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Site 5MN5970: Ten Thousand Years of Occupation

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THE COVER: Nicole M. Darnell graduated Mesa State College in 2003 with a B.A. is History. She is currently employed with Grand River Institute, working as an archaeologist and a geographic information systems (GIS) technician.

Contents

Site 5MN5970: Ten Thousand Years of Occupation

By Nicole M. Darnell*

Abstract

In June 2002, Grand River Institute (GRI) contracted with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to conduct an intensive archaeological survey of areas that would receive direct impact from vegetative treatment, and to identify and accurately locate archaeological sites and isolated finds. GRI would also determine what, if any, potential effect vegetative treatments would have to all eligible historic sites, as well as provide recommendations for the mitigation of any adverse effects. Vegetation treatment consists of mechanical manipulation, including roller-chopping or hydro axing, and burning. Of 700 acres surveyed, the Grand River Institute recorded site 5MN5970 as an archaeological landscape that covered approximately 600 acres located on BLM-administered land in Montrose County, Colorado. GRI recommended the site as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and identified five areas (loci) as having the potential to contribute significant data to the prehistoric/historic record of the area. The GRI also evaluated one additional site and several isolated finds as ineligible for historic registry.

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Archaeology Defined

Many sources indicate that archaeology is a two-part profession: one part adventure, and one part detective work.[1] Archaeology often conjures a vision of Indiana Jones and his quests to find ancient treasures of the past. While every archaeologist dreams of finding that link which unravels the mysteries of the modern world, reality is much different from that portrayed in movies. Archaeology typically consists of tedious and precise work in the field, followed by many hours devoted to analysis and the creation of reports that interpret the finds for the public.[2] Thorough analysis allows the archaeologist to formulate theories to present an understanding of a people's culture and processes of change.

National Historic Preservation Act

The Antiquities Act of 1906 declared that the federal government is responsible for "antiquities" located on federally controlled lands. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 allowed the National Park Service to identify and protect historic sites. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 specifies policy for lands under governmental control and requires agencies to consider environmental, historical, and cultural values whenever federal land is modified, or when federal money funds a project.[3] This places greater value on the sites, but also shifts the emphasis to the bureaucratic process.[4] The Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974 provides for federal and private agencies to receive funding for preservation and recovery of archaeological and historic resources. The National Historic Preservation Act, originally enacted in 1966, has been amended as recently as 2000. As one of many acts designed to protect the national heritage, it established the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and provided for state preservation programs and grants. This act declares that our spirit as a nation is reflected in our historic heritage and should be preserved. It also states that "increased knowledge of our historic resources, the establishment of better means of identifying and administering

them, and the encouragement of their preservation will improve the planning and execution of federal and federally assisted projects."[5] The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 36 part 60.6 establishes the measurement of significance, with which to assess the site's research potential. As a consequence of these federal mandates, contract archaeology, also known as cultural resource management, was born.

Cultural Resource Management

Cultural Resource Management (CRM) is defined as: "work necessary because of planned modification of the earth's surface by construction activity."[6] Contract archaeologists work in areas that are generally not selected for their archaeological potential, but for non-archaeological reasons, such as building, recreational use, land exchange, and natural resource use. Controlling agencies are responsible for management and conservation decisions. These federal agencies include the Bureau of Land Management, the USDA Forest Service, and the National Park Service. The contract archaeologist presents the governing agency with information and recommendations concerning the project surveyed.[7] This helps agencies mitigate impacts to the site or artifacts contained within the site.

In the 1970s, agents generally collected the entire artifacts located on a site. Artifacts are "humanly made or modified portable objects, such as stone tools, pottery, and metal weapons."[8] This is, by necessity, limited to non-perishable items. The majority of artifacts decompose, leaving only stone or hardened materials (such as pottery) behind. If conditions permit, one might find occasional plant or animal remains, and very discrete structures.[9] In the case of stone tools, artifacts include each stage of the tool manufacturing process, from acquisition and manufacture to use and disposal. Two problems arise from removing all of the artifacts on a site. First, there is generally no trace of the site left on location, which makes it difficult to reevaluate it in the future. Second, curation facilities are running

out of room to store the finds. The current trend involves sparse collection of diagnostic artifacts only and meticulous record keeping of artifacts left *in situ*.

Permitting and Bidding Process

Contract archaeology requires both a curation agreement and a collection permit. Curation agreements are issued through the curation facility. There are two for western Colorado: the Museum of Colorado, which curates for northwestern Colorado, and the Anasazi Heritage Center, which curates from the Uncompahgre Plateau, south. Collection permits are awarded based on education (usually a Master's degree), experience in a region, and the ability to curate the finds. Each governmental agency is responsible for issuing its own permits. Contracts are awarded, based on the lowest bid and on the contractor's experience and quality of work. The federal office attempts to get three bids, and awards contracts to the best-qualified archaeologist.

The Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife (DOW) and the Uncompahgre Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) contracted Grand River Institute (a private archaeological and environmental consulting firm) in the summer of 2002 to perform a Class III (intensive) cultural resource inventory of the West Campbell Creek vegetation treatment area. This survey totals 700 acres of BLM administered lands in Montrose County, Colorado. In compliance with federal law, the firm identifies and evaluates human activities and occupation in the area. This includes artifacts, ruins, structures, works of art, architecture, or natural features that were utilized or otherwise deemed important to human events in the area.[10]

Pre-field Analysis

Prior to data collection, a pre-field analysis must be done to determine what research has already occurred in the area. The area's history must be taken into consideration, as well as the geologic and geographic environment. Also, the investigator

determines if geomorphologic conditions were sufficient to have removed or deposited materials. For instance, a steep hillside may transport materials away from their original drop points. If sites exist within a half mile of the project area, they will be revisited during the survey for impacts. Research into the geographic topology of the area also eliminates locations that are unlikely to produce results. This "sampling" technique focuses on areas that provide the best location, such as proximity to a water source, and protection from the elements. During the pre-field analysis, the director also decides how many people are required to do an efficient job. The pre-field analysis for the West Campbell Creek project area indicated no previously recorded archeological sites in the area.

Geology and Location of the Project Area

The West Campbell Creek project area is located on the Colorado Plateau, in the Paradox Basin, just north of Nucla, Colorado (map 1). Among the most unique features of the Colorado Plateau is significant variation in elevation. At its lowest, the elevation is approximately 4,300 feet at the Colorado River, and the highest is at least 14,000 feet in both the West Elk and San Juan mountains. This results in a wide variation of temperature and ecological zones. Temperatures in lower valley regions range into the 100s, but nearby mountain regions are significantly cooler. Winters are longer in the mountainous regions, while valleys experience very mild temperatures. The amount of precipitation varies widely as well, with the lower Sonoran regions receiving less than ten inches per year. On the other hand, the mountainous regions can receive more than forty inches per year.[11]

The Paradox Basin measures 4,500 square miles, and is composed of mesas and canyon lands. The elevation ranges from 4,500 feet in Gateway, Colorado, to 8,600 feet just north of Sinbad Valley, Utah.[12] This basin was formed during the Pennsylvanian period, a time when a sea developed, covering the entire Four-Corners region.[13] A down-thrusting of the shale

formations formed a trough.[14] The receding waters previously covering the region left behind sediments and evaporates, such as arkose, shale, limestone, and gypsum, and, most significantly, salt, which collected in the trough to a depth of over 10,000 feet.[15] Erosion during the Cenozoic and Mesozoic eras deposited another 10,000 feet of continental sediment over the salt, which caused "differential loading," making the land mobile. Later, erosion stripped the top layer from the region, leaving the salt open to exposure. Eventually, the salt domes collapsed, leaving the basin behind.[16]

The lithic materials encountered at this site are mostly from local geologic formations. The Brushy Basin member of the Morrison Formation is comprised of black, red, white and green cherts, agates, jaspers and chalcedonies. The Dakota Sandstone Formation contains black, dove gray, and white cherts. Also, it contains an orthoquartzite, which is fine- to medium-grained and moderately silicified with angular quartz grains.[17] Green to gray cherts, as well as dark green medium-grained sandstone, are found within the Burro Canyon formation. The latter formation contains a conchoidal fracture. Obsidian, which is not commonly found on sites in western Colorado, was recovered from the site (figure1).

Climate and Environment

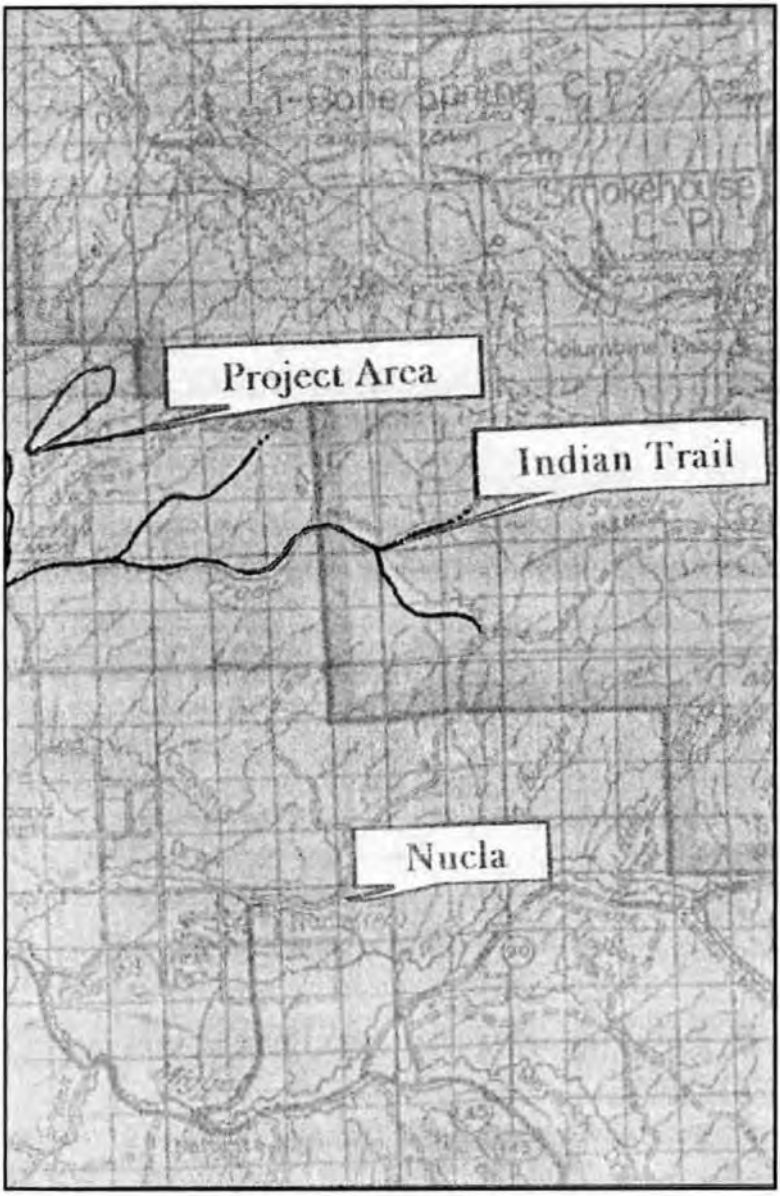
A study by Michael Berry and Claudia Berry classifies major climactic events into the following episodes: Late Glacial (11,000-8,000 B.C.), Pre-Boreal and Boreal

Figure 1: 5MN5970.s24

(Drawing courtesy of Nicole M. Darnell.)

(8,000-6,500 B.C.), Atlantic I-IV (6,500-3,100 B.C.), Sub-Boreal I-III (3,100-800 B.C.), Sub-Atlantic (800 B.C.- A.D. 400), and Scandic and Neo-Atlantic (A.D. 400-1100).[18] The Late Glacial period marked the end of the glacial period. The climate grew warmer and precipitation increased, thereby increasing the size of forested regions. The Pre-Boreal and Boreal Period brought about a decrease in moisture (possible drought conditions) and cooling temperatures. The Atlantic period is divided into four subcategories. The first (I) is defined by an increase in moisture, while II-IV are apparent periods of decreased moisture, corresponding with Antev's Altithermal period.[19] Period III is also known as the "Great Drought." Sub-Boreal is also divided into three categories: I (increase in moisture), II (increase in temperature and precipitation), and III (cooling temperature with moist conditions). There was an increase in pinyon pine forest range[20] and record levels of cultural activity. The Sub-Atlantic record reflected another drought, as evidenced by decreased range of pinyon pine forest, a decrease in precipitation and increased temperatures. The Scandic and Neo-Atlantic period records a drought and a decrease in population, although such recent data is less reliable. Berry and Berry divided the record of prehistoric habitation of the Colorado Plateau region into three phases, which can be compared to the climatic record.[21] Phase I (8000-3000 B.C.) includes Paleo-Indian occupation, but is limited in solid evidence. Phase I also includes an interval of significant occupation during the time of the Boreal/Atlantic (6500 B.C.) but ends with the onset of the Altithermal. Period II (3000-1000 B.C.) marks a population explosion at unprecedented levels. Period III (1000 B.C.-A.D.500) is defined by a reduction of moisture, and the introduction of agriculture, to varying degrees, on the Colorado Plateau.

The movement, or migrations, of people from one region to another was often influenced by climatic factors, but other



Map 2. Section of a historic map showing project location and Indian trails. Scale unknown. (Map courtesy of the USDA, Forest Service, of Uncompahgre National Forest, 1951.)

factors, such as warfare or disease, also influenced migration.[22] Migration was often small-scale, with slight adjustments to seasonal movement patterns. It is presumptuous to say that the indigenous people made no conscious decisions about migrations, as some have suggested;[23] however, it seems logical to assume that the group decided to relocate, either on a small or large scale, based on the resources available (map 2).

The elevation range of the West Campbell Creek project area varies from 6000 to 6800 feet, with the vegetation consisting of sagebrush and pinyon/juniper woodland. Basins of Colorado, including the project area, are occupied by semi-desert features. The Upper Sonoran Zone, at 6000 feet is characterized by pinyon pine, juniper, and sagebrush. The Transitional Zone at 7000 feet is host to Gambel oak and serviceberry.[24] The pinyon/juniper zone typically exists at elevations between 5500 and 8500 feet. In many areas, the elevation change is abrupt, and the majority of the plants are limited to their vegetative zone. Animal life abounds in this transitional zone. In the project area, Gambel oak and cottonwoods often cover drainages, with ridges and open areas consisting of mountain mahogany, serviceberry, and sage. Indigenous populations sought out locations near a water source. Sites on mesa tops or sites with a view were also highly favored. Animal resources vary, with the area currently supporting mule deer, elk, coyote, black bear, rabbits, mountain lions, bobcats, fox, beavers, skunk, badger and weasels. Bird species observed during fieldwork include jays, ravens, red-shafted flickers, golden eagles and other raptors. Prehistoric hunter-gatherers in Colorado utilized bison, mule deer, elk, mountain sheep, rabbit, birds, and, to a limited degree, fish. Larger game could be found in the mountain regions, while smaller game was available in lowlands.[25]

Field Methods

A crew varying from two to four persons performed a surface survey of over 700 acres during the month of June 2002.

Crew members walked north-south or east-west transects approximately 20 meters apart utilizing USGS 7.5' quadrangle maps. The crew chief worked from enlarged quadrangle maps with 100 meter grids and plotted points received from crew members. All members equipped themselves with two-way radios and Global Positioning System (GPS) units.[26] The GPS unit receives constant satellite signals from space and then averages a position, which is displayed on the unit as northing and easting coordinates. These points, when plotted on the map, identify the type and quantity of artifacts, and sometimes the type of rock.

Sites are defined by the presence of six or more artifacts and/or significant features which indicate patterns of human activity. Isolated finds are those with less than six artifacts or those that represent a single event, such as a lithic reduction. At each of the localities, crew members took photographs. Photos captured overall views of the site, as well as views of single artifacts. These photos are on file at the Uncompahgre Field Office of the BLM in Montrose, Colorado. The diagnostic artifacts collected for preservation are curated at the Anasazi Heritage Center in Dolores Colorado.[27]

Criteria

This survey produced two new prehistoric sites (5MN5970 and 5MN6232) and seven isolated finds (5MN5921 through 5MN5925, 5MN6233, and 5MN6234). The survey crew viewed each cultural resource with restraint, and identified sites based on its potential to contribute to the understanding of cultural patterns, processes, or activities. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) sets the criteria for the assessment of a site:

> The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of State and local importance that

Map 3. 3-D Image of Project Area. Location map showing finds. Project performed by Grand River Institute on behalf of the Uncompahgre Field Office of the BLM. (Map created by Nicole M. Darnell, 1 December 2002.)

possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and a) that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; or b) that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or c) that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method or construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or d) that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in the prehistory or history.[28]

Site Discussion

Site 5MN6232 was identified as a "small lithic scatter" with artifacts dispersed over an area of 305 meters. The majority of artifacts rested in a saddle area between two ridge points (map 3). Clusters of flakes, ranging from five to fifty, were located with a sparse scatter of flakes between them. Quartzite, which is found locally, makes up the majority of the flake composition. The Grand River Institute evaluated the site as ineligible for registry with the NRHP, because it appears unlikely to yield additional information at this time. They recommended no further work at this site.

Site 5MN5970 was recorded as an archaeological landscape which encompasses approximately 600 acres within the project area. It is situated on a mesa top between Campbell Creek to the northwest and Shavano Creek to the southeast. The mesa top is cut with drainages and ridges. Thousands of artifacts are scattered across the mesa, with clusters that indicate short term use areas. Survey crews discerned open camps, lithic procurement, and food-processing localities. In some areas, the

artifact distribution was relatively low; however, in others it was very high and located in association with thermal features. The thermal features consisted of fire-cracked rock, some containing ash or charcoal, located in shallow soils. In areas where soil has accumulated (drainage bottoms, saddles, and pockets formed on the sides of ridges), crews found slab-lined pits.

Ten localities were identified due to artifact/feature density. Of these ten, four contained both fire-cracked rock and slab-lined pits. If the same group of indigenous people created these features at the same time, they indicate that each had a special function. Research members found few artifacts near the slab-lined features, but located many near the fire-cracked rock. It is possible the slab-lined features may have been used for roasting purposes and were intentionally placed on the perimeter of the camp.[29] Artifacts that were found nearest to the thermal features range over a broad time frame and do little to identify their origins. Slab-lined pits found elsewhere in the region have been dated with confidence to two periods, one 1000-1500 years ago and the other, 6500-7000 years ago.[30] Pits associated with the later dates are attributed to the Archaic culture, and are believed to be used for heating, cooking, roasting, or stone boiling.[31] These pits are found in many different forms, including simple ash stains, simple hearths, basin hearths, rock-filled pits, slab-lined pits, and fire-cracked rock features.[32] Researchers tested replicas of slab-lined, unlined, shallow depression, and shallow cobble-filled pits, with measurements taken regarding fuel consumption, heat retention, and charcoal/ash production. Slab-lined pits provided the best heat-control of all pits tested.[33]

The contract crew collected forty-two diagnostic artifacts for analysis and preservation. To identify the cultural origins of the artifacts, archeologists referred to regional data when available. Using Alan Reed and Michael Metcalf's outline of prehistoric divisions, researchers attributed the artifacts to Late Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Formative, and Proto-historic cultures.[34]

The two oldest diagnostic artifacts located within the project area are probably Paleo-Indian in origin, matching the Foothill Mountain complex (table 1).[35] Ten thousand years ago, at the end of the Altithermal, the Paleo-Indian culture was divided between the Plains and Foothill Mountain traditions. Foothill Mountain traditions ranged in small bands and utilized more individual hunter/gather techniques, whereas Plains people focused more on communal bison hunting.[36] While there is little evidence indicating the domestication of plants, Foothill Mountain people were dependent on a wide variety of floral resources. Foothill Mountain traditions also often utilized mule deer and mountain sheep.[37] The Foothill Mountain people used local quartzite for the majority of their artifacts, including the

Figure 2: 5MN5970.s18

ones found on this site (figure 2). It should also be noted that crew members found Paleo-Indian artifacts on this site in association with Ute artifacts. It is possible the Ute were curating Paleo-Indian points and reworking them, since finding these points together is a reoccurring phenomena.[38]

There are many important innovations that occurred to mark the change between Paleo-Indian and Archaic (table 2). The

Figure 3: 5MN5970.s31

Figure 4: 5MN5970.s21

(Drawings courtesy of Nicole M. Darnell.)

Table 1: Collected diagnostic artifacts—Paleo-Indian.[39]		
ID	**Description**	**Approximate Age**
5MN5970.s17	Foothill-Mountain Paleo-Indian Base reworked	10000-8000 B.P.
5MN5970.s18	Foothill-Mountain Paleo-Indian Base	10000-8000 B.P.

Table 2: Collected diagnostic artifacts—Archaic.[40]		
ID	**Description**	**Approximate Ages**
5MN5970.s31	Deception Creek-Early Archaic	8000-5600 B.P.
5MN5970.s3	Convex base stemmed	7500-5000 B.P.
5MN5970.s9, .s20, .s38, .s48	U.C. Type 31, Shavano Phase	3500-1000 B.C.
5MN5970.s30	McKean Lanceolate base	5000-2500 B.P.
5MN5970.s11, .s14, .s21, .s23	U.C. Type 25, Roubideau Phase	3000-500 B. C.
5MN5970.s39, .s45	McKean Lanceolate base	5000-2500 B.P.
5MN5970.s35	Gatecliff Contracting Stem	2500 B.C.-A.D. 500
5MN5970.s32	Oshara Tradition Armijo Phase	3800-2800 B.P.

period is separated into the following three divisions: Early (5500-3000 B.C.), Middle (3000-1500 B.C.), and Late (1500 B.C. - A.D. 300).[41] All three eras were represented on this site (figures 3-5). The Deception Creek lanceolate is reported to be the oldest of these points (figure 3). Early Archaic people are thought to have been less mobile than their Paleo-Indian predecessors.[42]

The period between Paleo-Indian and Archaic also witnessed an unprecedented rise in population among those who occupied this region. The natives' diet changed, as indicated by the appearance of grinding stones and slabs. Faunal choices changed with more utilization of smaller species. These include (listed based on frequency of occurrence): deer, bison, pronghorn, elk, bighorn, as well as rabbits, fish, and rodents. Floral choices also changed to include pigweed and goosefoot, Indian rice grass, chokecherry, prickly pear cactus, mustard, pinyon nuts, salt brush, and Mormon tea.[43] The contract crew observed many of these floral and faunal options within the project area. Diversity of point styles is a prominent characteristic of this time. These include variations of lanceolate, stemmed, side-notched, corner-notched, and hafted knifes.[44]

The Formative Period ranges from approximately 400 B.C. to A.D. 1300.[45] Two peoples existed together during this time, the Anasazi and the Fremont. The Anasazi occupied mainly the Four-Corners region, and the Fremont occupied various

Figure 5: 5MN5970.s49

Figure 6: 5MN5970.s22

(Drawings courtesy of Nicole M. Darnell.)

Table 3: Collected diagnostic artifacts—Formative.[46]		
ID	**Description**	**Approximate Ages**
5MN5970.s49, .s51	Besant	A.D. 0-300
5MN5970.s33	U.C. Type 29, Horsefly Phase	500 B.C.-A.D. 0
5MN5970.s4, .s12,.s15, .s25, .s41, .s42, .s52	U.C. Type 27, Ironstone Phase	A.D. 0-700
5MN5970.s7	U.C. Type 5, Coal Creek Phase	A.D. 700-1300
5MN5970.s22, .s40	Uintah side-notch	A.D. 850-1150

Table 4: Collected diagnostic artifacts—Protohistoric.[47]		
ID	**Description**	**Approximate Ages**
5MN5970.s36	U.C. Type 4, Ute Period	A.D. 1300-1880
5MN5970.s29	U.C. Type 8, Camelback Phase	A.D. 1300-1500
5MN5970.s1, .s24, .s26, .s27	Cottonwood Triangular	A.D. 1200-1700
5MN5970.s5	Desert Side-notch frag	A.D. 1200-1700
5MN5970.s2	Hafted End Scraper (2 Pieces)	A.D. 1300-1880
5MN5970.s6, .s28	Ute Leaf-shaped Knife	A.D. 1300-1880
5MN5970.s8	Knife tip and midsection	A.D. 1300-1880
5MN5970.s10	Shoshone Knife	A.D. 1300-1880

locations in Utah. However, evidence does exist that both groups might have passed through this region, based on the artifacts collected (table 3). Technology grew with the development of bows and arrows.[48] There is also a decrease in the point variability, as they became more specialized for the bow and arrow. Most points associated with this period were small and corner-notched or side-notched (figure 6).

The increase in human population led to a decrease in the animal population. As a consequence, some of the people became engaged in limited horticulture, especially corn and maize. This is also the first time two-handed manos had been utilized.[49] Food consisted of wild plants, small game, insects, prickly pear, Mormon tea, wild rose, wild pea, salt brush, mustard, and ground flour, which were formed into cakes.[50] It is less likely in this region that the groups of the Formative period would have engaged in agriculture, indicated by the absence of semi-permanent structures.

Current research indicates the Ute migrated over time to southwestern Colorado from Mexico. The Ute people parted ways with their Paiute and Shoshone kin in Death Valley and eventually made an appearance in the Four-Corners area by A.D. 1300.[51] The Uto-Aztecan language links these three cultures. The Ute were a highly mobile group, using wickiups as shelters. Freestanding wickiups were made by propping three to four poles against the ground, and angled to meet at the top. The Ute then covered these poles with small poles, boughs, bark, or hides

Figure 7: 5MN5970.s5

(Drawing courtesy of Nicole M. Darnell.)

which served as covering. Other wickiups were made from live trees, with poles propped against them. The doorway often faced east, and hearths were place either inside or outside. Although crew members found no wickiups in the project area, these structures are visible throughout western Colorado. Less common structures include domed willow shelters, tipis, sweat lodges, menstrual huts, and ramadas (a type of lean-to). Sweat lodges and menstrual huts were built at least monthly, and less care was given to their construction.[52] Ute people traveled in family groups, with the size of the group varying depending on the availability of resources. They developed new types of pottery and projectile points (table 4). Common to this period is the Desert Side-notch (figure 7). Investigators for this project identified two styles of knives which researchers have attributed to Ute occupations.[53]

Conclusion

After careful study of the information collected in the field, and lab analysis of the artifacts, the Grand River Institute evaluated site 5MN5970 as eligible for the NRHP. Archaeologists determined that locus numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were likely to produce significant information concerning temporal and environmental data.[54] Either avoidance of the loci by vegetation treatment or excavation to preserve the information these locations might hold is recommended. The sites and diagnostic artifacts recovered in the project area are consistent with other known aboriginal occupations in this region. They indicated a long period of occupation, ranging from Paleo-Indian, Archaic, Formative, and Proto-historic times. The sites consist of small open camps and lithic work areas, both of which were occupied for short periods of time. These camps were probably occupied as part of spring and fall seasonal migrations. According to the project report, "The loci sizes within the archaeological landscape and their apparent horizontal stratification indicate limited activities were being conducted on the mesas related to the procurement of lithic and floral/faunal resources."[55] Slab-

lined features lead researchers to believe that local populations were processing specific resources, such as pine-nuts. The open pinyon-juniper forest and sagebrush community provided a variety of floral resources. Also, ecological zones (riparian and dense berry-producing shrubs) within ten miles of the project area would have provided year-round resources to exploit. Through continued research and new technological advances, further information can be yielded through sites like this one. The five loci within site 5MN5970 (numbers 1-5) have been blue-flagged for easy identification. It was recommended that a buffer zone be established around the loci. If avoidance is impossible or impractical, excavation was advised. By protecting these resources, we allow for future study as technology continues to develop.

Notes

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[22]Robert C.Euler, G.J. Gumerman, T.N.V. Karlstrom, Jeffery S. Dean, and Richard Hevly, "The Colorado Plateaus: Cultural Dynamics and Paleoenvironment," *Science*, 205: 1089.

[23]Berry and Berry, "Chronological and Conceptual Models," 320.

[24]Young and Young, *Colorado West*, 70.

[25]Cassells, *The Archaeology of Colorado*, 24.

[26]Unit types included Garmin GPS III Plus, and Map 76. Accuracy ranged from ±6 meters to ±20 meters. PDOP was set to 6 and information acquired with less than 4 satellites to calculate positions was disregarded. Weather was fair and generally clear.

[27]Conner, et al., *Campbell Creek Proposed Vegetation Treatment*, 4-6.

[28]National Parks Service, Department of the Interior, "National Register of Historic Places," *Code of Federal Regulations* Title 36, Pt. 60.6, 2000 ed.

[29]Conner, et al., *Campbell Creek Proposed Vegetation Treatment*, 10.

[30]Alan D. Reed and Michael D. Metcalf, *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society), 1999: 84.

[31]Ibid, 81.

[32]Ibid, 82.

[33]Ibid, 82.

[34]Reed and Metcalf, *Northern Colorado River Basin*, 6.

[35]Conner, et al., *Campbell Creek Vegetation Treatment Area*, 10.

[36]Frison, *Hunters of the High Plains*, 19, 67.

[37]Reed and Metcalf, *Northern Colorado River Basin*, 66.

[38]Conner, et al., *Campbell Creek Vegetation Treatment*, 10. Also, Berry and Berry, "Chronological and Conceptual Models," 315.

[39]Dates for 5MN5970.s17 and .s18 come from George C. Frison, *Prehistoric*

The Ridgway yard circa 1975. Facing south, the grove of Cottonwood to the right is the Ridgway town park. The pointed red roof of the Ridgway depot can be seen in the background. The truck loadout can be seen just right of center, the ramp is in the up position. Photo by Alden Armstrong. (Photo courtesy of Alden Armstrong Collection, Grand Junction, Colorado.)

Huters of the High Plains, 2ed. (San Diego: Academic Press), 1991:67. Source Tables 1-4: reprinted, by permission of publisher, from Carl Conner, et al., *Campbell Creek Vegetation Treatment*, append. A.4.

[40]Dates for .s31 and .s3 provided by Reed and Metcalf, *Northern Colorado River Basin*, 85. Dates for .s9, .s11, .s14, .s20, .s21, .s23, .s38, and .s48 provided by William G. Buckles, "The Uncompahgre Complex," Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1971: 1220. Dates for .s49 and .s51 provided by Frison, *High Plains*, 97. Dates for .s32 provided by Cynthia Irwin-Williams, "The Oshara Tradition: Origins of Anasazi Culture," *Eastern New Mexico University Contributions in Anthropology*, (5): 1. Dates for .s35 provided by Richard N. Holmer, "Common Projectile Points of the Intermountain West," *University of Utah Papers* (110): 105.

[41]Reed and Metcalf, *Northern Colorado River Basin*, 77.

[42]Ibid, 88.

[43]Ibid, 93.

[44]Ibid, 83.

[45]Ibid, 98.

[46]Dates for .s4, .s7, .s12, .s15, .s25, .s33, .s41, .s42, and .s52 provided by Buckles, "The Uncompahgre Complex," 1220. Dates for .s49 and .s51 provided by Frison, *High Plains*, 105-106. Dates for .s22 and .s40 provided by Holmer, "Common Projectile Points," 107.

[47]Dates for all Protohistoric points provided by Buckles, "The Uncompahgre Complex," 1220.

[48]Reed and Metcalf, *Northern Colorado River Basin*, 71.

[49]Sally Crum, *People of the Red Earth* (Santa Fe: Ancient City Press), 1996: 56.

[50]Ibid, 56.

[51]Virginia McConnell Simmons, *The Ute Indians of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado), 2000: 14.

[52]Reed and Metcalf, *Northern Colorado River Basin*, 160.

[53]Conner, et al., *Campbell Creek Proposed Vegetation Treatment*, 11.

[54]Ibid, 9.

[55]Ibid, 14.

The Ridgway Branch of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad

By Matt Darling*

The Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad in Colorado's San Juan Mountains faced difficult times in the 1950s. The mines were in a state of decline and the cattle ranchers were transferring to trucks. With trucks doing much of the haulage, the connecting Rio Grande Southern Railway ended operations in 1952, causing rail traffic to drop even further. Declining revenues required the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad to make significant changes to its branch-line infrastructure in the Montrose to Ouray region. To save money and simply operations, the railroad eliminated two segments of the rail line in 1953: a short line to Cedar Creek (east of Montrose), and the Ridgway to Ouray section. The Montrose to Ridgway line survived until 1976 because it was standard gauged, eliminating the expense of transferring loads to and from the narrow gauge cars.

Denver & Rio Grande

To put the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway in historical perspective, it is necessary to begin in the period just

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after the Civil War with a colorful man named William Jackson Palmer. A Civil War general turned ambitious railroader, he incorporated the Denver & Rio Grande Railway on 27 October 1870.[1] He had learned about narrow gauge railroads from Great Britain, and they intrigued him.[2] Narrow gauge trains traveled on rails only three feet apart, making such track cheaper to build than the standard gauge 4' 8 fi" width. Palmer planned to use narrow gauge to connect the United States and Mexico with a railroad from Denver, Colorado to Mexico City, Mexico.[3] At El Paso, Texas, Palmer's D&RG would connect with his Mexican line, the narrow gauge Ferrocarril Nacional Mexicano.[4] Palmer's grandiose plan attracted a number of British investors familiar with narrow gauge railroads.

In 1871, the D&RG started construction south of Denver, and two years later, D&RG crews began surveying on the Colorado-New Mexico border. Nearby, survey crews from the rival Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway pushed west from Topeka, Kansas. Both railroads knew that Raton Pass was the only desirable route through the mountains. The Santa Fe had arrived there first, and blocked Palmer's railroad access south of Trinidad, Colorado. The case went to court, where the D&RG lost. Palmer then set his sights on the mining town of Leadville, Colorado where he had planned to go after the mainline to EI Paso was finished. However, the Santa Fe had the same plans. Once again, there was only one route, the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River, and another court battle erupted. This time, Palmer did not back down, and both railroads started building rail lines. The D&RG's crews even constructed forts on its right-of-way to block the Santa Fe. Both sides hired gunmen and the "Royal Gorge War" continued for many months.

Miraculously no one died. Finally a court in Boston hammered out an agreement, known as the "Treaty of Boston"[5] which specified that the Santa Fe could not build in Colorado, and the D&RG could not build in New Mexico for a period of ten years.

With his plans for Mexico stymied, Palmer centered his railroad operations on mineral wealth; for the next five years the D&RG raced to any mineral strike in Colorado or Utah. The primary goal was to get to the mines, but there was a second motive: Palmer raced into new territory to prevent anyone else from taking territory from the D&RG. Cheap and fast construction defined his game plan.

The D&RG's line to Ouray

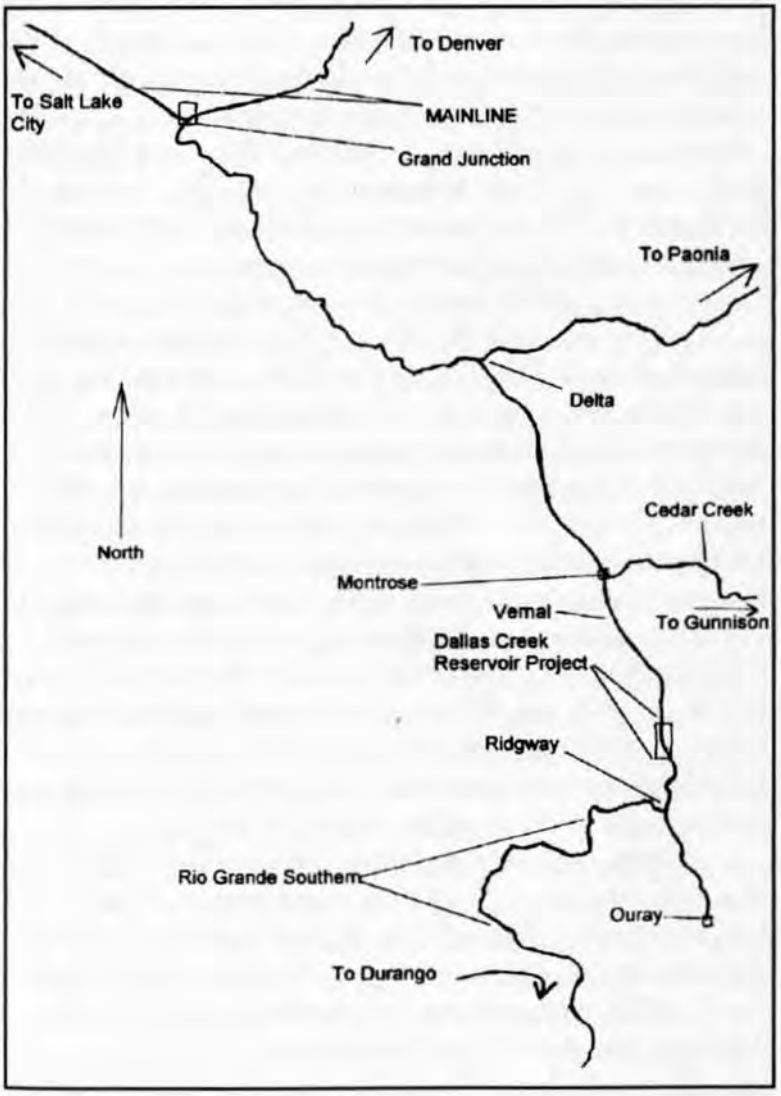
In late 1883 the stockholders tired of Palmer's racing tactics and expenditures, and removed him as president of the D&RG. From 1884 to 1886 political infighting within the company plagued the D&RG and prevented any new construction to the mines in the northern San Juans. In mid-1886, the D&RG had a new president, David H. Moffat,[6] who brought stability to the company. As president, Moffat built new branch lines to mining towns, but he chose only the most promising places, such as Ouray, Lake City, and Aspen. In the late summer of 1886, construction began south of Montrose. Crews of a subcontracting company, Orman & Crook Company, began pushing south through the farmlands and ranches near Montrose. By early 1887, grading reached Dallas (located three miles north of the present town of Ridgway) which became a booming little rail-head town until construction of the Rio Grande Southern railroad in 1891 moved the rail-head south to Ridgway.

The work continued slowly on toward Ouray. The final segment of construction proved the hardest because the box canyon that Ouray sits in narrows four miles north of town. To place the track in the correct spot, a shelf had to be blasted out of the rock face. In addition, the steep terrain increased the required grade to a challenging 2.3%. Near the top of the climb, just north of Ouray, the railroad had to build a large wood trestle. Consequently, Moffat asked the town of Ouray to help to finance the line's construction and donate land for the depot. Finally on 15 December 1887 the first work train reached the town, and on

21 December, the first official train pulled into Ouray. Locomotive number 16 (named "Pike") pulled the train.[7] A large crowd of citizens greeted it. The wait had been memorable: the temperature that day hovered near zero, and two men in the crowd had gotten into a fight and left, amusing the crowd.

Rio Grande Southern Railway

The construction of the Rio Grande Southern Railway in 1891 increased the importance of the Ouray branch. With this new railroad the train traffic through Ridgway increased even further. An English-Russian immigrant named Otto Mears built the RGS.[8] A unique man, Mears had made a living first as a Union soldier in the California Volunteers, then as a merchant, and later as a builder of Colorado toll roads. As mining boomed in the San Juans in the late 1880s, and internal squabbles continued to plague the D&RG, Mears decided to build railroads in places where the D&RG would not go. His first enterprise, the Silverton Railroad, ran from Silverton to the Red Mountain and Ironton mining districts to the north. He then used profits from the Silverton Railroad to build a connecting line with the D&RG at the new Ridgway junction on the Ouray line. The junction and new town were named Ridgway, in honor of Robert M. Ridgway, the first superintendent of the Rio Grande Southern who supervised construction on the northern end of the railroad.[9] The RGS ran through the western San Juan Mountains to Durango, where it connected to the D&RG again. The Rio Grande Southern's purpose was to serve the mining districts of Telluride, Ophir, Rico, and the ranchers in the San Juans. The RGS, built in 1890 and 1891, initially had a great deal of business. However, profits plunged when Congress repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase act in 1893 forcing most of the mines in the San Juans to close.[10] Shortly thereafter the Rio Grande Southern went bankrupt, and Mears was removed as president. The RGS would limp along until 1952.



Map of the Rio Grande Southern and Denver & Rio Grande Western railroads in west central Colorado. (Map courtesy of Matt Darling.)

The Ridgway branch of the D&RG covered diverse geography. In the north, open farmlands around Montrose slowly gave way to foothills where the track lines crossed the Uncompahgre River for the first time. Then the line ran south-southeast to the border of Ouray County, where it skirted the eastern edge of Log Hill Mesa and crossed the river again. The railroad then followed the Uncompahgre River past McKenzie Butte. Just north of Ridgway, the rail line crossed the Uncompahgre river for the forth and final time and entered the Uncompahgre valley at the Ridgway town site.

Decline of the Narrow Gauge

From the 1890s through the 1950s, narrow gauge trains chugged along the D&RG's tracks, surviving the company's ups and downs. For most of its history, the D&RG struggled financially. For the first forty years its executives seemed more interested in political maneuvers than running an efficient business. From 1906-1909, George Gould, son of the infamous Jay Gould, used the D&RG's money to purchase bonds to build his new railroad, the Western Pacific, which connected Salt Lake City, Utah and Oakland, California. This financial action put the D&RG in the position of having to pay for the Western Pacific's bonds. In 1915, the Western Pacific went bankrupt, and the D&RG suffered financially. Eastern businessmen did not care if the railroad remained financially viable and offered good service: dividends and profits were their primary concerns.

From 1883-1935, the D&RG alternated between periods of success and failure. In 1924 the railroad was reorganized and called the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway. From 1927-1929, the D&RGW prospered moderately, but the Depression hit the D&RGW hard, because it carried more than two million dollars of debt. By 1935, the D&RGW declared bankruptcy. The court appointed two western businessmen to run the railroad, Henry Swan and Wilson McCarthy.[11] These two men, McCarthy especially, believed in running a railroad that offered good service and made a profit. Instead of concentrating on dividends

for shareholders, McCarthy began to rebuild the railroad. His goal was to make money by spending money.

In 1947 the D&RGW came out of its twelve-year receivership, and was renamed the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad. Under the guidance of McCarthy, the Rio Grande had shifted its focus from local mining traffic to Chicago-Oakland interstate traffic. By becoming a competent, competitive, transcontinental bridge route, the Rio Grande prospered. However, this new focus had little tolerance for narrow gauge trains that ran off into the remote mountains, unless they were profitable. Consequently, by the 1950s, time was up for most of the narrow gauge trains. Remaining narrow gauge lines were now being removed on a lack-of-profit basis. The branch line to Santa Fe, New Mexico was the first casualty in 1941. The next was the line connecting Montrose and Gunnison through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River, which for nine years, 1881-1890, had been the "mainline."

In this age of abandonment, four branch lines in Colorado's mountains survived. The rail line between Silverton and Durango had its economic base transformed. Beginning in the 1940s, this route became a tourist attraction, and growing numbers of people started riding the mixed passenger/freight trains to Silverton from Durango. By the late 1950s, the riders had transformed this mixed train into a full passenger train, which regularly sold out and averaged 110% capacity. The second line to survive was the line from Alamosa to Durango then south to Farmington, New Mexico, called the San Juan Extension. This line crisscrossed the Colorado-New Mexico border a dozen times. The region around Durango was very remote in the 1950s, and roads were dirt and gravel at best. This route survived because oil was discovered near Farmington, New Mexico in the early 1950s, creating a demand to transport oil-field tools in and the oil out. When first contacted, the Rio Grande's surprised response was, "You want to do what?" Oil transformed the San Juan extension from a long, low-profit,

narrow gauge branch-line to a busy rail-line. The third branch to last past the 1950s was the Monarch branch, just west of Salida, which hauled limestone for the CF&I steel mill in Pueblo. Originally a narrow gauge line in the 1880s, this line was converted to standard gauge to simplify operations in 1956.

Changes come to Ridgway

The fourth branch-line to survive was the Ridgway branch. Its fortunes were tied to a number of changes in railroading on the Western Slope. On 8 April 1951, the Interstate Commerce Commission authorized abandonment of the Rio Grande Southern,[12] which was the source of more than half of the traffic on the Ridgway branch. The railroad had lost the last of its mining contracts the previous fall, because the mines in Rico and Telluride had switched to trucks for haulage. This, plus the loss of the railroad's only rotary snowplow in 1949, and the termination of its mail contract in 1950, brought an end to the Rio Grande Southern.

With the loss of this railroad, the number of trains running to and from Ridgway dropped significantly. Traffic out of Ouray had also dropped to one or two trips per week. The only revenue-generating traffic left in the Ridgway area was outbound lead and zinc ore from the Silverton region via trucks, and inbound coal traffic to Ridgway from the coal mining town of Somerset. Outbound sugarbeets from the loading facility at the Rio Grande's siding, called Vernal (five miles south of Montrose) also provided some business.[13]

Income from the current traffic did not justify train operations to Ouray any more. The Cedar Creek branch east of Montrose was also at the end of its profitability.[14] All the narrow gauge track running out of Montrose in the 1950s had been connected to the rest of the narrow gauge system, but in 1949 the line to Gunnison had been cut. Consequently, to operate the narrow gauge trains, the Rio Grande had to shuttle its narrow gauge train crews from Gunnison to Montrose, via bus which was an expensive operation. In addition, the whole branch line system

badly needed repairs. Another bothersome factor for the Rio Grande was the necessity of transferring loads from standard gauge cars to narrow gauge cars in Montrose. All of this meant that the Ouray section of the branch operated at a loss of over $9,000 dollars a year.[15] Abandoning the Ouray and Cedar Creek lines and then standard gauging the Ridgway section would cost $53,165 to save an estimated $279,470 in rehabilitation costs, as well as $9,753 annually in operation losses.[16] With the narrow gauge removed, the need to keep the 1896 narrow gauge steam locomotives would be gone, and standard gauge diesel locomotives could operate the line, saving thousands of dollars for the railroad. All the narrow gauge equipment in Montrose could then be consolidated to Salida.

On 21 March 1953, the last narrow gauge train pulled into Ouray to pick up stray boxcars.[17] Several weeks earlier, crews had begun converting the line to standard gauge by placing longer ties under the rail.[18] After the last narrow gauge train had passed on its way home, the crews began widening the rails to standard gauge. This track crew numbered one hundred strong, twenty-five of whom were Navajo Indians.[19] The work of abandoning the Ouray branch was postponed because of the winter cold. After the gauge was widened, the railroad's Bridge and Building crew rolled in to finish the job of upgrading the bridges south of Montrose. South of Ridgway the Brinkerhoff Brothers of Rico salvaged the rail of the branch line for scrap iron.[20]

As part of the conversion of the Ridgway branch, an unloading facility and railroad wye of standard gauge proportions was needed. At the north end of the old narrow gauge yard in Ridgway, there was a railroad wye, or a section of track designed for turning trains around. A wye is shaped like a Y with the top bars of the Y connected. This track arrangement allows a train to back into one leg of the wye from the mainline, and head out onto the other leg. Once the train is back onto the mainline it has turned around. This move is similar to turning around in a narrow street where you can not make a U-turn. The Denver and Rio

Grande Western and the Rio Grand Southern had jointly owned this wye, in narrow gauge times. When the RGS was being dismantled, the Rio Grande asked the Southern Scrap and Metal Company of Durango (the scrapper of this line) to save 825 feet of the Rio Grand Southern's main track on the north leg of the wye[21] so they could standard gauge it and could then turn equipment around. To pay for this track, the Rio Grande gave the scrapper an equal amount of unneeded track material from Montrose.[22] At the south end of the Ridgway yard, the track came to a new and abrupt stop. The track gang had converted the line to standard gauge all the way to where it intersected with a highway for automobiles several hundred feet south of the old depot. At this point rails continued across the highway, but the track was still narrow gauge.[23] On the south end of the crossing the track had been removed. This interesting arrangement shows how quickly and cheaply the standard gauging of the Ridgway branch was.

With the end of narrow gauge operations, crews loaded the unneeded equipment on standard gauge flatcars and shipped it to Salida, where it was used until the end of that branch in 1956. After the narrow gauge equipment was gone, workers changed the yard in Montrose to standard gauge operations only, by removing the third rail. The three-rail system, or "dual gauge operation," had allowed both standard and narrow gauge trains to run on the same track. Narrow gauge trains used one outside rail and an inside one three feet from the first rail, while standard gauge trains used the two outside rails.[24]

On 2 April 1953, the first standard gauge train rolled into Ridgway.[25] The Rio Grande had replaced only the broken rails and the roadbed had barely been improved. So, the Ridgway branch was now standard gauge, but of low quality. In the twenty years the branch line continued to operate, there was little maintenance of it, and sometimes weeds grew above the rails and made the trains running to Ridgway appear to be floating on grass. Track and ties were a problem. The Rio Grande's records

Circa 1975, a north bound Ridgway freight snakes its way through the Gunnison River canyon, south of Grand Junction, Colorado. Photo by Linda Armstrong.
(Photo courtesy of Alden Armstrong Collection.)

Circa 1975, facing north. As you can see the weeds were very tall on the Ridgway branch. The locomotive D&RGW 3001 is a General Motors GP30, built in 1961. The dirt ramp of the truck loadout can clearly be seen in the photograph. Photo by Alden Armstrong. (Photo courtesy of Alden Armstrong Collection.)

indicate that the trackage structure consisted of 65 pound used rail, called "relay rail," laid in 1926 and 1927. Some short sections had 85 pound and 90 pound relay rail, laid more recently in trouble prone curves.[26] Most of the cross ties on the branch were standard gauge by 1971, but 2,000 of the ties were still the shorter narrow gauge type.

Operations

During the years of standard gauge operation, the Rio Grande reduced the speed limits on the branch for safety reasons. In 1953 the Rio Grande considered the Montrose to Ridgway line as a regular branch-line, but imposed a speed restriction of twenty to twenty-five miles per hour.[27] By 1970 the branch was not listed in the roster of branch-lines at all. On the Montrose branch timetable, however, the railroad stated that on the "Montrose-Ridgway Spur" trains were not to exceed fifteen miles per hour.[28] The Rio Grande had degraded the line to a 24.74 mile long loading track. By 1976 the speed had been reduced to ten miles per hour.[29] Also, by this time five miles per hour "Slow Orders" were common due to poor track conditions.[30] All of this led to extremely slow trips to Ridgway in the later years.

Dealing with old narrow gauge roadbed and track was a nightmare for the crews. The trains were forced to pass many "slow orders" because without any extra ground work, the track moved constantly, causing freight cars to rock back and forth, creating more problems because rails and track bolts broke. In the spring, washouts damaged the roadbed.[31] Most of the time trains bound for Ridgway used two locomotives, not because of the need for power, but as insurance against derailment: if one of locomotives derailed, the second could pull the first back on the track.[32] Railroad crews noted that the track was the worst they have ever seen. The cars rocked so badly that conductors could sit in the cupola and see the car identification numbers on the backs of cars as they swayed back and forth. One time, while locating a car of coal at Ridgway, the car tipped over, dumping

all the coal on the ground. The customer came out and thanked the crew for unloading it just in the right spot.[33] In later years, the Rio Grande had self-propelled track inspection cars, called "Pop Cars," lead the Ridgway trains, to make sure the track was safe for them.[34]

Despite the difficulties, the Ridgway Branch served an interesting assortment of industries. In the Montrose area, the Russel Stover Candy Company and Holly Sugar Company were important customers.[35] In Ridgway there was a truck loadout facility used by the Dixie Lynn Mine, the Camp Bird Mine, the Idarado Mining Company, Federal Resources, and Standard Metals.[36] The loadout was simply a dirt ramp, the height of railroad gondola cars. When the cars were in place, a wooden ramp was lowered so that the trucks could back onto it and dump their loads of lead and zinc concentrate.[37] The Rio Grande also brought coal from the mines at Somerset to Ridgway for the local schools.[38] Other items that often came by rail to Ridgway were small shipments for Rico Lumber and iron ball shot for the ball mill at Telluride.[39]

One of the Rio Grande's most effective cost-saving moves was dieselization, which could be done after standard gauging. By 1956 the Rio Grande had removed all the steam engines from the standard gauge. A 1943 American Locomotive Company Diesel[40] pulled the first standard gauge train into Ridgway. Over the next twenty years, the locomotives grew bigger and more powerful. By the 1960s the locomotives usually were General Motors products called GP9s. Bigger and newer locomotives on the mainlines sent the GP9s to places like the Montrose to Ridgway branch line. In time, the then-new locomotives would be replaced as well. By the 1970s the most common locomotives on the Montrose Ridgway line were GP30s, which had been displaced on many mainlines by the new GP40s. By the late 1970s, it seemed that the Rio Grande would grab any

Here the train is north of Ridgway negotiating the terrain near McKenzie butte, circa 1975. The terrain was like this from Ridgway to Colona on the county border. Photo by Alden Armstrong. (Photo courtesy of Alden Armstrong Collection.)

locomotive (except the ones used for pulling 90 car coal trains) that would not collapse the bridges or derail, and run it down the line. Nearly new GP40-2s built in 1974 ran to Ridgway before the line closed.[41]

Over the years, structures along the Ridgway branch disappeared. The first to be removed was the Ridgway tool house. In 1948, the Rio Grande deemed it surplus and sold it for $303.00.[42] In 1954, the Ridgway laborer's house was sold for $645.00.[43] In 1957, the Rio Grande removed all the old station signs along the route. Railfans and locals had already taken several signs in the old Ridgway yard for souvenirs.[44] In 1965, the Rio Grande sold the Ridgway depot to Lester Lowery for $7,929.00,[45] who then sold the structure to Milton Mitchell.[46] He moved the depot east of the tracks, and rotated it 90 degrees. It stands there today.[47]

A Railroad of Their Own

Despite the deterioration of the Ridgway branch, train crews enjoyed working on it because there were no other trains, and no tight schedule had to be maintained. The crews were on their own: all they needed to do was get the train back to the rail yard at Grand Junction, where the branch lines connected with the main line. The relaxed schedule and freedom the branch-line offered, allowed crews to be more open and friendly to the locals and railfans than railroad rules allowed. They befriended two photographers—Alden Armstrong and his wife, Linda. The conductor told them the history of the line and explained railroad operation to them. They allowed Linda Armstrong to ride along several times, and she took excellent photographs of the branch from the caboose cupola. At Whitewater, just south of Grand Junction, the crew would stop the train and let Linda off, so railroad officials in Grand Junction would not see her.[48] One of the many photographs that the Armstrongs took showed two of the Ridgway train crew sitting on top of the caboose cupola,

Here on a south bound run, you can see the extra freedom the Ridgway train crews had. The train was proceeding at about five miles per hour when this shot was taken, circa 1975. Photo by Alden Armstrong. (Photo courtesy of Alden Armstrong Collection.)

something that officials prohibited for safety reasons. In the crew's mind there was little to worry about: there were no tunnels on the Ridgway branch, and riding on top of the cupola was a welcome break from the routine.[49] These men felt as though they had a railroad of their own!

Decline of Traffic

The 1950s and 1960s went rather well on the Ridgway branch, and the operations remained mostly the same, except for changes in the locomotives. By the early 1970s, however, several things doomed the Ridgway branch. In 1970, the Dixie Lynn mine stopped shipping from Ridgway, because its market for iron ore dried up.[50] In late 1970, the Holy Sugar Company closed its operations, because the demand for sugarbeets dropped. The small lumber shipments out of Ridgway ended by 1973 as well. That same year Ridgway built a new school, and this building and other new and remodeled schools in the area all used natural gas instead of coal.[51] In addition, the Bureau of Water Reclamation planned a new reservoir. The original plan was to locate the reservoir in the valley where Ridgway was, but this angered its residents and drove property prices down. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the Bureau worked on its plans, and assured the people of Ouray County that the dam would not require abandonment of their town or the railroad.[52] In the mid 1970s the Bureau changed its mind, and began urging the abandonment of the railroad line, citing the cost of relocating the railroad.[53] To appease the people of Ridgway the Bureau moved the proposed reservoir north about seven miles. On 21 October 1971, the Ouray County *Plaindealer* had the large headline "NO RIDGWAY DAM!"[54] These changes saved Ridgway, and led to a boom and plans for an improved water treatment system. The Ridgway branch was the loser in the struggle. The Rio Grande did not fight for continuation of the line; traffic had dwindled to the point that the railroad was only running trains when needed, only once a week at times.

Photograph of the Ridgway yard circa 1975, facing south from the train. The gondola contains lead concentrate from the Camp Bird mine. The truck loadout is on the right. The road in the background in where the tracks ended. Photo by Alden Armstrong. (Photo courtesy of Alden Armstrong Collection.)

The last train left Ridgway in December of 1976,[55] with the last load of lead concentrate from the Camp Bird Mine. Over the years the Camp Bird had been the Rio Grande's steadiest customer on the Ridgway branch. A load from the Camp Bird had also been on the last narrow gauge train out of Ouray twenty-three years earlier.[56]

Abandonment

In 1972, the Rio Grande applied for abandonment of the Ridgway branch.[57] After a four year wait, they got permission to abandon the line by the Interstate Commerce Commission. On 21 January 1977, the Rio Grande produced a map showing the work to be done. On this map appeared the Dallas Creek Reservoir Project, a factor in the demise of the line.[58] The Rio Grande awarded the contract for removing the line to A&K Railroad Materials, Inc., of Clearfield, Utah;[59] and, in early May of 1977, removal of the Ridgway branch began.[60] In November of 1977, the Rio Grande sent a letter to A&K complaining that the old bridges had not been removed.[61] In February of that year, the Chief Engineer of the State Department of Highways had stated that he wanted all bridges on the old Ridgway branch that were not going to a new use in Montrose county to be removed quickly, because, if the work was delayed: "Someone may feel they [the bridges] may have historical value and would be a problem."[62] Rush orders were instituted and, by 5 January 1978, most of the bridges were gone.[63]

The Ridgway Branch Today

After the Interstate Commerce Commission gave permission to abandon the Ridgway branch, the attorney for Ouray County, Rich Tisdel, wrote on the behalf of the Commissioners offering to "buy the right-of-way from the Ouray county line southward to mile post 377.56 in or near Ridgway."[64] After buying the right-of-way, Ouray County placed a new water pipeline on it. One of the old railroad bridges over the Uncompahgre carried the pipeline there.

Top: The current end of track in south Montrose. The track leading to the right (east) goes to Russel Stover Candy. Bottom: The remains of the wye switch in Montrose. Photos by Wayne Darling, 24 November 2002. (Photos courtesy of Matt Darling Collection, Grand Junction, Colorado.)

Ouray County converted the southern part of the old railroad grade into a bike path connecting Ridgway and the Ridgway State Recreation Area. Just north of Ridgway is the first of four bridges that were not scrapped in 1977. This bridge originally stood on the Rio Grande's Tennessee Pass route at milepost 118; the old milepost painted on the bridge is still legible. This steel through truss bridge carries bikers across the river. Except for the wood deck added for the bikes, the bridge is just like it was when the standard gauge trains used it. About a half a mile north of the steel bridge is a wood trestle, the trestle is used by a private residence as the entrance to their property. Just north of the reservoir, about eight miles north of Ridgway, is the third surviving bridge, the one that carries the pipeline across the river. This one has a steel deck truss span, with wood trestle approaches. Less than a mile north of this are the remains of the fourth surviving bridge, a simple wood trestle which has no function and is slowly coming apart. Three miles north of the Montrose and Ouray county line, the old railroad grade has been turned into a frontage road for Highway 550. This road parallels the highway north for about six miles just like the railroad did thirty years ago. A portion of the northern end of the Ridgway branch is now a bike path in southern Montrose that extends from behind the Ute Museum to the end of Rio Grande Avenue.

In 1976, when the Ridgway branch was scrapped the tracks south of Montrose were all removed. The track now ends where the scrappers stopped pulling it up about one hundred feet south of the switch that leads to Russell Stover Candy. The track to Russel Stover now meets modern branch-line standards, which is much better than the Ridgway branch ever was. A couple hundred yards north of Russell Stover's track is the Montrose wye. Half of the old wye has been removed; the rest is still in place, curving to the east and pointing toward Cedar Creek and Gunnison. The fragment of the wye is made up of the old 65 pound rail that was laid down on the Ridgway branch in 1926.

This photograph shows the steel through truss bridge north of Ridgway that is now part of the new bike path. Author included to show scale. 24 November 2002. Photo by Wayne Darling. (Photo courtesy of Matt Darling Collection.)

Close up of the wye switch in Montrose showing the change from 90 lb. rail to 65 lb. rail. The smaller rail on the right at one time was laid to narrow guage width. As you can see the rail joiner had to be cut down to allow the two rails to be bolted together. Photo by Wayne Darling, 24 November 2002. (Photo courtesy of Matt Darling Collection.)

Top: Old unused wood trestle, north of the Ridgway State Recreation Area. The trestle is less than one hundred feet from the highway. Bottom: The Ridgway Depot as it looked on 24 November 2002. Except for the new colors and the brick facade under the windows, the depot has changed little since the 1950s. Photos by Wayne Darling. (Photos courtesy of Matt Darling Collection.)

Where this old rail joins the newer rail, the track joiner was cut down in order to bolt to it. Some of the railroad ties in Montrose date from the 1950s when the yard was three-rail. Some of these ties still show the grooves from the old narrow gauge rail. A few even have third rail track spikes still in them. Nearby stands the old Rio Grande depot, built in 1911 with a unique Spanish Mission look. It now serves as the Montrose county museum.

Despite the fact that the Ridgway branch is gone, questions about it persist. The 65 pound rail has the name "Cambria Steel 90 VI" engraved on it. This raises intriguing questions about its origin. Perhaps it came from Cambria Steel in England.[65] If so, this British rail may have been first used on the Rio Grande's Tennessee Pass line. A bit of evidence to support this theory is that the bridge north of Ridgway was originally used on Tennessee Pass. Another possibility is that the rail came from the Cambria Steel mill in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Tourist Dollars Let You Survive

A brief historical survey of branch-lines in western and southwestern Colorado reveals an unmistakable pattern of abandoning traditional haulages for tourist dollars. The Ridgway branch that depended on ore from Colorado high-country mines went out of business in the 1970s. The Monarch extension survived for a time by hauling limestone to Pueblo, but by the 1980s that line was scrapped. However the branch lines that turned to hauling tourists have managed to survive. The San Juan extension ran at capacity in the 1960s, hauling oil from Farmington, but when that declined, Colorado and New Mexico purchased it and now runs it for tourists as the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic railroad. The Silverton branch (now called the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad) found its mother lode in the tourist trade. In modern Colorado mountain railroading, the key to profits is mining tourist dollars. The old narrow gauge railroads now enable tourists to view the mountains and remnants of Colorado's mining history. Mining

The marks of the old narrow gauge rail can be made out and one of the track spikes missed by the scrapers in 1953 is still in place. The photographer is facing south to Ridgway. Photo by Wayne Darling. (Photo courtesy of Matt Darling Collection.)

and railroading went together in Colorado's past, they declined together, and now both are mostly tourist attractions in the mountainous areas of the Western Slope.

Notes

[1]Robert G. Athearn, *The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad: Rebel of the Rockies* (1962; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 15.

[2]George W. Hilton, *American Narrow Gauge Railroads* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 308.

[3]Athearn, *The Denver and Rio Grande Western*, 2.

[4]Ibid., 2.

[5]Ibid., 87.

[6]Gordon Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray. The Ouray branch of the Denver & Rio Grande," *Colorado Rail Annual: A Journal of Railroad History in the Rocky Mountain West* 11 (1973): 102

[7]Ibid., 106.

[8]Maelry H. Ferrell, *Silver San Juan: The Rio Grande Southern Railroad* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Press, 1973), 5.

[9]Doris Gregory, *The Town That Refused to Die: Ridgway, Colorado, 1890-1991* (Ouray, CO: Cascade Publications, 1991), 4. (Hereafter: Gregory, *Ridgway*.)

[10]Ferrell, *Silver San Juan*, 87.

[11]Robert A. LeMassena, *Rio Grande to the Pacific!* (Denver, CO: Sundance Ltd., 1974), 149.

[12]Robert W. Richardson, "Narrow Gauge News," *Colorado Rail Annual: A Journal of Railroad History in the Rocky Mountain West* 21 (1994): 107.

[13]Papers for preparation of application to abandon Ridgway branch for the Interstate Commerce Commission, 26 May 1971, 3, Authorization for Expenditure reports of the Denver and Rio Grande Western (hereafter: AFE of the D&RGW), file 348, Colorado Railroad Museum Collection, Robert W. Richardson Library, Colorado Railroad Museum, Golden, Colorado. (This collection is inconsistent in terms of providing file and document numbers, page numbers, and dates. The author has provided all identifying information contained on the individual documents.)

[14]The Cedar Creek branch was all that was left of the old main line that had connected Montrose to Gunnison via the Black Canyon of the Gunnison River. This line was the main line from 1881-1890. The Cedar Creek line served as part of the Black Canyon line until 1949 when the line through the Black Canyon was scrapped because the line had lost a lot of its traffic and a large mud slide had covered the track. The Rio Grande did not want to pay to fix the mud

slide again, which had caused trouble many times in the past. By 1953 the Cedar Creek branch could not pull a profit hauling cattle to winter pastures anymore.

[15]ICC permitting abandonment of Ouray Branch, 9 September 1952, 4. AFE of the D&RGW.

[16]Cost Estimates, D&RGW, 22 August 1952, AFE of the D&RGW.

[17]Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray," 203.

[18]Ibid., 204.

[19]Richardson, "Narrow Gauge News," 118.

[20]Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray," 177.

[21]D&RGW letter from John Ayen, Jr., to F.A Moran, Request for RGS wye, 19 December 1952, AFE of the D&RGW.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Richardson, "Narrow Gauge News," 152.

[24]Hilton, *American Narrow Gauge Railroads*, 265.

[25]Richardson, "Narrow Gauge News," 152.

[26]Papers for preparation of application to abandon Ridgway branch for the ICC, 26 May 1971, 2, AFE of the D&RGW, file 348.

[27]"1953 Railroad Employee Timetable," ID&RGW online archive <http://users2.evl.net/~swmeier/riogrande.htm1> (15 August 2002).

[28]"1970 Railroad Employee Timetable," ID&RGW online archive, ibid., 15 August 2002.

[29]"1976 Railroad Employee Timetable," ID&RGW online archive, ibid., 15 August 2002.

[30]Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray," 177.

[31]Ibid., 176.

[32]Alden Armstrong, photographer, interview with author, Appleton, Colorado, 8 September 2002.

[33]This story about the spilling of the coal car comes from the vast library of unwritten jokes and tall tales held by the railroader community who have asked that names not be named.

[34]Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray," 177.

[35]Record of Property changes: Structural units, 1948, AFE of the D&RGW.

[36]Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray," 177.

[37]Papers for preparation of application to abandon Ridgway branch for the ICC, 26 May 1971, AFE of the D&RGW, file 348, 3.

[38]Armstrong, interview.

[39]Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray," 177.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Richardson, "Narrow Gauge News," 152.

[42]Armstrong, interview.

[43]Record of Property changes: Structural units 1954, AFE of the D&RGW.

[44]Armstrong, interview. By 1957 half of the RR signs were already missing from the Ridgway yard. Alden himself had taken the "End of Track" sign some time before.

[45]Record of Property changes: Structural units, 1965, AFE of the D&RGW.

[46]Gregory, *Ridgway*, 77.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Armstrong, interview.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray," 177.

[51]Gregory, *Ridgway*, 77.

[52]Ibid., 82.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid., 76.

[55]Ibid., 83.

[56]Chappel, "Train Time in Ouray," 176.

[57]Ibid., 177.

[58]Ridgway Branch map, 21 January 1977, AFE of the D&RGW.

[59]A&K Railroad Materials letter, Notice to proceed with Ridgway Branch removal, 29April 1977, AFE of the D&RGW, file AFE-8471.

[60]A&K Letter, Notice to proceed with Ridgway Branch removal, 29 April 1977, AFE of the D&RGW, file AFE-8471.

[61]Letter from the D&RGW to A&K Railroad Materials, 8 November 1977, AFE of the D&RGW, file AFE-8471.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Work completion letter from A&K Railroad Materials, 5 January 1978, AFE of the D&RGW, file AFE-8471.

[64]Gregory, *Ridgway*, 82.

[65]Sean Curtis, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Railroad Conductor, interview with author, Grand Junction, Colorado, 29 November 2002.

The Vietnam Memorial in the American Legion Park, Gunnison, Colorado. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

Home Again: Vietnam and Life after the War for Gunnison Veterans

By Jim Woytek*

Every American war has created images of events and heroes. While these remembrances are not always accurate, they are nonetheless embedded in American textbooks, art, literature, movies and, most importantly, our historical memory. The American Revolution conjures images of the Declaration of Independence, George Washington crossing the Potomac, and the patriot victory at Yorktown. Robert E. Lee, U.S. Grant, Abraham Lincoln, and Gettysburg characterize the Civil War, while the doughboys and mustard gas are firmly entrenched in the American memory of the First World War. Historical images of World War II include the allied invasion of Normandy and Marines planting the American flag atop Mt. Sarabachi. The war in Southeast Asia was different. Vietnam's images are those of My Lai, violent protest, napalm, and the real horrors of war. Like wars fought throughout history, the Vietnam War helped to define a generation and a country.

This unpopular war divided America along the lines of age, race, gender, region and politics. For some, protesting government actions in Vietnam signaled their rebellion against

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the "Establishment," an imperialistic U.S. Government, and capitalistic exploitation of the third world. Many protesters argued that the federal government used the conflict to control and exploit minorities and the lower socio-economic classes. Supporters of the war considered it as an opportunity for financial gain; or, most commonly, viewed it as a way to contain or defeat the growing communist threat following World War II. But to the men who fought, whether as volunteers or draftees, Vietnam was a call to duty that became a fight for survival. These men came from sprawling urban metropolises, suburbs, small towns of the rural South, Midwestern farms, and western ranching communities.

This article is a case study of attitudes about the war and returning veterans in the 1960s and 1970s in Gunnison, a small, conservative Western Slope community. Attitudes evolved over time and fell into three time periods, each with a distinctive mood: in the early 1960s, returning veterans received a warm welcome; then, in the later years of that decade, veterans received recognition, but not outright appreciation; and, finally, by the 1970s the community had become indifferent. Generally, these shifts in local opinion reflected the changing mood of America as a whole. While many analysts have concluded that urban centers expressed more discontent with the war than rural America, this paper suggests even small, isolated towns in Colorado evidenced a weariness with the on-going war.

Several Gunnison residents served bravely in Southeast Asia. Three of them, Jake Spritzer, Don Archuleta, and Bill Gazzoli, were born and raised in the town. Mike Sampson returned from Vietnam to Denver, Colorado and later made Gunnison his new home. Russ Barr is now a resident of the Gunnison Valley, having moved to Gunnison years after the war had ended. Their journeys took them to different places and changed them in various ways, but they shared many experiences, and returned to a country torn apart by ideology. On

their new battlefield of homeland America, they fought to move on with their lives and leave the haunting memories of combat behind them. Vietnam had not only transformed American society, it had changed these men forever.

The roots of the Vietnam War extended back to a time before some of these men were born. After World War II and the defeat of fascist Germany and imperial Japan, a new military threat arose under the guise of the U.S.S.R. and communism. This was the beginning of the Cold War, a time when an "iron curtain" separated the globe between the "Free World," and what Ronald Reagan would later deem the "Evil Empire." In 1954, the French-controlled colony of Indochina teetered on the brink of collapse, threatened by rising communist and nationalist movements. President Eisenhower's aides in Washington debated intervention in the situation, and even considered strategic nuclear strikes.[1] Through the thousand days that John F. Kennedy served in the presidency, the situation in Vietnam worsened.[2] After Kennedy's assassination, Lyndon Johnson inherited the problem. Johnson, once staunchly critical of using military action in the country, approved a buildup of American advisers in South Vietnam, though he assured the United States that, "American boys will not be sent to do what Asian boys ought to be doing themselves."[3]

As tensions mounted and it looked as though military action would be necessary to keep the North Vietnamese army from advancing and taking South Vietnam, the American government began sending troops to fight a war that Johnson had earlier called the responsibility of the Vietnamese. Conflict in autumn of 1965 in the Ia Drang Valley, began the full-fledged effort of the American military in Vietnam.[4] As combat intensified, the U.S. implemented a search-and-destroy policy in the hope of grinding down the opposition's forces and reporting a favorable "kill ratio." For example, in the Ia Drang campaign, some three hundred American soldiers were lost, a number that,

to American leaders, seemed minimal in contrast to the two thousand communist troops killed in action.[5] Politicians and military leaders miscalculated the tactics of attrition: the American people abhorred heavy casualties, even if they were small compared to those of the enemy.

As the war in Vietnam escalated, some American cities erupted into violence. Racial tension and political radicalism had been mounting for years. The 1960s began as a decade of youthful promise, but after Kennedy's death, disillusionment gripped many young people. Teach-ins on college campuses led to demonstrations, and the non-violence of Martin Luther King gave way to the more radical ideas of Bobby Seale and Huey Newton's Black Panther party.[6] Racial tension had become such a heated issue that a race riot even broke out aboard the *U.S.S Valley Forge*, a warship just off the coast of Vietnam.[7]

In 1968, communist forces in Vietnam launched a massive assault on American military forces that would be known to history as the Tet Offensive. Young liberals demonstrated at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and events turned violent with the arrival of the Chicago police. Political tension mounted and the threat of violence on the streets became more prevalent. Soldiers who returned from the jungles of Vietnam faced another war at home.

For a handful of men, home was the small town of Gunnison, located in a valley carved by the Gunnison River in western Colorado. With a population of about seven thousand, Gunnison was a microcosm of conservative America. People of Gunnison enjoyed their rural lifestyle, and sometimes eschewed change, even if it was as simple and harmless as a woman wearing "odd" clothing. An article in the *Gunnison County Globe* reported on local reaction to a young lady wearing different colored stockings and a short, multi-colored miniskirt while shopping in downtown Gunnison.[8] The young lady expected disapproving looks, but the townspeople's hostility surprised her.

A number of women made not-so-subtle comments about her attire, and even judgments on her character.[9] The radical change and growing liberalism that swept the country in 1968 had not taken hold in this small town.

On larger issues of politics and foreign policy, Gunnison in the mid-1960s fell on the conservative, perhaps even hawkish side of the spectrum. The 29 February 1968 issue of the *Gunnison County Globe* offered a feature story about a debate at Western State College between two visiting professors, Dr. Edward Rozek of the University of Colorado and Dr. Holmes Brown of Denver University.[10] A large crowd listened as the two scholars offered their points of view on Vietnam. Rozek advocated continued involvement in Asia and argued that the government's policy was working. Brown took the opposite position, saying that policy needed revision, and that the U.S. should immediately withdraw all military forces from Vietnam, even if that meant America admit defeat to a communist army.[11]

A week later, in the 7 March edition, an editorial appeared, entitled "It Doesn't Make Sense...." The author stated, "Our vote is for Dr. Rozek, but we really disagree with both of them." The paper supported Rozek's argument that U.S. policy was the right strategy for the situation, but the *Globe* was prepared to take its case a step further: "We think the Johnson administration needs some of the Teddy Roosevelt type guts...get the war over with and world opinion be damned."[12] The newspaper questioned how American forces could continually bomb the tiny country of Vietnam with such few tangible results. Was it not time to employ more military force there?

The article also advocated the use of force to retrieve the ship *U.S.S. Pueblo* from North Korea. It was time to "draw a line and ask the enemy to step over."[13] If the government and the American people were not prepared to do so, the *Globe* suggested that future generations would be entitled to call them "lilly-livered."[14] The article claimed that the majority of townspeople felt

the same way; the American government was on the right track, it only needed to step up military operations in Vietnam, and become more aggressive in its approach to defeating the communists.

Just weeks later, another editorial appeared; this one based on Sidney DeLove's, *The Quiet Betrayal*. DeLove decried the wave of unpatriotic behavior that had swept across the country, especially among America's young people. In the article, he described the "Stars and Stripes" as a symbol of national unity, patriotism, and a great history of ideas and achievements. He called for a return to religious and patriotic values in the face of uncertainty. DeLove painted America as the "great republic, the chosen infant destined to be man's last remaining hope for suffering humanity...and God's gift to mankind."[15] DeLove's powerful words reflected what many in Gunnison believed.

However, not everyone in town agreed with the editorial in the *Globe* and DeLove's sentiments. Gunnison's Western State College hosted debates and lectures on Vietnam, and a number of students objected to further military action in Vietnam. Anti-war protests and demonstrations were quite small when compared to those in many colleges and universities across the nation, but a few incidents at Western State shocked and even offended many of the townspeople. In the fall of 1970, a small group of college students demonstrated against the war effort. Neither the local government nor its law officials tried to stop it. The protesters marched from the college through town, carrying a casket draped with the American flag. To the demonstrators, this cry for peace pleaded for an end to the senseless deaths of American soldiers. To those who had friends and loved ones fighting in Vietnam, this act of sedition betrayed American soldiers who were risking their lives for their fellow countrymen. The event drew a front-page picture in the *Globe*, but those who opposed the parade did not make an issue of the event.[16]

Despite some protest from the college crowd, Gunnison, according to the *Globe*, staunchly supported the war effort and

the men and women serving their country; they would welcome their returning veterans with respect and a hearty "Thank you." The newspaper published articles on new enlistees in the military, and expressed pride in the achievements of local military personnel. By examining the evidence from the local papers, a case could be made that veterans of the Vietnam War should have received a warm welcome from the townsfolk upon their return from battle. But was this really the case? Either the *Globe* drastically overstated public support for the military, or, as the war progressed, the town continued its support of American policy, but remained apathetic about the soldiers who risked their lives in defense of the United States. Granted, veterans returning to Gunnison did not endure angry mobs or the contemptuous acts of being spit on and called "baby killers" as some veterans faced when they returned to the United States, but neither did they receive a hero's welcome like that of their World War II counterparts. If the Gunnison area was typical, rural America tended not to chastise its returning veterans and hold them personally responsible for wartime atrocities; but, as a whole, these citizens failed to acknowledge the courage of its young servicemen. Veterans returned and quietly reentered the local population. For Gunnison veterans of the Vietnam War, it took over two decades to receive official recognition from their townspeople.

In the early years of the 1960s, before anti-war sentiment had peaked, Gunnison welcomed home one of its vets. Jake Spritzer was born and raised in the Gunnison area. He joined the Army in 1959 because he had always been interested in the armed forces and felt a sense of duty to serve his country. He served six months in Vietnam in 1963, and received his discharge from the Army in 1965 after six years of dedicated service. While serving his time in Southeast Asia, Spritzer recalls no news of protests or demonstrations, as later vets remember. He was there before the Ia Drang campaign and the heaviest combat of the war.

However, when casualties increased, anti-war sentiment grew. He returned home to Pueblo, Colorado and visited his parents, who had moved away from Gunnison. Jake Spritzer moved to Boulder for a time, but returned to his hometown, this time for good. Spritzer described the experience of returning to the United States as "exciting." After being away for years, he could not imagine living anywhere else; he loved Gunnison.[17]

His return differed from that of the later veterans. Spritzer felt welcomed, and the town treated him well. He had married while still in the service in 1964, and, when he returned to Gunnison, he became a carpenter. He often marched in Veteran's Day and Memorial Day parades, and during these parades he began to see disapproval from citizens in the area. These parades took place in the ex-mining town of Crested Butte, thirty miles north of Gunnison. This small ski town is traditionally more liberal than its southern ranching counterpart, and it showed in the spectators. Spritzer remembers a small, but vocal, group of protesters who raised their voices, but nothing on the scale of later protests across the country.[18]

Don Archuleta, another Gunnison native, joined the United States Marine Corps in 1967. Though he had planned on joining the service, a judged quickened Archuleta's decision after a small mistake left him with the choice between military duty and legal consequences. He joined the armed forces and served 375 days in Vietnam. There, he heard little news of the protests and demonstrations taking place in America. Archuleta recalls that the military news carried some stories, but he did not pay close attention to them. He focused his mind on the job he had to do. He served in Vietnam in the years 1967-1968, at the height of combat. The Buddhist holy day of Tet, on 30 January 1968, marked the beginning of one of the bloodiest years of battle. Over 1,100 American troops and 2,300 Vietnamese allied troops died in the Tet Offensive.[19] That year, Archuleta suffered a wound and the military "medi-vaced" him out of Vietnam. After

experiencing the sights, sounds and pain of the war, Archuleta describes returning home to Gunnison as "heaven."[20]

After recovering from his injuries in Fitzsimmons Military Hospital in Denver, Archuleta returned to Gunnison and worked as a carpenter. Much like Jake Spritzer, the community did not celebrate Archuleta's homecoming, but people seemed glad that he had returned healthy and safe. He says he never felt a "cold shoulder" as the later veterans would, but he also acknowledges the fact that no one wanted to talk about the war. He preferred that, because he wanted to leave Vietnam in his past and raise a family. He did just that, marrying in 1970.[21]

Another veteran, Bill Gazzoli, who returned to Gunnison in the early 1970s, said the town reacted to his homecoming with indifference. Except for his family, Bill Gazzoli received no real welcome. He had graduated from Gunnison High School in the spring of 1970, and planned to attend college and later join the military to become a pilot. But, as young men often do, Gazzoli acted with indiscretion and faced an ultimatum: legal trouble or military service. He chose the latter and served in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971. On his return, the only local people to seek him out were drug dealers. Because Gazzoli had been to Vietnam, where drug use was rampant, especially among soldiers involved in heavy combat, dealers assumed he would be a sure customer. He was not. Gazzoli says that, because Vietnam had become such a highly unpopular war, many people, even friends, ignored that he had made many sacrifices by leaving Gunnison to fight for his country. Gunnison's attitude during the 1970s was, in Bill Gazzoli's words, "You were over there, so what? That's no big deal."[22]

Gazzoli does not recall any major demonstrations in Gunnison, before, or after his time in Vietnam. "There may have been a couple [of protests] up at the college," he remembers, "but nothing real big." Of course, many rallies and protests had made national news, namely, the confrontation between students and the National Guard at Kent State University. On 4 May 1970,

guardsmen fired into a crowd of protesting students wounding nine people and killing four.[23] When asked about anti-war sentiment, Gazzoli replied, "I didn't like it before I went over and liked it even less when I got back."[24]

When stationed in Vietnam, Gazzoli received much of his news about the situation in the United States from letters and news clippings sent by his parents. And, if the demonstration or event became of national interest, he would read about it in the *Stars and Stripes* military newspaper, or hear it over the Armed Forces Radio Network. He admits that news showing the American public's anti-military stance affected morale. More often, however, Gazzoli said that the men would fight even harder upon receiving negative news from the States. It motivated his fellow soldiers to prove the justness of their fight as well as their ability to win the war.[25]

After serving his tour in Vietnam with the U.S. Marines, Gazzoli made a stop in Okinawa, Japan, where, he says, the Marines would always stop. In Okinawa, he joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). After Vietnam, the VFW instilled in him a great sense of pride; he had served in the United States Marines, the greatest military force on the planet, he felt, which made him part of a long legacy of heroes. The VFW acknowledged Gazzoli's courage and sacrifice. Even though the Vietnam War was unpopular with much of the country, older veterans from the World War II and Korean War eras, treated Vietnam vets as equals. Elder veterans knew that they had all fought for the same thing, only at different times and under different circumstances. But, as time passed, Gazzoli drifted from his involvement in the VFW. He joined the Gunnison Volunteer Fire Department when he arrived home, and his involvement with the GVFD became a significant part of his life.[26]

By the early 1970s, the country had grown weary of the war, and Gunnison was no different. But the town still offered a haven from the more volatile areas of the country. Mike

Sampson, a native of Denver, joined the Army in 1967. He had registered for training school and had been waved from infantry duty in Vietnam. After boot camp, he joined the army's airborne division and, upon completion, expected orders that would send him to school. The Army informed him that by enlisting in the airborne unit, he had forfeited his opportunity for school. Sampson received orders for advanced infantry training, and, consequently, duty in Vietnam. After fulfilling his obligation in Vietnam, Sampson elected to remain there because he felt a strong sense of duty to his country.[27]

Mike Sampson served his country during the events at Kent State, and remembers a sense of outrage among his companions. They directed their outrage at the students, not the National Guard. Enlisted men expressed a common sentiment: "If you want to fight, fight over here with us."[28] As Sampson and thousands of American men risked their lives in defense of Americans, those they fought to protect chose to march and demonstrate. He, like the other veterans, felt betrayed.

After thirty-seven months of duty, Sampson returned to his Denver home in March of 1971, where he faced the wrath of his countrymen every day.[29] Sampson began work at the gas station job he had left when he joined the Army. He lived with his sister and her roommate, an old high school acquaintance whom he would marry in August of 1971. His return to Denver was hard; old friends became new enemies who ridiculed him for his service. They could understand serving the standard duty time, but they rejected him for his three years of volunteer service. He was taunted, talked down to, and spit on. After only six months in his hometown, he made the decision to leave Denver for a place where he could be anonymous. That place was Gunnison. He had fished and hunted with his father in the Gunnison area for years as a boy, and felt that the small town would be the best place to escape the scorn of the anti-war groups.[30]

He arrived in Gunnison with no job, no money and no

place to live, but it still seemed like the perfect place to be. The small town may have been less hawkish than in earlier years of the Vietnam conflict, but it did not foster the contempt that Sampson had been met with in Denver. Gunnison, though, was no less conservative than in 1968, when the *Globe* had supported Rozek's view on the war. Here, Mike Sampson let his hair grow into an Afro, and he endured criticism from many of the local men. Mike's response to this was: "The military could tell me to cut my hair, but I wasn't about to let some cowboy."[31]

Sampson began working at the Monarch Homestake Mine, located almost an hour east of Gunnison, and kept his military background to himself. Later, he, like Bill Gazzoli, joined the Gunnison Volunteer Fire Department. He lived quietly in Gunnison. After his experiences in Denver, he was not about to announce that he had served in Vietnam, let alone disclose that he had volunteered to serve three tours of duty. He felt unaccepted from the beginning; in part because his appearance branded him as an outsider. He never knew firsthand how Gunnison felt towards men who had served in Vietnam, but he knew it could not have been as severe as what he had experienced in Denver.[32]

By the second half of the 1970s, America had moved on, and so had Gunnison. Vietnam was a part of the past that few people wanted to relive. Russ Barr, who had served in the U.S. Navy from 1966-1969, moved from Wisconsin to Gunnison in 1977. He was stationed off the coast of Vietnam three times aboard the *U.S.S. Valley Forge*, a converted World War II aircraft carrier. Though he never experienced the horror of the search-and-destroy combat missions in Vietnam, he witnessed the results. He and his fellow shipmates shared spaces with combat Marines and saw medical evacuation helicopters return many wounded and bloody men to the ship.[33]

His return home was not like that of Mike Sampson's in Denver, but more like that of Bill Gazzoli. Barr experienced a

hands-off attitude instead of the warm welcome he expected for his effort. He, like the other vets, felt betrayed by the anti-war protests and demonstrations taking place in the United States. He lived a quiet life in Wisconsin, working as a carpenter before moving to Gunnison in 1977. He joined the local chapter of the VFW long after the war was over. He had moved on with his life, and it seemed that the town had done the same. No one questioned him about his service in Vietnam, nor did any of the residents treat him differently than any other citizen of Gunnison. The community welcomed Russ Barr, and he has enjoyed living in the area for the past twenty-five years.[34]

After almost twenty years of involvement and over a decade of American troops engaged in combat, President Richard Nixon ordered the evacuation of U.S. forces from Vietnam on 29 March 1973.[35] The withdrawal of American troops did not mean peace in Vietnam; the communist North would eventually take the South, unifying the country under a single government. The American effort to stop the spread of communism in Vietnam failed, and America had been changed forever. Radical social change, political protest, disillusionment, scandal and a long, unpopular war had taken a toll on the American people, and the tumultuous years surrounding the Vietnam War would leave a lasting impression on politics, culture and society.

Many of the veterans realized that they had participated in a new kind of warfare. Helicopters were the new "horses" of the cavalry.[36] In addition to being a proving ground for helicopter combat, Vietnam was also a place to test other forms of new, hi-tech military equipment, including vastly improved "machine-circuits that can wipe out any enemy with no American losses."[37] According to Subcommittee transcripts, the innovative Night Hawk helicopter led to 323 additional enemy kills and 10 live prisoners.[38]

As much as Vietnam provided a testing ground for military innovations, it also provided a blueprint for how not to

conduct a war. Russ Barr pointed out that U.S. forces were far superior to the forces of the North Vietnamese, but a series of political blunders and miscalculations led to one of the biggest debacles in American military history. He asserts that the U.S. "would have won that war if [the politicians] would have let us." Therefore, the politics that surrounded the war left the American troops to fight an invisible enemy with, in the words of Barr, "one hand tied behind our backs."[39] As a result of being politically hindered, Barr pointed out that the Vietnam War left the U.S. with nothing to show for its efforts but battlescars.[40]

Veterans who returned home to Gunnison, or made the town their home for the first time, all had to come to grips with their feelings about their experiences during and after the war in Vietnam. Those from Gunnison, and elsewhere, tended to keep their experiences and feelings to themselves. As Bill Gazzoli said, there was, and often is, no open dialogue between Vietnam vets and the rest of the world.[41] Many veterans experience feelings of loss, remorse, rage, and a sense of betrayal.[42] Some have claimed that this unwillingness or inability to express their feelings has led many veterans to develop post-Vietnam syndrome, a psychological disorder.[43]

Veterans from Gunnison have found their own way of dealing with their experiences in Vietnam. None say that they have experienced post-Vietnam syndrome, but it is sometimes difficult for them to talk about the war, because what they saw cannot be adequately expressed with words or be understood by those who did not experience Vietnam. It took Russ Barr a full thirty years to come to terms with his own emotions, though his memories of Vietnam are still difficult to discuss.[44] Don Archuleta sees Vietnam as a part of his past and has left it there, saying it is best to move on. He did received one phone call, ten years ago from a fellow Marine he had served with, but he does not feel compelled to revisit the war.[45] Jake Spritzer said that he can reminisce about his experiences in Southeast Asia, and has

contacted a number of his fellow Vietnam veterans, but has not stayed in constant contact with them. He still does not feel inclined to talk about his war memories with just anyone.[46] Bill Gazzoli has only talked to a few veterans about his experiences, but he has never had extensive conversations with family members nor talked to any of his friends from the war since he arrived home. He had made a promise to a friend from nearby Montrose, who had ridden "shotgun" in his truck in Vietnam that the two of them would meet each Fourth of July at a certain location, and drink a few beers while they remembered their buddies. His friend never contacted Gazzoli to finalize plans, and Gazzoli did not pursue the matter. They have not spoken since. He has recently renewed his subscription to *Leatherneck Magazine*, the official publication of the United States Marines, and he says that he often finds himself looking to the "Mail Call" section, curious to see if he recognizes any names.[47] So far Gazzoli has not found a familiar name and does not know what his reaction will be if he does find one. Perhaps they will share their memories, good and bad, and pay their respects to those who did not make it home safely to America.

In 1982, a memorial to the 58,229 Americans who lost their lives in Vietnam was erected in Washington, D.C.[48] Each veteran has a number of companions whose names are carved into the polished black marble walls of the memorial, but few of the Gunnison vets have actually seen the memorial. Mike Sampson did visit the wall ten years ago: "It was a moving experience; it really tore me up."[49] He also visited the Moving Wall, a traveling replica of the memorial, while coming home from a firemen's convention in New Mexico. Sampson found the emotional turmoil of the Moving Wall exhibit in Pagosa Springs, Colorado just as powerful. The other men, Jake Spritzer, Don Archuleta, Bill Gazzoli and Russ Barr have not visited the Vietnam Memorial, but all plan to do so someday; all hope it will be in the near future.

Today, a small, but powerful tribute stands in Gunnison's American Legion Park in honor of the Vietnam Veterans. It is a bronze sculpture of the traditional burial marker in Vietnam—military boots next to an automatic rifle plunged in the ground, topped with the helmet of the fallen soldier. The memorial was erected in memory of seven Gunnison High School graduates who lost their lives in Vietnam: George Bowen, Terry D. Bruns, F. Scot Crismon, William Romack, John Sievers, W. Stanley Watters, and Walter C. Wright, died along with thousands of other American soldiers in Vietnam. Dan McKenna, a former Marine who served during the Vietnam War era, though not in Vietnam, headed the project. He had seen a similar sculpture in Creede, Colorado, and felt that a memorial in Gunnison was overdue.[50]

In 1996, McKenna employed the sculptor of the Creede memorial, with a projected fee of $8,000. As the project neared its end, the sculptor informed McKenna the price would be $3,000 more than expected. McKenna had planned on paying for a large portion of the project from his own pocket, but had stopped accepting donations from the townspeople of Gunnison because private contributions covered the expense of the project.[51] It pleased McKenna that the community had rallied and shown its appreciation for the servicemen who risked their lives and died for America. The Vietnam Memorial was dedicated in the American Legion Park in Gunnison on Memorial Day, 1996, in the presence of many townspeople, including a number of veterans of Vietnam and of other wars. For the men who served in Vietnam, it is a symbol of pride and a reminder of loss. After two long decades, the Gunnison veterans of Vietnam received the heroes' welcome they deserved.

All five men mentioned in this article currently reside in the Gunnison Valley. They have moved on with their lives, though their experiences in Vietnam have helped shape who they are today. Amazingly, even after they endured tremendous pain

Vietnam Memorial, American Legion Park, Gunnison, Colorado. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

and hardship, both during and after the war, all say they would serve again, if called into action. They may have different feelings about the war and the politics of Vietnam, but they love their country and their flag. Don Archuleta said that even though he has not served in the United States Military for thirty years, every time he hears the National Anthem and sees the American flag wave, it sends shivers down his spine.[52] Each of these Vietnam veterans embody honor, integrity and courage.

Plaque at the foot of the Vietnam Memorial in Gunnison, Colorado. (Photo courtesy of the author.)

Notes

[1] Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once...And Young* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1989), 12.

[2] Terry Anderson, *The Sixties* (New York: Longman, 1999), 40.

[3] Moore and Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once*, 12.

[4] Terry Anderson, *The Sixties* (New York: Longman, 1999), 77.

[5] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: The Viking Press, 1983), 480.

[6] Anderson, *The Sixties*, 92-94.

[7] Russ Barr, interview by author, Gunnison, Colorado, 12 October 2002.

[8] Dee Ann Martin, "She Finds Out About Gunnison," *Gunnison County Globe*, 28 March 1968, final edition.

[9] Ibid.

[10] "Local Lecture at WSC," Ibid., 22 February 1968, final edition.

[11] "It Doesn't Make Sense...," Ibid., 7 March 1968, final edition.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Sidney DeLove, "Can We Wave the Flag Too Much?" Ibid., 2 May 1968, final edition.

[16] Ruth Woytek, interview by the author, Morrison, Colorado, 21 October 2002.

[17] Jake Spritzer, telephone interview by the author, 20 November 2002.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Anderson, *The Sixties*, 92-94.

[20] Don Archuleta, telephone interview by the author, 20 November 2002.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Bill Gazzoli, interview by author, Gunnison, Colorado, 13 October 2002.

[23] Anderson, *The Sixties*, 177.

[24] Gazzoli, interview.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Mike Sampson, telephone interview by the author, 20 November 2002.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Barr, interview.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Karnow, *Vietnam*, 684.

[36] Moore and Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once*, 10.

[37] Robert Jay Lifton, *Home From the War: Vietnam Veterans, Neither Victims nor Executioners* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 366.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Barr, interview.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Gazzoli, interview.

[42] Lifton, *Home From the War*, 447-448.

[43] Ibid., 420.

[44] Barr, interview.

[45] Archuleta, telephone interview.

[46] Jake Spritzer, telephone interview.

[47] Gazzoli, interview.

[48] "Vietnam Wall Facts," n.d., <www.thewall-usa.com/information/ > (22 November 2002).

[49] Sampson, telephone interview.

[50] Dan McKenna, telephone interview by the author, 20 November 2002.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Archuleta, telephone interview.

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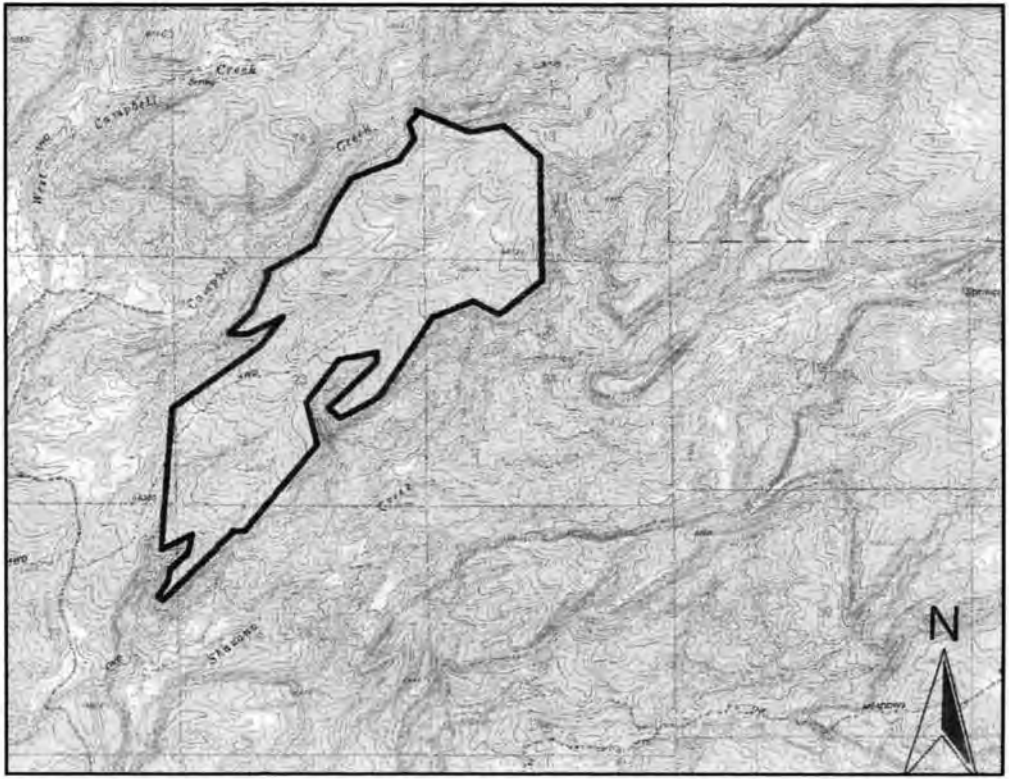
Montrose County, Colorado
USGS 7.5 minute Series, 1983
Contour Interval 20 Feet
Scale1:24,000



Map 1. Project Location Map. Study boundary for the Class III cultural resource inventory of the Campbell Creek vegetation treatment area in Montrose County for the Bureau of Land Management Uncompahgre Field Office. (Map created by Nicole M. Darnell, 1 December 2002.)

BACK ISSUES

Vol. 1	#1	Hard Times But Good Times: The Grand Junction Women During the Great Depression
		Recollections of the Redlands
	#2	Uncompahgre Statesman: The Life of Ouray
	#3	The Grand Junction Town Company and the Land Dispute with William Keith
		The Avalon Theatre
	#4	The Grand River Ditch
		Recollection of Naturita
Vol. 2	#1	The Roan Creek Toll Road
		Harvesting Peaches with German Prisoners of War
	#2	Birds of Mesa County
		Crawford: A Good Little Town
		Chinese in Early Grand Junction
	#3	Reminiscences of Early Life in Grand Junction.
	#4	The Schiesswhol Building: An Economic Barometer of Grand Junction Business Activity, 1908-1934
		The New Deal Programs as Seen from Loma.
		The Peach Festival, 1887-1909: A Celebration of the Land
Vol. 3.	#1	Volunteer to Professional: A History of the Grand Junction Fire Department
	#2	"A Monument for Good in the World and Glory of God": The Parachute Home Culture Club
	#3	Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade 1881-1931, Part I
	#4	Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade 1881-1931, Part II
Vol. 4	#1	The Ku Klux Klan in Grand Junction 1924-1927
	#2	The Schmidt Family Hardware Store and Grand Junction, A Partnership.
		Early History of the Grand Junction High School Band
		Transcendental Twisted Trees and Enos Mills
	#3	The Crawford Mill
		The Survival of Judaism in a Far Western Town: A Brief History of the Jewish Community of Grand Junction
	#4	Archaeological Investigations at Battlement Mesa
		Enstrom's: More Than Just Toffee
Vol. 5	#1	Higher Education and Mesa State College: A Study of Roles and Influences
		In the Spirit of Public Service: Leslie Savage of Western Colorado

	#2	A Reminiscence of Mesa College at the End of World War II 1944-1946
		The Manhattan Project on the Colorado Plateau
		The Plateau Canyon Road
	#3	Grand Junction's City Parks: A History of Community Cooperation
		Reminiscences of an Inveterate Colorado Skier
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Vol. 7	#1	A Study of the Retolaza Boarding House and its Role in the Life of the Basque Iinerant Sheepherder
		The Western Hotel of Ouray: A Hundred Year History
	#2	Women Coal Miners, The Orchard Valley Mine, and the Efficacy of Affirmative Action
		Women and Their History in Kannah Creek
	#3	Labor Shortage and is Solution During WWII in the Grand Valley of Western Colorado
		John Lawrence and the Opening of the San Juans, 1869-1882
		The Howard Lathrop Agriculture Center
		Las Immigrantes Mexicanas
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Vol. 9	#1	The Blind Immigrant
		I Don't Even Hear the Trains Run Anymore
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Vol. 10	#1	Objective History: Grand Junction, Colorado, Part I
	#2	Objective History: Grand Junction, Colorado, Part II

	#3	William Moyer: The Rise and Fall of a Small-Town Progressive
		The Life of Humanitarian Sabina Veronica Lally O'Malley
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		Sights on the West Coast But Home in Grand Junction
		Tales of Black Mesa
Vol. 11	#1	"Queen" Chipeta
		Audre Lucile Ball: Her Life in the Grand Valley from World War II Through the Fifties
	#2	A History of the Palisade Wine Industry
		The Birth and Early Years of Club 20
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		War Relief Efforts of Mesa County During the Second World War
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Vol. 12	#1	Camp Hale: A Civilian Perspective
		Military Memories of Glenn Hanks and the Tenth Mountain Division
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Vol. 13	#1 & 2	The Far Country: Wild Horses, Public Lands, and The Little Book Cliffs of Colorado
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	#4	John Otto: More Than a Misunderstood Visionary
Vol. 14	#1	Early History of School Bands in Western Colorado: The Legacy of Cleon Dalby
	#2	Transplanting the Body: Bringing Southern Italian Culture to Grand Junction, 1870-1930
	#3	The Bug House: History of the Colorado Insectary, Palisade, Colorado
	#4	A Thousand Year Old Pine, Mesa Verde, and Enos Mills
		Women, Politics, and Booze: Prohibition in Mesa County, 1908-1933
Vol. 15	#1	World War II Comes to Delta
		Annuals of a War Era High School: Grand Junction, Colorado's High School During World War II
	#2	Uncommon People in an Uncommon Valley: Homesteading in the Surface Creek Valley
		A Short History of Bowie, Colorado
	#3	Panther Pride: Delta's 1960 State Championship in Football
		The Day Buffalo Bill Came to Town

	#4	Early History of Plateau Valley, Colorado, and Pioneer Life of the First Settlers, as Related By Them or Their Near Relatives Our Home Town
Vol. 16	#1 & 2	Wayne Aspinall's A Family Message to My Family
	#3	La Mamma

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