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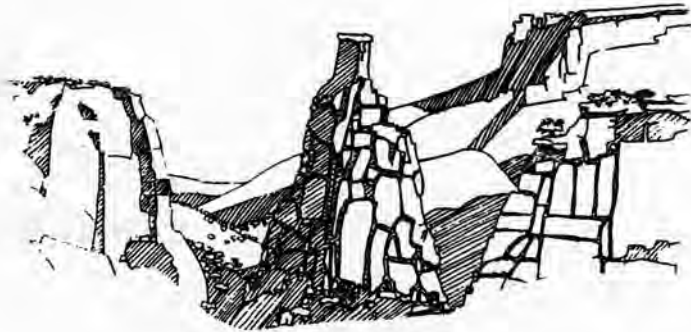
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## THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS ON THE COLORADO NATIONAL MONUMENT

By Tyrone Farrell

Tyrone Farrell graduated "Cum Laude" from Mesa State College in 1990, with a B.A. in History.

A cliff face rises, almost vertically into the clear blue sky, and the redness of the rock is accented by the green Juniper and Pinyon trees. A small lizard runs under a rock, and a cottontail rabbit scampers over the hill. The fresh air is invigorating and the scenery lifts the spirit. Suddenly there is a loud boom, followed by the lesser sounds of falling rocks. A puff of smoke rises above, and the enchantment and serenity of the scene is broken by a group of young men dressed in khaki army clothes, round brimmed canvas hats and boots.<sup>1</sup> They use sledgehammers, shovels, and other hand tools to make a road. The khaki-clothed men, involved in one of the many depression Era projects of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the Colorado National Monument, represent an enterprise characterized by tragedy, great accomplishments, comedy, and an example of a government program that worked.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), created in 1933 during America's deepest, longest depression and dissolved in 1942 during the early stages of World War II, characterized the many programs of the depression Era that helped America recover from the economic crisis. The administration of Herbert Hoover concentrated on supporting private enterprise and industry to overcome the depression. The Roosevelt administration, however, adopted a new approach to the depression. The CCC, as well as other programs of the New Deal Era, provided assistance and support directly to working individuals. A new era of American government had begun, and the CCC achieved a historical role in it.

The CCC program employed young men, 18 to 25, in city, county, and federal land projects. It taught job skills, discipline, and academic courses; and created a more effective worker and informed citizen. The CCC became an instrument for employment, social welfare relief, and education.

Across the nation, from 1933 to 1942, approximately three million young men worked on the various CCC projects. Their main tasks included reforestation, erosion control, drought relief, pest eradication, fire prevention, and land reclamation.<sup>2</sup> CCC workers put out fires in Montana, planted trees in Illinois, and built trails in New Hampshire; yet the CCC represented more than a make-work program.

Government leaders viewed the program as an opportunity to improve social conditions within society and within the lives of the individual men. President Roosevelt hoped to improve the character of young men by taking them from the corrupt and unhealthy environment of the cities, and transferring them to an invigorating, healthful, moral-producing natural environment.<sup>3</sup> Roosevelt's program produced a chance to implement medical care, healthful diets, education, recreation, and job training.<sup>4</sup> Robert Fechner, the director of the CCC program, saw even wider benefits to the program. Fechner noted that the monetary allotment sent home by each

CCC worker "made their lives more comfortable and pleasant." He referred to the families of the CCC workers who received an average of \$25 to \$30 wage paid to the CCC worker each month. Fechner believed each community benefitted from the local purchases made by the CCC camp. In 1934, the CCC program appropriated \$294,000 for CCC projects on the Colorado National Monument.<sup>5</sup> This sum would amount to over 1.5 million in today's dollars, and represented only a fraction of the money spent on the nine-year CCC project on the Colorado National Monument. In addition, Fechner praised the social benefits derived from contact between enrollees from different states and localities, and between the workers and the local community population. In 1934, CCC enrollees came from Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Nevada, and Kentucky, as well as from Colorado to work on the Colorado National Monument.<sup>6</sup> From the beginning, the CCC program promised to solve economic woes, and produce a more qualified and productive citizen, benefitting the nation socially and economically. Fechner's vision of a positive ripple effect on the economy and Roosevelt's vision of creating a better citizenry became reality as CCC camps opened in the state of Colorado and throughout the United States.

Colorado's many CCC camps worked on various projects. In the summer, the CCC participated in forest fire control, reforestation, pest eradication, fire prevention, and land reclamation. CCC groups built trails and campgrounds in temporary camps set up in the Rocky Mountain National Forest, Mesa Verde National Park, and other national forests. The trail over the Crag Crest to the Cottonwood Lakes on the Grand Mesa represents one of many such trails. The CCC also worked on state projects such as the famous Red Rocks Amphitheater near Denver, and the Garden of the Gods Park near Colorado Springs. Small towns benefitted from CCC projects such as the Rifle Mountain Park, Durango's Hillcrest Park,<sup>7</sup> and the Hanging Lake Trail in Glenwood Canyon. The CCC, active across the nation and within the state,



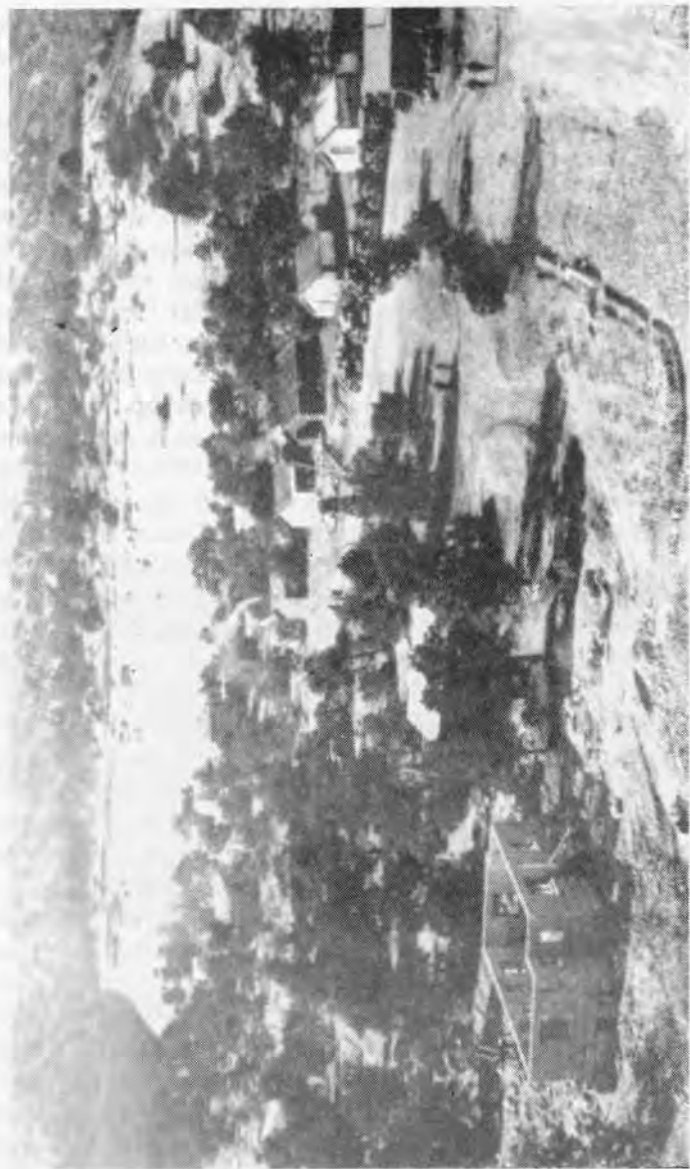


PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOCH, CNM

*CCC Camp on the Colorado National Monument*

participated in one of the more spectacular depression era projects; the construction of the Rim Rock Drive in the Colorado National Monument.

The CCC considered the Colorado National Monument and the nearby town of Grand Junction, excellent locations for CCC work projects. The Monument needed a good road to make it more accessible. In 1902, Grand Junction businessmen and others financed one road project through the Monument, opening up what was envisioned as an important tourist attraction. This project produced the "Trail of the Serpent", a winding, narrow, and non-paved road. Grand Junction businessmen then started to work for a better road that would follow the canyon rims and enhance the area. The Rim Rock Highway, designated as a CCC project in cooperation with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) - another Roosevelt work relief agency, presented an opportunity to implement relief efforts in western Colorado. Grand Junction's rail lines, good roads, central location, temperate climate, and surplus of housing and buildings suggested an ideal regional headquarters for the CCC.<sup>8</sup> The headquarters served as administrative and supply base for camps not only in Grand Junction, Palisade, and the Colorado National Monument, but many other Western Slope camps.

In the spring of 1933, ten men arrived from Ft. Logan, Colorado to set up a temporary camp in the Colorado National Monument.<sup>9</sup> Their efforts, and those of many others, made the deep, wide, red rock canyons and tall monoliths of the area more accessible to everyone.

There were major logistical and jurisdictional problems to be overcome in setting up the camps. Young men must be recruited, fed, clothed, and housed. Skills must be taught to the recruits to enable them to accomplish their tasks. The project required leadership to supervise the recruits who varied in age, experience, and maturity. The construction of the Colorado National Monument Road required rock blasting, trail making, fencing, and building of structures. The National

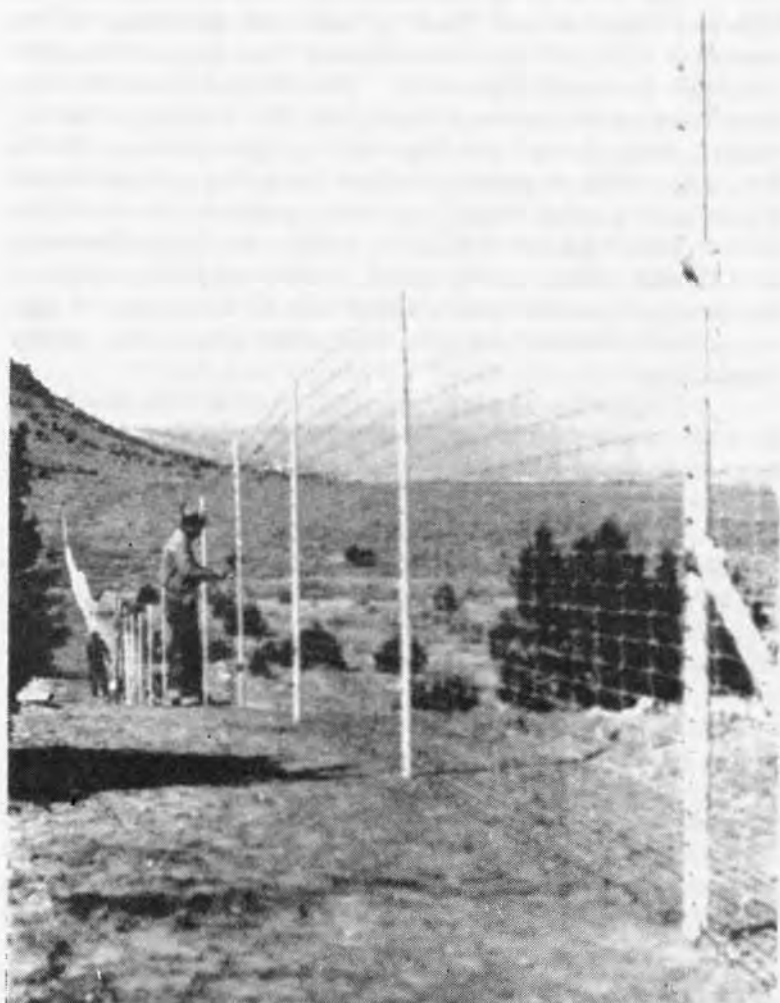


PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOCH, CNM

*CCC enrollers fence on the Monument.*

Park Service did not have the facilities or men to handle such an enormous task. The CCC provided the solution.

The CCC program assigned various tasks to the different national and local government agencies. Park personnel planned and coordinated the projects on the Colorado National Monument. The United States Army contributed materials and personnel for housing, clothing, feeding, disciplining, and entertaining the enrollees. Older men with proven experience trained the young men, and relief committees selected needy applicants eligible to work in the CCC.<sup>10</sup> The Department of Labor determined the guidelines to be followed within the program. CCC eligibility required enrollees to be on the county relief rolls, 18 to 25 years of age, unmarried, without criminal records, and with needy dependents.<sup>11</sup>

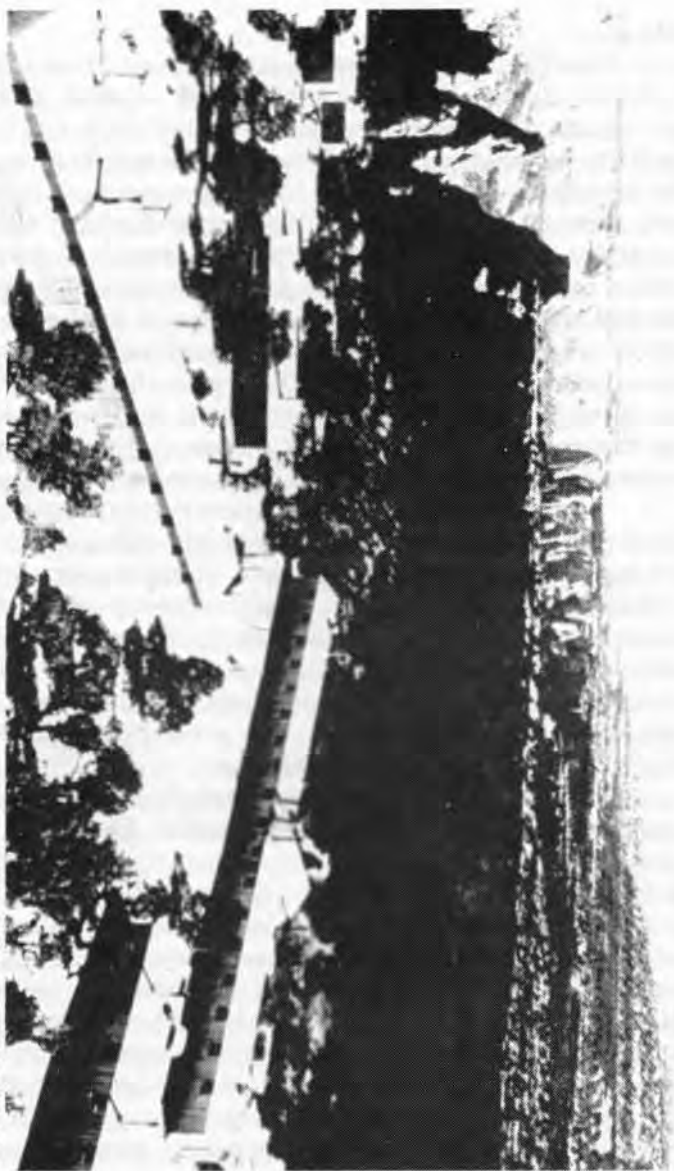
A question arose, at one point, as to whether Mesa County authorities strictly complied with the eligibility requirements. During the early recruitment for CCC workers, the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel charged that friendship and influence became a means of selecting for the camps.<sup>12</sup> After enrollment, however, the influence became worthless because the program required a physical examination by the camp medical officer prior to acceptance into the program. Once accepted, the enrollee was under the authority of a military officer. An army commanding officer, usually a lieutenant, with a small staff consisting of a medical officer, a sergeant, and a few privates, maintained authority within the camp. The lower end of the hierarchy of authority consisted of barracks leaders chosen from the enrollees, or from the skilled locally employed men, referred to as LEMs. LEMs supervised the work sites and the training of the enrollees. They also taught the vocational classes at the camps.<sup>13</sup> A foreman and engineer, hired by the National Park Service, supervised the LEMs and the enrollees. Military men, bureaucrats, professionals, and experienced skilled workers combined efforts to give the younger, inexperienced CCC enrollee a rounded

education.

CCC camp life represented the elements of a military installation, vocational workshop, and summer fun camp combined. The Monument camps looked very much like a military installation. There were five barrack buildings with forty beds each, a recreation building, mess hall, infirmary, and other minor buildings.<sup>14</sup> Wake-up call was at 6:30 a.m., breakfast at 7:00 a.m., and by 8:00 a.m. enrollees were in the trucks on their way to work. After a lunch break, enrollees worked until 4:30 p.m., and ate dinner at 5:00 p.m. Until lights-out at 10:30 p.m., the enrollees relaxed or studied. On the weekends, from 4:30 p.m. Friday to 10:00 p.m. Sunday, enrollees could leave camp.<sup>15</sup> Many local enrollees went home for the weekend. Others went to movies, dances, or explored within the nearby area. Many just stayed at the camp.

Enrollees earned weekend leave by accepting discipline. Weekend privileges could be revoked for loafing on the job, or for failing to pass daily inspections. Enrollees were expected to dress neatly and correctly. Barrack leaders checked to see that beds and living areas of each enrollee were kept neat and clean. A common challenge for the enrollees meant making their beds well enough in the dimness of lantern light to pass inspection later in the day.<sup>16</sup> The army personnel expected disciplined behavior in the CCC camps.

Though the camps respresented similarity to army camps, important difference surfaced. The CCC camps produced better food than army fare, though some enrollees failed to notice. Allyn Huston's memory of macaroni, beans, and cheese served at the camp seemed to him like standard army fare.<sup>17</sup> Harvey Cline, however, remarked the CCC food tasted good.<sup>18</sup> It is likely the food seemed better because the high altitude and climate in which the young men worked stimulated young appetites, and because regular army rations were increased in portions and supplemented with nontraditional foodstuffs.<sup>19</sup> For the young men from the southern states, the CCC attempted to provide food more



*CCC barracks on Colorado National Monument.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOOCH, CNM

familiar to their taste. Catering to regional taste was definitely not regular army.

CCC life differed from regular army life in other ways. The young men who worked on, below, and above the cliffs of the Colorado National Monument carried no weapons, and lacked training in the arts of war. Despite army influence the CCC was not a military organization, but an organization for improving the land and educating young men.

Enrollees received recreational and educational opportunities from the CCC. The National Monument 1 Camp (NM1C), the site of the current Monument visitor center, constructed a full sized baseball diamond to accommodate fifty or more CCC enrollee baseball players. A recreation center provided the opportunity for enrollees to play cards and engage in other activities.<sup>20</sup> The Fruita camp, located near the north entrance of the Monument, hosted monthly dances, weekly amateur nights, and basketball. Winners of the amateur shows received tickets to motion picture theaters in Grand Junction. Clubs and organizations from nearby towns presented plays, concerts, and other activities at the camps. The baseball and basketball teams played games with other camps and teams from the local area. Enrollees at the Fruita camp produced a camp newspaper called the Camp 3 News, later called the Monument Murmurs.<sup>21</sup> NM1C produced a paper called the Monument News. The Monument News contained an editorial section, project news, and class schedules. One editorial commented: "candidates tired of guarding water bucket and not opponents", referring to two basketball players who spent most their time on the bench.<sup>22</sup>

Enrollees received a choice in a wide variety of academic pursuits such as typing or bookkeeping,<sup>23</sup> reading, writing, math, or spelling.<sup>24</sup> Academic activities depended on the availability of teaching personnel from the local area, however. Local instructors varied in their ability and the amount of time they worked at the camps, and took the CCC jobs until other opportunities became available. This unstable

situation posed no special problems since all CCC recruits enlisted voluntarily for unspecified lengths of time.

The amount of time available for teaching limited CCC educational instruction. Jonah Mantlo taught typing, reading, and writing, but also drove a truck hauling quarried stone.<sup>25</sup> Mantlo provided only a few evening hours for instruction during the week because of this arrangement.

Enrollees benefitted greatly from vocational opportunities, especially those learned on the job. Young CCC men learned auto mechanics, handcrafts, carpentry, and other skills.<sup>26</sup> Most education represented on-the-job experience and instruction, but vocational classes existed for the enrollees after work hours. Experience with blasting powder, jackhammers, baking ovens, and other equipment made enrollees more attractive to future employers. Fred Allen acquired a job as a cook because of his experience in the camp kitchen.<sup>27</sup> Allen was from the East but chose to settle in Grand Junction. He married a local girl whom he met at a dance for CCC enrollees.

The combination of play, education, work, and discipline made the CCC job a positive experience. According to Lewis Price, who ran a jackhammer, set explosives, inspected barracks, and performed other duties, time in the CCC benefitted him by learning to live with others and take orders. Price related that being required to dress for dinner taught him important lessons in obedience.<sup>28</sup> He appreciated the experience and skills he acquired so soon after high school graduation. Howard Foree recalled his CCC experience as nothing special, just another job. Foree, however, expressed gratitude for being able to put bread on the family table.<sup>29</sup> In 1931, before the creation of the CCC program, Richard Foster worked on the Monument road driving two teams of horses. From 1933 to 1934 he participated in the CCC, drilling rock and doing powder work. According to Foster, the experience he gained in the CCC "was better than a college education".<sup>30</sup> Allyn Huston remembered both the positive and negative



aspects of his enrollment. Huston disliked the lack of privacy in barracks with only a small cot to sleep on, and the inability to leave camp unless permission to leave was granted. On the positive side, Huston benefitted from the work experience, the education, and the social interaction. For a farm boy such as Huston, the CCC represented the only job available after his graduation from high school.<sup>31</sup> Obviously there was something worthwhile to be gained, whether a little or a lot, by those who served in the CCC. Perhaps this is why so many former members of the CCC, like Ray Ramsey have returned to see the fruits of their labor.<sup>32</sup> Like many CCC veterans, Ramsey exhibited pride in what he accomplished in the CCC.

The CCC projects on the Colorado National Monument remind visitors of CCC accomplishments, such as the drain holes and sandstone walls built by Mike Lopez.<sup>33</sup> One of the drainage tunnels of the Rim Rock Highway bears the name of Ed Hernandez, his personal mark as a CCC worker. Hernandez also worked on the stone walls.<sup>34</sup> Buildings made out of native sandstone, cut by G.W. Patterson and his jackhammer stand today as visible reminders of CCC work. Patterson also baked in the mess hall.<sup>35</sup> Stone walls on one of the buildings are so well laid and matched, that the walls appear to be mirror images of each other.<sup>36</sup> Picnic shelters, stone walls, a campground, road turn-outs, and trails exhibit the quality of the CCC work.

Though the camps provided opportunities for work, education, physical improvement, and a better quality of life, some enrollees did not take advantage of the situation and abused the opportunity. For instance, two cars disappeared from Fruita and were later found near the camp among the bushes and trees. In order to find those responsible for the thefts, camp members submitted to fingerprinting. Three enrollees, however, deserted the camp before being fingerprinted and were later captured in Salida, Colorado.<sup>37</sup> They received a thirty-day suspended jail sentence.<sup>38</sup> A series of gasoline thefts from the camp storage tanks caused



*Constructing stone walls on the Colorado National Monument.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHUCH, CNM

inconvenience for CCC members on the upper camps. Enrollees lost the privilege of driving their private vehicles to the Monument, and were required to park them at the Monument outskirts and walk to camp. Those enrollees working in the upper camps were forced to hike up the trail and use the ladders that scaled the cliffs to reach camp. The wood ladders and trails had been constructed to maintain the Fruita Water Line and installed before the CCC was created.<sup>39</sup> Though some enrollees abused their opportunities at the Monument camps, most of the enrollees benefitted by the experience.

Many CCC veterans remember the less serious aspects of camp life - the pranks, humor, and good times. G.W. Patterson enjoyed watching new recruits water the flag pole so the flag would not wilt. Patterson became the victim of a self-inflicted prank while working in the mess hall. He reversed the portions of shortening and flour while making dough and created a substance which he referred to as synthetic rubber.<sup>40</sup> Lewis Price found humor in the aversion the "out-of-staters" felt in going up and down the steep and winding Serpent's Trail Road. According to Price, most preferred K.P. duty to using this trail to reach the top of the Monument.<sup>41</sup> Pranksters carried a barrack mate into a snow-covered field, as he lay sleeping on his cot. They looked on in mirth and laughter as the victim slowly awakened and gazed around in confusion. In another incident, one of the enrollees who had gone to town to see a movie, became lost after an evening of drinking. The police found him singing loudly at the top of the movie house fire escape. He received a free night in jail as a result of his nocturnal serenade. The embarrassed young man turned down further opportunities to go to town with the other enrollees.<sup>42</sup> Despite such isolated incidents, rules, discipline, and isolation prevented alcoholic related incidents from becoming common.

CCC enrollees not only adjusted to new living and work experience, they contended with mother nature. In the winter of 1934, the camp lost its water supply when a break in the

Fruita water line interrupted the supply to the camps. The CCC commander detailed three trucks and nine drivers, working twenty-four hours a day, to bring water from Grand Junction. In August of 1934, a fire destroyed the camp latrine, bathhouse, and electric light plant. On another occasion the rains washed out the fill on the uncompleted roads and left the camp isolated for several days. Supplies ran low, but not out. In the winter of 1933-34, a diphtheria outbreak quarantined the camp for over a week.<sup>43</sup> These incidents proved that even a well organized project could not anticipate every possible occurrence.

The winding Rim Rock Drive represented the most significant contribution of the CCC to the Colorado National Monument. The CCC operated trucks, road graders, and other mechanized equipment, and accomplished the majority of the hand work. In fact, the heavy use of shovels, picks, and hand drills meant that one enrollee spent full time sharpening such tools. Rail carts, pushed along tracks, contained the hand-shovelled dirt removed by the enrollees.<sup>44</sup>

The CCC was not the only group that worked on the scenic road. The WPA contributed to the construction of the road and in fact accomplished most of the initial and dangerous work, including the construction of the switchbacks. The CCC involvement in the road construction included the light work of widening and improving parts of stretches already completed.<sup>45</sup> In many cases, however, the two groups worked on the same stretch of road.

Today travelers can stand at the edge of the Rim Rock Highway and peer down at the chasms below, protected by retaining fences. The CCC and WPA workers, however, labored without benefit of those fences. They built a road along, atop, and under the sheer cliffs of the canyons. Unfortunately for some, this thrill turned into tragedy.

A tragic accident on the Rim Rock Highway illustrates the controversy, luck, heroism, death, and misfortune associated with the construction of the highway. In 1933, the



PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOCH, CNM

*Access to Rim Rock Highway construction.*

cliff face, fifty feet high and twelve feet deep, towering above a group of WPA workers fell without warning, covering one hundred feet of road. five men died on the road from the falling rock. Three men were killed when they fell from the 300 foot cliff in an attempt to escape the falling rock. Russell "Buster" Moreland died of his injuries hours later at St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction.

The accident created controversy and division for the workers and the surrounding communities. The day of the accident, the deaths of the WPA men John Rupe, Leo Adams, Robert Fuller, Charley Beason, and Moreland were attributed to a weakness on the cliff face caused by earlier blasting. Coincidental blasting at other sites may have set off the slide.<sup>46</sup> A coroner's jury ruled the accident unavoidable because of a hidden seam within the rock that broke at the unfortunate time.<sup>47</sup> Two days after this ruling, twenty-six men involved in the accident issued statements in the *Daily Sentinel* charging that work had resumed too soon after the powder charges had been shot, and before adequate inspection of the area had been made. They claimed that negligent actions resulted in unnecessary loss of life, and asked that greater precaution be taken to insure against future accidents. At the same time, they requested the investigation be reopened but the request was denied.<sup>48</sup> Congressman Edward Taylor, acting in the interest of Robert Moreland, father of the victim Russell Moreland, sought assurances that the National Park Service would conduct another investigation.<sup>49</sup> The second investigation by Rocky Mountain Park Superintendent, Edmund B. Rogers, resulted in conclusions similar to those of the coroner's jury.<sup>50</sup> Comments appearing in a *Daily Sentinel* front page editorial illustrated how much the tragedy and controversy upset the people of Grand Junction and the surrounding area. The editorial called for the public to disregard false reports or rumors. It also reminded its readers how much the project meant to the economy of the area and how the accident had been the only serious incident during the



PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOCH, CNM

*CCC workers on the Colorado National Monument.*

long project.<sup>51</sup> The controversy failed to stop or delay the project. The coroner's jury completed its work in one day and the investigation by Rogers took only two days. No court action occurred because of the accident and it faded quickly from headline news. Those who worked on the Monument or lived in the Grand Junction area, however, remembered the blame, loss, regret, and sorrow of the incident.

The accident might have been worse except for some good fortune and heroism. Prior to the collapse of the cliff, one of the workers was hit on the cheek by a single pebble, prompting foreman Bill Liddle to order most of the workers to move two-hundred feet away from where the cliff eventually fell. Harvey Holloway, a powder man, survived the fall with the aid of the rope holding him as the cliff fell from beneath him.<sup>52</sup> Liddle's order certainly reduced the number of potential deaths, and Holloway survived because of the rope. Bill Liddle, who later stood accused of leading the men into the cliff area too soon after blasting, pulled two men out of danger.<sup>53</sup> CCC workers laboring on that particular section of road two days earlier, had been barred from the work site by the medical officer because of the extreme dusty conditions and the lack of proper protective wear.<sup>54</sup>

The action of the medical officer meant CCC enrollees were not potential victims of the accident, although they did help in the rescue operations. Twenty CCC workers, lowered by rope down the cliff, helped carry victims to the mouth of the Monument Canyon. Other CCC workers waited until after dark with vehicles to transport the victims.<sup>55</sup> Days after the accident, CCC worker J.B. Wooten moved the ambulance, which had been stationed away from the accident site. As soon as the road was cleared, Wooten drove the ambulance over the unstable road. Wooten, nervous as he drove over the loose dirt and rock, completed his task without incident.<sup>56</sup> The men who had cleared the road for Wooten faced even greater danger, yet no further fatalities occurred at the site. The accident represented a close call for the CCC workers but for the WPA





PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOCH, CNM

*Blasting on highway construction on the Colorado National Monument.*



*Site of rock fall tragedy on the Rim Rock Highway.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOCH, CNM

workers it was a tragic misfortune.

Fortunately, few fatal accidents occurred on the road work despite the potential for danger. WPA workers encountered greater danger working in the big vehicle tunnels, and along the steep slopes and cliffs. The CCC workers spent less time along these areas and concentrated their work on the drainage tunnels. Explosives endangered both groups and proved fatal to Bill Liddle a year after the cliff fall. He sustained fatal injuries while inspecting a "dud".<sup>57</sup> A CCC worker became ill after breathing noxious fumes following his return to a tunnel too soon after a blast. He recovered and was fortunate that his disobedience did not result in his death.<sup>58</sup> In many of the drainage tunnels, CCC workers fell ill from the carbon monoxide expelled from the drill compressor. The enrollees received a shot of medicine to counteract the CO poisoning and told to rest.<sup>59</sup> Fortunately these daily dangers seldom proved fatal. Even when there were more than six hundred WPA and CCC workers on the Monument serious accidents remained uncommon.

The United States involvement in World War II affected the progress of the Rim Rock Highway, the most important task of the CCC at the Colorado National Monument. Other work projects competed with the Rim Rock Highway for manpower, however, before the World War caused the disbanding of the CCC. The federal government scheduled projects for the CCC across the state on federal and state lands. The harsh winter conditions of the mountainous region allowed the building and occupation of only temporary summer camps. A company of young men might spend the summer working in the Rocky Mountain National Park, and be transferred to the Colorado National Monument during the winter. The number of men available for work in the CCC depended on the number of men willing to join, and stay in the organization. During the depression, the lack of jobs in private industry created a large pool of unemployed workers willing to join the CCC. As the depression became less severe and more



*Loading rock on the Colorado National Monument by CCC workers.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOCH, CNM

jobs became available in the private sector, fewer workers showed interested in the CCC. While the number of workers declined, the number of projects did not. Transferring men became an increasing necessity. Often these transfers became permanent. In 1937, National Monument 3 Company (NM3C) permanently abandoned the Fruita camp to work in Palisade.<sup>60</sup> NM3C returned but occupied the camp at the site of the current Monument visitor center. Only two companies of CCC men remained for work in the Monument from that point. The elimination of one company did not seriously hamper the road work but it forced the other two companies to assume extra duties, such as trail work and attendant duties. The pace of the road work slowed because of the seasonal transfers of workers and shortages of men entering the program. Seventy-three non-CCC men remained on the road work because of summer CCC transfers.<sup>61</sup> Seventy-three men could not accomplish the work of two hundred CCC men, therefore work on the road slowed considerably. The CCC returned in the winter of that year. In 1940, the park superintendent noted a delay in work because of the disbandment of the CCC company and the late arrival of its replacement.<sup>62</sup> Through 1941 work on the road continued, but at an even slower pace because the availability of workers further declined. In June the superintendent noted a shortage of fifty to sixty men. By August the situation worsened. Only sixty to eighty enrollees worked each day,<sup>63</sup> compared to the nearly two hundred available in 1937 and 1938. In November of 1941, another camp permanently closed as company NP9C transferred to Mancos, Colorado.

The United States entry into the war in December of 1941, not only caused more shortages of men at the Monument project, but caused the permanent alteration of the CCC across the nation.<sup>64</sup> Young men began entering the armed services, eventually causing the disolution of the CCC. CCC camps in the Grand Junction area assumed other duties in line with defense needs. G-2 camp of Grand Junction and G-125 of

Paradox transferred to road work leading to the vanadium mines of San Miguel, Montrose, and Mesa counties of Colorado.<sup>65</sup> In March of 1942 the CCC totally withdrew from the Monument.<sup>66</sup> Two months later the conflicting needs for men and materials between the CCC and armed forces put an end to the CCC throughout the country. In June of 1942, Congress deleted all funding appropriations for the CCC, and the CCC experiment ended.<sup>67</sup>

Eventually the buildings, roads, and implements of the Monument camps were either removed or buried to restore the natural conditions that existed before the arrival of the CCC. Every possible effort erased any sign that the CCC existed within the Monument. Before the evacuation of the camps, authorities considered using the camps as enemy alien camps during the war.<sup>68</sup> One CCC camp south of Palisade housed German Prisoners of war involved in the peach harvest.<sup>69</sup> A few broken and weathered artifacts are all that remain where the Monument CCC camps once stood. The Rim Rock Highway remained unfinished until the early 1950s.

An examination of the work of the CCC in the Colorado National Monument reveals three principal developments. First, a remarkable degree of cooperation existed in making the program work. The organization of the CCC involved many agencies. The army provided officers and equipment. The local relief agencies provided recruits. The National Park Service provided the job and work supervisors. Local communities provided the experienced older professionals, and gave social and moral support. The WPA cooperated in completing much of the road work. All parties involved made sacrifices and changes which contributed to the success of the project.

The second impact of the CCC saw the improvement of land and people. Roosevelt and his administrators set up a program to improve the land. The CCC erected Monument trails, campground shelters, fences, and buildings and they assisted in building a new road. Four CCC camps of



PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK SCHOCH, CNM

*CCC workers on the Colorado National Monument.*

approximately two hundred men each, existed on the Monument for ten years, causing limited impact on the natural environment. At the same time, the lives of the young men improved. The camps offered above average housing, food, and health care. Job skills and education improved the lives of the workers. Discipline instilled character in the young men, and provided recreation for their physical as well as their mental health. The exchange of people from one area of the country to another helped build understanding and improved relations between people from different regions.

Physical accomplishments represented the third impact of the CCC, including the Rim Rock Drive and facility improvements in the Park. Access to the beautiful, deep, red rock canyons made possible without destroying the natural beauty, benefits the area and the many tourists from across the nation who visit the Monument each year. Enrollees gained a sense of accomplishment and pride and the program created future opportunities for the young men who participated. Most CCC workers developed new and useful social skills because of the experience.

The success of the CCC suggests that a similar kind of organization might be successful today. The current Youth Conservation Corps, in fact, is patterned after the CCC. This organization gives teenagers an opportunity to work on trail building, campground projects and conservation maintenance in the national forests, much as the CCC worked to improve the public lands in the 1930s and 1940s.



## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup>"Civilian Conservation Corps," *Dictionary of American History*, 1976 edition. p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>David E. Shi. *The Simple Life*. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985) p. 234

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Lyons. ed. *A Social History and Assessment of the Civilian Conservation Corps*. (Boulder:1981) p.2.

<sup>5</sup>"Funds Assured to Complete Monument Road" *The Daily Sentinel*. 21 December 1934. p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>C. N. Alleger, and L. A. Gleyre. *History of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado 1936*. (Denver: Press of the Western Newspaper, 1936) p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* p. 151.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.* p. 89

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* p. 131.

<sup>10</sup>"Local Relief Committee Now Selecting Men: Work Camps in Forest" *The Daily Sentinel*. 24 April 1933. p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>Lyons. p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>"Choices for Local Camp Criticized" *The Daily Sentinel*. 2 June 1933. p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>Alleger. p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.* p. 134.

<sup>15</sup>"Discipline, Healthful Work, Solid Food, and Much Recreation Provided for Youths on Monument Camp Road" *The Daily Sentinel*. 9 June 1933. p. 7.

<sup>16</sup>Alleger. p. 135.

<sup>17</sup>Allyn Huston. Interview. Grand Junction, CO. 4 January 1989.

<sup>18</sup>Cline Interview.

<sup>19</sup>*Daily Sentinel*, 9 June 1933.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>21</sup>Alleger. p. 136.

<sup>22</sup>Fred Allen. Interview. Grand Junction, CO. 29 June 1989.

<sup>23</sup>Alleger. p. 133.

<sup>24</sup>Lyons. p. 23.

<sup>25</sup>J. B. Mantlo. noted in "Memories of Civilian Conservation Corps" *Colorado National Monument Registration Book*.

<sup>26</sup>Alleger. p. 133.

<sup>27</sup>Allen Interview.

<sup>28</sup>Lewis Price. Interview. Grand Junction, CO. 4 January 1989.

<sup>29</sup>Howard Foree. Interview. Grand Junction, CO. 5 January 1989.

<sup>30</sup>Richard Foster, noted in "Memories of Civilian Conservation Corps" *Colorado National Monument Registration Book*.

<sup>31</sup>Huston Interview.

<sup>32</sup>Ray Ramsey, noted in "Memories of Civilian Conservation Corps" *Colorado National Monument Registration Book*.

<sup>33</sup>Mack Lopez, noted in "Memories of Civilian Conservation Corps" *Colorado National Monument Registration Book*.

<sup>34</sup>Ed Hernandez, noted in "Memories of Civilian Conservation Corps" *Colorado National Monument Registration Book*.

<sup>35</sup>G. W. Patterson, noted in "Memories of Civilian Conservation Corps" *Colorado National Monument Registration Book*.

<sup>36</sup>Hank Schoch. Interview. Grand Junction, CO. December 1988.

<sup>37</sup>J. B. Wooten. Interview. Grand Junction, CO. 2 January 1989.

<sup>38</sup>Price Interview.

<sup>39</sup>*Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Reprts.* United States Department of Interior, N.P.S., Colorado National Monument Library. 1 November 1937. p. 5

<sup>40</sup>Patterson notes.

<sup>41</sup>Price Interview.

<sup>42</sup>Wooten Interview.

<sup>43</sup>Alleger. pp. 134-136.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. p. 150.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>"Nine Killed by Slide on Monument Road" *The Daily Sentinel*. 13 December 1933. p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>"Monument Canyon Tragedy Unavoidable: Verdict of Coroners Jury States" *The Daily Sentinel*. 14 December 1933. p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>"Greater Precaution to Protect Men on Rim Rock Road Asked" *The Daily Sentinel*. 14 December 1933. p. 4.

<sup>49</sup>"Investigation by Competent Engineer" *The Daily Sentinel*. 15 December 1933. p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>Untitled article, *The Daily Sentinel*. 3 December 1933. p. 1.

<sup>51</sup>"The Rimrock Tragedy" *The Daily Sentinel*. 17 December 1933. p. 1.

<sup>52</sup>"Monument Canyon Tragedy..." p. 10.

<sup>53</sup>"Nine Killed...." p. 1.

<sup>54</sup>Lewis Interview.

<sup>55</sup>"Nine Killed...." p. 2.

<sup>56</sup>Wooten Interview.

<sup>57</sup>"Investigation of Workers Death Dropped" *The Rocky Mountain News*. 25 July 1935.

<sup>58</sup>Wooten Interview.

<sup>59</sup>Lewis Interview.

<sup>60</sup>*Superintendent's Monthly*

*Narrative Reports.* United States Department of Interior, N.P.S., Colorado National Monument Library. December 1939.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid. November 1937. p. 3.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. June 1938. p. 1.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid. February 1940. p. 1.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid. April 1941. p. 2.

<sup>65</sup>"Grazing Service CCC Camps Will Work on Highway" *The Daily Sentinel*. 19 January 1942. p. 8.

<sup>66</sup>*Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Reports.* United States Department of Interior, N.P.S., Colorado National Monument Library. March 1942.

<sup>67</sup>"CCC's Doom" *Newsweek*. 15 June 1942. p. 30.

<sup>68</sup>*Superintendent's Monthly Narrative Reports.* United States Department of Interior, N.P.S., Colorado National Monument Library. February 1942.

<sup>69</sup>Harold Zimmerman. "Harvesting Peaches with German Prisoners of War," *Journal of the Western Slope*. Vol. 2, No. 1, Grand Junction Colorado. p. 19.

ONION VALLEY  
THE FATE OF A ONE-ROOM SCHOOL  
By Shirley Scott

As the snow melted and the earth warmed in the spring of 1940, people in the rural areas across Colorado began deciding the fate of their one-room schools. Improved transportation influenced farm and ranch folk to close one-room schools and send their children to larger consolidated schools. The Onion Valley one-room school, located near Maher, Colorado, closed after over a half century of service. After its closing in 1940, seven country schools in Crawford Valley, (Missouri Flats, Grandview Mesa, Crawford Mesa, Clear Fork, and two schools on Fruitland Mesa) closed, one-by-one and the remaining children bussed to the "big" school in Crawford, Colorado.<sup>1</sup>

Onion Valley, located in the extreme northeastern corner of Montrose County along Highway 92, received its name from the beautiful, purple-blossomed wild onions growing in the area.<sup>2</sup> Myrtle Lynch, a former student, remembers being called "onion breath" because she ate the onions during recess.<sup>3</sup>

Onion Valley's original school building was a log cabin built in the 1880s.<sup>4</sup> Men, women, and children built the school with logs hauled by horses from nearby Black Mesa.<sup>5</sup> Before long, however, the

area outgrew its new school. The extension of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad into Hotchkiss in 1902 made it easier to reach the Crawford country by stage coach. Improved access to the area produced an increase in population and growth of cattle ranching.<sup>6</sup> Onion Valley needed more space by 1907, and residents went to work building a larger structure from Black Mesa fir logs, cut into three by twelve boards.<sup>7</sup> According to Opal Lynch, a former Onion Valley teacher, the new school (a frame building with a shingled roof) served not only as the school, but as a community center for the valley's dances, elections, and other activities.<sup>8</sup> The new school opened September 28, 1908 with Myrtle Reynolds as the solitary teacher.<sup>9</sup> On completion of the new school, the old log school became a wood and coal storage shed.<sup>10</sup>

Onion Valley's first schools occupied the property donated to the Montrose School District by Harry Briggs. Briggs stipulated that upon closure of the school, the building and the land would revert to Briggs' ownership.<sup>11</sup> Onion Valley offered only the first eight grades, therefore, students attended high school elsewhere, usually Crawford. Pupils who graduated from the eighth grade paid tuition to attend high school in Crawford, because both the Onion Valley School and the nearby Maher school were located in Montrose County while Crawford was located in Delta County.<sup>12</sup> The Maher and Onion Valley schools existed in the same School District (District 7), shared the same directors, and used the same text books.<sup>13</sup>

Like many who attended rural schools in Colorado, Onion Valley students and teachers rode horses to school, at times through six to eight feet of snow. To force his horse named "Grandma" through six feet of snow, Luce Pipher beat his horse with his lunch pail, and lost his lunch in the process. When the animal broke loose, Pipher recalled a happy ending because his teacher, Mary Childress shared her lunch with him. "It was a hell of a meal," Pipher said. His

horse had no trouble getting through the snow on its return trip home.<sup>14</sup>

Onion Valley teachers taught first through eighth grades and, kept the school warm, and made sure water was available for the students.<sup>15</sup> The isolation of the area and the possibility of marriage, caused a high turnover of teachers. Women teachers were not allowed to be married, although Mary Childress admitted that she taught at Ragged Mountain School (another small one-room school in Western Colorado) a short time after her wedding.<sup>16</sup>

Opal Lynch, of Crawford, taught at Onion Valley School in 1927, 1928, and then in 1937.<sup>17</sup> Even though teachers usually lived in the back of the Onion Valley school, Lynch chose to live with her parents and ride her horse to school.<sup>18</sup> Teaching eight different grades in one room represented no difficulty for Lynch. "It would probably be hard if you only had the experience of not going to school in a one-room school." Lynch said.<sup>19</sup>

The boys, according to Lynch, exhibited few differences in the 1920s than boys of today. One day she opened her desk drawer and found several garden snakes. Calmly, she closed the drawer and never said a word. Several years later, two former students met her on the street and asked her about the snakes. Lynch replied, "They were there. If I would have acted frightened, the class would have been disrupted and you boys might have tried another incident."<sup>20</sup> Lynch planted flowers near the front of the school, and she and the boys carried water from a nearby creek in order to keep them growing and blooming.<sup>21</sup>

A typical day at the Onion Valley School began with the flag salute and the singing of songs like "America" or "Old Black Joe".<sup>22</sup> Reading and arithmetic followed and, as in most one-room schools, older students helped the younger ones. During recess, the students played games like hide-and-seek or crack-the-whip. Another favorite pastime for the boys at

recess, according to Luce Pipher, was "smooching" the girls.<sup>23</sup> Geography and History followed the morning recess. The students ate lunch and played games during the noon hour recess.<sup>24</sup> Emergency situations required special recesses such as the time the wind blew the stove pipe into the classroom. Lynch immediately dismissed class and the older boys helped her replace the stove pipe.<sup>25</sup>

Many boys deferred graduation from the eighth grade until after they were twenty years old because farm and ranch work interrupted their schooling.<sup>26</sup> This situation created a wide variance among the ages of the students. When older children bullied the younger ones, teachers like Mary Childress and Opal Lynch remedied the situation by having the boys carry wood or water at recess.<sup>27</sup> After lunch, students learned Civics, Government, and Psychology, followed by another recess. English, Writing, and Spelling lessons finished the day. Each Friday, all the students lined up in front of the room for a Spelling Bee. Students took their seats as they misspelled words until only one person remained. According to Myrtle Lynch and Luce Pipher, it was not always the older students who were left standing.<sup>28</sup>

The 1920s and 1930s represent an era of rural migration to the cities in America. Like many other small communities, Onion Valley's enrollment declined. Luce Pipher and Margaret Deutch were the only first graders at Onion Valley in 1939<sup>29</sup> and farmers and ranchers of Onion Valley voted to discontinue the Onion Valley School. The doors closed in May of 1940, making it one of the first of Crawford Valley's one-room schools to be terminated.<sup>30</sup>

With the closing of the school, Briggs sold the land and buildings to Ernest Hatch of Montrose.<sup>31</sup> Hatch owned property in Midway, located between Hotchkiss and Paonia on Highway 133, and needed a larger home for his family. He dismantled the Onion Valley School, moved the material to Midway during

the spring and summer of 1952, and used this material to build a larger home. The house became the Hatch's "main" ranch house for several years.<sup>32</sup>

Keita Davis, a resident of the Midway area, lived next door. She knew the house had been built from used lumber but did not realize it was from an old school house.<sup>33</sup> Wayne Campbell and Ron Holybee, who knew the Midway area at the time, remembered Hatch building the house. They told about people making fun of Hatch because they thought he was painting the boards before putting them on the construction.<sup>34</sup>

Hatch moved the older Onion Valley log school to another location on his ranch near Jay Creek and used it for a barn. The original log school, burned according to Gene Reedy, former fire chief of Paonia.<sup>35</sup> Many believed it was the newer Onion Valley School (the Hatch home) that had burned. However, Campbell and Holybee confirmed that the materials of the Onion Valley School still stand in the form of the Hatch home. The structure currently houses a Cristian School.<sup>36</sup>

The house rebuilt from Onion Valley School materials was transferred to Harold Ross of Delta, Colorado, in 1976.<sup>37</sup> Even though the property is zoned agricultural, Ross is currently renting it to an organization operating a private Christian School.<sup>38</sup>

Many one-room schools like Onion Valley disappeared. The only evidence left on the original site of the Onion Valley School is the partially covered cement frames of the outdoor toilets, built by Works Project Administration workers during the depression years.<sup>39</sup> Many people in the Maher, Crawford, and Paonia area fondly remember the Onion Valley School. Schools like Onion Valley have been torn down and the lumber used to build homes or other buildings. Some, like the Maher School, still stand neglected, with broken windows and peeling paint. Bees have built hives in them, and many are overtaken by weeds and

underbrush. They are quaint reminders of an educational system that once promoted democracy, strengthened community life, and enthusiastically taught many generations the three "R's".



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Delta County Public Schools, School Board notes. Austin, CO. 15 May 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Opal and Myrtle Lynch. Interview. Crawford, CO. 12 January 1990.

<sup>3</sup>Lynch Interview.

<sup>4</sup>The Daily Sentinel. 8 June 1988.

<sup>5</sup>Luce Pipher. Interview. Crawford, CO. 12 March 1990.

<sup>6</sup>Delta County Independent. 5 July 1928.

<sup>7</sup>Mamie Ferrier and George Sibley. *Long Horns and Short Tales: A History of the Crawford Country*. Vol. 1 (N.P. 1982) p. 36.

<sup>8</sup>Opal Lynch Interview. Crawford, CO. 7 January 1990.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Pipher Interview.

<sup>11</sup>Maxine Briggs Burch. Interview. Delta, CO. 7 January 1990.

<sup>12</sup>Opal and Myrtle Lynch Interview.

<sup>13</sup>Martha Savage. Interview. 7 January 1990. According to Savage, former Superintendent of Delta County Schools, the old school records (prior to 1950 consolidation) were unavailable and the author had to rely on former teachers and students for information.

<sup>14</sup>Pipher interview.

<sup>15</sup>Opal and Myrtle Lynch interview.

<sup>16</sup>Mary Childress. Interview. Paonia, CO. 7 January 1990.

<sup>17</sup>Opal and Myrtle Lynch interview.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Opal Lynch interview.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Opal and Myrtle Lynch

interview.

<sup>22</sup>Opal Lynch and Mary Childress. Interview. Crawford, CO. 12 January 1990.

<sup>23</sup>Pipher interview.

<sup>24</sup>Opal and Myrtle Lynch interview.

<sup>25</sup>Opal Lynch interview.

<sup>26</sup>Onion Valley School Census, 1908-1924, Delta County Court House, Delta, CO.

<sup>27</sup>Lynch-Childress interview.

<sup>28</sup>Opal and Myrtle Lynch interview and Pipher interview.

<sup>29</sup>Pipher interview.

<sup>30</sup>Opal Lynch interview.

<sup>31</sup>Pipher Interview.

<sup>32</sup>Ernest Hatch. Interview. Montrose, CO. 11 June 1990.

<sup>33</sup>Keita Davis. Interview. Midway, CO. 12 July 1990.

<sup>34</sup>Wayne Campbell and Ron Holybee. Interview. Midway, CO. 12 July 1990.

<sup>35</sup>Gene Reedy. Interview. Paonia, CO. 12 July 1990. According to Reedy, retired Paonia Fire Chief, the burning of the old log school could not be verified because the fire department had not kept records before 1972.

<sup>36</sup>Campbell and Holybee interview. Hatch phone interview. 12 July 1990.

<sup>37</sup>Warranty Deed. Box 439, p. 1013 Delta County Clerk and Records Office. Delta, CO.

<sup>38</sup>Delta County Clerk and Records Office. Delta, CO. Parcel No. 3243-212-00-014. 12 July 1990.

<sup>39</sup>Onsite investigation. Miriam Jackson and author. 10 May 1990.

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