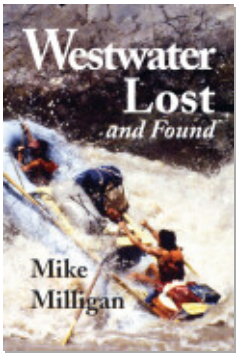
5. Rocks, Dams, and Hideouts: Entering the Canyon



5

Rocks, Dams, and Hideouts

Entering the Canyon

Not far into Westwater Canyon, just beyond Wild Horse Cabin, is Wild Horse campsite. Not often used because of its proximity to the launch, this camp offers some of the most colorful scenery during the evening and early mornings. Granite outcrops emerge from the water, standing as a gateway into the canyon, and the number of large metamorphic and igneous rock slabs increases along the banks. Beyond the camp, at Wild Horse Rapid, the river bends toward the southeast and short dark cliffs begin to appear. The camp provides beachfront property, with plenty of tent and tarp locations and less tamarisk than elsewhere. Numerous outcrops of granite, schist, and gneiss along the beach provide some privacy, and pockets eroded out of them, as if by an ice cream scoop, offer natural chairs.

Prospecting and mining occurred throughout the area, beginning in the 1880s, and some remnants still exist nearby. Short hikes lead to Wild Horse Cabin upstream and the Duplex Miner's Cabins downstream. Directly behind camp there appear to be the remains of a chimney. This is the most notable location of evidence of human history within the canyon's walls. Once active with placer miners, the area is now silent except for sporadic river runners floating by or the occasional gobbling of recently introduced wild turkeys. This camp is too hot during

midday to appreciate. One must spend the night cradled amongst the granite rock outcrops and watch the shadows on the Wingate sandstone cliffs across the river in the evening, then the wonderful orange hues at dawn when the sun rises from the east. The river splashes serenely through small riffles, creating a calming atmosphere when combined with the show across the river. At night the sky is dark and generally clear, exhibiting an endless vista of stars, planets, and occasional satellites.

From here to the end of the canyon there are four predominant geologic sequences in the rock history. Two sequences dominate the canyon scenery: the darker igneous and metamorphic granite, schist, and gneiss that are 1.7 billion years old. Then strikingly elevated above them are the much younger 200-million-year-old Wingate sandstone cliffs, which rise hundreds of feet above the river. Easy to miss, sandwiched between these dominant strata, is the sloping Chinle formation that is slightly older than the Wingate sandstone. Also, less noticeable, on top, is the youngest formation, Kayenta sandstone. "Slightly" seems like an understatement because these formations represent millions of years of geologic time, though they follow each other sequentially. This cannot be said of the Precambrian rock below them. The unusual marriages of formations referred to as unconformities are gaps of geologic history where strata are inexplicably missing.

The metamorphic and igneous rocks are Precambrian, the oldest rock group on the planet, in some places dating back to the earth's formation approximately 4.66 billion years ago. Although the Precambrian rocks in Westwater Canyon are not that old, the mere fact of their Precambrian age is impressive enough. The granite, schist, and gneiss can be difficult to distinguish. A Tag-A-Long company boat-gal recently taught me a mnemonic for them: "It's not gneiss [nice] to take your schist for granite." Until 1998, there had been little specific analysis of the Precambrian rock within Westwater; then in October of that year, during a research trip through the canyon that was organized by John Weisheit of the Colorado Plateau River Guides (CPRG) of Moab, Wil Bussard and Tamsin McCormick gathered sufficient samples to begin the process of identification. Wil Bussard wrote of the Precambrian rocks along this course in the winter 1999 issue of *Confluence*.[1] He described to me further the metamorphism related to Westwater Canyon:

> Granite is an intrusive igneous rock that forms when magma cools beneath the Earth's surface. Over a billion years ago magma came into the crust and solidified at depth in the area that is now Westwater Canyon. The large crystal sizes and consistent alignment of these crystals at Black Rocks and Miners Cabin tell us that this magma cooled slowly and at depth in an actively compressing environment. The metamorphic rock into which the granite was emplaced has mineral assemblages consistent with burial metamorphism of about 10–20 kilometers. So, the rocks we now see in Westwater Canyon are those which were deep in the continental crust at the time of crystallization. Activity on the surface at this time is not recorded here, as it has been eroded away and lost in the Great Unconformity, the missing gap in geologic time of roughly 1.5 billion years between the Precambrian rocks and the overlying Triassic Chinle formation/Wingate Sandstone. It is reasonable to infer that surface activity here in the Precambrian was similar to mountain belts at continental margins of today, i.e. the present day Sierra Nevada/Coast ranges of California or perhaps the Andes of South America; with sedimentary and volcanic rocks being produced and deposited.[2]

The metamorphic rocks of Westwater are a remnant of the Uncompahgre uplift that once was part of a greater mountain range than the current Rocky Mountains. "The Ancestral Rockies arose, beginning about 300 million years ago and stretched from southeast Oklahoma to Salt Lake City. The Uncompahgre uplift pushed up the crust at Westwater and adjacent areas, creating the Paradox Basin to the southwest."[3] Seas, deserts, sand dunes, and shorelines were all a part of the geology that afterwards put piles of sandstone, shale, and limestone onto the Precambrian base. And just as it took millions of years to pile them on, it also took millions of years for nature to dig through time and expose the schist below. These metamorphic rocks would still be thousands of feet underground had it not been for erosion, primarily by the Colorado River. Wherever these rocks are, the river will be narrow due to their hardness. The Wingate Sandstone erodes easily, but not this Precambrian rock.

The Chinle formation dates from between 245 and 208 million years ago—thus the geological history gap of about one and a half billion years in Westwater Canyon. The often unnoticed Chinle formation is the talus slope at the base of the Wingate cliffs and formed during the Triassic period, which began about

225 million years ago and ended 35 million years later. The Chinle rock is a shale from a time when the area consisted of level flood plains, meandering streams, or shallow lakes. Its gray color came from impregnation by volcanic ash.

Following the Chinle formation the geologic history adheres to a continuous sequence with the Wingate sandstone followed by the Kayenta sandstone. The dominating Wingate formed near the end of the Triassic period. Unlike the tropical visions we have of this age spurred on by movies like *Jurassic Park*, sand dunes similar to those of the Sahara Desert hardened through time into the sandstone of this region. Sandstone is a softer rock, and the river, rain, ice, and, to a lesser degree, winds have shaped it for millions of years. When not protected, sandstone erodes quite easily and forms domes, fins, and occasional arches. Such formations are located in Westwater Canyon. Less noticeable, the Kayenta sandstone has been described as the glue that holds the more fragile Wingate sandstone together.

High above Wild Horse Rapid, the first rapid encountered, a form like a wild horse's head can be seen in the face of the cliff. Whether the rapid was named after the formation or because wild horses once roamed the area is anybody's guess.

Immediately beyond Wild Horse Rapid, walls of schist and gneiss shoot up over one hundred feet straight out of the water, suddenly imprisoning boaters in a deep narrow canyon. This stretch is similar to the narrow gorge further downstream, only it is somewhat tranquil and relaxing here. In normal river conditions, dead timber can be seen in this area thirty, forty, or fifty feet above, reminders of higher waters. The debris scattered above has caused many recreational boaters throughout the years to speculate how such incomprehensible flooding would affect the narrow canyon.

For many years Skull Rapid and the other continuous rapids were thought to be unrunnable above 30,000 cfs, let alone if flooding reached the heights where the debris accumulated. Most boaters hypothesized that the Colorado River bottlenecking through the narrow gorge would be like a toilet flushing. Then in 1983 and 1984 several boaters made pioneering high-water trips through Westwater and experienced what nobody previously had. A group of rafters that included the rangers at Westwater rode 60,500 cfs of river speeding through Westwater on June 27, 1983.

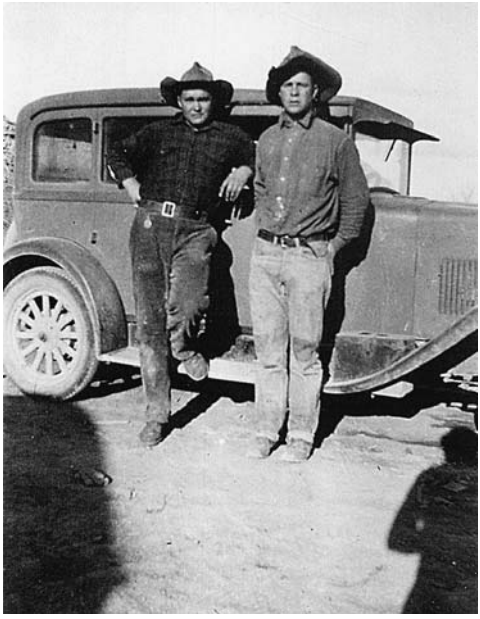
Instead of enormous holes and huge rollers, whirlpools sucking down on the rafts were the river's most frightening aspect.

Since 1950 when boating Westwater began gradually to increase in popularity, high water in most years averaged around 20,000 cfs, and only a few years exceeded 40,000 cfs, the highest being 63,400 cfs on June 10, 1957.[4] There is no record of anybody boating Westwater during 1957, and most of the recorded runs of Westwater prior to the 1970s were on low water. Many had thought 1983 was exceptional, but the following year on May 27, 1984, the Colorado River surged even higher through the canyon, with 69,500 cfs of water. All thought of the canyon being unrunnable at such levels was dispelled. Even though we have nearly experienced 70,000 cfs, one can only imagine what the reported highest level of 125,000 cfs looked like in 1884 when it flushed through the narrow canyon.[5] Conversely, prior to the summer of 2002, an extremely low water level hadn't been seen since April 19, 1977, when the river ran at 1,100 cfs. That year water conservation was requested of everyone along the Colorado River early in the spring, yet as dry as that was, it was not the lowest recorded level. That occurred on June 21, 1934, when the flow reached a low of 640 cfs.[6]

We are fortunate the canyon is available for us to enjoy at all. As early as 1902, speculators envisioned the canyon producing electricity for an "electric road" to transport ores between Moab and Cisco. The *Grand Valley Times* described the proposal:

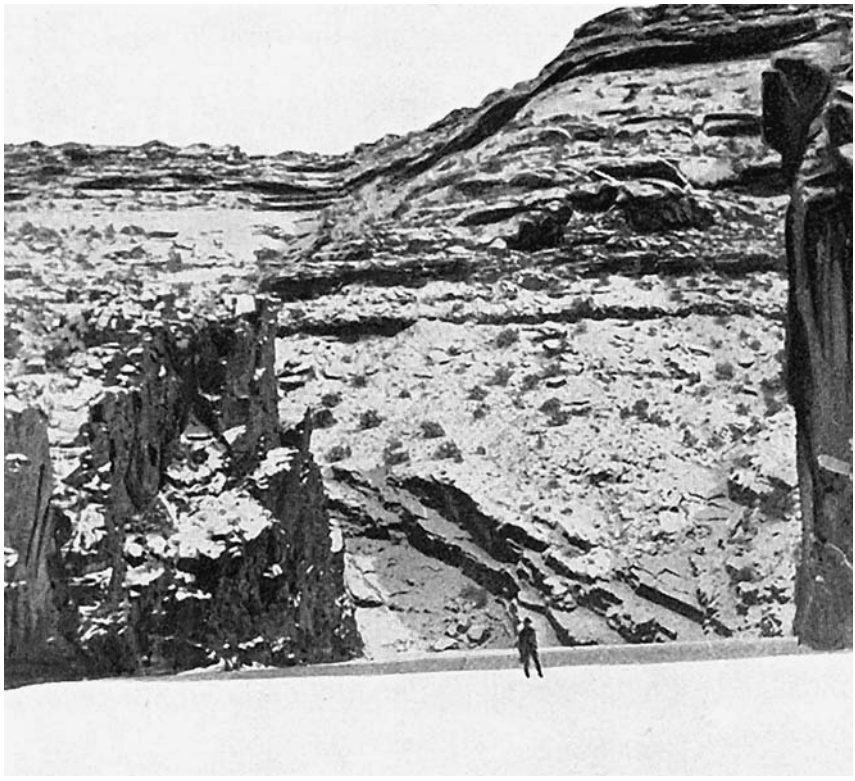
> Cisco is located in Grand county, near the Colorado border on the main line of the Rio Grande, and if the ore could be transported to that point the mine owners would have easy sailing. Mr. Earnshaw says the scheme is not only feasible, but he believes that it would be a paying line. The cost of the road would be about $1,000,000. The plan is to use the water in the canyon of the Grand river near Cisco, where the water has a drop of about 1,000 feet in five miles. It is estimated that a line fifty miles long would reach the principal deposits in the camp.[7]

J. N. Corbin, representing the Mt. Tamasaski Mining Company near Moab, invested considerable time researching the feasibility of the electric road and lobbying for it during trips to Salt Lake City and Denver. Perhaps his visit to Denver prompted the Bureau of Reclamation to get involved in seeking an additional



Inseparable Owen Malin and his stepbrother Jesse Hunt in front of 1924 Erskine, in approximately 1932. Photo courtesy of Dorothy Vario.

Jesse Hunt riding the hills above Westwater. Photo courtesy of Ila B. Reay.



"Dam site on Grand River 6 miles below Westwater, Utah." Notice man standing in the middle of the frozen river. U.S. Congress, U.S. Geological Survey, Reclamation Service, 2d report, 1903, 58th Congress, 2d session, 1903–1904, H. Doc. 57, no. 44.

use of the water running through Westwater Canyon. The headlines of the *Grand Valley Times* dated February 6, 1903, read: "The Government to Utilize the Great Water Power at Westwater." A dam would not only provide electric power, it would store water for irrigating arid eastern Utah and western Colorado lands. Engineer Matthes was described as "very jubilant" about the prospect. A lengthy canal would parallel the Book Cliffs and run east to the Grand River Valley in Colorado. A pumping plant would be built in the vicinity of West Salt Creek, obtain its electrical power from the proposed Westwater Dam, and elevate Grand River water to the canal. Once in the gravity canal the water would return to Colorado and primarily irrigate the Grand Valley.

Originally a proposed dam site was described as "a narrow place in the canyon about 2 miles below Westwater in the NE. 1/4 sec. 27, T. 20 S., R. 25 E., where the width between walls at the low-water line is 100 feet."[8] This would be in the proximity of Mile 123 on the Belknap *Canyonlands River Guide.* Further studies rejected the original location, citing backwaters during high water that would flood the Westwater valley, affecting the town and railroad. After further consideration the survey concluded a better location was available at approximately mile 117, near Bowling Alley and Skull Rapid. Fortunately the dam was never built.[9]

Some of the terrain south of the Colorado River may not have been surveyed until the Bureau of Reclamation investigated the Westwater dam sites, judging by an 1894 township survey.[10] In 1875 and 1876 survey crews working for Ferdinand V. Hayden had been in the vicinity of Westwater, and their reports suggest they did considerable survey work on the outskirts of Westwater Canyon but did not enter it.[11] Perhaps the government recognized at the time of the dam survey that the region's geography was incomplete because in 1911 they sent Raymond Seitz to Westwater. By wagon, Seitz surveyed Westwater Canyon, making his way into its interior at Big Hole. Later in 1929, renowned geologist Charles B. Hunt made his survey debut, joining a team of geologists led by C. H. Dane who surveyed much of the Grand County region.[12]

Downstream from Wild Horse Rapid, pyramidal buttes can periodically be seen above the granite and gneiss walls. The Wingate cliffs east of the river don't seem as intimidating as at the beginning of the canyon. They are more distant, and from this perspective one can imagine the base of them having once been shorelines and inlets to a great sea. Reflecting on the geology can remind you of what man can do to it. Recently a modern miner scarred the land at the top of the point just down canyon from Wild Horse Rapid. Yet man's footprints in the canyon are more tolerable when they are accepted as a part of its history. A miner's cabin, Indian petroglyphs, and Counterfeit Cave add to the romance of the region, but seeing a backhoe, a road, and trailers in this region is a distasteful reminder of how easily what is left of wilderness here can be threatened. Like tourists carving their initials over ancient petroglyphs, the act of defiling what

now represents natural and historical conditions is not acceptable. In fact the new mining disgusted enough people that lawsuits were filed, and in March 1999 Ron and Ray Pene were ordered by the U.S. Department of Justice to take their equipment out of the canyon. The Penes' mining claim surprised everybody who thought the canyon was protected from these activities because it was being considered for wilderness protection by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1975.

After Cougar Bar the higher geologic formations reveal themselves again. For a brief moment the river opens up into a small pond; then it suddenly and briefly narrows into the tightest section of the canyon to this point. Here the flowing river seems to rarely see the sun. At least that is the perception when most boaters pass this area in the morning shade. The narrow canyon then opens up again and high above stands a lone pinnacle attached to the tall Wingate cliffs. The formation was referred to as Smokey Bear Point on Les Jones's once popular scroll river map. This marks where Little Hole enters the river from the west. Little Hole is one of the two rincons in Westwater that provide access in or out of the inner canyon.

Little Hole seems secluded because it is well into the middle of Westwater Canyon. Above, a dusty road on the west rim of the canyon overlooks Little Hole then continues on to Trail Canyon and Big Hole. From the Little Hole overlook there is a fairly simple hike into the canyon and down to the river. Perhaps this secluded access made Little Hole and Big Hole logical areas for bootleggers during the Prohibition that lasted in Utah from 1917 until 1933. Utah passed its own dry law almost three years before the Eighteenth Amendment was passed by Congress prohibiting the consumption of alcohol nationwide. With alcohol being unavailable to purchase, some consumers turned to making their own booze in their homes or near their property. Many old-timers claim everyone seemed to have a recipe for making a brew and kept a hidden jug around the house, although it was illegal to do so. But producing their own alcohol was a problem since law enforcement was directed toward the producer rather than consumers. Producers invented ingenious ways to conceal their illicit operations, and some in rural areas found remote locations where they were less likely to be discovered. The canyon lands provided prime locations because "the topography actually encouraged development of the

Barrel rings found at Big Hole help substantiate stories that a large bootlegging operation existed there during Prohibition.

illegal industry. In the rugged terrain of southeastern Utah, ranches and river washes were favorite locations for operating stills and concealing equipment and supplies."[13]

Several stills were located in the Westwater region, including a well-hidden one on an island near Bitter Creek, where Elwood C. Malin and Frank Moore set up shop. Officers had to borrow a boat and row out to the island, where they found the still "cleverly concealed in a dugout in some thick brush."[14] Another small still was located "south of the Colorado river some ten miles from Cisco, and . . . housed in a 'dugout' on the side of a wash."[15] Some moonshiners were not so clever, though. Santo Muos set up shop in a section house, just up the road from deputy sheriff H. E. Herbert's home. He received a speedy trial, being arrested at 7:30 A.M. and convicted at 5:30 P.M. that same evening.[16] Although always on the lookout, the federal government did not generally pursue the little producers, but the distributors who made their livelihood from bootlegging.

On March 26, 1929, Sheriff O. C. Miller of Moab, with his deputies R. D. Westwood and Charles Cato, drove to Westwater

on a tip that a still was being run about three miles above town. They discovered a still that had the capacity to produce about ten gallons of booze a day and also found three gallons of liquor already made. They suspected the illegal producer knew about the raid because he was nowhere to be found. After destroying the still and barrels, the officers headed back to Moab using the old Cisco road that paralleled the railroad tracks. On a hunch the officers stopped at the head of Agate Wash, which drains into the Colorado River about a mile above the old Cisco pumphouse.

Climbing to the top of the hill they observed a man running away from them. At the bottom of the wash they could see a dugout, which they investigated, discovering a large still with a capacity of 380 gallons that was in operation when they arrived. Near it at least twenty five-gallon barrels of liquor had been filled and were ready to move. Two trucks were also discovered near the site, one bearing a Colorado license plate. The still had recently been built, and the officers suspected it was intended to supply Colorado markets. The *Times-Independent* article read, "Probably the biggest booze haul ever conducted in Grand county occurred in the Cisco-Westwater section Monday."[17]

For men who wanted to avoid the law, what better place was there to establish a still than deep in the canyon of Westwater, where there was access to water and isolation? According to long-time Westwater resident John Malin, the largest bust occurred in Big Hole and Little Hole, where a one-thousand-gallon still was uncovered. Malin said federal agents did not let the county sheriff know about their tip because they suspected leaks were coming out of the sheriff's department. Not long before the federal agents discovered the still at Little Hole, John and his older brother Owen visited it when nobody was around. He wrote: "Owen and I were down to it. A bear had sampled most of the vats [and] even took a bath in one. We followed the bear for about 100 yards[;] the mash was like a laxative for the bear. He left a pile of feces about every 50′. I imagine he had a hang over for some time after."[18]

Owen Malin was assigned by federal agents to be a rim guard over the Big and Little Hole canyons and watch for anyone coming into or leaving the area. When federal agents entered Big Hole canyon they found six wooden vats holding about five hundred

gallons of mash. The booze was being transported to Denver using a Lincoln car with special tanks strung underneath it. The still located at Little Hole had the capacity of one thousand gallons. The federal agents chopped the stills into small pieces. John claimed there was a lot of booze making in the Big and Little Hole area. Today the only evidence of a bootlegging operation is at Big Hole, where barrel rings were discovered beneath a large boulder in 1998. Without evidence or a better description of the bootlegging activities in Little Hole, it is difficult to ascertain where in the canyon the stills were located. Natural springs that have since dried up within Little Hole and elsewhere throughout the region provided water for the bootleggers. After the federal agents had left the area, Owen Malin and his stepbrother Jesse Hunt returned to the destroyed stills, gathered the copper that was left behind, and sold it.

Although the copper located at the stills was not produced at Little Hole, there were several copper claims in the canyon. In 1903 Edmans and Hommell had the first known copper claim near Westwater. They planned to develop their property near the Little Dolores by forming a stock company. Little else was said though until November 1917 when a party of men from Glade Park reportedly spent a week at Little Hole inspecting the condition of the "old copper mine." Years later Owen Malin asserted in an interview that these fellows from Colorado had jumped the claim at Little Hole, which had been held by a black man possibly named Luke. Luke was visiting the Malin home the evening he heard about the party going to Little Hole, and he left immediately to get his mine back. Owen's father, Elwood C. Malin, decided to warn the party about Luke. Owen said:

> Dad had saddled up a horse and took out over the hill and went down the other way to the trail through Little Hole and got two of the guys out of there. Well Luke went down the backside of the river. It took him longer and he just shot the heck out of those tents and that camp they had, but dad had gotten them out on top and they went back to Grand Junction and never did come back. Well Luke hung around here for about a month waiting for them to come back. He was going to kill em. He sure shot the heck out of their camp. If they'd a bin in there he'd a probably gotten them with fire like that. They just built a big fire then pulled out. Course that, the fire, kept him busy because he thought they were still there.[19]

Today almost all sign of man's history within Little Hole is gone, and all that remains are the Fremont Indian petroglyphs and the slight imprint of a corral or small dugout. No direct evidence of mining could be detected during a couple of brief canyon explorations that I made with John Weisheit in 1998 and 2000. Geologist Wil Bussard accompanied us on both trips and did not find any evidence of copper, guessing that possibly "some of the green color in the Chinle Formation" confused the miners.[20] In any event we do know the vats for moonshine were completely destroyed by federal agents and Owen Malin and Jesse Hunt took all of the copper from the still to town and cashed in on it.

After passing Little Hole the river turns south and the Little Dolores enters the river from the east. Little Dolores is Westwater's mini-paradise in the desert. Although not nearly as magnificent as Vasey's Paradise or Elves Chasm in the Grand Canyon, it still holds its own. The tamarisk on the upstream shore is dense but clustered, with paths running through it and ending in many bedding areas. Although the mosquitoes it attracts are a detraction, the tamarisk at this location provides one of the few shelters within the canyon. The area is an exception since tamarisk is the most despised plant along the Colorado and Green Rivers. Introduced sometime around the turn of the century, a native to Asia and southwestern Europe, this bushlike plant has overrun many shores and beaches. It can grow so dense that it smothers other plant life, absorbing tremendous amounts of water to survive. At the landing a couple of large openings provide central locations for camp kitchens.

A short hike up the Little Dolores leads to a small waterfall, which generally drops little more than a trickle into a pool below. During storms and spring runoff though it becomes a muddy river that surges through the small gap at the top on its way to the Colorado River. The pool has been a popular swimming hole and an opportunity for much-needed baths. However, it is not a good source of drinking water because of the cattle that range in the area upstream.

Above the falls at the base of the narrow butte that clearly identifies the passage of the Little Dolores through the Wingate sandstone are a few petroglyphs that could be Fremont and Ute. In 1956, there was a significant archeological discovery at Luster Cave upstream on the Little Dolores River near the Utah border. Several

ranchers around the turn of the century grazed their cattle in this area during the winter, then moved them southeast to Pinon Mesa, Colorado for the summer. Although the area is hot and looks desolate, former cattlemen say the grass was higher and healthier for cattle than it is now. The consensus from the old-timers is that climatic changes have for nearly a half century diminished the suitability of the land for grazing. Ranchers further up Little Dolores River commuted to the town of Westwater. Prior to the turn of the century there were also mining activities in the area.

Little Dolores Rapid is the first formidable rapid in the canyon and can be stubborn. Try to get the most out of it and you sometimes pay with a few round trips in the eddy along the western shore. Little Dolores consists of three parts. The upper and middle parts of the rapid offer nice roller waves in higher water levels. The lower end of the rapid is generally small with some sharp rocks in the center. While boating the lower rapid, your attention soon focuses on a small cave further downstream on the river's left bank. Outlaw Cave is about fifty feet above the river, and although it has been there since before the turn of the century, it was not always noticed before an explosion of river runners left a well-marked trail up to it.

Everyone who visits Westwater discovers Outlaw Cave anew. Whether you marvel at the double beds, the stove, or the woman's old shoe, the general remoteness of the cave elicits a sense of the old West. Truly a mystery, the history of Outlaw Cave may never be entirely known. Holiday River Expeditions owner Dee Holladay remembers that Ray Rose told him the first story he heard about who lived at the cave. Rose leased his ranch near Cisco from Perry Olsen of Grand Junction. He said that two outlaws occupied the cave at the turn of the century, and the original homesteaders of the Rose/Olsen ranch periodically took supplies in to them, even in cold winter months when temperatures dropped well below zero.

Charles H. Hallett originally homesteaded the ranch referred to in Belknap's *Canyonlands River Guide* as Rose Ranch. Hallett first entered the region in 1892 and homesteaded a piece of land on Westwater Creek near the head of Westwater Canyon. As told earlier, in 1894 Hallett was brought up on charges of murdering Royal Grant in a land dispute and was acquitted later that same

year. By 1897 he had sold his Westwater property, and sometime before 1910 his family moved to a ranch near the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad pumphouse at Cisco. Dee was told that Charles Hallett or his sons at times during the winter would cross the river on ice skates to get to the cave; another route commonly known by the old-timers was through Little Hole. The two outlaws supposedly were brothers who robbed a bank in Vernal, Utah. One of them had been wounded. They came back to the cave, and before long the wounded brother died and was buried about a half mile further downstream.

Perhaps this story has been corrupted to some degree as individuals over a century have retold it. Was it a Vernal robbery? Did a brother really die? Is that truly a grave in Marble Canyon? A possible answer to some of the questions may come from the *Grand Valley Sentinel* of July 18, 1891, which told a story of the murder of rancher Sam Jones at West Creek in Colorado. Jones was a ranch partner with John L. Campbell in Unaweep Canyon. On May 19, 1885, he left the ranch to travel to Silverton, Colorado, to collect several thousand dollars from a suit he filed against someone owing him money. When he did not show up in Silverton suspicions arose that foul play was involved. Eventually Jones's body was located and Campbell was implicated. Campbell was convicted and sentenced to thirty-three years at the state penitentiary at Canon City, Colorado. The twenty-three-year-old Campbell pleaded innocent.

The cowboy who most vehemently accused Campbell was Ira Smith, who discovered Jones's vest with three bullet holes and saw where the body had been dragged to a point overlooking a precipice in the West Creek area and dumped. A few years later, Ira and his brother Bob "with the aid of three embryo Black Barts . . . held up and robbed a Rio Grande mail and express train one night near a station ten miles east of Grand Junction. Their booty was small, but they very cleverly made their escape in a boat, ready to hand all provisioned for a voyage, sailing down the Gunnison river, thence by the Grand to the Utah line. Some weeks after they were arrested while in that territory by Sheriff Cramer, of this county."[21]

While in the Arapahoe County Jail in Denver, the Smith brothers met and befriended Newt Vorce, another felon.

Eventually Vorce was sent to Canon City, Colorado, where Campbell was serving time. While there Vorce confided that Bob Smith had all but confessed to the murder of Sam Jones. The Smith brothers were privy to enough information surrounding the murder to convince the Canon City warden to have the case reevaluated in 1891. The evidence was still not enough to release Campbell, but he eventually was pardoned and released on a technicality on July 4, 1896. It is uncertain how far on the Grand (Colorado) River the brothers went into Utah. Perhaps they made it to Outlaw Cave and are the first recorded boaters through Westwater.[22] In 1905, another pair of outlaw brothers escaped the law in the Dolores Triangle region near the Colorado border. Bill and Bob Steele were wanted in Utah and Colorado for stealing horses. The brothers were observed from across the Dolores River by Sheriff Andrew Somerville and his posse, who shot at the escaping men.[23]

Another story that has circulated is that the occupants of Outlaw Cave were from Grand Junction and were horse thieves. They would herd stolen horses into the area, keeping them close to the river where they would not be discovered, then leave again when they felt they were safe. On July 18, 1888, the *Grand Junction News* reported a gang of horse thieves near the Utah border. The thieves had an extensive operation and had stolen twenty-one horses in the area of Grand Junction. The sheriff had followed them but did not continue into Utah, where, it was reported, "They stand a good show of getting away into a part of Utah Territory that is comparatively unknown, and where it is considered it would be extremely dangerous to follow them unless by a large posse."[24]

Wild horses were known to roam southeast of Westwater across the river. John Malin remembered an old trapper who lived at Outlaw Cave in the early 1930s. He said the old-timer used to trap wild horse ponies for their meat. He kept them cool by lowering them into the river. John and his sister remembered visiting the old trapper and having steaks—unusual steaks—with him once.[25] (Incidentally, Les Jones, a long-time river runner, said a former, less common name for Skull Rapid was "Dead Horse Rapid.") This trapper probably was not the first resident of the cave, though.

The most important information on earlier occupants came from former area ranchers Roscoe C. Hallett and Elwood C. Malin. In 1933, after successfully navigating Westwater Canyon, Harold H. Leich stopped at Cisco pumphouse, where he met Roscoe Hallett. Born in 1891, Roscoe was a baby when his parents Charles H. and Chloe A. Hallett came into the region. During his life he had lived at both ends of Westwater Canyon and assisted with a government survey through the canyon, qualifying him as one of the better sources of information that we have.[26] Among other questions, Leich asked Roscoe about the "old mine tunnel" he saw in the middle of the canyon. Hallett claimed the "hole had been dug back in the 60's or 70's & was used in the 80's by a gang of Spanish counterfeiters."[27]

Additional information about Outlaw Cave came in 1956, when Les Jones and a party of boaters informed Moab sheriff John Stocks of a skeleton they had discovered in the canyon. Stocks secured the help of Moab resident Jimmy Walker to help him locate the skeleton. Jimmy had been to Westwater once before and was familiar with Little Hole as an entrance into the heart of the canyon. They packed a canoe down the canyon, crossing the river to the east, where they began their search. The following news proved to be more exciting than the skeleton story that prompted the search: "Stocks and his companions found a hidden cave in the wild country into which they had extended the hunt, and uncovered an old camp. A letter—one seeking the promotion of a mine, and dated in 1903—was the only clue, and time had made it impossible to read the name on the letter."[28] Jimmy Walker recalled, "The letter was between two parties, one back East and the other at Westwater. They were apparently setting up a hustle to promote the location as a gold deal. The letter was telling the man at Westwater to pick up a guy at Thompson and to show him certain things, but not to show him others."[29]

In 1950, several University of Utah students rediscovered the cave and also found "Some letters left in the camp were postmarked 1903, indicating that the camp had been undisturbed for nearly 50 years. Contents of the letters indicated that the occupants of the old camp were prospectors."[30]

Former Westwater resident Elwood C. Malin independently supported both Roscoe Hallet's and Jimmy Walker's stories when

Outlaw Cave (above and facing page) may have been used as early as the 1860s or 1870s. Residents at Westwater named it Counterfeit Cave because bogus money was produced there before the turn of the century.

Dee Holladay at Outlaw Cave. Dee has been instrumental in trying to protect and study Westwater since he first ran the canyon in 1965. Before the BLM began managing the canyon, a sign prepared by his boatman Kim Crumbo was placed in Outlaw Cave asking visitors to protect it. Photo by John Clark, from Holiday River Expeditions, courtesy of Dee Holladay.

(Facing page) Dee Holladay founded Holiday River Expeditions and became one of the original commercial outfitters running Westwater Canyon in 1966. Photo from Holiday River Expeditions, courtesy of Dee Holladay.

he wrote to the Moab *Times-Independent* from his home in Los Angeles. Supporting Roscoe Hallett, he referred to the site as "Counterfeit Cave." The *Times-Independent* dated May 24, 1956, reported the contents of Malin's letter:

> [The] first time he came to Westwater in 1904 he was down at the cave and was told a band had been using the place for making bogus money. The cave then was occupied by an old man by the name of John Warren.
>
> There was a little store and post office on the Westwater ranch, and run by a widow woman [Louise R. Hess]. Warren carried the mail from the post office to the depot once each day. He carried the mail out at 9 a.m. and bring them mail back from the depot, then get in a boat, cross the river and walk down to the Counterfeit cave and prospect. He would stay overnight in the cave and return the next morning.
>
> For his chore of carrying the mail, he received $15 per month and lived on this income for five years. He was from New York. He also had a cabin on the river bank, close to where the big ranch pump house is now, but closer to the bank which has since washed away.
>
> When Malin first went to the cave, there was a little iron cook stove, a table, two cedar pole bunks, two chairs and a makeshift cupboard, a few old dishes and a couple of frying pans.
>
> The widow who had been operating the store and post office married a man named Ed Bowdle and her new husband began to carry the mail. Deprived of his mail route income, Warren went to Grand Junction, bought a new suit of clothes, hat, shoes and a big suitcase and pulled stakes.
>
> That was the last they ever heard of him. The general opinion at the time was that he had been panning gold during those five years at Westwater, and that was where he got the money to leave on.
>
> In the winter of 1905 Malin lived in a tent about 40 yards from the old John Warren cabin. It was while looking around the cabin that Malin discovered Warren was also an assayer, and saw lots of equipment in his cabin.[31]

Conceivably John Warren may have been the goat who swallowed the bait about the cave's mining potential.[32] Louise R. Hess was made postmistress at Westwater on May 9, 1903, and continued at that position until 1909, when J. G. Imhoff succeeded her. All of the known letters found in the cave were dated 1903, and some of them concerned two men trying to swindle a third party from back east into purchasing the cave or a mine near its location.

One source indicated the cave resident receiving the mail was from Salt Lake City, Utah. Elwood Malin came to Westwater in 1904 but did not mention how long Warren had been a resident of the area. He did correctly identify the year Warren left Westwater after losing his job to E. G. Bowdle, who married the postmistress, Louise R. Hess, on October 15, 1905. John Warren was not listed on the 1900 U.S. Census for Westwater.

Additionally,

> Malin recalled that in about 1908 or 1910, two men came to Westwater, bought a boat from Ed Herbert, and went down the river on a prospecting trip. One of them was a one armed man named Rich McGrooder but Malin did not recall the name of the other.
>
> They lived in counterfeit cave for some time. They tried to interest an eastern outfit to put up money for mining equipment, and shipped 50 pounds of black sand to the company in New York. But the offer was rejected by the New Yorkers.
>
> Disappointed, the pair pulled out. They left bedding and supplies in the cave, and was going to come back, but they never did.[33]

The *Times-Independent* dated January 3, 1919, printed the following report from Westwater: "R. W. McGruder, with Mssrs. Cook and Applegate, came in from Grand Junction the last of the week and are camping in Granite [Westwater] canyon and inspecting the placer claims, with a view to future development."

There are no more detailed accounts of the cave than those Hallett and Malin provided. Still, they gave important information about the cave's history while simultaneously raising new questions, such as who would have been in the area in the 1860s and 1870s in the middle of Indian territory, and why would counterfeiters use such a remote place? This is an intriguing part of the cave's history that likely is lost forever.

Not only is a part of Outlaw Cave's history lost but its contents have also slowly disappeared or been irreparably damaged. In May 1950, Paul Geerlings described the contents of the cave, "two beds, cooking utensils and supplies were intact, although badly weathered." He also said that "an open box of cornmeal on the table was still in good condition," leaving the group with the impression the cave had been untouched for nearly fifty years.[34] Six years later Moab sheriff John Stocks and Jimmy Walker rediscovered the cave and continued with a description of the contents:

"The occupants of this ancient camp evidently either left hurriedly, or intended to come back, and never made it. Why? Your guess would be as good as anyone's. But those who had lived in this cave left behind them their bedding, cooking utensils and even an old stove. Time had rotted away the bedding, and spread rust over the other items."[35]

Even as late as 1962 the contents had remained undisturbed and respected by those who rediscovered the cave. Famous kayaker Walter Kirschbaum wrote in a letter to John L. J. Hart:

> To me, the most fascinating occurrence on that trip [August 16] was our discovery of that cave about one third down the way on the left, about 30 feet above water level which was inhabited in the first decenium of this century by a man from Salt Lake, whose name I forget, but where we found mail addressed to him just 'Westwater, Utah,' and a chair fabulously carved and constructed from nothing but driftwood, two beds, one in each corner, etc., etc. I have no doubt you are familiar with this. I made sure that no one, on both of our trips disturbed anything there. It's a great, to say the least, a great witness of some of the people before us in this kind of country. Actually, knowing a certain sort of people that are more egotistic than respectful, I think someone should take steps to preserve this landmark.[36]

Eleven years later Dee Holladay introduced BLM archeologist Richard E. Fike to Westwater and the cave. His notes were brief regarding what remained: "Artifacts in the cave include a Home Rule, Duffy-Trowbridge Range, a table, and two pole and straw beds."[37] No longer were any letters present to help solve the puzzle of the cave, the handsomely carved chair (or chairs) disappeared, and other items of antiquity were gone. Perhaps not too late, the BLM designated the cave as a historic site, protecting it from vandals and souvenir hunters.

The grave speculated to be a half-mile away was, according to the most prevalent story, that of one of the outlaw brothers, who was wounded and died while fleeing the law. Perhaps it was one of the Steele brothers who were shot at by a posse in 1905. Former Westwater residents say it could have been anybody's since many bodies had been found floating from Colorado to the area. Owen Malin had his own graveyard consisting of nine unidentified floating bodies he buried near Bitter Creek. Other bodies have been reported at Cisco. Perhaps the story we can all

most sympathize with is that shortly after the turn of the century an IRS agent came into Westwater snooping around. After a few days he mysteriously disappeared, never to be heard of again. It has been said the grave belongs to the IRS agent. Wishful thinking.