had once nurtured growing cattle herds rapidly diminished due to overgrazing and the encroachment of farmers and sheep ranchers. Cattle populations also declined along the Dolores River during the mid-1890's reflecting the national decline in productivity resulting from the Panic of 1893.[25]

Changes in cattle marketing also occurred. Prior to the turn of the century, steers were not sold until they reached four to five years and weighed 1,400 to 1,600 pounds. Demand for higher quality beef and the introduction of custom feeding lots prompted ranchers to begin selling steers eighteen to twenty-four months of age and 1,050 and 1,250 pounds in weight. The establishment of custom feed lots began with the rise of the Colorado sugar beet industry. The tops of the sugar beet plants were found to be an effective fattening medium, producing a higher quality of meat in a shorter quantity of time.[26] By the turn of the century, ranching in the Lower Dolores Valley involved smaller herds of fenced, high quality beef. Cattlemen had found that 100 head were needed to make a living and 1,280 acres were necessary to support a herd of that size.[27] Reduced rangelands forced cattlemen to grow alfalfa and other forage crops to feed cattle during the winter. With cultivation now needed to support cattle, ranchers could no longer raise as many head, forcing them to raise higher grades of cattle which required closer supervision.[28] The purchase of registered and high grade bulls increased at this time, as ranchers upgraded existing herds. Those cattlemen who failed to adapt to the changing situation were often forced out of business.[29]



Diversification, both in livestock and agriculture, helped the prosperous Ritter Ranch survive the Great Depression.

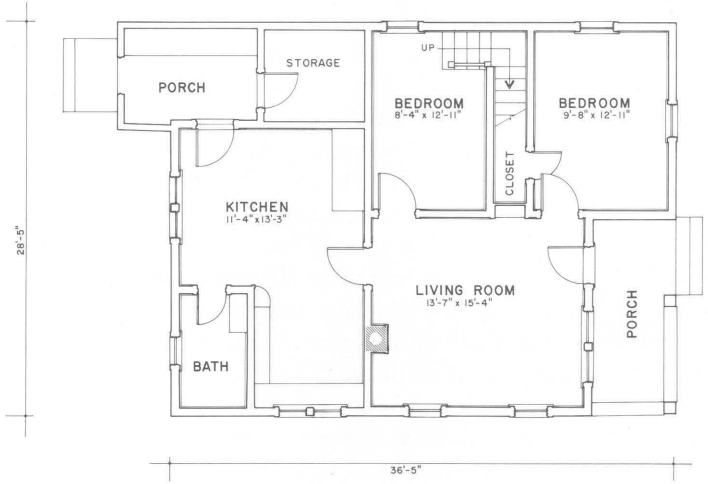


SOUTHEAST ELEVATION



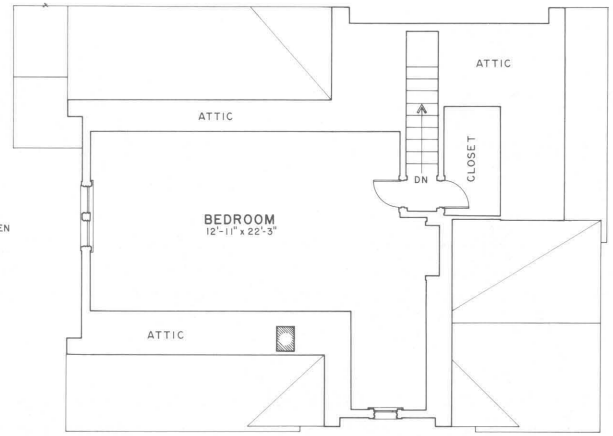
NORTHWEST ELEVATION

MATERIALS
FOUNDATION: CONCRETE
WALLS: STUCCO
ROOF: WOODEN SHINGLES



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

MATERIALS
FLOORS: NARROW BOARD WOODEN
WALLS: FIBREBOARD PANELS
CEILINGS: FIBREBOARD PANELS



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 5 10
FEET 1/4" = 1'-0"
0 1 2 3
METERS 1:48
NORTH

THE RITTER RANCH - GUEST HOUSE
OLD DOLORES HIGHWAY
DOLORES VICINITY
MONTEZUMA COUNTY
COLORADO

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

SURVEY NO. HABS CO-38

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 5 OF 11 SHEETS

DRAWN BY: DEBORAH REHN HURST

DOLORES VALLEY PROJECT - 1981
RAY WINGERD, PROJECT LEADER
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

William May's original log house was incorporated in the structure that now is the main house.



The Ritter Ranch was fairly self-sufficient with its large collection of livestock and variety of cultivated crops. Wild hay, alfalfa, small grains, and potatoes were grown on the 70 acres of valley land and pinto beans and wheat cultivated on the west valley wall. This rectangular potato shed was built of adobe walls and covered with a sod roof. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

Similar economic factors soon encouraged the gradual introduction of sheep into the Dolores Valley. Sheep could graze on winter ranges and depleted grasslands that could no longer support cattle. In addition, between 1908 and 1914 national meat consumption spiraled downward lowering the price for cattle.[30] Sheep producers felt the resulting "pinch" from low meat prices combined with high wool prices would enable them to survive. The two 'crop' advantage of sheep eventually forced many cattlemen throughout the West to grudgingly integrate sheep into their herds.

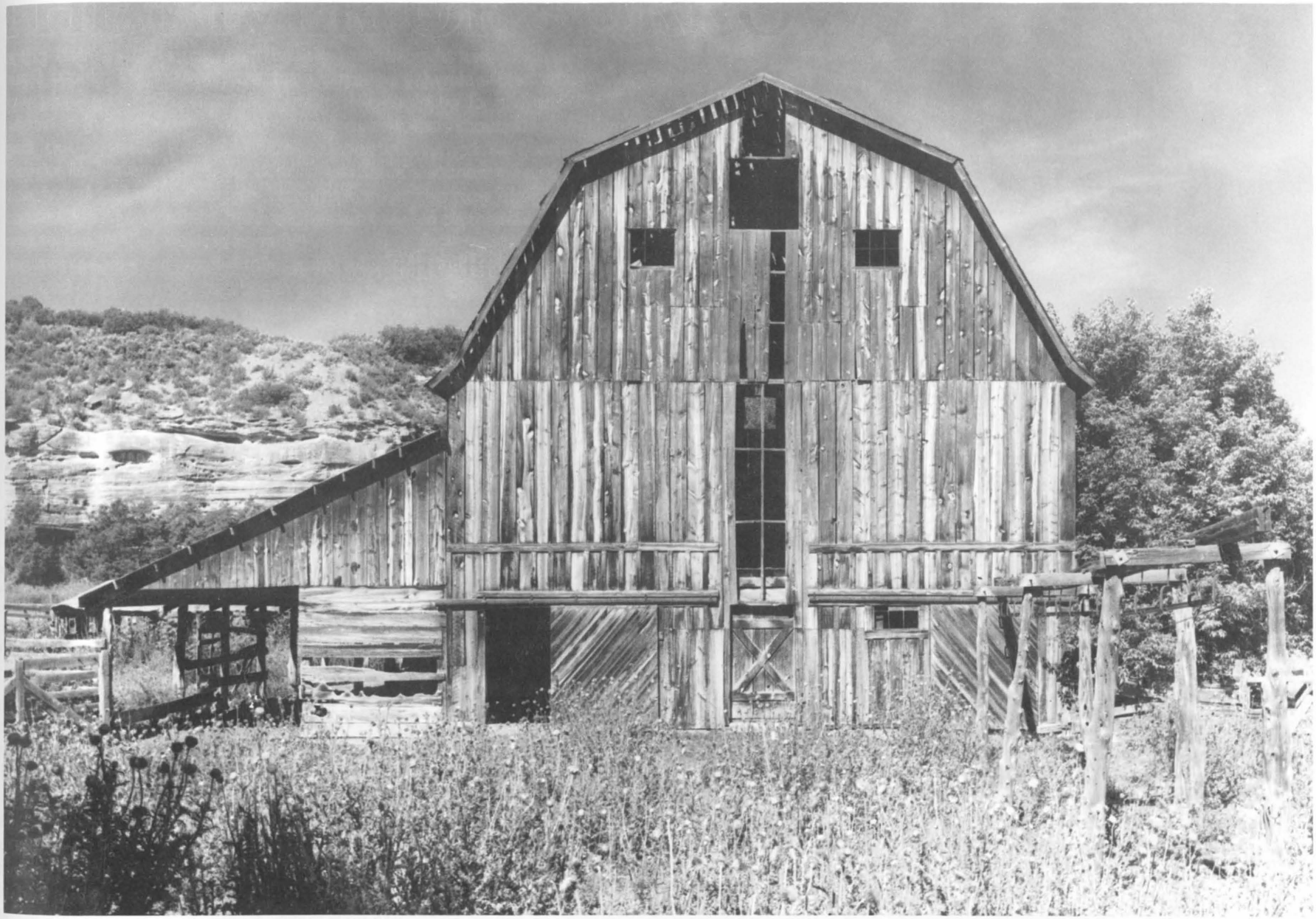
H.F. Morgan, a local cattleman, brought the first large herd of sheep into the Lower Dolores River Valley precipitating an early sheep/cattle conflict. In 1910 Morgan went to market intending to purchase cattle and instead returned with 3,000 head of sheep. Cattlemen who had been Morgan's friends killed 40–50 of his sheep, cut tent stakes, and scared his herders to demonstrate their feelings of his new livelihood.[31] Yet this violence was relatively minor compared to other Western settlements. The ideological rift between sheepmen and cattlemen, however, continued locally for many years.

Raising sheep was a cyclical process much like cattle ranching. The Cline family, descendants of Morgan, drove flocks a short distance to the Hovenweep ruins for five winter months. In May, the sheep were driven to nearby Sagehen Flats for lambing until mid-June. Large operations "lambed" out in the open but smaller herds acquired sheds since the profit margin was slimmer. After lambing, the sheep were driven to the high cool ranges of the Upper Dolores River Valley to produce a dense growth of fleece.[32] Between September 15th and October 1st, lambs were driven to "Lizard Head" to be shipped to market. The remaining sheep were herded to Sagehen Flats before beginning the cycle again.[33]

Unlimited grazing resources established the premise for western cattle and sheep industries. Traditionally, as ranges became depleted, ranchers moved to virgin territory. Since settlement of southwestern Colorado occurred historically late, when the impending scarcity became apparent, few new rangelands remained. The limitation resulted in the formation of local cattlemen's associations in the 1880's and 1890's to seek solution to the grasslands dilemma. However, since most grazing was on public lands, government involvement was needed.

In 1891 the Federal government expanded its commitment to conservation of the country's natural resources with legislation creating Forest Reserves. Effective controls within the Reserves, however, were slow in development and it was not until 1906 that grazing fees were collected. A year earlier, the Montezuma Reserves were created; previously local ranchers had grazed cattle here without a fee. The government saw itself as a regulatory agency providing the greatest good over the longest period of time rather than expediting short term gain. The grazing fee for cattle was 25–30 cents per head and 5–8 cents per head for sheep.[34] The fees collected were used to upgrade the grasslands, monitor forest fires and reduce diseases with dipping tanks and vaccines provided by the United States Forest Service.[35]

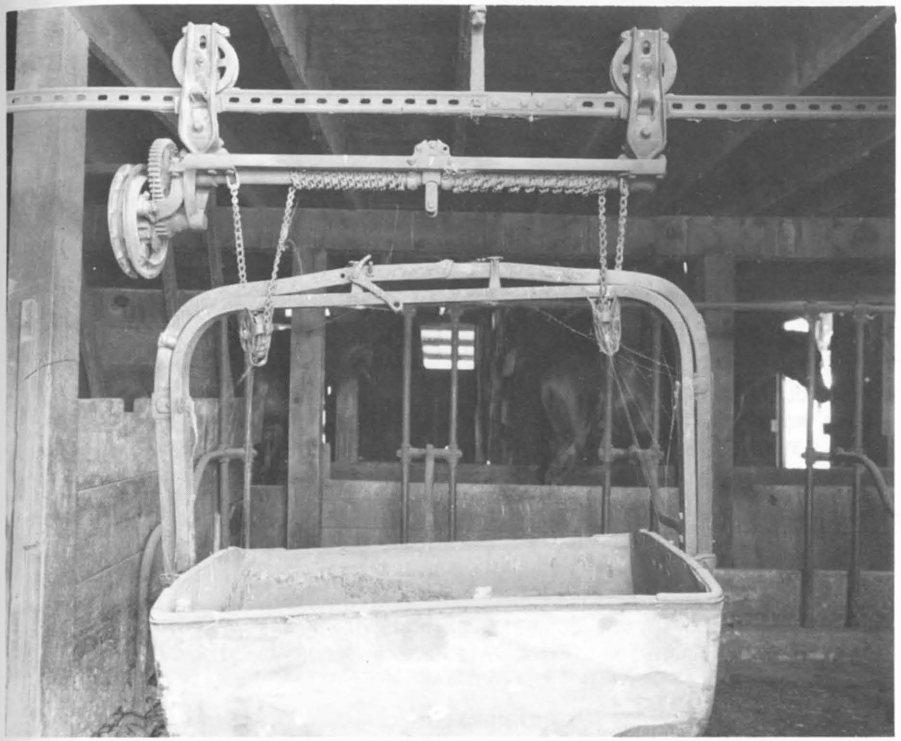
Regulation of National Forest lands alleviated some of the rancher's concerns but forces outside the Valley began to exert a more powerful influence due to increased reliance upon the national market. World War I and its increased overseas market for beef had a buoying effect upon local lifestock production. Cattle and sheep prices zoomed upward and ranchers responded by increasing their herds and holdings.[36] Sheep stockyards in Denver doubled their business in one year, making Denver one of the largest markets for sheep in the world.[37] The boom gradually leveled off but the number of livestock continued to increase. The 1916 drought followed by a long cold winter left many ranchers



The Ritter barn, originally with an attached octagonal silo, was constructed in 1918 with wood from nearby Lost Canyon. The Ritters raised registered Hereford cattle as well as registered Hampshire and Suffolk sheep. (Jet Lowe, HAER)



Although time has taken its toll, the interior loft of the barn remains impressive. (Jet Lowe, HAER)



The Ritters were often the first to incorporate "modern" technologies leading the way for surrounding ranchers. One such innovative feature of the ranch was this small metal manure car which was conveyed along a track suspended from the barn's ceiling and extending along the north side of the stalls to the exterior where it was supported by three posts and beam bents. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

near ruin. The sheep industry recovered within a few years but many cattlemen had over-extended themselves and entered the Great Depression in a poor financial state.

The lumber town of McPhee proved to be the saving grace for many local ranchers. Construction began in 1924 and the 600–1,000 townspeople had a positive effect upon the local economy. A reliable market in McPhee cushioned the effects of wildly fluctuating 1920 livestock prices. The Seegers, for example, located directly south of McPhee, remained in business and enlarged their dairy operation due to McPhee business. By 1938 their herd of Holstein-Friesan cows was ranked eighth in the nation. Local ranchers supplied McPhee with milk products, eggs, produce and meat, both to individual residents and to the company commissary.

Period 3 Homesteading (1928-World War II)

The national economy exerted its strongest influence in the Dolores River Valley during this era. The Great Depression decimated livestock prices and prompted the migration of many people from Oklahoma into the narrow valley. Even though the depression had an inhibiting influence on agriculture and ranching throughout the country, the Lower Dolores Valley was somewhat insulated due to local demands created by the town of McPhee and technological advances in farming and ranching.

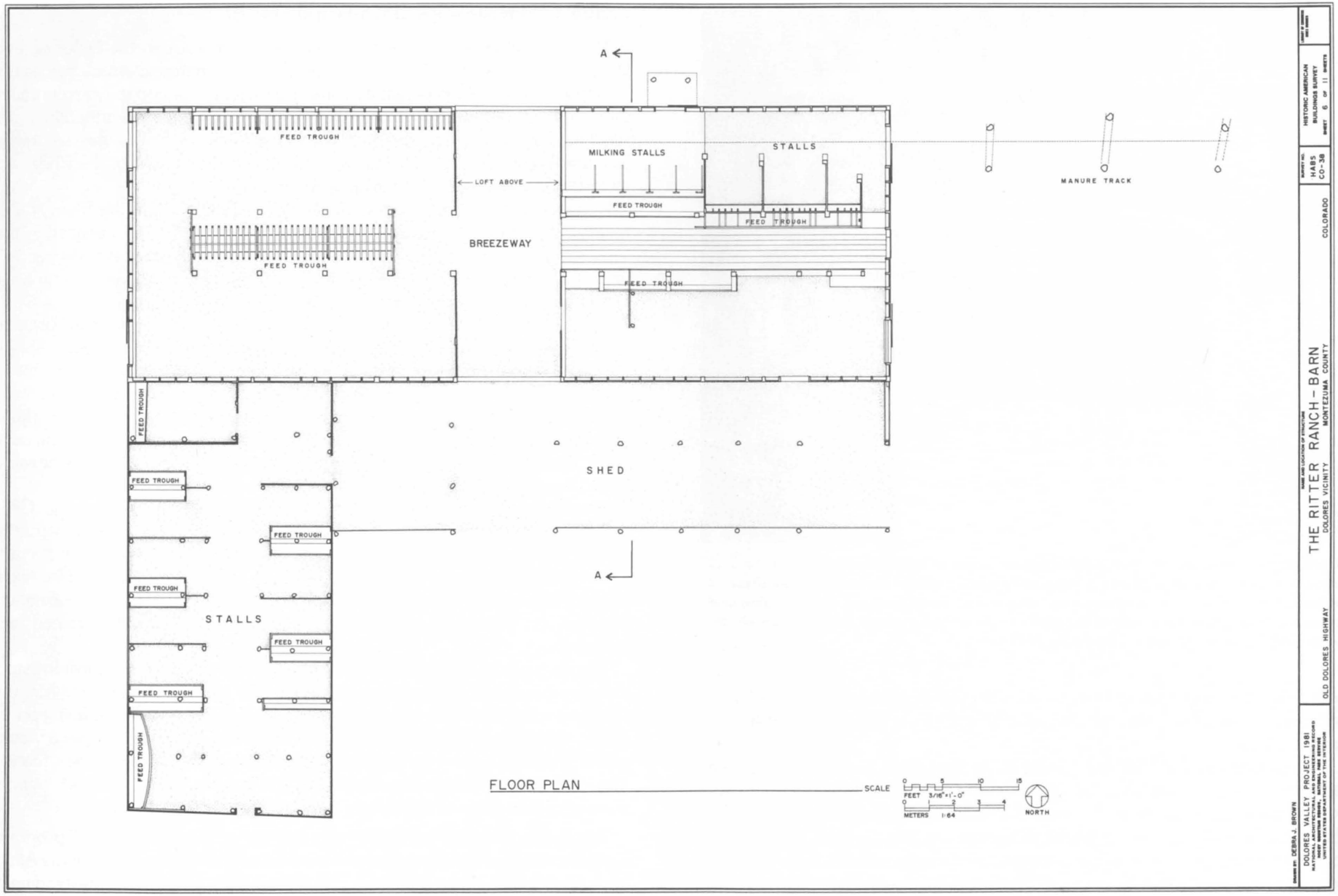
Homesteading activity increased during the 1930's within the River Valley. Most of the land patents occurred between 1936 and 1940, suggesting that settlement occurred early in the 1930's, with the homesteaders waiting 5–10 years to "prove up" their claims. Federal legislation passed during this time also encouraged settlers to expand and consolidate their holdings.

A majority of the new homesteaders came from the Dust Bowl areas of Oklahoma and Western Texas. Forsaking their homes, these people sought refuge in agricultural areas throughout the West. Since lands were available for homesteading within the Valley, many settled hoping to realize a livelihood from ranching. Adaptation and determination were needed to survive on these lands as they lacked fertile soil. Leslie Reynolds, who homesteaded land in the north end of the Valley, exemplifies this type of settler. On his hilly forty acres he raised goats, hogs, chickens and cultivated a small vegetable garden.[38]

In addition to attracting an influx of settlers into the Valley, the Great Depression exerted a severe effect on established ranchers. The cattle market almost collapsed and marketable livestock remained on the farms because prices and demand were low. Four to five year old mature steers sold for two to three dollars a head, when and if a buyer could be found.[39] Keeping marketable livestock on the ranch increased the drain upon an already strained local economy.

The summer of 1934 proved to be the bottom to which the local livestock industry could fall. Range water was so scarce from repeated droughts, that ranchers were forced to sell cattle and sheep to keep them from dying on the range. On August 6th of that year, the Federal government began a weekly quota purchase system for both cattle and sheep to help alleviate the situation. The government bought approximately 300 head of cattle and 1,000 head of sheep the first week of the relief program.[40]

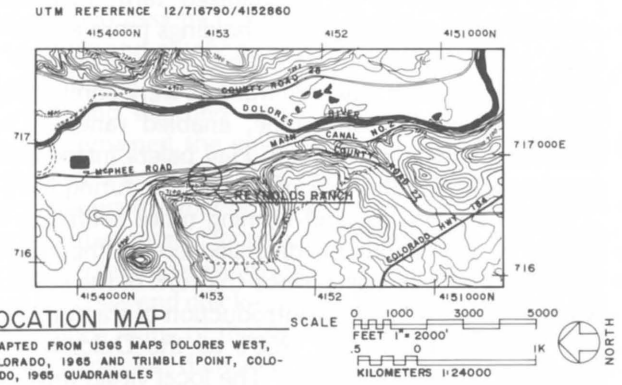
The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 was one of a series of "New Deal" programs designed to assist the ailing livestock industry (although the origins of the Act go back to the turn of the century). The Act severely curtailed homesteading by removing unappropriated public lands from all forms of entry and then using these lands as a base for establishing grazing districts throughout the West. Under Section 7 of the Taylor Grazing Act, however, the Department of the


A
FEED TROUGH
LOFT ABOVE
MILKING STALLS
STALLS
FEED TROUGH
FEED TROUGH
MANURE TRACK
FEED TROUGH
BREEZEWAY
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SHED
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FEED TROUGH
FEED TROUGH
STALLS
FEED TROUGH
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A
FLOOR PLAN
SCALE
FEET 3/16"=1'-0"
METERS 1:64
NORTH
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 6 OF 11 SHEETS
SURVEY NO. HABS CO-38
THE RITTER RANCH - BARN
DOLORES VICINITY
MONTEZUMA COUNTY
COLORADO
OLD DOLORES HIGHWAY
DOLORES VALLEY PROJECT 1981
NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING RECORD
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DRAWN BY: DEBRA J. BROWN

THE REYNOLDS RANCH

THIS PROJECT WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY (H.A.B.S.) OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE'S NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING RECORD, ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE, IN COOPERATION WITH THE SALT LAKE CITY REGION, BUREAU OF RECLAMATION. UNDER THE DIRECTION OF KATHERINE COLE, CHIEF, DIVISION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES, THIS PROJECT WAS COMPLETED DURING THE SUMMER OF 1981 AT THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY FIELD OFFICE, CORTEZ, COLORADO, BY JOHN P. WHITE, PROJECT SUPERVISOR (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY); STEVEN M. WIESENTHAL, PROJECT FOREMAN (UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND); PROJECT HISTORIANS, LINDA DISHMAN (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS), MAUREEN L. GERHOLD (PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY) AND LISA B. MAUSOLF (WELLESLEY COLLEGE); ARCHITECTS DEBRA J. BROWN (VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY), DAVID J. INSINGA (VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY); AND STUDENT ARCHITECT DEBORAH REHN HURST (WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, ST. LOUIS).

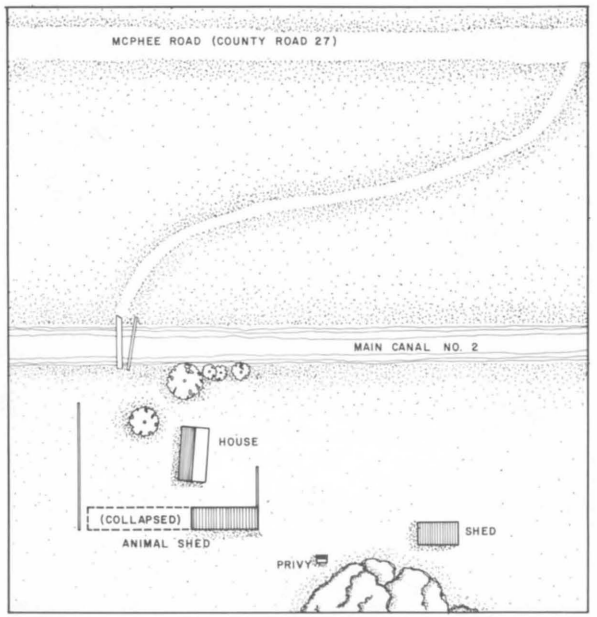
THE REYNOLDS RANCH REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF HOMESTEADS WITHIN THE MCPHEE RESERVOIR AREA OF THE DOLORES VALLEY AND IS TYPICAL OF MANY SUBSISTENCE LEVEL RANCHES ESTABLISHED DURING THE 1930'S. SIMPLE IN DESIGN, THE HOUSE WAS CONSTRUCTED IN 1934 BY LESLIE REYNOLDS WITH LUMBER FROM THE NEARBY MCPHEE LUMBER MILL.



LOCATION MAP

ADAPTED FROM USGS MAPS DOLORES WEST, COLORADO, 1965 AND TRIMBLE POINT, COLORADO, 1965 QUADRANGLES

SCALE 0 1000 3000 5000 FEET 1" = 2000'; .5 0 1K KILOMETERS 1:24000; NORTH



SITE PLAN

SCALE 0 50 100 FEET 1" = 40'; 0 5 10 20 30 METERS 1:480; NORTH

DRAWN BY: JOHN P. WHITE, DEBORAH REHN HURST AND STEVEN M. WIESENTHAL

DOLORES VALLEY PROJECT 1981
NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING RECORD
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
REYNOLDS RANCH
McPHEE ROAD (COUNTY ROAD 27) DOLORES VICINITY MONTEZUMA COUNTY COLORADO

SURVEY NO. HABS CO-37

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 1 OF 4 SHEETS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER

Simple in design, the ranch was homesteaded by Leslie Reynolds in 1934 who settled the land in anticipation of his retirement from the nearby town of McPhee.



The lumber used in the construction of Reynolds home was given to him in lieu of back wages from the lumber company at McPhee. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

Interior continued to allow selective homesteading providing the applicant petitioned successfully for reclassification of the land. If specialists within the Interior Department determined that the property could be used more productively as farm land than grazing land, the acreage was then re-opened for homesteading.[41]

The Act also empowered the Department of Interior with strict regulatory and maintenance authority in order to conserve and protect overgrazed rangelands. Forage resources were leased from each district for not more than ten years to holders of valid permits.[42] Ownership of lands near the ranges was required for securing permits, forcing ranchers to own land near seasonal ranges.[43] It was not unusual for ranchers to own land in at least three locations between the Utah-Colorado border and the high ranges of the Upper Dolores Valley. The Taylor Grazing Act and the Civilian Conservation Corps were called in to build retention dams and check erosion.[44] In 1938 statewide sales of ranch properties climbed to 1920 levels, indicating renewed enthusiasm in ranching as a livelihood.[45] World War II increased the demand for meat and produce, continuing the upward spiral.

Technological advances in both domestic and agricultural spheres dramatically changed the lifestyle and cultivation methods of local farmers during this era. Electricity first came to the Valley in the 1920's with the use of Delco battery systems.[46] Phone lines began to connect Valley homes with the rest of the nation by the 1930's.[47] Trucks were not common locally until the 1930's–40's as a lack of improved roads caused a delay in their incorporation into everyday life.[48] Trucks expanded local market potential and lessened dependence upon the railroad. Telephone and trucks increased contact with the world beyond Dolores and lessened the isolation that had plagued Valley settlement since its inception.[49]

The introduction of mechanized farm machinery allowed ranchers to cultivate their generally larger holdings more efficiently. Popular usage of iron wheel steam tractors to clear lands on the west side of the Valley began in the 1920's and gasoline powered tractors were common by the 1930's.[50] Bulldozers introduced at the same time, enabled ranchers to clear fields and make reservoirs to water livestock. Hay balers introduced during the early 1940's compensated for the lack of manpower during the war.[51]

Tractors made dryland farming more profitable by allowing cultivation of greater acreages and crop diversification. Although potatoes had been grown in the Dolores River Valley since the turn of the century, large scale production was not possible until the introduction of tractors. The 1930's began a heyday that continued until the 1950's as the Dolores area became an important producer of seed potatoes.[52] The local virgin meadow mountain loam yielded potatoes that were disease free, a major prerequisite for seeding.[53] Stored in root cellars on individual ranches after fall harvest, the potatoes were shipped to potato farms throughout the Southwest in spring.[54] Seed potatoes became an important local commodity not only because of their prolific cultivation but because greater demand than supply always existed and were therefore less affected by the price fluctuations of commercial potatoes.

Period 4 Homesteading (post World War II to the present)

This era marked the close of the free land tradition in the Dolores River Valley. Homesteading of public lands continued until 1962 when the last patent was issued. Ranchers who wanted to enlarge their holdings secured most of these patents. The Bureau of Land Management Act of 1948 made surplus government land available and most homesteads of this period were issued under this legislation.

By the end of the Second World War, sheep had become the primary livestock in the area.[55] Cattle and dairy cows were still common on most ranches but they were small scale operations. Sheep ranchers were able to enlarge their holdings by purchasing neighboring ranch lands or obtaining additional grazing permits.

Since over half of the Colorado sheep ranches were family operations, the marginal nature of these enterprises were especially susceptible to fluctuations in market demand.[56] Synthetic fabrics which gained popular use in the 1950's and 1960's significantly decreased the demand for wool. The loss of market for both lamb meat and wool forced many sheepmen out of business. By the 1950's American wool production had dropped almost 50 percent prompting the Federal government to enact the National Wool Act of 1954. The Act supported wool prices at a level fair to both producers and consumers by subsidizing the sheepmen for the difference between production costs and sales.[57]

Although valley ranches remained family concerns, the national shift to agribusiness did have local repercussions. Increased output was needed to compete on the national market and mechanization and cultivation of larger acreages became the means to that end. Some ranches became quite large, encompassing great acreage and exerting a strong force upon the local economy. But most ranches remained the small scale enterprises they had always been, struggling to exact a living from the rugged landscape.

As was typical in most frontier environments, neighbors and family members provided an important social and economic focus for Valley ranches. The family was an important work unit with children raising rabbits and helping in the fields. The women cared for the dairy cows and chickens while the men cultivated the fields and herded livestock. Since many of the ranches were often faced with economic crisis due to national market demands, the sale of eggs, butter and milk often provided the only real income during a season or year. Neighbors helped one another during harvest times and much socializing occurred between the ranches. Locally, little cash was used. Ranchers would exchange dairy products and eggs at Dolores stores for domestic products and meat was often bartered between neighbors.

Limited in resources, the Dolores Valley provided a challenge to determined settlers. Narrow valley walls prohibited the extensive flat acreages needed for profitable dryland farming. Due to a 1,000 foot higher elevation than the nearby Montezuma Valley, cultivation of fruit and other frost susceptible crops was not feasible. Settlers upgraded livestock and experimented with various crops in order to coax a livelihood from the land. Cooperation and technological innovation were prerequisites for success. That ranching endured more than 100 years within the Dolores River Valley attests to the adaptability, determination and self-reliance of its inhabitants.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Interview with Virgie LaRue, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 26 August 1981.

[2]Densil Cummins, "Social and Economic History of Southwestern Colorado 1860-1948," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1941), p. 626-627.

[3]Ernest Staples Osgood, *The Day of the Cattleman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1929), p. 85.

[4]Steven Baker, "A Brief View of Homesteading in the Primary Project Area with a Test Model of the Basic Homesteading Periods," Dolores Archeological Program, 1978, p. 54.

[5]Ibid, p. 52.

[6]Ira S. Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County Colorado,* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Publishing Co., 1953), p. 55.

[7]Interview with Ina Kuhlman Cline, Dunton, Colorado, 22 July 1981.

[8]Richard Goff and Robert McCaffree, *Century in Saddle* (Denver: Colorado Cattlemen's Centennial Commission, 1967) p. 144.

[9]Paul O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition* (Denver: Colorado State Office Bureau of Land Management, 1980), p. 122.

[10]Freeman, *History of Montezuma County,* p. 57.

[11]Ibid, p. 51.

[12]Interview with Jim Cline by Linda Dishman, Dunton, Colorado, 22 July 1981.

[13]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County,* p. 78.

[14]Ina Kuhlman Cline interview.

[15]Interview with Maurice Ribber by Susan Goulding, Mancos, Colorado, 8 September 1980.

[16]Bloom, "Historic Studies," Unpublished manuscript, Bureau of Reclamation Service, Dolores Archaeological Program, Cortez, Colorado 1980, p. 119.

[17]Joel Maxcy, "Grandad Hampton's Life and Experiences in Southwestern Colorado," unpublished paper from Dolores High School, Dolores, Colorado 1973 (typewritten).

[18]O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition,* p. 121.

[19]Duane Smith, "Valley of the River of Sorrows," Unpublished Manuscript, Bureau of Reclamation, Dolores Archeological Program Files, 1978, p. 35.

[20]J.H. Causey, "Bond Advertisement" (Denver: no publisher, March 1911).

[21]Interview with Jim Cline, 22 July 1981.

[22]Freeman, *History of Montezuma County,* p. 303, 305.

[23]*Dolores Star,* 9, December 1904, p. 1C.2.

[24]Alvin Kezer, "Dry Farming in Colorado" (Ft. Collins, Colorado: Colorado Agriculture Experiment Station of the Colorado Agricultural Center, 1917), p. 1.

[25]Maurice Frink, *When Grass Was King* (Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado Press, 1956), p. 116.

[26]W.L. Carlyle, "Bulletin on Beef Production in Colorado" (Denver: Denver Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade, no date), p. 2.

[27]Goff and McCaffree, *Century in the Saddle,* p. 148.

[28]Osgood, *Day of the Cattleman,* p. 202.

[29]O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition,* p. 126.

[30]Ibid., p. 145.

[31]Jim Cline interview.

[32]Professor B.C. Buffum, "Improving of the Range," *Western World* (December 1904):12.

[33]Jim Cline interview.

[34]Cummins, "Social and Economic History of Southwestern Colorado," p. 704.

[35]Ora Brooks Pecke, Ph.D., *The Cattle Range Industry* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1937), p. 89.

[36]Goff and McCaffree, *Century in the Saddle,* pp. 160-161.

[37]*Denver Post,* 31 December 1935, p. 10B, c.1.

[38]Interview with Floyd Reynolds, 21 July 1981.

[39]Interview with Newel Periman, Cortez, Colorado, 16 July 1981.

[40]Freeman, *History of Montezuma County,* p. 307.

[41]O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition,* p. 145.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Cummins, "Social and Economic History of Southwestern Colorado," p. 707.

[44]Farrington Carpenter, "Range Stockmen Meet the Government," *1967 Denver Westerner's Brand Book,* Vol. XXIII (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Publishing Co., 1968), p. 335.

[45]*Denver Post,* 2 January 1939, p. 2A, c.5.

[46]Newel Periman interview.

[47]Ina and Jim Cline interview.

[48]Newel Periman interview.

[49]Interview with Art and Bill Hamilton, Dolores, Colorado, 28 July 1981.

[50]Jim Cline interview.

[51]Ibid.

[52]*Dolores Star,* 27 March 1981, p. 6.

[53]*Dolores Star,* 5 August 1938.

[54]Art and Bill Hamilton interview.

[55]Jim Cline interview.

[56]Kerry Gee, "Facts for Western Colorado Sheep Producers," Colorado State University, Fort Collins, 1978, p. 13.

[57]*Denver Post,* 21 September 1958, p. 2AA, c.3.

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CHAPTER THREE

EASTERN CAPITAL AND FRONTIER INITIATIVE: THE HISTORY OF THE MONTEZUMA VALLEY IRRIGATION SYSTEM

Maureen Gerhold

Prologue

Settlement of the Montezuma Valley in sourthwestern Colorado was made possible in the 1880's by the construction of the Montezuma Valley irrigation system. Organized by James W. Hanna, the system consisting of a tunnel (5,400 feet long), "Great Cut," siphons and wooden flumes channeled water from the Dolores River through a steep divide. The system constitutes one of the earliest large scale, privately funded and continuously operating irrigation projects in the Southwest.

Irrigation in southwestern Colorado began long before anyone imagined there would be a Montezuma Valley irrigation system. The arid climate made irrigation an absolute necessity. The crude stone terraces or check dams of the Anasazi cliff dwellers, the first to practice irrigation in this area, can still be seen in Mesa Verde National Park. The Navajos also used a primitive form of irrigation to adapt to the climate and geography.[1] In 1852 the Mexican American settlers in the San Luis Valley began the oldest continuously operating irrigation system in Colorado.[2] This mastery over the environment was an important technological advancement that aided settlement of the arid western slope of the Rocky Mountains.

Irrigation projects stimulated rapid settlement between 1880 and 1890 on the western slope.[3] However, the ever increasing number of settlers placed too great a strain on the limited supply of water. This was especially true in Montezuma Valley where sufficient water was not available to practice irrigation.[4] The lack of water did not inhibit settlement for long since the valley was ideally suited to growing fruit, due to the elevation, the southeast orientation of the valley ridges and the sunshine and cold nights.[5] Conversely, the adjacent Dolores Valley, with only a thin strip of bottom land, was unsuitable for large scale irrigation agriculture.[6]

Fortunately, the need for water in the Montezuma Valley was complemented by the excess in the Dolores River Valley. These geographical factors prompted the formation of the Dolores, Lost Canyon, and Montezuma Ditch Company in 1878.[7] The company began work in 1879 on a mile long tunnel to divert water from the Dolores River to the San Juan River Basin.[8] It was to pass under the Dolores Divide and flow into the head of Hartman Gulch. However, work was halted when it became apparent that the undeveloped area could not fiscally support such a venture.[9]

Although this first attempt at irrigating the Montezuma Valley failed, James W. Hanna organized the Montezuma Water Supply Company to try again. The company filed September 16, 1880 with a capital stock of $200,000, much of it raised in Boston with B.L. Arbecan of Boston serving as president of the company.[10] Hanna was the vice president and general manager, E.S. Turner of New York was secretary and A.B. Chamberlain of Denver the treasurer. Hanna's service as speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives (1891–1893) may have helped him to cement these contacts.[11] As one prominent historian noted, "with such financial help, large canals that otherwise would have been too costly for individual or cooperative efforts were built."[12]

In this speculative venture the profits came almost entirely through the Cortez Land and Investment Company.[13] Hanna controlled this company in addition to the Montezuma Valley Water Supply Company, a common practice at the time.[14] J.M. Mack served as engineer and chief designer for the irrigation



The Morton Flume, shown here in 1951, and the Dolores Number Two Canal carried the Dolores River water through a "Great Cut" across the divide to supply areas in the Montezuma Valley with irrigation. (Dolores Archeological Program Records, Dolores, Colorado.)

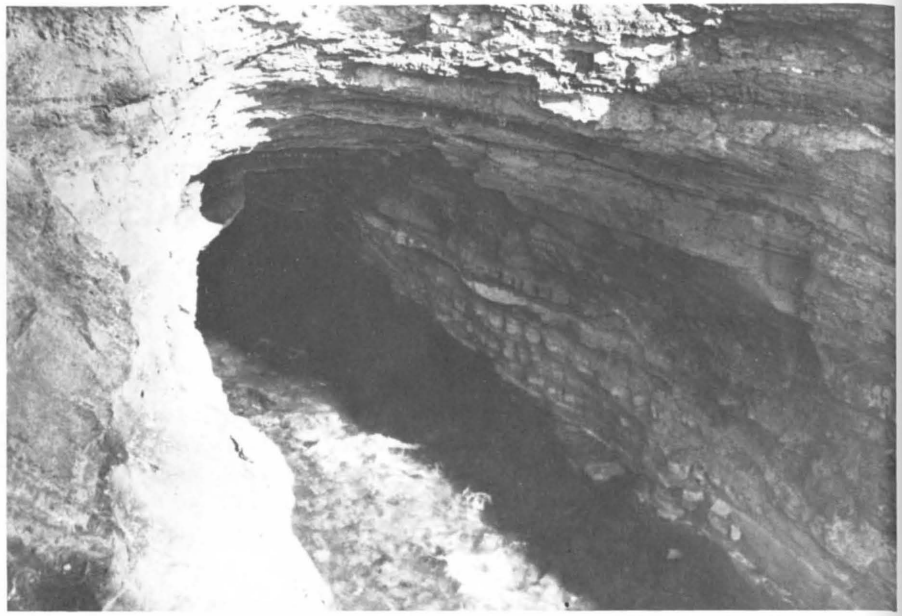
system and also laid out the town site of Cortez in 1886. A conflict of interests, however, soon developed from this situation, when $80,000 was diverted from digging the Highline ditch, to build a three mile flume to supply the town of Cortez with domestic water.[15]

The Montezuma Valley Water Supply Company planned to supply water to an expected population of 50,000 in Cortez, and to irrigate 200,000 acres in the area south and west of the San Juan and Dolores Divide.[16] The plan was typically optimistic. Water from the Dolores River was appropriated to supply this area and in 1892 the water court adjudicated 1300 second feet of water, an amount that is still large enough to serve the valley.[17] It was the Doctrine of Prior Appropriation of water rights that made the use of Dolores River water by Montezuma Valley residents possible.

Until the settlement of the arid West, water rights in America were determined by English Common Law or Riparian Rights. This permitted the use of running water by the owners of the land bordering streams provided they did not diminish or alter the flow.[18] This system of water rights was well suited to the humid East, but proved to be impractical in the arid West. Therefore, Colorado and other states west of the 100th meridian adopted the doctrine of Prior Appropriation whereby water was diverted from rivers and streams without regard to ownership of the land along the stream banks. "It endowed the first users with a permanent right to water so long as they needed it and continued to use it beneficially. Priority of diversion established rights, regardless of the geographical location on the stream where the diversion was made."[19] This made it possible to build canals across unsettled land without the threat that the water would later be claimed by a newcomer.[20] The priority of appropriation method of water diversion was made law in the Colorado Session Laws of 1861.[21]

Disputes between settlers necessitated the regulation of water use in a state where water was so valuable. Voluntary cooperation was not enough. Moreover, water use agreements between states sharing the same river had to be enforced. Therefore, in 1879 the state established ten water districts. Southwestern Colorado was not included until 1887 when twenty-four of the seventy districts were in this corner of the state.[22] Each district, defined by drainage basin pattern, had a commissioner to regulate water use by the priority system. The Montezuma Valley drainage was not assigned a commissioner until after 1940.[23]

Local regulation was not received without some initial tension. The Dolores River Valley received its first water commissioner, Wilford Speer, in 1962, when the ranchers met him with shotguns.[24] He was responsible for enforcing the eighty-one decreed water rights on the Dolores and West Dolores Rivers. Even today, John Reed, the gatekeeper for the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company, maintains that he would "trust 'em (water commissioners) with my

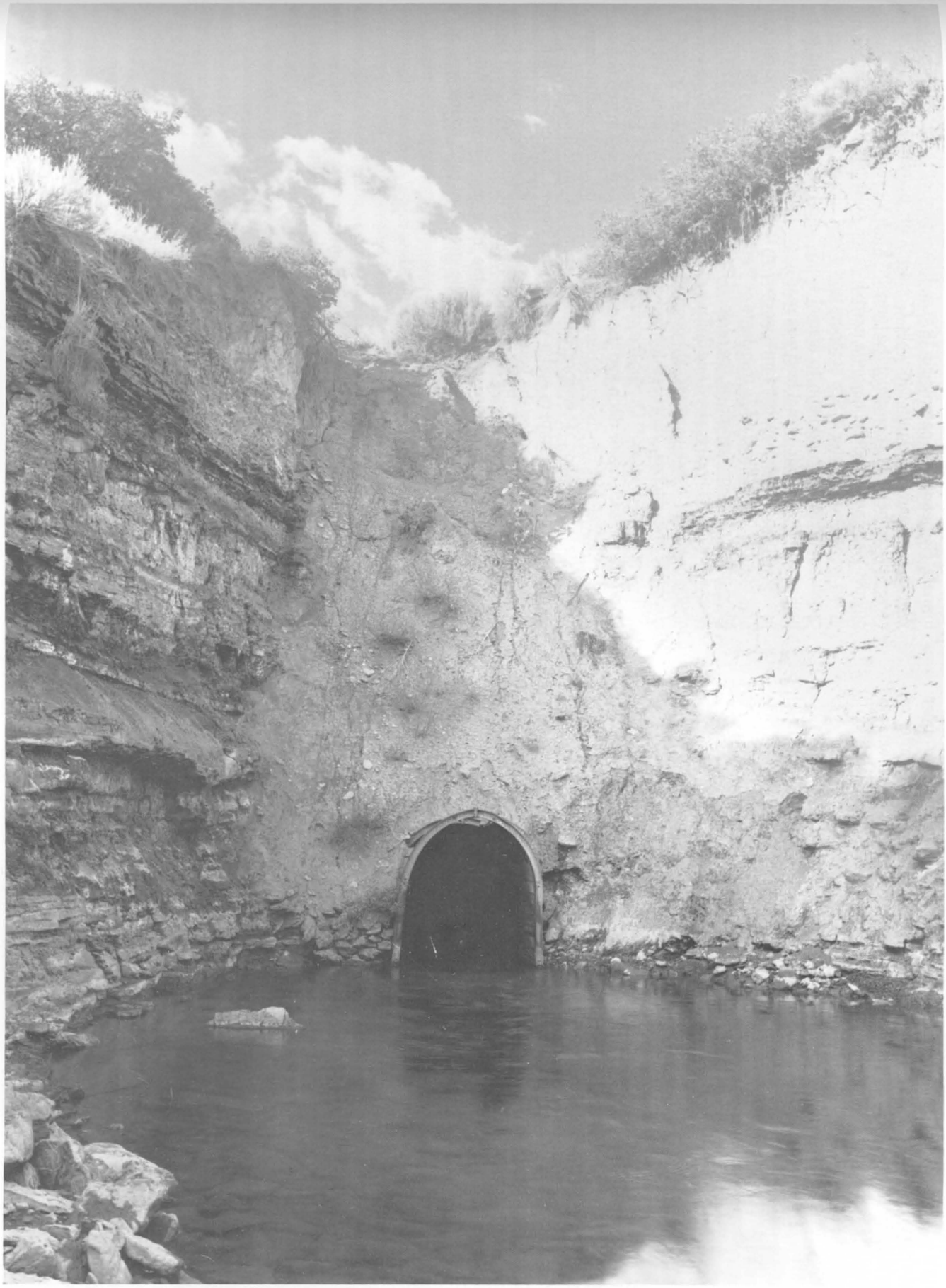


The Montezuma Valley Water Supply Company began this mile long tunnel in 1885 using Sergeant drills powered by air compressors. The tunnel was placed on a one percent grade and was built nine feet wide and seven feet high. (Dolores Archeological Program Records, Dolores, Colorado)

wife, money, anything, but not water."[25] William H. Blake, with the company from 1886 to 1910, claimed to have developed a callus on his hip from carrying his gun on the job. He also spent a great deal of time riding to Denver to testify for disputes in the state water court.[26] Although water regulation now runs more smoothly, many court cases over water rights still occur.[27]

When construction of the mile long Montezuma Tunnel began in 1885, it was considered "one of the greatest irrigation enterprises, not only in the state, but in the West."[28] The construction of railroad tunnels, was a common phenomenon throughout the 19th century, but the construction of irrigation tunnels was rare. The Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company Tunnel was one of the first in the West.[29] Moreover, irrigation engineering was in its infancy. The results of field experiments were empirical and difficult to relate to a specific problem.[30] Nevertheless, in 1889, upon the completion of the tunnel, Colorado ranked second in irrigation development. Ten years later the state moved into first place where it remained until 1919.[31]

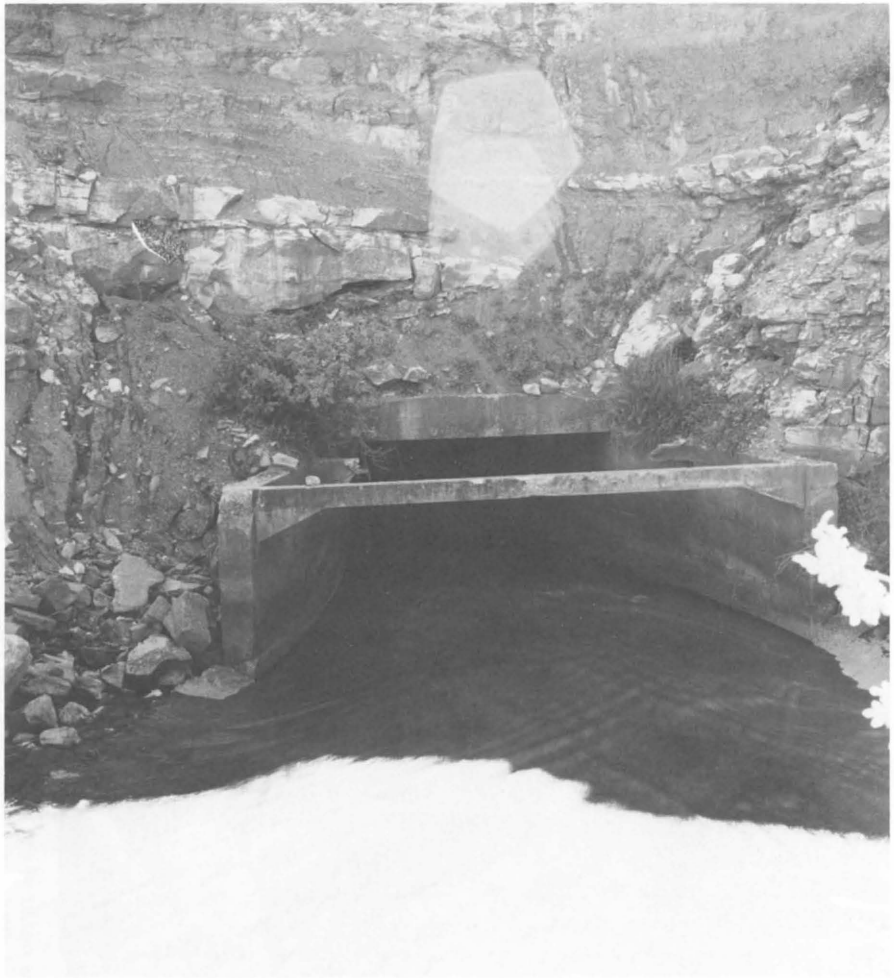
Construction on the tunnel began November 25, 1885. Although the tunnel began with a four foot diameter, the design soon was enlarged to seven by nine feet to carry water at 700 cubic feet per second.[32] Water flowed for a distance of



The outlet of the tunnel was composed of soft, crumbly sandstone and as a consequence was reinforced in the winter of 1963–1964 with steel arches. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

5400 feet at a one percent grade through a hard sandstone ridge.[33] At the outlet of the tunnel, however, the rock was soft and crumbly, and in the winter of 1963–64 after repeated cave-ins steel arches were installed.[34] There was no lining in the remaining 4200 feet of the tunnel, which made repair work very dangerous.[35]

All the materials and manpower used to construct the tunnel had to be brought in or enticed to the undeveloped area.[36] Drilling and blasting occurred at four headings, from either end and from a vertical shaft sunk midway in the tunnel.[37] Sergeant drills patented in 1878 and manufactured by the Norwalk Iron Works Company in South Norwalk Connecticut, powered by 20 × 24 air compressors helped to construct the tunnel.[38] Rock loosened by black blasting powder was carried out by carts on narrow gauge rails, with dirt elevators and dump wagons used later.[39] Slip scrapers and wheel scrapers were used on the canals and ditches in addition to animal teams and plows. Water had to be hauled to the site, but animal feed was readily available.[40] Local ranchers who needed money to improve their farms worked on the tunnel, canals, and ditches. The company also hired a few transients of German and Russian origin, but no Mexicans or Indians worked on the project. Construction crews worked twelve hour tunnel shifts and received one dollar a day.[41] Big Bend probably served as a major camp for these workers, although the main office was in Cortez.[42] To complete the ditches, ranchers formed small groups and contracted for a certain amount of work.[43] During the summer months, camps formed near the work site for each major ditch and the men used a sheep wagon for cooking.[44]



The entrance of the tunnel, completed in 1889, channeled water at a rate of 700 cubic feet-per-second to the mile distant Montezuma Valley farmers. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

Unfortunately the ranchers, occupied with digging ditches, failed to prepare their lands for irrigation. Therefore, when the water began to flow, the irrigation company had few customers and a very limited income at a crucial time. The strain proved too great for the young company and it folded.

The Colorado Water Supply Company took over between 1888 and 1890.[45] Financial complications persisted under the new management. Additional problems complicated the situation. A mile stretch of road soon came to be



The wooden Morton flume had unusually large dimensions, measuring 18 feet wide, seven feet deep and 5,850 feet long. (Dolores Archeological Program Records, Dolores, Colorado)

called Usher's boghole, due to frequent flooding and irrigation seepage.[46]

As the Colorado Water Supply Company struggled, a new company, the Dolores Number Two Land and Canal Company formed April 12, 1887 headed by B.S. Lagrange of Greeley, Colorado.[47] Although the areas it served, Yellow Jacket, Hovenweep Trail, Alkali, and McElmo Canyon, differed from the first company, the two companies competed for new settlers to increase revenues. The Morton flume and the Dolores Number Two Canal carried the Dolores River water through a "Great Cut" across the Dolores Divide to supply these new areas with irrigation water. This cut extended 4,000 feet and descended forty feet into the saddle of the divide. The wooden Morton flume had unusually large dimensions of eighteen feet wide, seven feet deep, and 5,850 feet long.[48] It was located south of the Dolores River between present-day Highway 145 and the town of McPhee.[49] Because of the continuous maintenance costs, the Morton flume was replaced eventually by a metal ditch that carried 350 second feet of water, twice the capacity of the old flume.[50]

The Dolores Number Two Land and Canal Company and the Colorado Water Supply company decided to join forces and in May, 1889 they formed the Colorado Consolidated Land and Water Company. Henry N. Tuttle of Chicago was president, and the general manager was S.W. Carpenter, a native of Denver. This company continued the tradition of administrative and financial mismanagement of Montezuma Valley irrigation, and after 1894 they passed on the tradition to the next company, the Montezuma Water and Land Company.[51]

The Board of County Commissioners set the rates for the company and after 1901, the Montezuma Water and Land Company filed a complaint against them. The court case demonstrated that rates, inadequate to pay the minimum expenses of the company, resulted in a loss of over $10,000 from 1890 to 1901. In spite of the financial problems, the system's vital maintenance operations continued. Many others, however, were neglected due to lack of funds. For example, in 1904 breaks in the ditches delayed water delivery, which contributed to poor crops that year.[52] In addition, the farmers paid for water they never received due to the lack of storage capacity.[53] Customers directed their frustration at Freeman, the newly appointed receiver of the bankrupt Montezuma Water and Land Company.[54] Their concerted efforts also spurred the formation of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation District.

The Montezuma Valley Irrigation District formed under the premise of operating in interest of its users.[55] It was also considered a means of densely populating the county.[56] Although the first meeting of the board of directors occurred January 7, 1902, negotiations for the sale of the company were not completed until April 30, 1907.[57] The district acquired the irrigation system from the Denver National Bank, Colorado State Bank of Durango and John V. Farwell of Chicago.[58] Elected by the taxpayers, the board of directors composed



In order to reduce maintenance costs, the Morton Flume was replaced by a metal and concrete ditch which carried twice the capacity of the old flume. (Dolores Archeological Program Records, Dolores, Colorado)

of R.R. Gordon, president, H.H. Smith, and John S. Wilson, developed the irrigation system according to the District Irrigation Law of 1901.[59] This law allowed the organization of irrigation districts that could purchase, construct, and maintain canals and reservoirs, issue bonds to raise capital, and levy taxes on the land irrigated. It also created the position of State Irrigation Engineer to regulate water use.[60]

To acquire the system a bond was "floated" for $795,000. The sum of $325,000 purchased the water rights and the ditch system, with $45,000 for the first year's interest. To rebuild the entire system and add two storage reservoirs $425,000 had been allotted.[61] The county treasurer collected taxes on the land in a manner similar to a school district. Once finished, the company expected to irrigate 60,000 acres of land with water priorities sufficient to supply 110,000 acres.[62]

A contract signed in late 1906 between the Montezuma Valley Irrigation District and Empire Construction Company bonded the construction company to overhaul the existing system, and construct two large reservoirs. Empire Construction Company's president, D.A. Canfield, agreed to take over the $795,000 in district bonds and acquire the system. The contract called for the work to be completed by May 1, 1908 when they would turn the irrigation system over to the district and pay the first year's interest on the bonds.[63] Narraguinnep Reservoir, first begun March 15, 1888 and expected to store 6,000 acre feet of



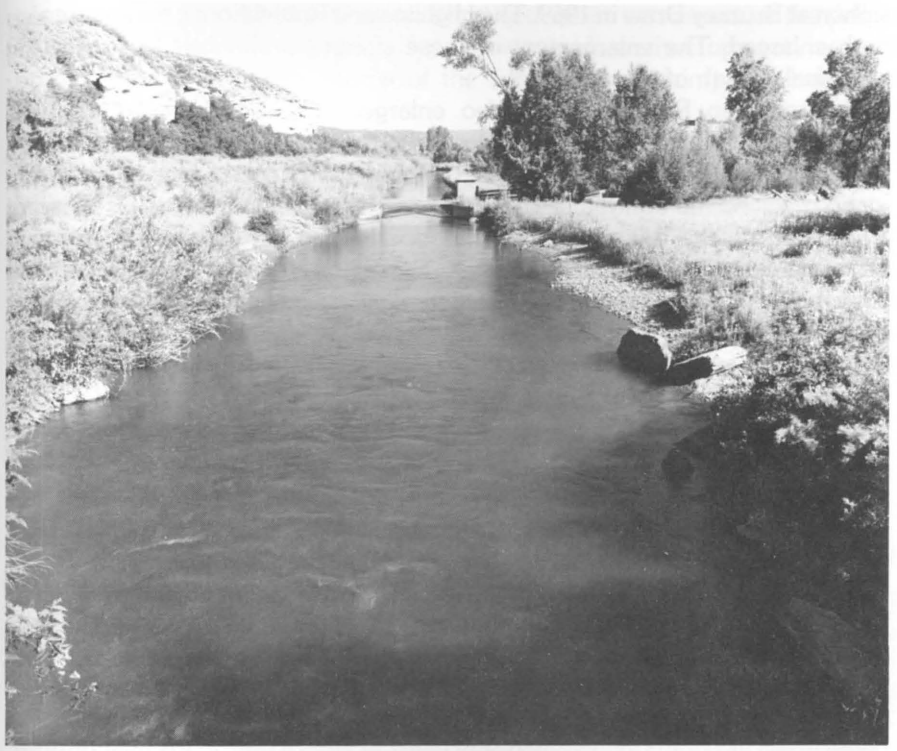
This headgate mechanism controlled the intake to the tunnel, providing water to Montezuma Valley ranchers and farmers. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

water, has since been enlarged twice.[64] A dispute in 1904 over buying the reservoir site between the Montezuma Valley Irrigation District and the Montezuma Water and Land Company resulted in the former being awarded the opportunity to buy the site from the latter for $3.50 an acre.[65] The enlargement, begun on October 28, 1907 by Empire Construction increased its capacity to 9,000 acre feet.[66] Narranguinnep Reservoir, located just below the mouth of the "Great Cut," is filled with storage water by the Dolores Number Two Canal. Another change in the system was in leasing the High Line or Mesa Verde Lateral in 1912 to the U.S. Government to supply the Southern Utes with water. On May 2, 1907 W.H. Crawford sent two hundred men, eighty teams, twenty dump wagons, and two dirt elevators to the headwaters of the west fork of the Dolores River to begin Groundhog Reservoir. Furthermore, Loftus and Skidmore were contracted to furnish $80,000 to $90,000 of lumber for fluming and piping. Unfortunately, the reservoir washed out soon after construction and was not reconstructed until the 1930's.[67]

Faulty construction was just one factor that contributed to the failure of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation District. Contracts, plans and specifications for the reconstruction of the ditches, flumes and tunnels, and the construction of the reservoirs proved inadequate.[68] This combined with the inexperience of the officials to produce losses "necessitating the expenditure of large sums thereafter."[69] From 1913 to 1919 the district was continually in debt.[70] Moreover, many landowners did not pay their toll charges. Finally, a "federal court in Denver held that the bonds were all inclusive and that the payment of assessments by any one person did not relieve him from having to pay as long as claims existed against the district."[71] This mutual liability held each member of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation District in debt as long as the district as a whole remained in debt. Therefore, land could not be bought and sold with clear titles. The politics involved in the irrigation district contributed to the downfall of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation District.

Members of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation District were discouraged by the continued bankruptcy of the district and the poor service and maintenance, but surprisingly their spirits lifted with the beginning of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company in 1920. Charlie Porter, a director of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company, summed up the situation. "It wasn't set up to make enough money to pay the toll, so up 'till 1920 it was a history of little companies going broke, farmers not doing well enough to pay their ditch companies and they needed water everywhere. They formed more companies and borrowed more money and went into default, and it was in the 1920's before our ditch companies got on a decent basis at all."[72]

The plan proposed by Colorado's ex-governor George Carlson for the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company involved individual liability for irrigation debts. The plan, accepted overwhelmingly in a vote 209 for and 20 against, resulted in the incorporation on November 1, 1920. The new officers were E.H. Kittell, president, W.I. Myler, vice president, John Wesch, secretary-treasurer, and E.W. Henry, superintendent. From this time forward all shareholders of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company had individual mortgages that served as collateral for irrigation debts. Land could finally be bought and sold freely.[73] This gave residents the incentive to meet their obligations.



This diversion dam diverted water from Canal Number one to the Montezuma Valley, (Jet Lowe, HAER)



Originally all headgates of the irrigation system were built of wood like the one shown here. (Dolores Archeological Program Records, Dolores Colorado)

The Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company has continued successfully up to the present time. The board of directors is elected by the shareholders. Each share entitles the owner to one eightieth of a second foot of water to irrigate an acre of land and each share has a vote. Extra water may be bought by the acre foot if one share per acre is not enough. Each year in December, the 975 shareholders with their 33,284 shares vote on an assessment per acre for the coming year.[74]

Although federal legislation such as the Carey Act of 1894, and the Newlands Act of 1902 existed to assist Western irrigation projects, the administrators of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation System chose not to seek federal aid until the 1930's when the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company formed the Montezuma Valley Public Irrigation District. This was done to obtain Public Works Administration (PWA) money, since only political subdivisions were eligible.[75] The Montezuma Valley Public Irrigation District received a $135,637.65 grant and a $165,779.35 loan from the PWA in 1938.[76] The Montezuma Valley Public Irrigation District was created by mortgaging all the assets of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company to the Montezuma Valley Public Irrigation District. As security for the money the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company agreed to cover the interest and principle on the bonds and maintenance fees.[77]

The Montezuma Valley Public Irrigation District used the PWA funds to rebuild Groundhog Reservoir.[78] The reservoir was fed by eight miles of feeder ditches from Little Fish and Beaver Creeks and added 5,000 to 6,000 acre feet of water to the irrigation system each year.[79]

The Montezuma Valley Irrigation System was enlarged and improved in other ways over the years. With maintenance of wooden equipment proving exorbitant, the board decided to replace deteriorated wooden headgates with steel and concrete in 1949. Similarly, wooden flumes were replaced by arroyos. In 1921, 105 wooden flumes existed, in 1936 only 43 and by 1972 only 7 remained. Now, 3 flumes are still in use and only 1 is wooden. In 1952 the siphon at Alkali Draw was enlarged from 22 to 26 inches and a similar alteration was made to a



With maintenance costs for wooden equipment proving exorbitant, the Board of the Montezuma Valley Public Irrigation District decided to replace the deteriorated wooden headgates with concrete and steel ones in 1949. (Dolores Archeological Program Records, Dolores, Colorado)



Repairs associated with wooden siphons like this one at Alkali Draw proved to be a continual financial drain on the troubled irrigation system. (Dolores Archeological Program Records, Dolores, Colorado)

siphon at Brumey Draw in 1969. The Highline and Rocky Ford canals were also both enlarged. The enlargement of these siphons and canals illustrates the continual growth of the system.[80]

Narraguinnep Reservoir was also enlarged and an additional reservoir constructed. In 1956 the addition to Narraguinnep Reservoir increased the capacity from 9,000 to 19,000 acre feet. Morrison-Knudsen Company of Boise, Idaho received the contract for $485,367.[81] This project, financed by a loan of $500,000 from the Wichita Bank for Cooperatives, received construction aid from the Soil Conservation Service.[82] The State Highway Department also contributed to the cost of the construction because Highway 147 crosses the main reservoir fill.[83] The Lone Pine Canal that circles the reservoir had to be moved to higher ground because of the raised water level, making the total cost of the project $562,287.[84]

Totten Lake was the most recent reservoir completed by the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company. It, too, washed out shortly after it was constructed in 1907.[85] On September 1, 1965 work began again on a 29 foot high dam that restrains over 3,000 acre feet of water. Coe Construction of Albuquerque completed the job for $200,000.[86]

The Montezuma Valley is, by no means, Colorado's most financially successful irrigation system. However, it did fare better than other irrigation projects in the southwestern part of the state. The Paradox Valley Land and Development Company project, for example, has been described as one of the greatest failures in southwest Colorado.[87] The La Plata Project, on the other hand, is still operating successfully and plans to build a dam in the near future.[88]

The Montezuma Valley and Uncompahgre Valley irrigation systems have much in common. Both began in private ownership, but the Uncompahgre project was taken over by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1903.[89] The construction of the 30,645 foot long Gunnison Tunnel that diverts the Gunnison River into the Uncompahgre Valley was completed in 1909, twenty years after the shorter Montezuma Tunnel began operating. The delay occurred because the use of the initial canal proved inadequate.[90] The canal had a capacity of 700 cubic feet per second, about the size of the Dolores Number Two Canal. The addition of the tunnel to the system improved the situation, but the settlers downstream at Delta had priority and often the tunnel had to be closed during the dry season.[91] Therefore, they added a dam to the system in 1937 with a storage capacity of 106,000 acre feet.[92] During the tenure of the tunnel, the acres under irrigation in the Uncompahgre system remained fairly constant, but rose again after the dam was constructed. The Montezuma Valley, on the other hand, irrigated an increasing number of acres after the tunnel opened and reached a plateau about 1920.[93]

The historical significance of irrigation in the arid West is well illustrated by the Montezuma Valley irrigation system. The complex series of tunnels, headgates,

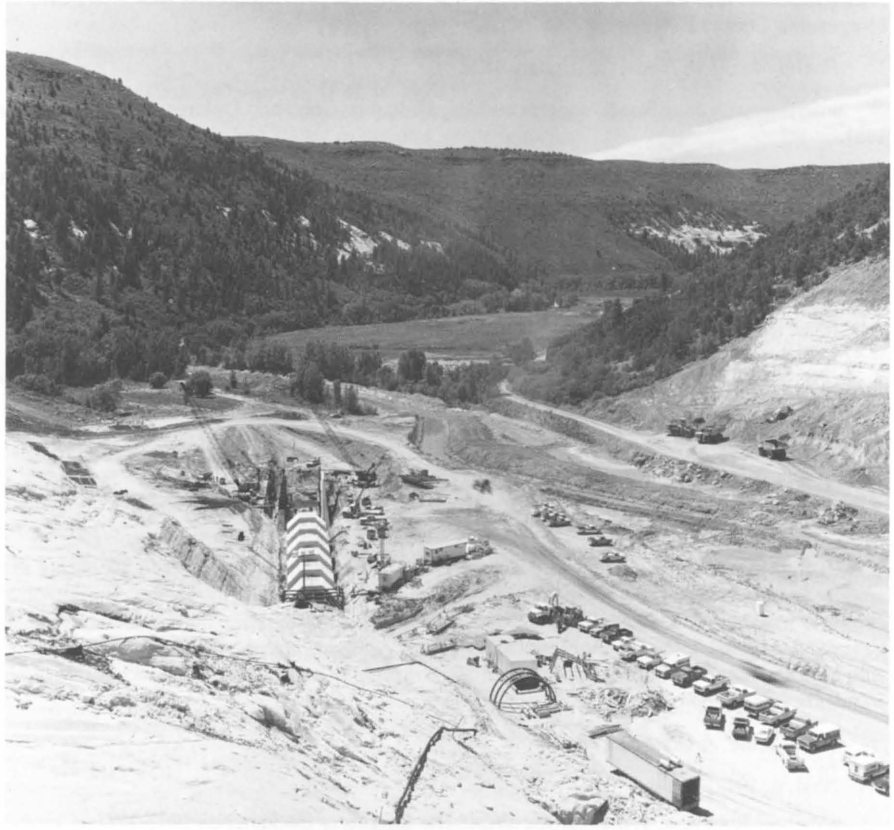
canals and flumes stimulated agricultural and urban settlement of the valley. Irrigation enabled Montezuma Valley farmers to diversify crops and increase productivity. This relieved some of the financial uncertainty and helped to stablize farm incomes.

Perhaps equally important, the history of the Montezuma Valley irrigation system involved many themes commonly present on the American frontier, including technological innovation, cooperation, and self-reliance. Technological innovations often occurred in the West in response to practical necessities. Although the engineering involved in diverting the Dolores River was not unique, it was creatively applied to the demand for water and the unusual situation of diverting water into an adjoining valley. Furthermore, the drills, patented only a decade earlier, represented modern equipment. The engineering feats in the Dolores and Montezuma Valleys were incredible when considering the remoteness of the area.

Cooperation so necessary in the West is also apparent in nearly every aspect of a working irrigation system. LaVernne Swanner, daughter of a tunnel construction worker, believes "there wouldn't have been anyone settled in this valley if the pioneers hadn't built the Montezuma Valley Tunnel back in the 1880's. Self-reliance can be examined in a broader sense in the unwillingness of the company to accept federal aid throughout much of its history, unlike the Uncompahgre Valley Irrigation System. Technology, cooperation and self-reliance were essential prerequisites for the Montezuma Valley irrigation system. These frontier characteristics highlight the great importance water was and is given in the West and specifically in the Montezuma Valley.



The irrigation system never attained the potential of its historic boosters such as James W. Hanna. Gauging Station along irrigation canal. (Jet Lowe, HAER)



With the completion of the Bureau of Reclamation's McPhee Reservoir, shown here in construction, the irrigation system's potential may be finally realized. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

FOOTNOTES

[1]Densil Cummins, "Social and Economic History of Southwest Colorado 1860–1948" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1941), p. 628.

[2]Alvin T. Steinel, *History of Agriculture in Colorado,* (Fort Collins: The State Agricultural College, 1925), pp. 177–78.

[3]Paul O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition, A History of Southwest Colorado,* (Colorado State Office: Bureau of Land Management, 1980), p. 143.

[4]Interview with Les Nunn, Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company, Cortez, Colorado, 15 July 1981.

[5]Lillian Hartman, *Lillian Hartman's Colorado,* Vol. 1. (Denver, 29 December 1909), p. 8.

[6]The topography of the Dolores Valley makes it unsuitable for growing fruit trees, because of its higher elevation and the cold pockets of air that settle there. Interview with Robert L. Seaton, Montezuma County Extension Agent, 30 July 1981.

[7]*Rocky Mountain News,* 24 January 1878.

[8]Interview with John Reed, Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company, Dolores, Colorado, 30 July 1981.

[9]Steve Baker and Duane Smith, "Looking Forward to Happier Times" (Bureau of Reclamation Dolores Archeological Program files, Cortez, Colorado, 1978) p. 35.

[10]*Rocky Mountain News,* 17 September 1880.

[11]*Montezuma Journal,* 8 January 1904, p. 3.

[12]Carl Ubbelohde, *A Colorado History,* (Boulder: Pruett Press, Inc., 1965) p. 190.

[13]Interview with Agnes Blake, daughter of Montezuma Valley irrigation system employee, Cortez, Colorado, 6 August 1981.

[14]Baker and Smith, "Looking Forward to Happier Times," p. 19.

[15]Baker and Smith, "Looking Forward to Happier Times," p. 19.

[16]*Montezuma Journal,* 28 April 1888, p. 1.

[17]To claim a specific amount of water an entity petitions the water court to adjudicate this amount and the court assigns him a priority number, like a place in line at the bakery. The person or company may only use his specified amount of water after those priority numbers lower than his have received their allotment. The Montezuma Valley irrigation system has 64.6 second feet of water with a priority number of 21 and a conditional decree for 1235.4 second feet with a priority number of 50 adjudicated to them.

[18]Ubbelohde, *A Colorado History,* p. 190.

[19]Ibid, p. 191.

[20]Michael Robinson, *Water for the West: The Bureau of Reclamation 1902–1977,* (Chicago: Public Works Historical Society, 1979).

[21]Cummins, "Social and Economic History. . . .", p. 632.

[22]Ibid, p. 637.

[23]Ibid, p. 638.

[24]Interview with Agnes Blake.

[25]Interview with John Reed, Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company Gatekeeper, Dolores, Colorado, 30 July 1911.

[26]Interview with Agnes Blake.

[27]Interview with Wilford Speer.

[28]*Montezuma Journal,* 28 April

[29]Henry S. Drinker, *Tunneling, Explosive Compounds and Rock Drills,* 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley, 1882).

[30]Walter H. Graves, *Irrigation and Agricultural Engineering,* (Denver: Republican Publishing Company Printers, 1886), p. 6.

[31]Steinel, *History of Agriculture in Colorado,* p. 233.

[32]Interview with John Reed.

[33]Lindsay T. Baker, *Water for the Southwest, Historical Survey and Guide to Historic Sites,* (New York: ASCE Historical Publication No. 3, 1973), p. 68.

[34]The steel arches were installed over 4″ × 6″ × 4′ wide lagging and placed every four feet for a distance of 1200 feet at the tunnel outlet. Interview with Lester Failey, former superintendent for the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company, Cortez, Colorado, 29 July 1981.

[35]Interview with Agnes Blake.

[36]Ira S. Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County Colorado: Land of Promise and Fulfillment,* (Boulder: Johnson Publishing Company, 1958), p. 96.

[37]Baker, *Water for the Southwest,* p. 68. Interview with Les Nunn.

[38]M.J. Mack, "Irrigation Engineering in the Former Home of the Aztecs," *Engineering News,* December 1887, p. 468; See also Drinker, *Tunneling Explosive Compounds and Rock Drills,* p. 270 and Mack, *Engineering News,* p. 468.

[39]Lindsay T. Baker, "Montezuma Valley Irrigation," *Colorado Municipalities,* issue unknown, pp. 128–129.

[40]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County Colorado.*

[41]Interview with John Reed.

[42]*Montezuma Journal,* 15 August 1980.

[43]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County Colorado,* p. 96.

[44]The sheep wagon was stored at the William Blake home in the winter and used as a playhouse by his children. Interview with Agnes Blake.

[45]Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado,* (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1895), Vol. 4, p. 228.

[46]Interview with Charlie Porter, former employee of the Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company, Cortez Colorado Public Library.

[47]Hall. *History of the State of Colorado,* p. 228.

[48]Montezuma Journal, 15 August 1980, p. 5B.

[49]Harold Keown, "Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company Report," 1972.

[50]The Morton Flume, first constructed of wood in the shape of a box, leaked badly and was replaced with a metal flume. After the metal deteriorated from sand abrasion, the flume was reconstructed of Oregon fir in a half-barrel shape. Pieces of this flume still exist in alternate uses such as watering troughs. The final Morton Flume was metal and sections can still be seen flattened over several Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company buildings in Cortez. See for example, Interview with Lester Frailey.

[51]Hall, *History of the State of Colorado,* p. 228.

[52]*Montezuma Journal,* 8 January 1904, p. 2.

[53]Harry V. Pyle, *Dolores the Gateway, Harry V. Pyle, the Guide to the Montezuma Valley,* (pamphlet 1906).

[54]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County, Colorado,* p. 98.

[55]Ibid.

[56]*Montezuma Journal,* 26 February 1904.

[57]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County, Colorado,* p. 100.

[58]*Montezuma Journal,* 8 January 1904, p. 3

[59]See *Montezuma County, Colorado—Land of Fine Climate, Beautiful Scenery, Rich Soil, Abundant Water, Large and Varied Production, and Great Opportunities,* (pamphlet 1915). Bureau of Reclamation, Dolores Archeological Program Files, Cortez, Colorado; and Hartman, *Lillian Hartman's Colorado,* p. 12.

[60]Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane Smith, *A Colorado History,* (Boulder: Pruett Publishers, 1976), p. 260.

[61]*Montezuma Journal,* 15 August 1980, p. 5B.

[62]Hartman, *Lillian Hartman's Colorado,* p. 2.

[63]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County, Colorado,* p. 99.

[64]"Water District 71, Dolores River: Decrees of Adjudication 1 February 1892, 18 December 1933, 8 March 1937, 22 March 1963 Transfers and Conditionals made Absolute, Glen E. Humiston, W.C.I."

[65]*Montezuma Journal,* 4 March 1904, p. 1; and 13 May 1904, p. 1.

[66]*Water District 71, Dolores River.*

[67]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County,* p. 99.

[68]*Montezuma Journal,* 15 August 1980, p. 5B.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County,* p. 101.

[71]Ibid, p. 11.

[72]Interview with Charlie Porter.

[73]Freeman, *A History of Montezuma County,* pp. 100–101.

[74]Interview with Les Nunn.

[75]Keown, "Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company Report."

[76]*Denver Post,* 7 December 1938, p. 19.

[77]Keown, "Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company Report."

[78]This area served as a sheep pasture before flooding. Interview with John Reed.

[79]*Denver Post,* 7 December 1938, p. 19.

[80]Keown, "Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company Report."

[81]Ibid.

[82]"...So They Built a $1/2 Million Dam," *Western Farm Life,* 15 August 1948, p. 5; and Interview with Lester Frailey.

[83]Keown, "Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company Report."

[84]Ibid.

[85]Interview with Lester Frailey.

[86]Keown, "Montezuma Valley Irrigation Company Report."

[87]Cummins, "Social and Economic History of Southwest Colorado 1860–1948," p. 644.

[88]Bureau of Reclamation, *Recommendations on Project Number 34-8-2,* p. 14.

[89]O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition,* p. 144.

[90]David W. Brunton and John A. Davis, *Modern Tunneling with Special Reference to Mine and Water Supply Tunnels,* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1914), p. 331.

[91]"Report on the Irrigation Canals of Colorado," *Engineering News and American Contract Journal,* 25 December 1885, Vol. 16, p. 425.

[92]Ibid., p. 655.

[93]Ibid., p. 670.

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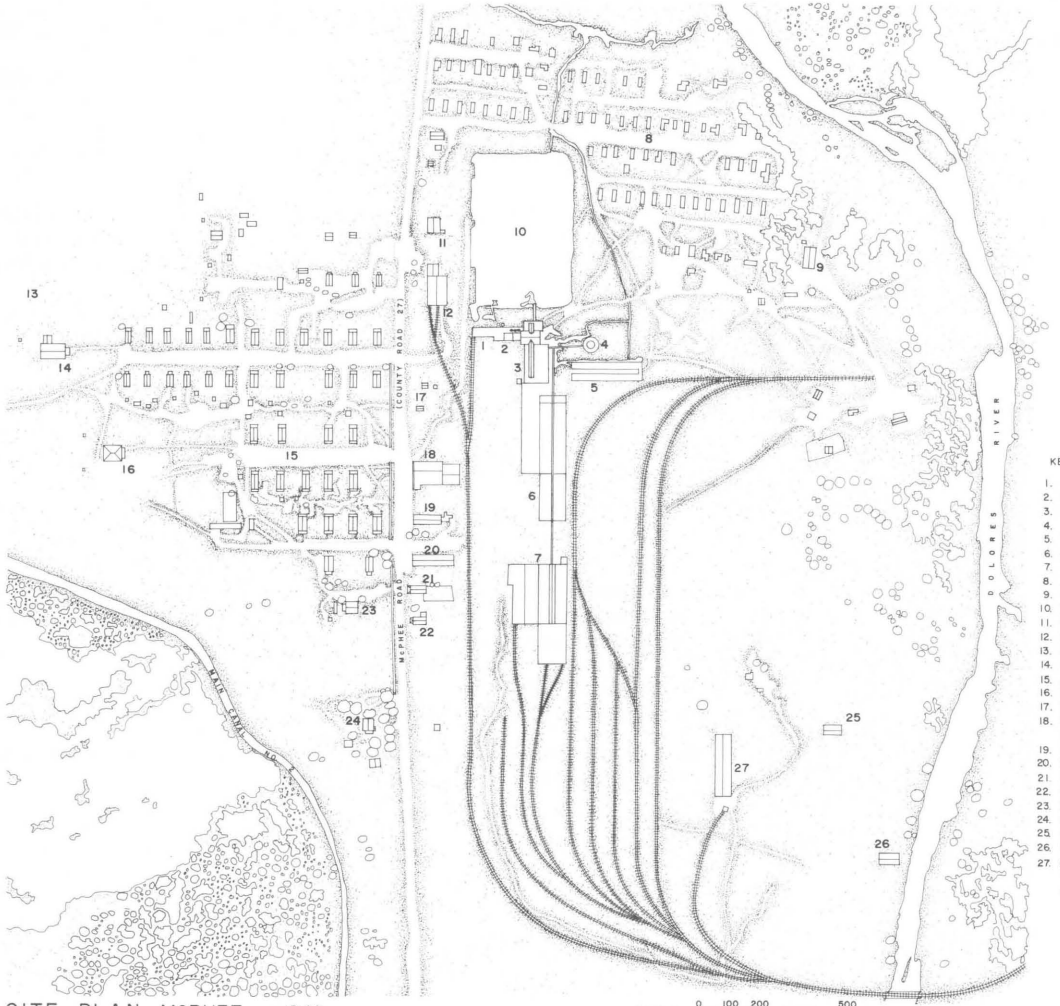
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McPHEE, COLORADO
A COMPANY TOWN



KEY TO BUILDINGS

1. STEAM POWER PLANT
2. SAW BUILDING
3. SAWMILL
4. SAWDUST BURNER
5. DRY KILN
6. BOX FACTORY
7. PLANER
8. MEXICAN SECTION
9. MEXICAN LODGE- SPMDTU
10. MILL POND
11. BLACKSMITH SHOP
12. MACHINE SHOP
13. CEMETERY
14. CATHOLIC CHURCH
15. ANGLO SECTION
16. SCHOOL
17. SCALER, GAS STATION
18. COMMISSARY- POST OFFICE- COMPANY OFFICE
19. COOK HOUSE
20. BUNK HOUSE
21. MORRIS HOUSE (PRIVATE RESIDENCE)
22. DOCTOR'S OFFICE
23. DOCTOR'S HOUSE
24. SUPERINTENDENT'S HOUSE
25. STABLE
26. ICE HOUSE
27. HAY BARN

THE LOCATION AND ALIGNMENT OF THE RAILROAD TRACKS ARE APPROXIMATE.

SITE PLAN, McPHEE c.1940

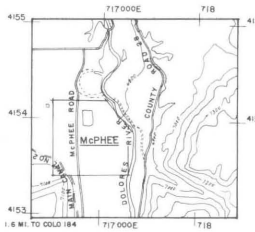
ADAPTED FROM U.S. FOREST SERVICE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, 1940
BUILDINGS NO LONGER EXTANT, 1981

SCALE 0 100 200 500 FEET 1"=200'
0 50 100 150 200 METERS 1:2400
NORTH

THE COMPANY TOWN OF McPHEE, OWNED, BUILT AND OPERATED BY THE NEW MEXICO LUMBER COMPANY, LASTED FROM 1924-48, SERVING AS AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FOCUS OF THE DOLORES VALLEY. AT ITS PEAK IN 1927, IT WAS COLORADO'S LARGEST LUMBER MILL TOWN, PRODUCING MORE THAN ONE HALF OF THE STATE'S LUMBER PRODUCTION. THE TOWN ALSO FEATURED THE LAST LOGGING RAILROAD IN SOUTHWEST COLORADO. SINCE ITS ABANDONMENT IN 1948, THE TOWN HAS GRADUALLY DISAPPEARED AS BUILDINGS WERE EITHER DEMOLISHED OR MOVED. TODAY, LITTLE REMAINS.

THIS PROJECT WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY (H.A.B.S.) OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE'S NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING RECORD, ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE, IN COOPERATION WITH THE SALT LAKE CITY REGION, BUREAU OF RECLAMATION. UNDER THE DIRECTION OF KATHERINE COLE, CHIEF, DIVISION OF CULTURAL RESOURCES, THIS PROJECT WAS COMPLETED DURING THE SUMMER OF 1981 AT THE HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY FIELD OFFICE, CORTEZ, COLORADO, BY JOHN P. WHITE, PROJECT SUPERVISOR (ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE, TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY); STEVEN M. WIESENTHAL, PROJECT FOREMAN (UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND); PROJECT HISTORIANS, LINDA DISHMAN (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS), MAUREEN L. GERHOLD (PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY) AND LISA B. MAUSOLF (WELLESLEY COLLEGE); ARCHITECTS DEBRA J. BROWN (VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY), DAVID J. INSINGA (VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY); AND STUDENT ARCHITECT DEBORAH REHN HURST (WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, ST. LOUIS).

UTM REFERENCES
NE 12/717100/4154210
SE 12/717300/4153440
SW 12/716470/4153420
NW 12/716480/4154180



LOCATION MAP

ADAPTED FROM USGS MAPS DOLORES WEST, COLORADO, 1965 AND TRIMBLE POINT, COLORADO, 1965 QUADRANGLES

SCALE 0 1000 3000 5000 FEET 1"=2000'
.5 0 1K KILOMETERS 1:24000
NORTH

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 1 OF 1 SHEETS

SURVEY NO. HABS CO-36

McPHEE, COLORADO - A COMPANY TOWN
McPHEE ROAD (COUNTY ROAD 27) DOLORES VICINITY MONTEZUMA COUNTY COLORADO

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

DRAWN BY: JOHN P. WHITE
DOLORES VALLEY PROJECT 1981
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE, DENVER, COLORADO
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

CHAPTER FOUR

McPHEE, COLORADO: A 20th CENTURY LUMBER COMPANY TOWN

Lisa Mausolf

Prologue

According to Western historian, LeRoy Hafen, McPhee, Colorado revolutionized the lumber mill business of Colorado by consolidating its scattered operations into one large, centralized mill and company town located along the Dolores River in southwestern Colorado. The company town and mill were founded in 1924 by the New Mexico Lumber Company and during its initial development relied almost exclusively on narrow gauge railroad for transportation, with lines stretching into the timberlands and connecting with the mainline of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad. During the mill's peak of operation in 1927, McPhee was Colorado's most productive mill town, producing more than half the state's annual lumber. The town featured a school, company store, church and housing for approximately 1400 persons.

The whir of machinery, the shouts of workers and other sounds associated with a prosperous lumber town no longer resound from an area five miles northwest of Dolores, Colorado. Yet from 1924 until 1948 this area was occupied by the company town of McPhee, at one time Colorado's largest and most important lumber mill town. At its peak in 1927, McPhee produced more than one half of the state's 60 million board foot production of lumber. A company town of 150 acres featuring a mill and subsidiary buildings provided housing for a community numbering as many as 1,400 people. Sixty miles of logging railroad, the last in the area, stretched its tentacles outward from this center, connecting logging camps as far as 26 miles away.

The story of McPhee, however, represents only one phase in the evolution of Western lumbering. As other lumber towns before it, McPhee gained sustenance from the death of other lumber areas. Like other towns, McPhee also possessed a limited future. It was a town based on planned obsolescence, utilitarian architecture and a simplistic grid street pattern. Though intended to last only 18 years, McPhee persevered for 24 years before finally being destroyed by fire. The company town has, however, survived much longer in the minds of those who lived there.

Interest in the timber reserves of the Montezuma forest and vicinity began long before McPhee was established. As early as 1874 the first mill was established in the area.[1] Lumbering in the Montezuma area as well as throughout Colorado accelerated quickly. By 1885 it was vertically integrated, with all steps of production owned by the same individual or family. At the turn of the century Dolores could claim two of the country's largest lumberyards.[2] Between 1874 and 1918 seventy-two sawmills harvested 254,477 board feet in the Montezuma National Forest.[3]

The development of mining, the construction of townsites and the growth of railroads at the end of the 19th century resulted in unrestricted cutting of timberlands. Partially in response to these shortsighted actions, the Forest Service was created in 1905 to control timber cutting and aid in reforestation.[4] In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt created the Gunnison, San Juan, Cochetopa, Uncompahgre and Montezuma Reserves, totaling some 3.6 million acres. The Montezuma Forest Reserve would prove central to the McPhee operations.[5]

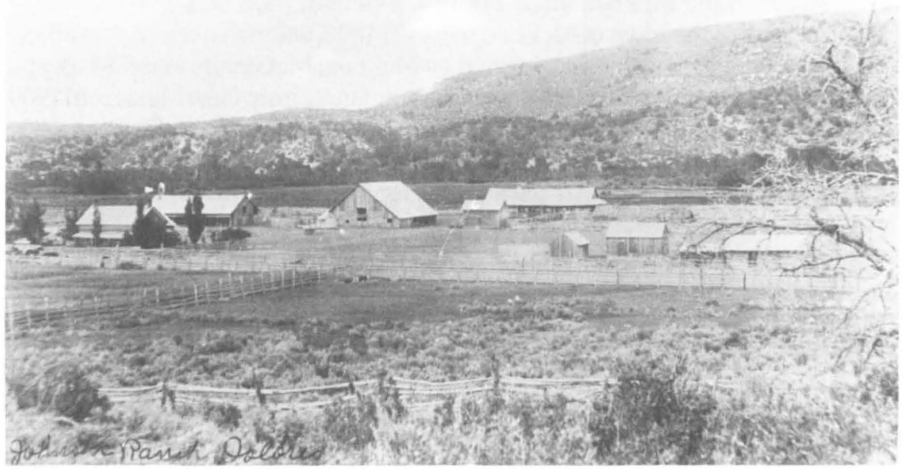
The town of McPhee represented the culmination of the endeavors of three lumber geniuses, each seeking to capitalize on these newly created reserves. McPhee's history reads like a roster of many of the area's most important lumbermen. The lumber firm of McPhee and McGinnity, one of the oldest in Colorado traces its origins to Charles McPhee's Denver carpenter shop. McPhee, a Canadian lumberjack from Prince Edward Island, migrated westward in 1872 to become one of the pioneer lumbermen of Colorado and New Mexico. The firm expanded rapidly into building construction, followed by a shortlived partnership called McPhee and Keating. In 1879 John McGinnity, a bookkeeper in the McPhee office became a general partner.[6]

The origins of the town of McPhee began in 1892, when a subsidiary, the New Mexico Lumber Company was formed by McPhee, McGinnity and E.M. Biggs. Biggs was part of an equally well known lumber family from New Mexico. In 1900 Biggs began buying cutting rights to timber in the area north of Dolores while employed by New Mexico Lumber Company. His interest was more personal than company-related. In 1907 the struggle for power over the timber peaked as McPhee learned of Bigg's activities and purchased the Denver lumber firm with which Biggs was negotiating for capital to establish mill operations.[7] This incident resulted in the erosion of Bigg's authority in company operations. Although Biggs remained affiliated with the company until 1917, McPhee and McGinnity took charge of the Dolores region.[8]

The creation of the town of McPhee began with E.M. Bigg's acquiring holdings north and west of Dolores in 1900. McPhee and McGinnity subsequently filed on alternate sections of land, thus denying access to logging competitors by isolating sections. By 1913 the New Mexico Lumber Company obtained cutting rights in Dolores.[9] The company completed their holdings in 1924 with a successful purchase of 400 million board feet of yellow pine within 55 square

miles, located in the Montezuma National Forest, seven miles north of Dolores.[10] Unfortunately, McPhee and company did not realize that much of the timber reserves was overmature and of poor quality. Yet as timber at El Vado, New Mexico had recently been exhausted, plans were made for a new center of company operations and a new mill town.

The town of McPhee was only part of the company's expansive lumber monopoly. During its peak in 1927 McPhee and McGinnity had five lumberyards in Denver, five in San Luis Valley and five on Moffat Road with 25 branches in Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming.[11] Its subsidiaries included the New Mexico Lumber Company, Sterling Lumber and Investment, and McPhee and McGinnity of Utah. The former had operations in Edith, El Vado and Chama, New Mexico and Chromo, Colorado. The equipment used at the varying locations was used again and again and moved on to the next lumber town as timber gave out. Lumbering until this time had always been decentralized in the area and as William McPhee, grandson of Charles McPhee recently noted, "it probably always should be." Yet the owners of New Mexico Lumber Company conceived of a town based on a new and daring idea, one which would consolidate all the company's scattered holdings into one base, a town to be situated north of Dolores, Colorado.[12]



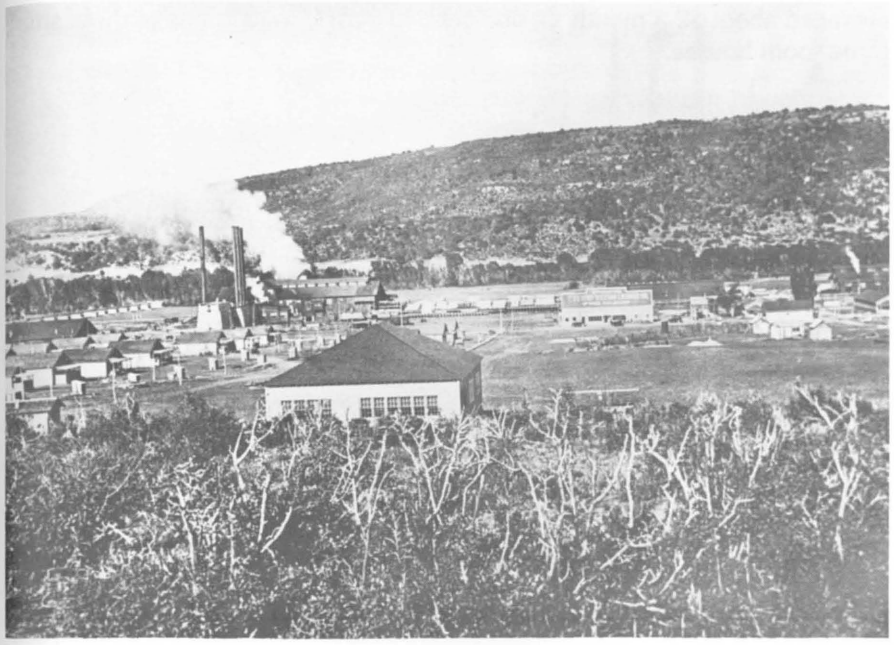
The Charlie Johnson homestead was ultimately chosen as the site for the company town of McPhee. Breeding both cattle and racehorses, the Johnson operation featured a 14 room adobe house, stables and racetrack. (Bill Hamilton, Dolores, Colorado)

Decisions concerning the location of a mill town can be traced to the years prior to the creation of McPhee. In 1905 Biggs retained Arthur Ridgway of the Engineering Department of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad to survey the Dolores area for timber potential. Ridgway suggested that a mill town be built either at the town of Dolores, or four miles downstream at the mouth of House Creek. He favored Dolores as it would eliminate the need for another train to transport lumber from the mill to the Rio Grande Southern Railroad.[13] Those involved, however, rejected the idea of locating at Dolores because of local opposition. This deal failed and the town was eventually situated on the 800 acre site of the old Charlie Johnson homestead, down the river from Dolores. The site's 14 room adobe house, stables and racetrack were obliterated. All roads still in use were the original ones, dating back to the Johnsons; requiring no new roads to be added.[14] In 1924 a gang of surveyors accompanied by W.W. Norseman surveyed the ground upon which the sawmill and railroad would be located.[15]

In planning the town of McPhee, those involved were faced with two alternatives; they could construct a small plant that would survive indefinitely if forest reserves proved sufficient and mill production moderate, or they could build a town based on high production and short term existence.[16] The New Mexico Lumber Company chose the latter scheme of planned obsolescence and rapid production. The inexpensive simple company housing and apparent lack of a professional town plan reflect this economical scheme.

The phenomenon of the company town is in many ways particularly suited to the American West where industries have had to locate in relatively isolated yet resource rich areas. In order to attract and maintain a labor force, industrial towns became essential.[17] In early years employees in the West, especially mountainous mining camps, constructed their own crude shelters or lived in what was available, abandoned box cars and the like. Employers soon learned, however, that housing even of the most primitive style, helped to stabilize the labor force. By the turn of the century most employers either provided housing, capital for building or furnished the land on which homes could be constructed. Although initially catering to bachelors, employers discovered company housing for married couples promoted a more responsible and stable labor force.

Before construction of McPhee started, "the details of the plan had been worked out with all the minuteness of a blueprint."[18] A company engineer in all likelihood designed the grid layout of the 150 acre town in 1924 consisting of the mill, homes of employees, lumberyards and subsidiary buildings. Surveyors, engineers, carpenters and grading crews all employed by the company were transferred to build the town and survey and grade the railroad routes. A

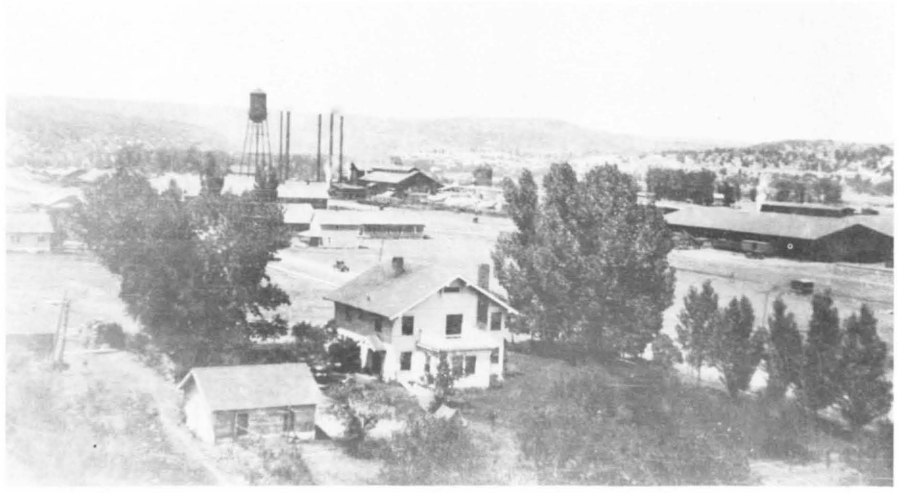


McPhee's unimaginative grid street plan was probably designed by a company engineer. (Robert Orr Collection)

document concerning the water system of 1927 yields the names of two engineers of the New Mexico Lumber Company who could have contributed to the McPhee plan; Warren Cryder Rhoads and S.S. Houston.[19]

The town site was originally known as Ventura. It was also temporarily called Escalante. McPhee was situated on the alleged spot where in 1776 Father Escalante stopped for several weeks beside a stream he called the Dolores River. The town was given its final name after an influential visit to the site by William McPhee in 1924.

One cannot help but marvel that a company engineer probably designed the town of McPhee, once the largest community in Montezuma county. A main street served as a median dividing the homes from the sawmill buildings, commissary and boarding houses. Wooden sidewalks lined the side featuring the Anglo houses. No attempt was made to offset the monotony of row after row of identical employee housing. Only the railroad tracks and the section of town housing the Hispanic workers interrupted the grid imposed on the land. The Mexican-American section was relegated to the outskirts of town, beyond the sawmill buildings in a crescent formation, responding to the curve of the river.



McPhee's company housing reflects the social and ethnic hierarchy commonly associated with company towns in the late 19th and early 20th century. The company manager's home, shown here in the foreground, was the most elaborate of the residences. (Robert Orr Collection)

The railroad effectively separated the Mexican-American section from the rest of the town.

The variety of housing in the town reflects the social hierarchy commonly associated with early 20th century company towns. The two largest homes belonged to the company doctor and manager. Built by the company, Dr. Speck's property contained a frame house, board-and-batten garage, two connecting sheds and a shed of frame construction. The house was one and one half stories, on a concrete foundation with a full basement. The exterior was of shiplap construction, capped by a gable roof with projecting eaves and exposed rafters. The superintendent's house, the more elaborate of the two, was apparently designed for Thomas Orr in 1925 by a Denver architect.[20] The grounds included the main house, garage, dugout, barn, frame pump house and an outbuilding of concrete blocks. The two story frame house with full basement had a wood clapboard exterior. The roof was a single gable, with exposed rafters, featuring eaves supported by boxed corner brackets. The south wing had a frame rail deck on its roof. The wood frame garage was covered with shiplap siding. The pump house was also notable for its horizontal wood siding and decorative trim.[21]

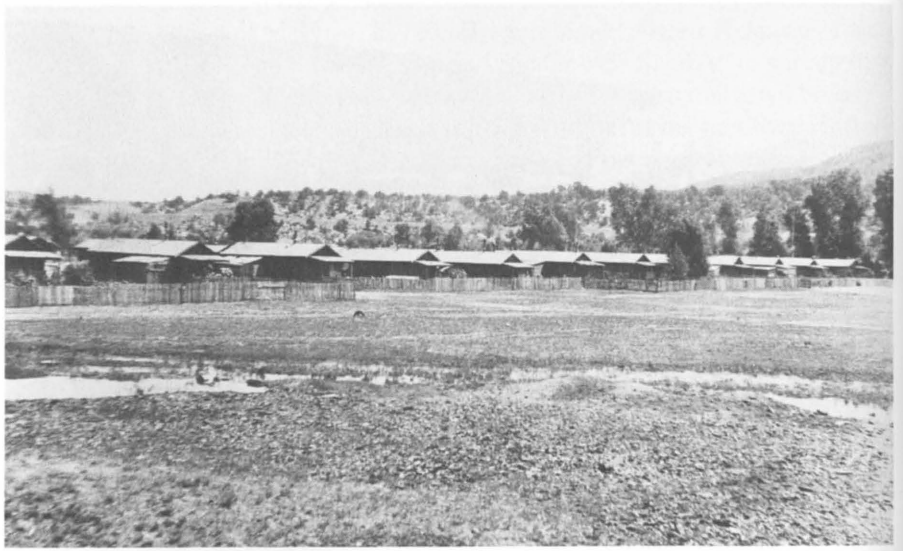
The majority of the Anglo employee houses contained five rooms. A few seemed to have been slightly wider judging from historic photographs. Some twenty houses were transported from the declining lumber town of El Vado, the



Anglo employees at McPhee resided in these modest five room frame homes, in most cases paying about $10 a month for rent. (Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado)

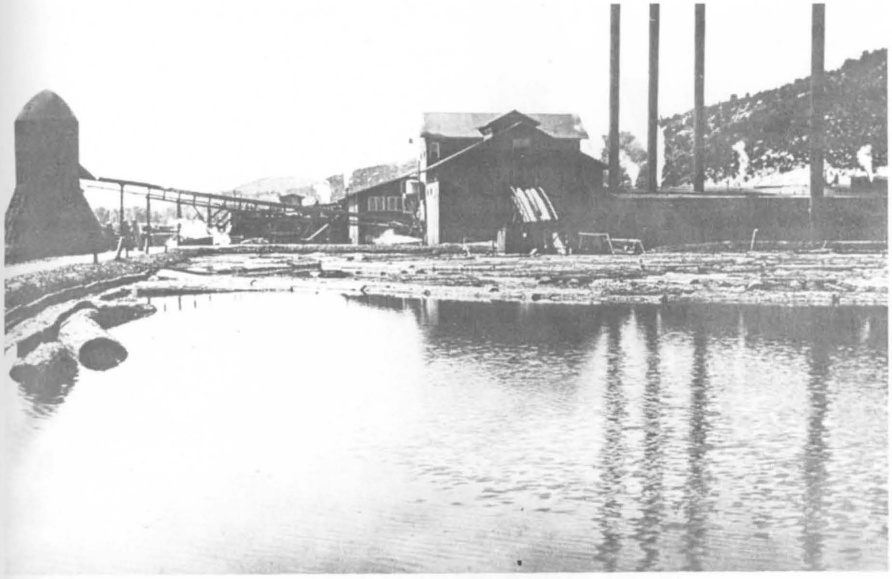
rest were constructed on the site.[22] Eleven additional homes were completed in 1925 and two rows of 3 room houses were built later.[23] The houses were simple rectangles capped by a broad gable, with front and rear porches and painted siding. In many cases the rear porch was screened for an additional sleeping area. Rent was $10 a month and was deducted automatically from wages. Electricity was provided by the company as was running water. Sewers were connected to the superintendent's, doctor's and some of the larger homes. The rest of the town had outdoor privies.[24] Many bachelors resided in a rooming house, and received their meals from a nearby cookhouse.[25] The old Johnson house, a two story frame house was moved directly across the McPhee road and used as an overflow boarding house for mill hands and visitors.[26]

A separate area 3/4 of a mile away from the Anglo community was reserved for the Mexican-American employees. This so-called "Mexican town," "Chihuahua" or "Chilitown" consisted of two rows of small houses of unfinished lumber, spaced at 15 feet intervals. A road ran along the south end, with paths between the house rows. The houses in the Hispanic section were "shot gun houses" consisting of three rooms all in a row, with doors in alignment. Some two room houses, with two doors leading to the exterior also existed. Electricity was provided to only a few of these homes while none received refrigeration or running water. Instead, kerosene lights, ice boxes, woodboxes, and outdoor faucets sufficed. Wood was available free from the company for firewood and an ice house was located near the mill pond. The houses had no foundation, wooden floors, newspapers stuffed inside the walls acted as insulation. Rent averaged about $2 a month. In one case 13 people lived in one of these small three-room houses.[27]



Hispanic workers at McPhee rented these small "shotgun" houses consisting of three rooms, with doors in alignment. Rents averaged $2 a month. (Robert Orr Collection)

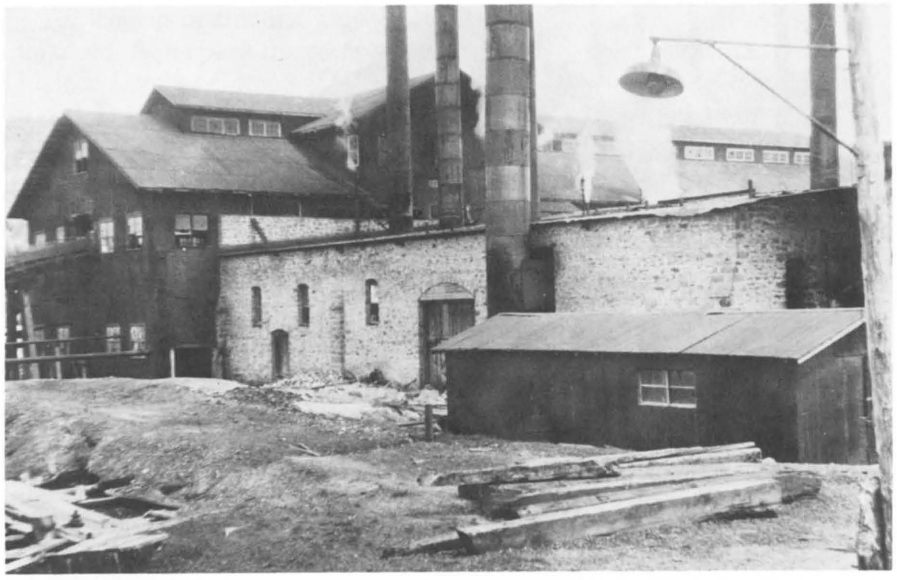
McPhee's impressive mill operations began in 1924 when R. E. Pryor moved his small sawmill onto McPhee and McGinnity timber lands and began to extract lumber and bridge timbers for the mill, sawmill and ties.[28] About this time crews from El Vado arrived to aid in construction. A combination of five ton chain driven trucks and eight wheel log wagons drawn by eight horses transported the heavy equipment from El Vado. The mill took an additional year and a half to complete and contained a band saw and circular saw. The mill covered a city block and featured a three-story main building with corrugated iron siding.[29] The three acre mill pond, used as a reserve when inclement weather prevented logging, was capable of holding one million feet of logs. There was no roundhouse, rather, the trains backed up to the mill pond. Inclined platforms carried the lumber from the sawmill to some 4 to 6 rooms of stone that housed the dry kilns. The stone sawmill powerhouse contained two 500 horsepower steam engines and nine boilers provided the steam for machinery. In the sawmill house, all waste was converted into wood chips which were used to stoke the boilers. The plant also included a planing mill, machine shop and adjacent box factory where lumber was precut for boxes. The mill was shut down in the winter when logging became difficult. Crews then worked part-time, but the boiler operated continuously.[30]



McPhee's lumber mill operation featured a three-story main building and a three acre mill pond. (Robert Orr Collection)



The mill pond was capable of holding one million board feet of logs. (Robert Orr Collection)



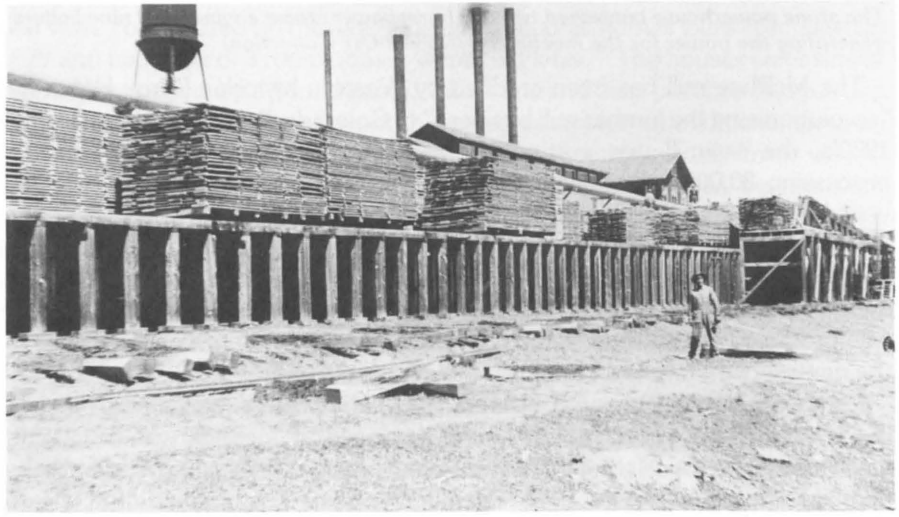
The stone powerhouse contained two 500 horsepower steam engines and nine boilers generating the power for the machinery. (Robert Orr Collection)

The McPhee mill has been credited by Western historian Leroy Hafen for "revolutionizing the lumber mill business" of Colorado.[31] At its height in the mid 1920's, the sawmill was cutting 150,000 board feet/day with the dry kiln processing 80,000 board feet/day.[32] In 1925, McPhee produced 27,445,360 board feet of lumber, 61 percent of the production of the entire state.[33] In the early 1940's after a fire destroyed the mill, smaller sawmills were built at strategic points in the logging area: at Lost Canyon, Barlow Creek, Glades and Plateau. Wood was brought to the planer to be surfaced and milled. The same capacity was produced but savings occurred from not having to haul waste material to the central plant.[34]

Lumber from McPhee was utilized for a variety of purposes and reached many destinations. Most of the wood produced at McPhee was rough-cut, finished later at the McPhee and McGinnity plant in Denver, located at Blake and 23rd Street.[35] The lower grades of lumber were made into railroad ties, to satisfy a contract with the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad.[36] This contract enabled the lumber company to survive the Great Depression.[37] Lower grade woods were also precut for boxes, and shipped to fruit and vegetable producers and the Sherwin William Paint Company. Superior lumber grades were used for construction and were also shipped to sash and door factories along the Missouri River.[38] The mill also received numerous federal government contracts, including one for lumber to build local Civilian Conservation Corp



Most of the lumber produced at McPhee was rough-cut, finished later at the McPhee and McGinnity plant in Denver. (Robert Orr Collection)



Some wood was precut for boxes and shipped to fruit and vegetable producers. (Robert Orr Collection)

Camps in 1933 and another to manufacture army locker trunk trays during World War II.[39]

The McPhees pioneered logging railroads. Their decision to use the logging railroad in this area was a response to the type of lumber which they sought.



During McPhee's heyday, sixty miles of narrow-gauge logging railroad stretched into the timberland. Here a logging train, with mechanical loader at rear, departs the log loading point for McPhee. (C.W. Sward, U.S. Forest Service)

Unlike species like cottonwoods which thrive in riverbottoms and can be cut, dumped into a river and floated, the tall Ponderosa pines require dry and well drained soil, normally found on mesas away from river bottoms. Land transportation either utilizing horses or logging railroads was, therefore, the only alternative.[40]

The McPhee railroad was the last narrow gauge logging railroad in southwestern Colorado. The railroad officially came to the Dolores River Valley in 1891, in the form of the Rio Grande Southern. Due to McPhee's relative isolation, the New Mexico Lumber Company decided to link the mill town with the main line railroad as well as construct track to reach into the timberlands. The participation of a main line railroad in the operation of logging lines was unprecedented in the United States.[41] Railroad construction began in 1924, using an incomplete survey commissioned for the Dolores, Paradox and Grand Junction Railroad in 1913.[42] In 1924, a line was built westward five miles from Dolores, terminating at McPhee. Many logging lines of the region, like the Colorado and Southwestern, as the McPhee's line was named, were formally incorporated rather than operating under the lumber company name.[43]



McPhee utilized narrow gauge railroads to assist in their logging. Mechanical loaders hauled the cut timber onto flat railroad cars. (C.W. Sward, U.S. Forest Service)

As logging operations moved deeper into the timber, railroad spur lines followed. At its peak the company amassed sixty miles of railroad.[44] The New Mexico Lumber Company had five logging locomotives, one geared and four rod.[45] The rod locomotives were mostly obsolete, obtained second-hand from the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad with one from Rio Grande and Southwestern Railroad at El Vado. The Montezuma Lumber Company, which took over in 1936, decreased the trackage substantially and reduced the locomotives to two. Most of the 45 flat cars came from nearby declining operations. Second hand track was imported from Salida and Pagosa Springs. In the 1930's, the Montezuma Lumber Company purchased an 1880 duckbill coach (#311) from the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad to transport employees and their families to Dolores behind the regular lumber train. On Saturday nights the train transported the townspeople to Dolores for dances, movies and drinking in the gas-illuminated car with faded red plush seats.[46]

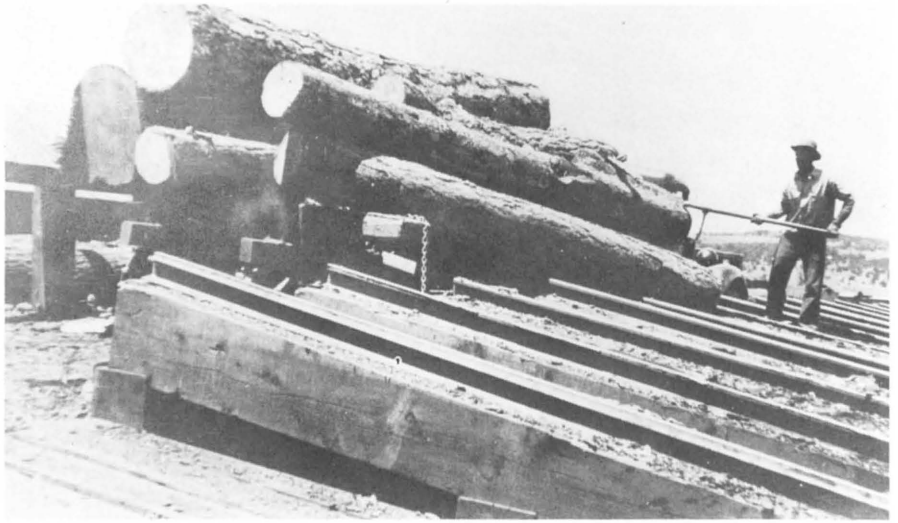
The end of narrow gauge logging in southwest Colorado came in 1932 when the expense of hauling logs and lumber by rail gave way to hauling by trucks. The five miles of track between McPhee and Dolores remained, however, and continued to service McPhee residents. The scrapping of the last of this segment occurred in 1948.[47] Finally in 1950, after an intense struggle and a brief period of receivership in the 1940's the Denver and Rio Grande Southern Railroad abandoned operations in the area.[48]



Railroad logging gradually gave way to hauling by trucks in the 1930's and 1940's. (Robert Orr Collection)

The logging operations at McPhee have been criticized for their continued dependence on the railroad and failure to mechanize production. Logging in Colorado, as exemplified by McPhee was marked by the absence of mechanical loading devices used on the Pacific Coast. It represented instead of a marked dedication to horse power.[49] Four horse teams, with either big wheeled rigs or eight wheeled wagons were used to haul the trees to the loading station. Instead of steam donkey engines, Colorado loggers used crosshauling, by which a team of horses dragged trees up a ramp onto log cars. Seven to ten flat cars made up a train with two locomotives used to haul from forest to mill. A third locomotive hauled the loaded cars to the unloading skids at the mill pond. It is interesting to note that most of the hay and grain for the 200–250 heavy draft horses had to be shipped in as no local ranch could regularly meet the demand.[50]

Social communities, separate from that of the company town of McPhee, sprang up as new logging camps were established. (See Appendix A for a list of company logging camps.) The sites of the camps moved every few years as logging operations ventured deeper to secure timber. The earliest, Horse Camp, was little more than a construction camp, though it did have a school. Beaver Camp in 1925 represented a more permanent encampment, with a store and post office. From then on, a small commissary was always moved along with the camp. Lawrence Sullenberger did most of the construction work and establishing of camps for the New Mexico Lumber Company.[51] Small board cabins were built on skids, easily hitched to four or six horses for transportation to new sites. Tent colonies were often constructed at the camps. Entire families often moved to the hills so the head of family could earn a living. Characteristically the camp housed several hundred loggers and their families. No rent was charged in the log camps. During the winter people from the logging camps resided in McPhee.



Flat railroad cars and later logging trucks dumped the cut logs onto the skidway at the mill pond. (Robert Orr Collection)

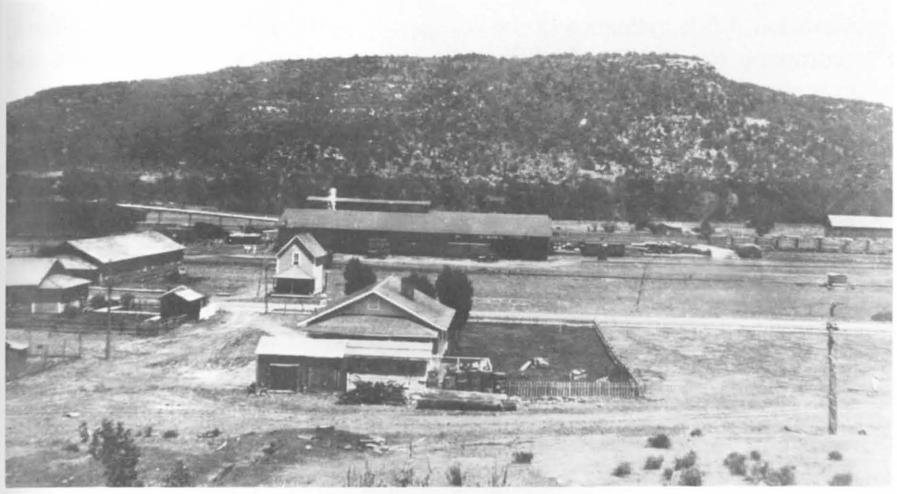
Yet to understand company towns one must view them as much more than mere housing. Community functions were usually vested in the company. As the 1920 Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin focusing on company towns stated:

> Where an employer goes into a new district to organize and establish a new plant he must practically build his whole community; he assumes the responsibility for the creation of a new center of social life. And not until he has established the community and demonstrated the likelihood of its permanence do secondary interests establish themselves and social control and self direction by the members of the community take shape.[52]

In the absence of self government it was revealing to note how employees viewed the company, especially their perception of owners. Such views were understandably mixed, yet in the case of McPhee employees seem to have had a certain affection for the original owner, William McPhee and a general distaste for those who followed. Paternalism was the key word; he served as a sort of fatherly figure. One observer recently noted that after McPhee passed away and the company reorganized, "the new management prevented things from running smoothly, as this new company exploited its employees as much as possible, giving them inadequate and unsanitary quarters in which to live, paying them in token money only good at the company store whose prices were exorbitant and otherwise treating them like animals rather than like human beings."[53] The comment, however, rings of nostalgia for the town which he described is no different than that which existed when McPhee lived. In any case, a clear affection for the original owner is apparent. Other complaints often referred to the new owners as dictators.[54]

Providing a school, like many of the McPhee community functions, was a task which fell to the New Mexico Lumber Company. It was not until years later that the county accepted the McPhee school into their jurisdiction. Originally classes were held in one of the four room houses, eventually transferring to the rooming house. A seven room schoolhouse was constructed on the west side of town in October, 1924 with company material and the men donating their labor. At its peak, 500 students attended the school in split sessions. After completing the tenth grade in McPhee, the students were transported to Dolores by the red carpeted train to complete their high school education. After the Great Depression, McPhee was forced to discontinue paying the tuition.[55]

The commissary at McPhee was more than one of the largest company stores in southwestern Colorado; it functioned as a community center. The McPhee



The bunkhouse, far left, provided additional company housing at McPhee. The company doctor's residence is shown in the foreground. (Robert Orr Collection)

store functioned as a department of the New Mexico Lumber Company as opposed to other company towns where the commissary was owned by a subsidiary or leased by an outside party. Direct or indirect pressure exerted by the company on employees to shop there seems to have been minimum.

The McPhee store occupied half of the second largest building in town (besides the mill), the company office and the post office sharing the other half. A butcher shop was located in a small extension next to the commissary and a gas station stood in front. Also inside the large frame building was a "picture show" and pool room. The commissary featured a high ceiling with a balcony and offered a variety of products including dry goods, hardware, meats and produce. What was not available at the store could be ordered from Montgomery Ward. The commissary was open to McPhee residents, logging camps, the CCC Camp as well as Dolores Valley residents and it accepted both cash and company scrip. Employees were charged cost plus 10 percent on all merchandise except dress shoes. At least one employee argued however that this was not true, "you were lucky if you got 40 percent above anyone else's price."[56]

McPhee employees received 40 percent of their wages in company issued scrip for use at the commissary, and 60 percent in cash. The scrip was estimated to equal living expenses per month plus rent. The coin-shaped tin scrip was accepted by many Dolores merchants.[57] Later, coupons which could not be redeemed in Dolores came into use. The employees received coupon books in five, ten and twenty denominations; the price of the books was deducted from the employee's check.[58] During difficult times employees were allowed to borrow on the next summer's wages, and were issued credit for use in the company store. Many were thus obliged to patronize the store and unfortunately a few, no doubt, became indebted to it.[59]

Area ranchers also patronized the large store, trading eggs, butter and produce at the store for scrip. Often this trade consumed a large percent of their cash flow. The scrip money allowed many area farmers to survive through financially unstable periods and shop for necessities at the commissary, especially merchandise which they could not trade for anywhere else.[60]

In terms of fuel, power and public utilities McPhee was virtually self-sufficient. The company generated all of its own fuel. Two miles from the Dolores-Disappointment Highway along the road to Beaver Camp, a vein of light lignite coal was developed. Twenty tons a day were mined, all of which was consumed by company operations. The coal was loaded directly from the mine into tenders of logging engines, the rest hauled for company use.[61] All mill waste material and sawdust were put through two machines called hogs where it was made into



The company store carried a variety of products including dry goods, hardware, meats and produce, accepting both cash and company scrip. Employees were charged cost plus 10 percent on most merchandise. (Bill Hamilton, Dolores, Colorado)

chips. These chips were conveyed to boilers with surplus stored in a fuel house.

Beginning in 1925, parts of McPhee received electricity making use of generators powered by steam from the mill boilers.[62] Lights were extinguished each night at ten o'clock when the generator went down. The system was comparatively advanced. Many of the surrounding districts remained without electricity for some ten to fifteen more years.[63] Only select homes in the Mexican-American section received power.[64] McPhee is typical of many Southwestern company towns where generally the better classes of homes received utilities.

A water pump was installed in 1927 to provide water for domestic and manufacturing purposes. The headgate was located on the west side of the Dolores River, two miles above McPhee. The pipe was drilled six feet into a sandbar, intending the sand to act as a filter.[65] The water was pumped to two large storage tanks in town.[66]

The New Mexico Lumber Company furnished a number of important social services, including a doctor and dispensary for the employees. Married employees paid two dollars a month for the medical privilege, single employees one dollar a month. Although accidents frequently occurred at the plant, one had to miss work more than ten days before collecting compensation. Mill breakdowns lasting longer than fifteen minutes had to be made up at night on workers' time. The men at the mill apparently received no vacation.[67] The McPhee police force consisted of one deputy trained by the county and employed by the company. There was no organized fire department in the town, in case of fire everyone pitched in with the help of the Dolores fire department. Amenities sponsored by the company included a company picnic, baseball team, tennis court and basketball court. There were apparently a few telephones in town and a good number of cars.

Religious worship in McPhee was influenced by the company. Because McPhee and McGinnity were both Roman Catholic, as were a large number of Hispanic workers, this denomination received special attention and support from the company. In the early years a train was sent into the town by the company to take Catholic employees into Dolores for Mass.[68] Work began on a Catholic Church in 1928, to be located near the school, on a hill to the west overlooking the town. A cemetery was planned and constructed on adjacent land serving all employees of the New Mexico Lumber Company. Company carpenters were released from other work to build the church with timber also donated by the company. Two dollars a month was withheld from the wages of all Mexican-American employees for the building. Apparently this met some dispute from non-Catholic Hispanic workers.[69] These funds were combined with a $2500 donation by McPhee and a $100 donation from the Catholic Extension Society.[70] The church was dedicated in June, 1929 and merited a half holiday for services, work resuming at one o'clock so visitors could see the plant in operation.[71] It is indicative of the company's power over community affairs, the company refused the Archbishop's request that the land on which the church stood be deeded to the diocese.[72]



Work began on a Catholic church in 1928 on a hill overlooking the town. Lumber was donated by the New Mexico Lumber Company. $2 a month was deducted from the Catholic workers to help defray the construction costs while company carpenters were released from their regular work to build the church. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

The church, measuring 30′ × 84′ was labeled the "largest and finest edifice of the kind in Montezuma County."[73] The wood frame building featured a single center bell tower extension and side wing. The roof was a single medium gable with projecting eaves and exposed rafters. The nave windows were multipaned and double hung. The interior was constructed of vertical planks to a point four feet above the floor and the horizontal planking extended to the ceiling. The planks were three inches wide with decorative grooves. A semicircular loft extended over the rear; two broad platforms atop each other formed the chancel. On Sundays the church hosted one service for all worshipers,



The Dolores Star *reported the Catholic church as the "largest and finest edifice of the kind in Montezuma County." (Jet Lowe, HAER)*

conducted in a combination of Latin, English and Spanish.[74] The church was moved to Dove Creek in 1949 where it received a stucco covering.

Other religious groups played lesser roles in the McPhee community. Many of the Mexican-Americans who migrated from El Vado brought with them a strong belief in the Penitente order. Officially frowned on by the Roman Catholic Church, the Penitents believed in penance such as self-flaggelation for sins. Private services were held in households, the believers keeping a rather low profile. A Baptist minister and reverend of the Salvation Army preached at the school at times; Latter Day Saints and Seventh Day Adventists were also active in the early years.[75]

Anti-papist sentiments permeated McPhee and McGinnity operations.[76] The period around 1925 marked a peak in Ku Klux Klan activity in Colorado as well as in Montezuma County.[77] The power of the Klan and their prejudices against Black, Catholic and Jewish persons during this period has been generally underestimated.[78] The year 1924 marked a wave of bigotry witnessing the election of all KKK candidates in Denver. The Klan's influence reached McPhee in the form of a boycott on McPhee and McGinnity and their subsidiaries.[79] The *Dolores Star* hailed the alleged efforts of the Klan to root out bootleggers, gamblers and the like and went so far as to declare in 1925 that today the best Americans are Klansmen.[80]

The relative impotence of unions in McPhee, reflects another aspect of the company's domination. In 1939 the first strike in the history of Montezuma County occurred in McPhee as 300 workers refused to go to work resulting in a two day shutdown of mill operations. The millworkers, following the lead of Mexican-Americans from Albuquerque, largely belonged to the AFL Union of Carpenters and Joiners. The incident was sparked by the replacement of a retiring millwright by a man with reportedly little experience.[81] After the millworkers struck, management shut down the mill, demanding the loggers stop working. The non-union loggers subsequently put enough pressure on the mill workers to force them out of the union. A clearcut victory for management over the labor force resulted; the union having lasted only slightly more than a year. Significantly, the strike was in no way caused by complaints concerning wages, hours or working conditions. Many employers viewed the company town as an effective type of insurance and insulation against strikes.[82]

Despite all attempts to create a cohesive community at McPhee, the town remained a loose union of transients on their way to new lumber operations. Much of the local news in the *Dolores Star* related the immigration in and out of town. Many came to McPhee from neighboring lumber mills, numerous Mexican-Americans from Lumberton, Chama, Alamosa and El Vado. A group of Blacks was hired from McNary, Arizona remaining until World War II. Farmers from Oklahoma came westward pitching tent colonies. Swedes and Finns were also present, perhaps most common in the logging camps. A large number of local small ranchers and farmers also sought work in the off season. There were few Indians. One of Colorado's longest lived Civilian Conservation Corp camps also located at Beaver Camp 20 miles north of Dolores between 1933 and 1942 adding yet another group of transients to the community. The CCC men sometimes shopped at the commissary and attended local dances.

During the Great Depression the plant was shut down for almost three years resulting in the exodus of nearly one-third of the workers. The lumber industry was among the hardest hit and many workers remained with no where else to go. The commissary closed, but those who chose to stay did not have to pay rent.[83] Some reportedly were employed on the Dolores sewer system[84] Others left around 1940 with empty houses becoming the site for many dances.

While attempting to foster community spirit, the company continued to encourage the tacit segregation of Mexican-Americans and Anglos. It is estimated that 75 percent of the community was Spanish surnamed.[85] Hispanics were present in the area well before McPhee, working as shepherds and with the railroad and cattle industry. Yet it is not until the 1920's that Hispanic names appear on land patents.[86] One local resident commented that pre-McPhee Mexicans were an "outstanding group of citizens, but many of the McPhee Mexicans (those imported from other lumber camps) were a different breed and they didn't always get along with whites or other Mexicans.[87]

Little social interaction occurred between the two groups. Each ethnic group resided in distinct sections and maintained their own social center. The Anglos congregated in the schoolhouse while the Mexicans had a lodge near the river where dances were held and Spanish culture encouraged. One observer noted "when Anglos and Mexican-Americans mixed in social activities it usually resulted in open hostilities. Friendships never endured after children graduated. Visiting was generally restricted to your own section of town though polite words were always exchanged if former friends should meet in the street."[88]

The 1940's witnessed the slow and gradual demise of the McPhee operations. (See Appendix B, Chain of Ownership, Chronology.) Several successive fires eroded its stability, yet each time rebuidling and rebirth occurred. In 1944, the Montezuma Lumber Company was sold and future lumbering seemed doomed as the new owners talked of using the McPhee site for an oil refinery.[89] Yet a new mill plant was installed and the town revived as a lumber center. The new owners supposedly built a fireproof building to house the mill. The mill was constructed of pipe stems from oil fields and with concrete, a tin roof and a floor of four by fours.[90]

Even the fireproof construction could not delay the inevitable disassembling of McPhee begun in 1944. Most homes were sold to nearby ranchers and relocated. Houses averaged $100–$125! It averaged three days to move an



A series of devastating fires in the 1940's contributed to the eventual abandonment of McPhee. (Bill Hamilton, Dolores, Colorado)

Anglo house, two to jack it and one to move it. By 1945 only 25 families remained on ranches or in Dolores.[91]

By 1945, the timber reserves were depleted to the point where operations were unprofitable and the main mill was dismantled, with a smaller mill sufficing.[92] World War II further drained away many employees. Those who remained were faced with broken, hard to replace machinery.[93]

In January, 1948 a devastating, yet in many ways merciful, fire destroyed the sawmill at McPhee. The second in a decade, the fire destroyed all mill machinery and damaged four railroad cars. Rather than rebuild the mill, a planer and dry kiln were set up. That same year, Bert Bidwell, a former Cortez resident took over the operation of the mill to clean up the remaining timber.[94] A.J. Rust reportedly operated the McPhee mill in its last days.[95] Salvagable machinery was sold to firms operating in Mexico.[96] Even after 1950 there were still several sawmills in the area which accounted for a large percentage of the state timber.[97] Lumbering continued sporadically in the area until 1976.[98]

In 1948 Fred and Margaret Shepherd bought the barren 480 acres of land which once housed the town, including the commissary and several small buildings. Just as Charlie Johnson who originally homesteaded the land, the new owners planned to breed race horses. They lived in what was once the superintendent's house until the Bureau of Reclamation purchased the land for the McPhee Reservoir project.

A number of the McPhee structures remain in the surrounding area today reflecting various degrees of alteration. Most homes are now located in Cortez and Dolores as well as Lebanon, Dove Creek and Lewis Arriola. (See Appendix C: McPhee Buildings.) J.E. Barret of Cortez reportedly bought and moved many of the houses.[99] J.D. Harris of Price, Utah was also responsible for moving an additional 110 homes.[100]

The superintendent's house as well as Dr. Speck's house have been moved to Summitt Ridge where they are now owned by Evelyn Royce. Dr. Speck's office was moved to Cortez where it served as his office until he retired and then his son's office until 1968 when he moved to Denver.[101]



Many of the employee residences have been relocated to surrounding communities such as Dolores, Dove Creek and Lebanon. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

Although the company town of McPhee lasted but a short 24 years, its tenure is typical of the short life span of most Western lumbering operations. McPhee's demise can hardly be credited solely to the exhaustion of timber lands in the area. Eventual bankruptcy was the result of a number of causes, not the least of which was the company's technological conservatism caught in the crux of an increasingly modern world. McPhee and McGinnity Company was hampered by their determination to stick with railroading, even into the age of cheap motor travel eroding the economic viability of the railroad. Changes in railroad rates in the early 1930's completed the process, wiping out the advantages the railroad once enjoyed in shipping and closing out much of McPhee's market.

The initial parent company also owes its failure to reasons quite removed from those which ended the town of McPhee. McPhee and McGinnity filed bankruptcy in 1930 as an immediate result of the panic of 1929 which severely shook building and lumber industries. A hard winter in 1929 further worsened matters. The company had also over-invested in government and private timber purchases which proved too sparse for profits. Likewise, the effect of a Klan boycott of mill products should not be underestimated as a contributing factor. Yet McPhee and McGinnity's operations, as well as those which followed them were all impeded by the quality of the lumber, which did not prove as good as initially assumed. Much of the timber was overmature by grading standards and was knocked down in grade to utility construction level, resulting in losses and debts for the company.[102]

In short, the fate of the town of McPhee could have been predicted looking no further than 1930. The damage done to the company at this point proved irreparable for later owners. Fires, accidents, a war-time shortage of labor were only the latest in a succession of problems plaguing McPhee. Although later owners converted to trucks, increasing the number of mills in the forests, they could not alter the inevitable and anticipated eventual demise of the remarkable McPhee Company town.

FOOTNOTES

[1]History of the Region of the Montezuma National Forest and Vicinity," (unpublished manuscript, Dolores Archaeological Program (D.A.P. files,) Cortez, Colorado, 1923).

[2]One of these was A.A. Rust Sawmill producing 50,00 ft/day. See Harry Pyle, *Dolores: The Gateway to Montezuma Valley.* (1906) Bulletin #4, in clippings file, Western History Department, Denver Public Library.

[3]"History of the Region of the Montezuma National Forest and Vicinity." (D.A.P. files unpublished manuscript, undated).

[4]*Historical Encyclopedia of Colorado,* Thomas S. Chamblin, ed. (Denver, Colorado Historical Association, 1975) p. 295.

[5]Paul O'Rourke, *Frontier In Transition: A History of Southwestern Colorado,* (Denver: Colorado State Office, Bureau of Land Management, 1980), pp. 126–27.

[6]William Vickers, *History of the City of Denver, Arapahoe County and Colorado.* (Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Company, 1880.)

[7]Gordon Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver and Rio Grande,* (Golden, Colorado: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1971), p. 41.

[8]Bigg's son was general manager of McPhee in the 1940's. See O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition,* p. 129.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.

[11]"McPhee has one of the Middle West's Biggest Sawmills." See *Rocky Mountain News,* 18 April 1927, p. 9.

[12]William McPhee to John Bloom, 13 March 1981, (D.A.P. files).

[13]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 141.

[14]John Porter Bloom, "Historic Studies" (D.A.B. files), p. 123.

[15]*Dolores Star,* 13 August 1926.

[16]*Dolores Star,* 13 August 1926.

[17]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 186. Chappell cites the following company towns: Arloa, Azotea, Brazos, Edith, El Vado, Glenco, Lumberton, McPhee, Pagosa Junction, S. Pagosa, Willow Creek.

[18]*Dolores Star,* 13 August 1926.

[19]Plat Book #4, p. 52. Montezuma County Clerk Office, Cortez, Colorado.

[20]"Letter to Editor" by Robert Orr, *Cortez Sentinel,* 23 June 1980.

[21]Unpublished material, (D.A.P. files).

[22]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 154.

[23]Interview with Art Hamilton, Dolores, Colorado, 28 July 1981.

[24]Interview with Adrian White, by Linda Dishman, Lebanon, Colorado, 15 July 1981.

[25]*Dolores Star,* 11 April 1924.

[26]Robert Orr, son of first superintendent, McPhee, Colorado to Deb Duranceau, 24 July 1979, (D.A.P. files).

[27]Interview with Lobato by Michael Sampson, Cortez, Colorado, 26 July 1979.

[28]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande* p. 146.

[29]*Montezuma Valley Journal,* 26 February 1959.

[30]Interview with Art and Bill Hamilton, Dolores, Colorado, 28 July 1981.

[31]James H. Baker and Leroy R. Hafen, *History of Colorado,* 4 Vols. (Denver, Colorado Tinderman Co., 1927) 2:746.

[32]*Montezuma Valley Journal,* 26 February 1949.

[33]Dolores Renze, "A Brief Study of Lumber Industry in Colorado 1858–1948," (A University of Denver course paper, 1949).

[34]*Dolores Star,* 24 July 1942.

[35]*Rocky Mountain News,* 8 August 1927, p. 14.

[36]Sylvia McClellan, *Timber: The Story of McPhee,* (Dolores, Colorado: Dolores Star, 1970) p. 18.

[37]Gordon Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 163.

[38]Ibid, p. 155.

[39]Dolores Renze, "A Brief Study of Lumber Industry in Colorado 1858–1948."

[40]William McPhee to John Bloom, 13 March 1981, (D.A.P. files).

[41]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 6.

[42]Mallory Hope Ferrell, *Silver San Juan* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Co., 1973), 394.

[43]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 6.

[44]Josie Crum, *The Rio Grande Southern Story* (Durango: Colorado Railroadians, 1947).

[45]Kramer Adams, *Logging Railroads of the West,* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Co., 1961).

[46]Ferrell, *Silver San Juan,* p. 395.

[47]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 57.

[48]See Robert Ormes, *Railroads and the Rockies* (Denver, Colorado: Sage Books, 1963), p. 335. Remnants of the McPhee railroad are still visible today. According to Robert Ormes, "The present highway downriver from Dolores follows the line of this railroad on most part where it climbs to the sage brush mesa. The railroad grade becomes visible to anyone climbing the rest of the way up the mesa from the road's highest point."

[49]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 6.

[50]*Dolores Star,* 13 August 1926.

[51]*Dolores Star,* 4 October 1928.

[52]U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Housing by Employers in the United States, Federal Survey of Company Houses in 1920,* by Leifer Magnuson, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 1920.

[53]Rev. Reginald James, "St. Rita's Church: Mancos and Missions," 10 May 1945, (D.A.P. records).

[54]Interview with Chris Gomez, Cortez Public Library, Local History Seminar, 1974.

[55]Interview John and Maurice Ritter, Mancos, Colorado, 8 September 1980.

[56]Interview with Chris Gomez.

[57]Tom Martin in Dolores has some of the McPhee tin money in $1, $.50, $.25, $.10 denominations. He said that $.01 pieces were not made as the scrip cost more than a penny. Interview with Tom Martin, Dolores, Colorado, 17 August 1981.

[58]Interview with Charley Artz by Newel Periman, 1979, (D.A.P. files).

[59]McClellan, *Timber: the Story of McPhee,* p. 33. The State of Colorado was notable among states for passing a law which forbade the use of a "truck system" in the payment of wages. According to this law an employee could not be required to waive payment of his wages in hard currency and take the whole or any part in merchandise. See "Legislation Relating to Payment of Wages in Scrip," *Monthly Labor Review, (July 1936): 75.*

[60]*Interview with Ina & Jim Cline, Dunton, Colorado, 22 July 1981.*

[61]*Dolores Star,* 13 August 1926.

[62]*Dolores Star,* 5 December 1924.

[63]McClellan *Timber: The Story of McPhee,* p. 10.

[64]Interview with Chris Brubaker, Cortez, Colorado, 13 July 1981.

[65]Plat Book #4, p. 52.

[66]Interview with Artz, 1979, (D.A.P. files).

[67]Interview with Art & Bill Hamilton, July 1981 (D.A.P. files).

[68]Interview with Gomez.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Bruner, "History of Catholic Church."

[71]*Dolores Star,* 7 June 1929.

[72]"Unpublished Material," (D.A.P. files).

[73]*Dolores Star,* 7 June 1929.

[74]Interview with Lucero, 1981.

[75]*Dolores Star,* 1924–28.

[76]*Catholic Register,* 16 September 1926.

[77]*Catholic Register,* 25 June 1923.

[78]*Catholic Register,* 30 July 1925.

[79]Chappell, *Logging Along the Denver & Rio Grande,* p. 162.

[80]*Dolores Star,* 22 May 1925.

[81]McClellan, *Timber: The Story of McPhee,* p. 25.

[82]*Dolores Star,* 14 July 1939.

[83]Interview with Lucero, July 1981.

[84]*Cortez Journal Herald,* 7 August 1930.

[85]Adrian White, "Unpublished Notes," (D.A.P. files).

[86]Bloom, p. 117.

[87]Interview with Ritter, 1980.

[88]Cynthia Kenoyer "Old Timers Still Remember McPhee as the Largest Town in Montezuma-Dolores Area," 3 April 1980, (D.A.P. files).

[89]*Dolores Star,* 3 March 1944.

[90]Interview with Artz, 1979.

[91]Reverend Bruner, "History of Catholic Church."

[92]*Montezuma Valley Journal,* p. 26 February 1959.

[93]Reverend Bruner, "History of Catholic Church."

[94]*Montezuma Valley Journal,* 26 February 1959.

[95]Ormes, *Railroads & the Rockies,* p. 335.

[96]*Dolores Star,* 3 March 1934.

[97]*Historical Encyclopedia of Colorado,* p. 286.

[98]Steven G. Baker and Duane A. Smith, *Dolores Archeological Program Historic Studies—1978 Research Design, Inventory & Evaluation,* (Salt Lake City: Bureau of Reclamation, 1979), p. 286.

[99]*Dolores Star,* 3 March 1944.

[100]Interview with John Turner by Michael Sampson, 16 October 1979, (D.A.P. files).

[101]McClellan, p. 115.

[102]Interview with Gomez.

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APPENDIX A: LOGGING CAMPS

1924 Horse Camp, 9 miles above Dolores on road to Norwood, construction camp

1925 Beaver Creek, 9 miles north, 25 miles north of Dolores

1927 Langston's Camp, 2.5 miles north

1927 Long Draw, 2.5 miles north, 20 miles north Dolores

1928 Calf Creek, 6 miles west, 26 miles from McPhee

1929 Timber Spur, above Rico, spruce timber

1929 Others moved to Salters Canyon, 19 miles north of McPhee

1933 Dry Canyon

1940 Lost Canyon, Glades
(1940's-smaller mills at Lost Canyon, Timber Spur, Barlow Creek, Glades, Plateau)

APPENDIX B: CHAIN OF OWNERSHIP

1924 New Mexico Lumber Company, subsidiary of McPhee and McGinnity

1927 John Zalaha purchased private interest of William McPhee, became general manager

1929 Zalaha purchases remaining New Mexico Lumber stock from McPhee and McGinnity

1929 Zalaha and Associates default on payments after stock market crash, company reverts back to McPhee and McGinnity

1930 McPhee and McGinnity bankrupt, plant closed

1931 Receivership by International Trust Company, New Mexico Lumber insolvent, mill equipment and property for sale

1934 Plant reopens, expected to stay open for 3 months

1934 New firm New Mexico Lumber and Manufacturing Company reopens plant in August

1934 September, fire destroys dry kiln

1935 New Mexico Lumber and Manufacturing fails after fire

1935 Montezuma Lumber Company formed by Thomas Orr and Associates of Biggs-Kurtz, Grand Junction, Colorado

1940 Mill and entire complex destroyed by fire, dry kiln and planer saved

1942 Machine shop fire

1943 Sawmill at Glades burned

1944 Operations sold to partnership headed by Lewis Mack of Moab, Utah. Mill not rebuilt, smaller one set up to keep planing, finish contracts. Removal of machinery begun

1948 January 19, Plant totally destroyed

APPENDIX C: McPHEE BUILDINGS

Cortez

Superintendent's House, Dr. Speck's house-Summitt Ridge

301 S. Ash St.

603 S. Ash St.

611 S. Ash St.

25–29 Elm St.

W. First St. (Next to Mountain Bell)

247 S. Linden St.

Dolores

3 houses on 17th Street

Dove Creek

Church and rectory

Lebanon

Unidentified residences

Lewis Arriola

Schoolhouse remnants (Wayne Dennison)
Unidentified residences

Inside back cover: Loading chute at Kuhlman Ranch. (Jet Lowe, HAER)

GPO 837 - 472

