

## One Hundred Years of Moab History

via *The Times Independent*

By Sadie Warner  
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Nancy Allemand was the typist for *The Confluence*.

### 1900

- Grand County Board of Commissioners met to discuss the prevention of infectious diseases such as small pox which were raging throughout the state of Utah. Health Districts and regulations were defined, and a quarantine was placed on parties coming from communities infected with the illness.
- Grand County Sheriff Jesse Tyler was murdered by cattle rustlers in the Bookcliffs area in June.
- Miners discovered gold veins in the La Sal Mountains south of Moab.

### 1901

- In an effort to close the gap between southern Utah's rural communities and the center of commerce—Salt Lake City—hours of volunteer work were completed on the road from Moab to Thompson, and hopes were flying high that one of the railroads would build a branch down this way.
- The citizens of Moab succumbed to oil fever as strikes were reported throughout the area and in Green River.

### 1902

- Diphtheria took its toll on the youth of Moab. Scores of graves in the Grand

Valley Cemetery are testament to the epidemic.

- *The Undine*, a river steamer, overturned in the Colorado River at Big Bend. Passengers and crew made it safely ashore.
- It was announced that a mail route between Richardson and Moab was to be established, opening lines of communication and commerce.

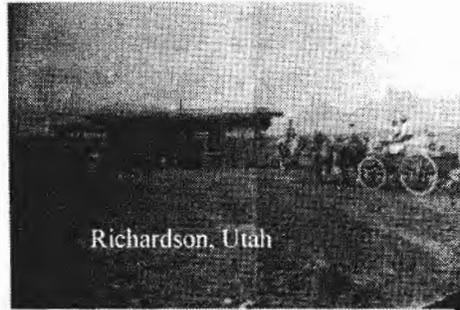
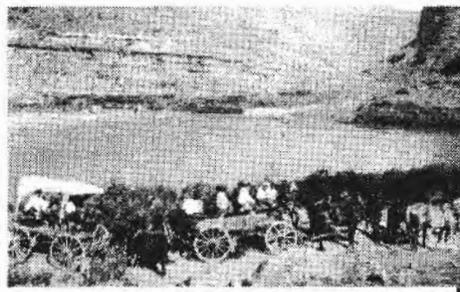


Photo from Mitch Williams Collection

- The La Sal Mining and Milling Company built the area's first smelter. The site was large enough to handle ore mined in La Sal, Lisbon Valley, and other surrounding mines.
- A road was built from Moab to the heart of the miner's camps at Gold Basin.



Early Hwy 128. Salt Wash across the Grand (Colorado) River. Photo from The Mitch Williams Collection.

### 1903

- Moab was incorporated. The town would, from that day on, be under the control of the city council. The first ordinances passed were to

create a town seal, to fix bonds of the officers of the town of Moab and define those offices and duties, and to regulate business licensing.

- La Sal Mountain Telephone and Electric Company was launched in Moab to build and operate power lines.
- Ground was broken for a new courthouse on Center Street.
- Uranium and barium were discovered in the La Sal Mountains.

### 1906

- Waterworks came to Moab. Pipes were laid and plumbing was enjoyed by those who could afford it.
- The Moab Grower's Association was founded.
- A year's subscription to the Moab newspaper—at the time called the *Grand Valley Times*—was \$2.

### 1907

- San Juan County boomed. Mines popped up and farms grew in an era of prosperity.
- Downtown Moab caught fire and was ablaze, but miraculously, damage was minimal.

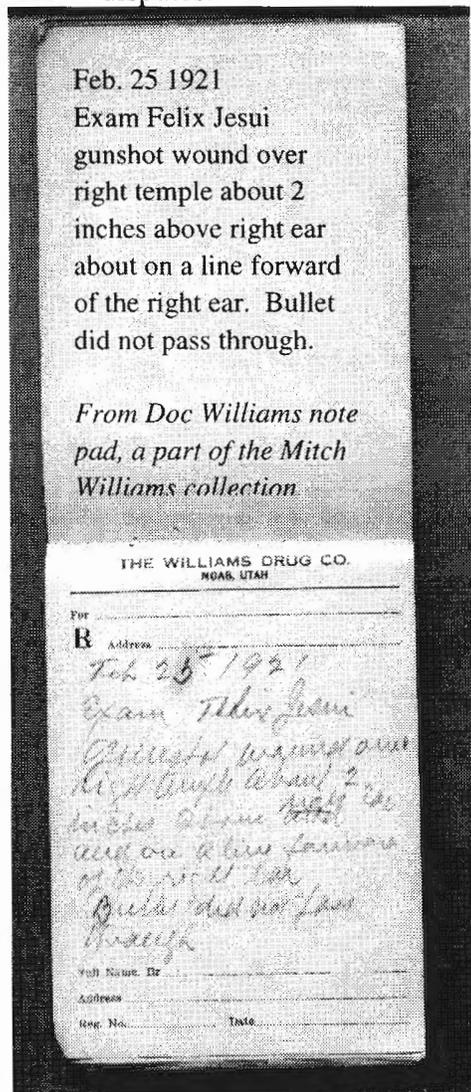
### 1908

- Telephone lines were completed, opening up a whole new world of communication to Moabites.
- A case of scarlet fever was reported and spread. It was later reduced to an epidemic of German measles.
- President Theodore Roosevelt established Natural Bridges National Monument near Bluff, Utah.
- Fire hydrants made their presence known along the streets of Moab.

- At a city council meeting it was decided that alcohol and saloons “are unnecessary evils.” The price of a liquor license skyrocketed to \$2000.

**1910**

- A range war broke out in the desert between cattlemen and sheep farmers. Violence ensued as both sides reverted to more primitive methods to settle disputes.



*Range wars lasted into the 1920s.*

- In order to irrigate 20,000 acres of farmland, it was decided to build a reservoir on Rattle Snake Flat, south

of Moab. Ken’s Lake now sits in that general area.

- Typhoid fever worked its way through the state and made an appearance in Monticello.
- Mexican Hat became a village and Monticello incorporated into a town.

**1911**

- A Moab transportation company was started to shorten the distance between the town and the railroad. Vehicles arrived that could carry up to 12 passengers and looked like stagecoaches, sans horses.



*Studebaker Wagons on 100 North Street Note poles servicing Doc Williams home at 40 West. Doc and two daughters standing. Business venture of Doc’s. Photo from the Mitch Williams Collection.*

**1912**

- The bridge across the Colorado River at Moab was completed. A weeklong celebration was held in its honor.
- Convicts built a road between La Sal and Monticello.
- A canning company, in cooperation with the Moab Fruit Grower’s Association, was built.
- A request for a bridge at Dewey was granted by the state of Utah.

- The newly constructed bridge at Moab began to show its imperfections.
- A disastrous fire enflamed Green River, causing over \$50,000 damage.
- It was decided that a public library would be built.
- A moving picture machine found a home in Moab.

**1913**

- Utah and Colorado joined forces to complete the Midland Trail, a highway from Indianapolis to the Pacific Coast.
- The Dewey Ferry sank to the bottom of the Colorado River.

**1914**

- The voters of Grand County approved a tax levy to build a suspension bridge at Dewy.
- The war between the Great Nations of Europe affects Moab: France cancels its order of ore.

**1915**

- The Grand County Public Library project was started with a book drive. The courtroom was converted into a public reading room.
- Moab was officially electrified when the Hammond’s brought in electric lights.
- Renegade Piutes in Bluff cause an uprising. U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Scott, captured the leaders and sent the rest of the band to the reservation.
- A steel bridge was built across Court House Wash.
- San Juan County established its own newspaper, *The San Juan Record*.

## 1916

- A road from Moab to Paradox was built and designated a state highway.
- The citizens of Dewey, Castleton, Cisco and Richardson hosted a three-day celebration in honor of the completion of the bridge at Dewey. It was hailed as the second largest suspension bridge west of the Mississippi River.
- The Big Indian Copper Company began construction of the first mill in the area.
- Central School boasted its largest enrollment to date: 240 students in grades K-12.
- The Moab post office progressed from Fourth Class to Third Class due to the large volume of mail being handled.
- An ice plant was built.

## 1917

- In April, President Woodrow Wilson led America into the Great War in Europe. He also introduced the Draft in order to raise a large army in a hurry. Young men all over the country enlisted, or were drafted into service, including many from southeastern Utah. Throughout the year notices appeared in the pages of *The Times* of patriotic farm boys leaving for Europe, and of course there were those few who never made it home.
- Moab found itself completely entrenched in the war effort. Liberty Bond Campaigns were so successful that every man, woman and child in the

valley owned one. Membership in the Moab chapter of the Red Cross was outstanding, movie fans shelled out a 3 cent war tax at the Ides Theater and citizens slimmed down on Wilson's war diet. Moabites were so patriotic that a pre-enlistment training camp was organized in town.

- Moabites began to invest in automobiles.
- The Moab Valley was a filthy place to live, according to the state sanitary inspector. "The unhealthful conditions of town is a crime and a disgrace," the inspector said.
- State convicts arrived in Moab to work on the road to Thompson.
- The United States government purchased large quantities of uranium, using radium content of the ore to manufacture munitions and supplies.

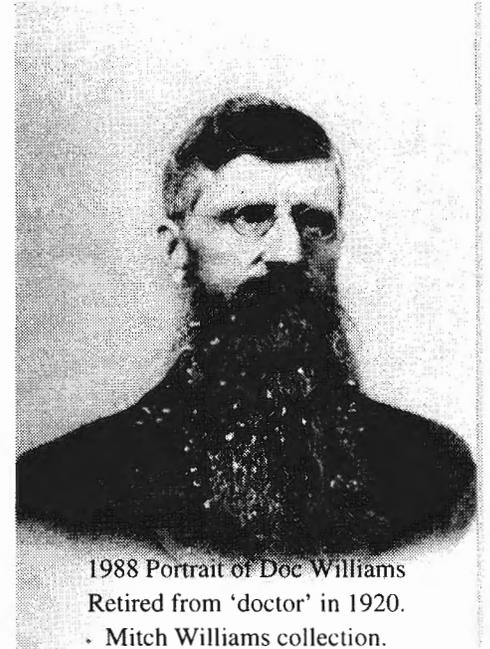
## 1918

- A children's welfare service was started in the valley.
- The war stamp campaign was launched.
- A new building was raised downtown to house the First National Bank and *The Grand Valley Times* office.
- A case of influenza closed Grand County schools and quickly spread throughout the county: 250 new cases developed in one week. A strict quarantine didn't stop the virus from claiming five lives.
- Soldiers began to return to their homes in southern

Utah after Germany surrendered.

## 1920

- After a large oil strike in 1919, the oil world focused its sights on Grand County.
- Prohibition was in full swing as local law enforcement busted booze joints in Green River and Thompson.



## 1921

- The river flowing past Moab had a name change. Until February 1921 it was known as the Grand River, ever after it was known as the Colorado River.
- The Moab Chamber of Commerce was founded.

## 1922

- The filthy condition of Moab prompted its citizens to inaugurate an annual clean-up day.
- In October, the very first Grand County Fair was a huge success.

## 1923

- Piutes declared war on the white people in Blanding. Violence was kept to a

minimum and the rebels were captured by the sheriff's posse.

- Moab's First National Bank was robbed. Bandits blew the vault and stole over \$7,000 from the safe. The bank's bookkeeper was bound and left inside the wrecked vault.
- The citizens of Moab and Green River join forces to raise funds for the improvement of roads in southeastern Utah.

**1924**

- In the heart of winter, the Moab Electric Plant went dead, leaving residents without power for a week.
- The windows sections of what is now Arches National Park was designated a national monument.
- An oil well in Crescent Junction was declared Utah's largest single oil producer.

**1925**

- Competition reached new heights of intensity in the Moab oil fields after a strike at the Big Six Oil Dome proved far richer than ever imagined. An oily geyser gushed for weeks on end as crews tried to control the flow.

**1929**

- Arches National Monument ballooned by order of President Hoover.
- The Moab Chamber of Commerce was re-established.
- Inmates at the Grand County Jail, arrested for burglary, shot and killed a sheriff's deputy in the doorway of said jail. After

a brief asylum from their cells, the outlaws were caught by the sheriff, escaped again and were caught again.

**1930**

- The Moab Lion's Club was formed.

**1931**

- The Great Depression descended on Moab along with the rest of the country. Unemployment was a major theme in the pages of *The Times-Independent* as job notices were sporadically published, hiring groups of men at a time to maintain county roads.

**1933**

- The Taxpayer's Protective League was formed by the citizens of Green River in order to combat taxation without representation in Emery County. A petition was signed and submitted to the Utah State Legislature requesting that Green River town become a part of Grand County.
- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal was implemented in Moab when vast improvements were planned in the La Sal Mountains' forests. F.D.R promised the community \$18,000 a month for a period of five months while work camps were set into operation, and groups of local men were employed in reforestation efforts.
- Money was secured from the federal government for the construction of a new school building and massive improvements in

the water and sewer systems.

**1934**

- A fire claimed the Thompson Garage and Hotel, causing \$25,000 damage

**1935**

- Dedication ceremonies were held for what is now "the old middle school." The county library, which had been located in the courthouse, found a new home in the recently vacated school building.
- Grazing districts were appropriated throughout southeastern Utah for sheep and cattlemen.

**1936**

- The first automobile was driven through Arches National Monument, proving that a passable road could be built, for very little cost to the taxpayers.

**1937**

- Construction was completed on Moab's first public swimming pool, and the new courthouse was dedicated on Center Street.
- One of Moab's most notable landmarks, the Utah Hotel, burned to the ground.

**1938**

- *The Times* began to print news of Adolph Hitler's invasion into neighboring European countries.

**1940**

- As the war heated up in Europe, the government called for young American men to register for selective service-just in case.

**1941**

- Grand citizens were notified to register for ration cards.

- The U.S. Defense Department ensured that roads would be built and maintained to strategic mineral mines in Grand County.
- A Scrap Rally was held in Moab to collect scrap metal for the manufacturing of munitions.
- The largest deposit of magnesium/potassium chloride in North America was discovered five miles down river from the Colorado River bridge at Moab.
- A Japanese-American relocation camp was opened at Dalton Wells, 14 miles west of Moab on the road to Thompson.
- The Potash Company of America bought land and began drilling at Crescent Junction.

#### 1943

- The most disastrous fire in Moab history destroyed the Moab Co-op, a department store and food market, causing \$50,000 damage. The resilient business moved to a temporary location until repairs could be made.

#### 1944

- Moab residents host a clothing drive to aid civilians in Russia.

#### 1945

- The country mourns the loss of a president. F.D.R. was the only living president that Moab residents threw a birthday ball for every year.
- Many residents were surprised to learn that some elements of the Atomic Bomb that had ended the

war with Japan so abruptly, were mined in Grand County.

#### 1946

- Commencement ceremonies were held for the largest class in history to graduate from Grand County High: 32 students.
- *The Times Independent* published its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue on May 30th.
- The Green River bridge collapsed and all traffic on U.S. Highway 50 was brought to a halt. Three weeks later, a temporary structure was opened for cars and light trucks.

#### 1948

- Plans were announced by the Atomic Energy Commission to run the vanadium mill in Monticello. The AEC also assured local mining companies that large purchases of uranium ores were to be made.
- The Moab Women's Club celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

#### 1949

- First National Bank and *The Times* celebrated growth as the newspaper office moved into a new building and the bank expanded and was remodeled.
- It was announced that a uranium mill would be opened to handle products from southeastern Utah and western Colorado.
- The Moab to Monument Valley Film Commission opened for business with *Wagonmaster*, directed by John Ford.

#### 1950

- Census figures revealed the population of Moab to be 1,272.

#### 1951

- An oil well at Cane Creek spouted 1,500 barrels per day. It was the biggest news for weeks in southern Utah.

#### 1952

- Throughout the year local mining and drilling companies squabbled with the Atomic Energy Commission over uranium prices.

#### 1953

- It was a busy time in Moab for the film industry. Three pictures were shot here, and Moabites enjoyed every minute of it: seeing the stars, hosting the production companies and even doing a little bit of acting themselves-as extras and stand-ins.
- A strike by the La Sal Mining Co. was hailed as the richest uranium deposit to the date.

#### 1954

- The Uranium Boom was in full swing, which directly led to a building boom in Moab. New houses and commercial buildings grew up almost overnight in order to accommodate families and businesses moving into the valley.

#### 1955

- The "ultra modern" Apache Motel opened on 400 East.
- Drought and a heat wave worried the citizens of Moab.
- Construction began on the U.S.'s "most modern"

uranium mill: the Uranium Reduction Co. at Moab.

- New circuits were installed for faster long-distance calling service.
- “Moab is going big time next Monday and it will cost John Q. Public from one it five cents to park the family jalopy on Main or Center Streets to do a little shopping.” That was *The Times*’ way of breaking the news about the installation of parking meters.
- The school year opened with a new building: Helen M. Knight Elementary was named in honor of the beloved Grand County educator and administrator.
- Moab celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- A new bridge over the Colorado River was built. It is still in use today.

#### 1956

- Moab audiences were delighted by a visit from *The Grand Ole Opry*.
- Twenty-three-year-old Sam Taylor returned from two years of service in the Army to become editor and manager of *The Times-Independent*.
- Tragically, a gas explosion at the Lariat Café in Monticello killed 15 diners during the seven o’clock dinner rush. It was the worst tragedy in the history of southeastern Utah.

#### 1957

- Operations moved to a brand new hospital named in honor of Dr. I.W. Allen.
- Adrien Foote (Taylor), matriarch of *The Times*, graduated from Grand County High.

- Dedication ceremonies 1961 were held for the Uranium Reduction Co. mill. With 220 employees, it was the largest single employer in Moab.

- The San Juan County village of Bluff was wired with electricity.
- KURA broadcast for the first time over Moab airwaves; television wasn’t far behind.
- Miller’s Shopping Center was born when Miller’s Supermarket opened with expanded hardware and sporting goods departments.

#### 1958

- The desert once again branded the people of Moab with drought and searing temperatures.
- After years of discussion and controversy, a paved entry road into Arches National Monument was completed.
- Two inmates in the Utah State Penitentiary were caught by Salt Lake City police counterfeiting Grand County checks and forging the treasurer’s signature.
- Nine holes were ready for play at the Moab Golf Course.

#### 1959

- Dead Horse Point was declared a state park.

#### 1960

- Arches National Monument’s visitor center was built.
- Moab Lanes opened for business with 12 deluxe bowling lanes and a playroom “so mom could bowl too.”

- Construction was begun on the Potash plant down river and was finished in 1963.

#### 1962

- Grand opening ceremonies were held for the rest of the businesses in Miller’s Shopping Center on south Main Street.
- Grand County High students moved into a new building: what is now the middle school.

#### 1963

- Missile testing was begun in Green River.
- The Chamber of Commerce selected “Heart of Canyonlands” as Moab’s official slogan.
- City Market opened its doors for business on Main Street. Remember fresh doughnuts?
- Uranium Reduction Co. sold out to Atlas Corporation.
- Moab mourned the loss of another beloved president: John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

#### 1964

- Canyonlands National Park was established by President Lyndon Johnson.

#### 1965

- Massive renovations were initiated on “old Star Hall.”

#### 1967

- The first annual Jeep Safari was hosted in Moab by the Chamber of Commerce. The event drew 150 jeeps and 500 participants.
- The town’s most spectacular and well-attended fire in history occurred when the Grand County Library succumbed to flames.

- The worst flood in 20 years turned Moab streets into riverbeds and damaged countless homes and businesses.
- Ten permits were issued for the first elk hunt in the La Sal Mountains.



*Tag-A-Long was operating raft trips in the 1960s. Photo of Mitch backing a trailer in the Green River and from the Mitch Williams Collection.*

## 1968

- Four heavily loaded railroad cars derailed and overturned on their way to the D&RG mainline from Potash.
- German troops were firing test missiles near Green River.
- Dedication ceremonies were held for the Dead Horse Point State Park visitor's center; Utah Governor Calvin Rampton presided.
- An unusual storm poured over an inch of rain down on the Moab Valley in an hour and plummeted hailstones that were an inch in diameter, causing untold thousands of dollars in damages to homes throughout the area.
- A new Grand County Library opened to the public.
- The Jaycees planted a permanent live Christmas

tree on the grounds of the county courthouse.

- It was announced that Rio Algom Mines of Canada would begin developments on claims in Grand County.
- An open house was held at the newly remodeled Star Hall, the new gymnasium and other facilities at the junior high.
- A brand new business opened up in Moab: the first car wash.
- The new, modern post office opened on 100 North.
- On Christmas Day, a disastrous fire caused an estimated \$1 million damage.

## 1969

- In his last 90 minutes in office, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a proclamation doubling the size of Arches National Monument and substantially increasing the size of Capitol Reef National Monument.
- The first foreign exchange student in Moab arrived from Argentina.
- The Slickrock Bike Trail was officially opened to the public.
- Grand County Library hosted its first children's summer reading program and story hour.

## 1970

- The Transient Room Tax premiered in Moab.
- A new medical center was opened downtown by Dr. J.P. Munsey.
- Dead Horse Point State Park was wired with electricity.

## 1971

- W.B. (Skinny) Wynn arrived from Texas to begin operations of his Moab Queen Canyonlands by Nite Show.
- A massive curbs, gutter and street improvement project was completed by the Moab Public Works Department.
- The Atomic Energy Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency joined forces to test areas in western towns for radiation.
- Four Corners Mental Health, a regional center, opened its offices in Moab.
- After being proposed, promised, and put off for years by politicians, President Richard M. Nixon made Arches a national park. He also expanded Canyonlands considerably.
- America's first "Uranium Multi-Millionaire" and former resident, Charles A. Steen announced to the Chamber of Commerce his plans to renovate and open to the public his Moab mansion, *Mi Vida*.
- Tex McClatchey's *Canyon King* sternwheeler was launched on the Colorado River.

## 1972

- Attorney William W. Benge, formerly of Berkeley, Calif., arrived in Moab to open a law practice.
- Cooperation problems between the Moab City Police and the Grand County Sheriff's Department spurred an investigation by the Utah Attorney General's Office.

No arrests were made and the case was quickly closed.

- Technology at *The Times-Independent* really changed. A computer replaced the old Linotype and *The Times* converted to offset printing of the newspaper.
- An open house was held for a new Federal Building in town.
- A special grant enabled the advent of the Sundwall Center, an educational facility for handicapped students.
- The first Santa Claus Christmas parade made the trek down Main Street.

#### 1973

- Snow was big news. Precipitation had been above average and caused a rockslide on the river road and a section of the roller rink to buckle.
- For the first time in history, Grand High's boy's basketball team was the victor in the race for the state's class 2A championship.
- Landscaping and other work was completed at the Old City Park.

#### 1974

- Technological advancements allowed Moab residents to dial direct long distance.
- Equestrian enthusiasts were treated to Moab's first horse races.
- Two Moab men were kidnapped and held at gunpoint until they were left tied in a Price motel room. Their captor, calling himself Mr. Hunter, forced the two men to empty their bank accounts and hand the

money over to him. "Hunter" was later captured in Portland, Ore.; apparently, he was already wanted in Indiana for murder.

#### 1975

- Oil and gas drilling gained momentum.
- The Bureau of Land Management reorganized its districts and stationed a district office here in town.
- A local grape growers association was started.

#### 1976

- Dry desert conditions caused a severe water shortage.
- A new movie theater opened up on Mill Creek Drive across from Power House Lane.

#### 1977

- Pizza Hut, Yellow Front and Checker Auto Parts opened on Main Street.
- The LDS Chapel on 400 North was dedicated.

#### 1978

- The Circuit Court system replaced all city courts throughout Utah.
- Jim Nyland was elected Grand County Sheriff.
- Grand County High School Football Coach Glen Richeson retired after 20 years with the team.

#### 1979

- A chapter of the Parent-Teacher Association was organized in Moab.
- The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the creation of Arches National Monument was celebrated.

#### 1980

- An outbreak of hepatitis was cause for concern among local officials.

- The "Sagebrush Rebellion" bill was passed by Utah legislators giving control of federal lands within the state over to state officials.
- The Grand Old Ranch House (formerly the Arthur Taylor House) was added to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Castle Valley received nationwide recognition when ABC-TV broadcast a live climb of Castle Rock.
- The world's largest solar voltaic generating system was dedicated during ceremonies at Natural Bridges National Monument.
- After an emergency executive session of the Moab City Council, the entire police force was put on probation due to a lack of effective law enforcement.
- An open house was hosted at the new City Hall offices on Center Street.

#### ***Of Special Note:***

Guides, Moab born locals, Kyler Carpenter and Dusty Simmons have chosen April eighth, two thousand as their wedding day.

#### ***AND***

Guides, John and Susette Weisheit set off on 02/02/2000 with two rafts and each other for a thirty day Grand Canyon trip. I hear they are still washing laundry.