COLORADO NATIONAL MONUMENT, PAST AND PRESENT

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Colorado National Monument, located in western Colorado, near the city of Grand Junction, comprises an area of 18,120 acres. Principally, its fascination comes from the deep canyons carved through hundreds of feet of sedimentary rocks and the unusual sculpturing done by the erosional forces. Secondarily, comes the attraction from the other natural features; the buffalo, elk, and deer; the flowers and trees; a scattering of ancient human history; and the story left behind in the form of fossils. Some of these things compelled the people of Grand Junction to petition that the area be set aside as a public park. This became a reality on May 24, 1911, when the monument was established by Presidential Proclamation.

The geologic story is fascinating. Represented are rocks dating back to Archean times with deposits of sedimentary rocks rising hundreds of feet above those of igneous origin. Within the sedimentary formations are found fossils of prehistoric life, climaxed by fossil remains of the dinosaurs. Five species have been found in the Morrison formation within a close radius of the monument.

At what time man appeared in this portion of western Colorado is uncertain. Artifacts associated with the Folsom Culture have been found in the vicinity, but whether or not the so-called Folsom man ever lived here is unknown, since these were but surface finds. The possibility exists that these artifacts were brought in by some later inhabitants, such as the Ute Indians, notorious scavengers.

The same holds true for the Yuma Culture. Distinctive Yuma points were surface finds also. Perhaps someday, one of these points will be found in conjunction with the fossil remains of a prehistoric animal in this area. Not until then will we know for certain. These two cultures have been dated elsewhere as being somewhere between 10,000 and 25,000 B. C.

The first humans to be definitely associated with this area are the Basket Maker II people. This was a society with an agricultural background dated sometime after 300 A. D. Two mummies, now property of the Government, were found within a short distance of the monument, and established as being Basket Maker II. It is probably safe to assume that the Basket Maker III were also in the general area.

Following the Basket Makers were the Pueblo complexes. Artifacts of the Pueblos have been found all over western Colorado. These people dated from about 700 A. D. to 1600 A. D., and are related to the modern Pueblo.

The Ute Indians were the more modern inhabitants of this area. Whether or not they were related to those previously mentioned is unknown. They remained throughout western Colorado until after the Meeker Massacre of 1879. Public demand then forced the Government to instigate treaties to force them onto reservations in Utah. The last of the Utes were past the site of Grand Junction by September 1881.

The Spanish led several expeditions into Colorado but the first to actually get into this portion of the Grand Valley were those in the Padre Escalante and Dominguez expedition of 1776. Their origin was Santa Fe, New Mexico. They entered the Grand Valley from the southeast, crossing over the lower slopes of the Grand Mesa, and followed the Book Cliffs past the confluences of the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers.

During the period 1835 to 1845 trappers frequented the western slopes of the Colorado Rockies. Often these men followed Indians returning from the eastern plains where they had gone to hunt and trade. Possibly the only fur trading post to be established in this vicinity was headed by Joseph Boubdeau. This post was built about 1838, just above the present site of Grand Junction.

Following the exit of the Ute Indians in 1881, the Grand Valley was thrown open to settlement. On September 7, 1881, the first ranch was staked by O. D. Russell and William McGinley near the site of Roubdeau's trading post.

A definite need for a town developed to supply the new settlers, as the present supply point of Gunnison was too far removed. On September 26, George A. Crawford, later to be known as the father of Grand Junction, located Section 14 as a townsite. He formed the Grand Junction Town Company at Gunnison on October 10, 1881.

The success of this company was practically assured

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