

# The Howland & Wheeler 1894 Inscription(s)

by Jim Knipmeyer

If a boater down the Green River lands at the upstream side of the mouth of Spring Canyon and follows the old uranium road down to the now-fallen log cabin moldering under the canopy of cottonwood trees, he (or she) will pass by a number of large talus boulders. In the vicinity of an old cable and other bits of rusting mining equipment, an interesting inscription can be seen cut into one of the rocks. On the side is "H. HOWLAND 10-94," and "Arthur Wheeler 1894," along with an incised picture-glyph entitled "My Gal and I."

Harry T. Howland was a longtime resident of Green River, Utah, first coming to that community from the mining town of Crested Butte, Colorado, in 1893. It was his stated intention to travel on to Hite, on the Colorado River in Glen Canyon, on a prospecting trip, but evidently changed his mind while in Green River. Instead, Howland and another man, named Spry, took a boat, described as being about 16 or 18 feet long, three and a half feet wide at the bottom and four at the top, and went down the Green River to near The Confluence.

The pair's intent was to both prospect and trap, though the latter turned out to be the most profitable. They reportedly got some fox, bobcat, beaver, and coyotes during the nearly two-month trip. At the conclusion the duo brought their skins back up the river in the boat.

In 1894, Howland made another river trip, this time from Green River all of the way to Moab. His father accompanied him, and once again the voyage was made in one boat, about the same size as the earlier one. The father returned home to Denver from Moab and Harry retraced his "steps" back to Green River, descending the Colorado (in 1894 the Grand) and making his way up the Green. Like the previous year, he again got some furs, shipping them out to market from Green River.

This 1894 trip, however, was not the one on which the Spring Canyon inscription was made. Howland said that the voyage with his father was done in August, while the "10" in the inscription undoubtedly refers to October.

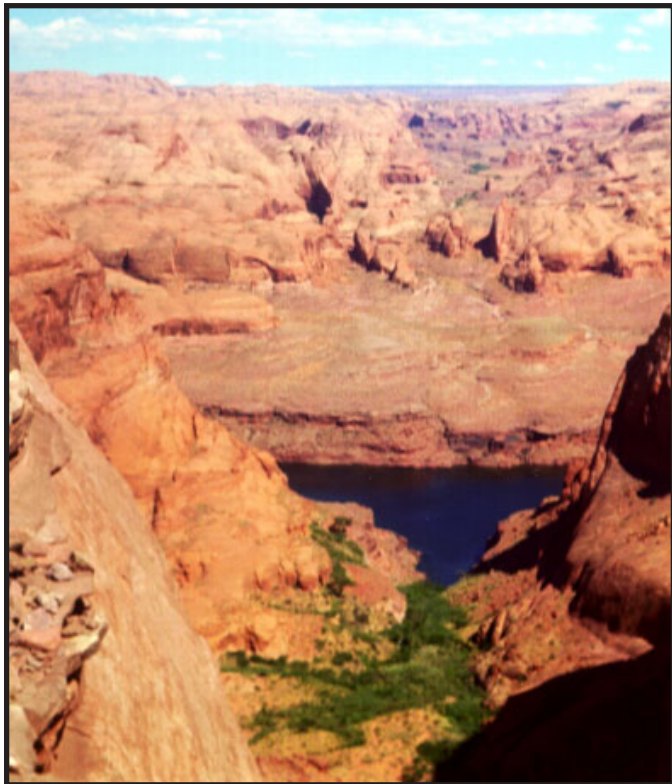
Arthur Wheeler was one of a trio of brothers from the state of New York who, in 1884, had settled on the right bank of the Green River, across from and just south of the mouth of the San Rafael. They installed water wheels for irrigation and planted alfalfa and fruit trees. The three also raised cattle.

In April of 1892, Wheeler was hired by B.S. Ross of Rawlins, Wyoming, to pilot his steamboat, the *Major Powell* (see the Winter, 1997 issue of *The Confluence*), down the Green River and on to the head of the first cataract on the Colorado. The trip was a success, and Ross eagerly began to promote regularly scheduled steamboat excursions down the river to Spanish Bottom. However, nothing ever came of his promises.

According to Hazel Ekker, of Hanksville, Utah, Wheeler's 1894 inscription near the mouth of Spring

Canyon was made on a trip in company with Harry Howland. The two were said to be close friends, and in later years Harry told Mrs. Ekker that he was with Arthur "when he carved the picture." Since Howland was a married man, while Wheeler was a bachelor, "My Gal and I" probably refers to Arthur. Based on both prior and later trips, the pair was probably trapping for furs during their 1894 voyage.

In the years to come, Howland made many more river trips, mostly on the Green and Grand, but at least once on the Colorado in lower Glen Canyon. Wheeler, on the other hand, left the area in 1898 for the Klondike region of western Canada, where he engaged in the Yukon gold rush. He never returned to Utah.



Looking out from the Hole-in-the-Rock, June 1963.  
Photo by Jim Knipmeyer

## The Place No One Knew: Glen Canyon on the Colorado

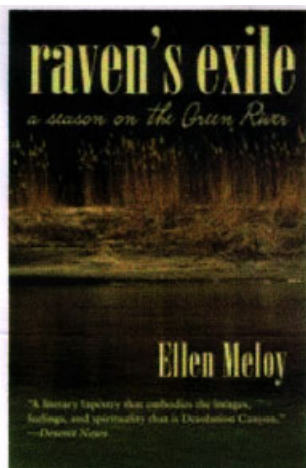
by Jim Knipmeyer

Soon after the 1963 Sierra Club publication of the above titled book was issued, the name became symbolic of the entire Glen Canyon wilderness-Lake Powell reservoir question. No one knew about the soon-to-be-lost Colorado River paradise to be able to save it from the government dam builders. In the last decade or so, however, there has been somewhat of a backlash against this epitaph. It is now maintained that many people knew about the splendors and beauties of Glen Canyon; just not the high-placed or influential ones.

Be that as it may, in the first few years of the 1960s I myself certainly knew very little about what essayist and novelist Edward Abbey described as "the living heart of the canyonlands." I first saw Glen Canyon in June of 1963. Just earlier that spring the gates of the diversion tunnels around the dam had been closed, but reservoir water already backed a little over eighty miles upstream behind the earthen coffer dam built above the worksite. But it was comparatively shallow, was primarily confined to the narrow "inner" gorge, and did not spread out over the flanking benchlands and up the many tributary canyons as it later would do. So what I got to see was still much more "canyon" rather than "lake."

After crossing the steel-arch bridge just below the still not-quite finished concrete plug of Glen Canyon Dam, my family and I proceeded past the Wahweap area. At that time I did know enough about the history of the region to be aware of the Crossing of the Fathers that lay a few miles to the northeast. We followed a narrow graded and dirt track to the crossing area and what had been, for the past several years, the take-out point for river parties near Kane Creek. The road wound across the sage-covered benchland past the towering pile of Castle Rock and the jutting prow of Romana Mesa, and around the point of Gunsight Butte. Most of the way the inner gorge of Glen Canyon was not visible, but neither was the reservoir water. Only at a place above the Crossing site itself, looking southeast toward the uneven upthrusts of Tse Tonte and Tower Butte, was the spread of the still-infant lake readily apparent.

Our next contact with Glen Canyon was some forty-five miles upstream, but it took a day-and-a-half of driving time to make our way to that point at the Hole-in-the-Rock. Once again, I knew enough about the general history of the region for us to bounce and jolt our way over the newly bladed road to this natural cleft in the rimrock of the canyon. Even to here the reservoir water had crept, but except for its unnatural azure color and the fact that it did partially fill the narrow inner gorge some fifty or so feet above the old river level, an undiscerning eye would have simply identified it as a very blue, very unruffled stream. Green vegetation at the base of the "Hole" bordered the lake water just as it would have the old Colorado, the gash of Cottonwood Creek still wound its way eastward on the opposite bank,



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and the flat-sided slabs of Register Rocks rose above what was still dry, almost barren benchland.

But my lack of real, intimate knowledge about Glen Canyon manifested itself at our third and last encounter. After another long and circuitous drive westwards, we came back into the depths of the canyon down the winding course of North Wash. Coming out into the main canyon itself, we drove slowly downstream on a shelf above the right bank of the still flowing, still living Colorado. We soon arrived at the Hite ferry, which would transport our vehicle and us across the river to the continuation of Route 95 on the opposite side. I did not even “know” enough to take a picture of the historic ferry. I did not “know” enough to photograph Hite’s old log cabin near the western bank. And I was certainly not aware of the incised “CASS HITE 1883” inscription which we drove right past as we made our way from North Wash down to the ferry crossing.

My ignorance continued on the eastern side as well. As we drove along the west bank up towards the mouth of White Canyon, I was not cognizant of the fact that perched on the rim of the cliffs, not far above our heads, were the hand-laid stone walls of the prehistoric pueblo ruin known as Fort Moqui. Last, but certainly not least in view of my present interest in the old, historic inscriptions of the Colorado Plateau region, I did not “know” that these walls and the surrounding rocks were literally covered with scores of names and dates carved and scratched by early travelers and visitors from as far back as the second Powell river expedition in 1872.

These “historic” remains of Glen Canyon are now gone forever. Even if the Lake Powell reservoir is someday drained, these man-made traces will have been long erased. But the “natural” Glen Canyon can be reclaimed, and Abbey’s living heart of the canyonlands can be KNOWN once again!

### **Green**

*We are green  
big and swirly  
and perfectly clear*

*the dip of our paddles  
pushing  
the silver river miles along*

*we are green  
and stone  
and sky*

*a dance of Ponderosa Pines  
a summer rain  
a bubble line*

*we are smiling  
big and perfectly clear  
and Salmon River green.*

**Doug Oblak**

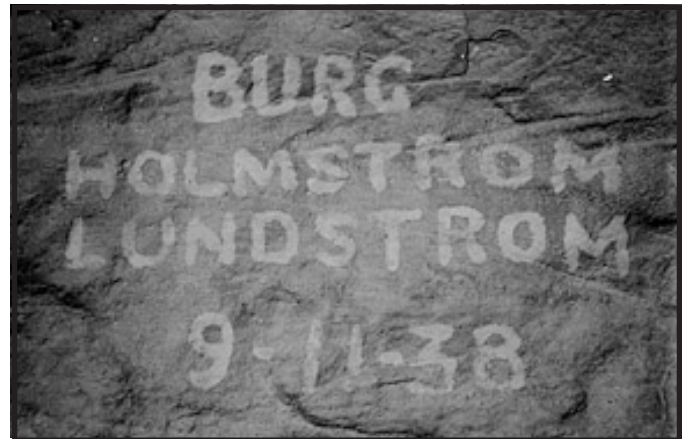
## **Inscriptions Along The Rivers Of Dinosaur**

**by Herm Hoops**

**T**hose early runners of rivers often left inscriptions to mark their passing or to record significant events on their trip. Their markings are a way for modern river runners to connect with that earlier time, when things on the river were simple and yet still unknown. Rivers flowed as the season dictated, undammed and unharnessed by mankind. The early wadedancers lacked our modern equipment, and without GIS or cell phones took off downstream with their rudimentary maps and supplies.

This is a list of early river runner markings in Dinosaur National Monument, followed by some interesting errata. Many of the inscriptions have significantly deteriorated over the past 30 years, from when I first saw them. You have to imagine your actions multiplied by the hundreds of other folks who have visited these sites. When you visit one of these sites do not touch the inscriptions. Touching inscriptions abrades them and leaves a small oily substance, which is also harmful to them.

The locations are keyed to the Belknap Guide.



### **Green River: Mile 234, river left**

The above inscription is located at river level in a small alcove about 200 yards above Harp Falls, it can be observed from a boat. The inscription was done in yellow paint, which has faded slightly. It is still clearly readable.

Haldane “Buzz” Holmstrom was the first person to run the Green and Colorado rivers solo (1937). In 1938 Amos Burg, an adventurer and National Geographic photographer made a film recreating Holmstrom’s solo trip. Buzz ran his homemade boat, the “Julius F.” and Burg ran “Charlie” the first inflatable raft to run the canyons. Phil Lundstrom, a friend of Burg’s, joined the trip from Green River, Wyoming, to Jensen, Utah.

### **Green River: Mile 232.3, river left**

REYNOLDS HALLACY

1950  
A K REYNOLDS

-----  
REYNOLDS  
G J GREEN

The inscription is located on a rock outcrop just above



the high water line at the upper end of the eddy below Triplet Falls. It was done in white paint, but most of the paint has peeled off.

A.K. Reynolds operated river tours through Dinosaur National Monument in the early 1950's using wooden catara-act boats. Dinosaur N.M. has an excellent film of some of these trips.



**Green River: Mile 232.3, river left**

- 9 Lee Kay
- 25 Earl Clyde
- 38 D.L. Rasmussen
- 39 Wes Eddington
- Roy DeSpain

These men worked for the Utah Department of Fish & Wildlife, and were doing a wildlife survey in 1938. Kay and Clyde had previously run the river with Bus Hatch in 1934. DeSpain joined Hatch on his 1939 trip down the Yampa River and later ran many commercial trips for Hatch. (Note: DeSpain's Rock on the lower left of Moonshine Rapid was named for Roy DeSpain).

**Green River: Mile 221.8, river right**

D J 1838

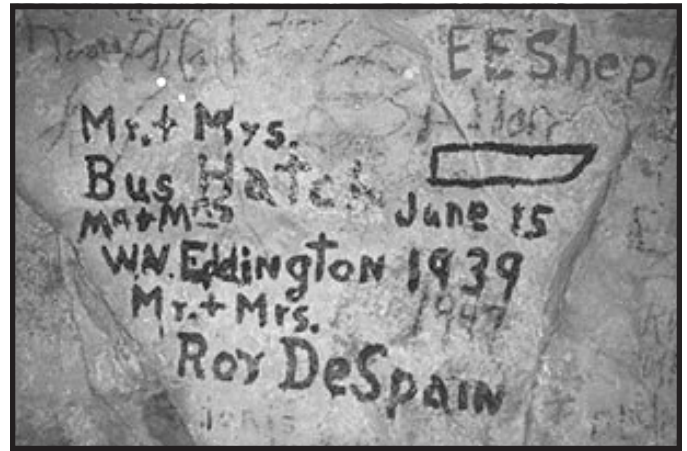
The inscription is located on a 20 feet rock wall about 50 yards above the second rapid in Whirlpool Canyon. It is about 4 feet above the high water line and is partially hidden by vegetation. The inscription is chipped lightly into the rock. Glade Ross (Utah river guide license #001 and NPS river ranger) located this inscription in August 1975. Though readable, this inscription has deteriorated over the past 30 years. It is not unlike the deteriorating condition of the Julien inscription at the mouth of Chandler Creek.

Denis Julien trapped and traded in the Midwest from 1805 to 1817. By 1827 he had move to the Taos area and apparently in the 1830's was trapping and exploring along the Green and Colorado River drainage. Julien left seven known inscriptions on or near the river: Whirlpool Canyon, Desolation Canyon, Labyrinth Canyon (two), Cataract Canyon, Arches N.P. and Inscription Rock on the Uintah River, near Vernal, Utah.

**Yampa River: Mile 20, river right**

- Mr. + Mrs. Bus Hatch June 15
- Mr. + Mrs. W.N.Eddington 1938
- Mr. + Mrs. Roy DeSpain

The inscription is located in Signature Cave about 200 yards across from Harding Hole. The inscription was done in black paint. Part of the Hatch name has been vandalized, but it is readable. There are many other names in the



cave, both historic and modern. In the late 1980's a Sierra Club trip left many inappropriate inscriptions in the cave.

Bus Hatch began his boating career on the Green River in 1931 and continued to expand his river running around the World. Bus' wife's name was Bay. DeSpain and Eddington had previously run the Green River in 1938.

As an aside, the chimney and equipment on the gravel fan below the cave are from Jens Jensen's mining explorations. Jensen made many trips down the Yampa, and may have been the first white person to have descended sections of the Yampa River.

**Miscellaneous Inscriptions**

**Green River: Mile 242.6**

A series of white and red survey benchmarks on both sides of the river just above the high water line. They may be from a dam proposed at this site or the Echo Park Dam.



**Green River: Mile 232.3, river left**

Hung up 4 hrs. at low Tide  
 May 16 '59  
 Georgie White + 14 Crew  
 Ring Done it

This inscription was carved into a driftwood plank that was originally attached to a post. By the mid-1980's it was gone.

Georgie White began her "river running experience" in the Grand Canyon in 1945. On May 16, 1959, one of her 27 feet pontoon rafts became stuck on the rocks at lower Triplet Falls. Ring was one of her boatmen.

**Green River: Miile 230.5, river right**

John Steward, of Powell's second expedition, recorded in his journal that he, Fredrick Dellenbaugh, and Walter Powell left their names along Rippling Brook (which they called "Leaping Brook") on June 25, 1871. In the mid-1980's I searched the area for several days. This inscription, if it exists has never been located.

### Green River: Mile 225, river right

Jack Sumner, of Powell's first expedition recorded in his journal that some of the party carved their names on Echo (Steamboat) Rock opposite their camp at the confluence with the Yampa on June 20, 1869. I have never located this inscription, although there are many petroglyphs along the base of Steamboat Rock.

### Green River: Mile 224.4

A two mile walk up Pool Creek ends at the Chew Ranch which is now owned by the National Park Service. On the stone walk leading to the main ranch house notice the diamond shaped stone. The "diamond" is the Chew Family brand, and in a variety of forms is still used by them today.

### Green River - mile 222-221

On a bench about 40 feet above river level on the right are survey marks and stakes from the survey of the Moffat Railroad. On the left at about the same level are ladders, cables, painted benchmarks and other debris related to the Echo Park Dam survey.

Unfortunately in 1989 I observed a seasonal river ranger at the Split Mountain boat ramp with much of these historic items. He was "cleaning up the canyon!"

### Green River - mile 212.6, river left

"The White Buffalo" a petroglyph-like figure on the wall to the left of a small island. The figure is above a talus slope and partially hidden by vegetation. The figure has characteristics of "cowboy art" although some say that it is Ute.

### Green River: Mile 199.5, river left

Note a large talus slope that appears to contact the overhanging cliff just upstream from the boat ramp. There is a 50 feet gap between the talus and the "wall" which is actually a very large alcove or cave. On the boulders facing the cave are several painted inscriptions believed to be from men conducting the Bureau of Reclamation survey for the Split Mountain Dam.

### Green River: Mile 199.2, river left

A several hundred yard walk up the bottom of the Split Mountain Escarpment to the second box canyon leads to inscriptions left by Chick and Frank McKnight. Chick and Frank were nephews of Josie Basset Morris whose cabin is at the end of the Cub Creek Road. The McKnight boys left the inscriptions in the late 1950's when they were visiting Josie and their father had let them drive his new (used) Buick. The boys cut across the fields and hiked up the canyon to explore. After leaving the inscriptions they got the car stuck much to the dismay of their father! Frank worked for Hatch River Expeditions for many years.

But an observant naturalist will gaze at the rocks below Triplet Falls across from the inscriptions and imagine a 27 foot pontoon boat high above today's river level. A savvy naturalist will make a connection between the inscriptions, today's lower water levels and the changes we have wrought upon our rivers: involving their customers in a thought provoking activity that highlights what we should do about those changes.

To put these inscriptions into perspective you can read books like *Echo Park* by Jon Cosco; *The Doing of the Thing*, by Welch, Conley and Dimock; *If We Had A Boat* by Webb, and such classics as *The Chew Bunch*.

## Coal Creek Dam Site

by Roy Webb

In the Belknap *Desolation River Guide*, on the same page [p. 37] as the photo of the "Thunderous Hole in Coal Creek Rapid" is another one of a man standing in the doorway of an old house, with the caption "Ruin housed Coal Creek damsite workers in 1911." If you look fast, in the tailwaves of Coal Creek—once you're safely past the "Thunderous Hole," of course—you can still see major excavations into the slope on the right side of the river, and the house and associated buildings and corrals are still standing on river left. On the last CPRG interpretative training trip, we stopped and bushwhacked over there to get a look at the excavations, and later camped by the old house across the river. Quite a bit of work went into the keyway, or foundation, of the dam, and the house and corrals have likewise stood the tests of time.

Despite the obvious effort put into the dam site, however, historical sources on the dam are as scarce as shade in Gray Canyon, found mostly in aging newspapers and the voluminous files of the Otis R. Marston collection at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. It was known as the Buell Dam, after the promoter of the project. Little is known about Buell, not even a first name or an exact date when he started on the project. The most detailed description of the dam comes from the diary of Ed Harmston, a railroad engineer, who surveyed Desolation and Gray canyons by land and boat for the Denver and Rio Grande Railway in September 1913. Harmston's party went by boat from mouth of the Duchesne River to the Seamount Ranch, today known as the Rock Creek Ranch; there they met members of the Buell Dam crew who were surveying the high water line of the proposed dam. From them Harmston learned that the dam "is to be 200 ft high...it is planned to use it for both irrigation and power purposes, the land to be irrigated amounting to 165,000 acres has been segregated under the Carey Act, and lies on both sides of Green River; the estimated cost of the project we are told is \$9,000,000. [...] The high water line of this dam will reach within a couple of miles of Seamount's ranch."

Apparently a man named Hyrum Johnson of Provo, Utah, was also involved in the dam in some way. In a 1966 interview between Otis Marston and Bill Seamount, Seamount says that Johnson "had 8 or 10 men drilling 2 or 3

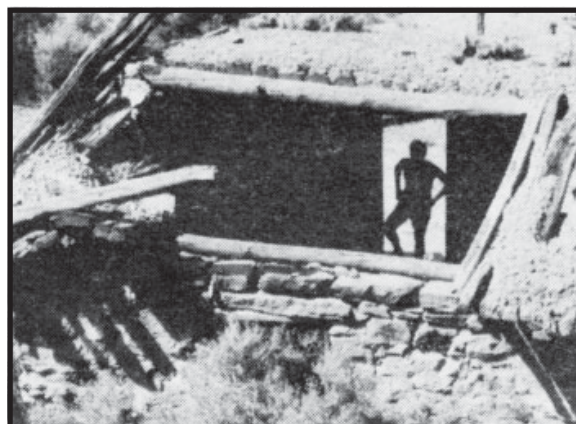


Photo from Belknap's *Desolation River Guide*

years near Coal Creek for UP&L”; later he wrote to Marston that Johnson was the “foreman.” I found a Hyrum E. Johnson in the *Jonas Johnson Family, 1600 - 1970*, who seemed to fit the bill; he studied drafting and construction at Utah State Agricultural College (now Utah State University), and later owned his own contracting firm. But unfortunately his brief biography makes no mention of working on the Buell Dam, and his involvement must for now remain a mystery.

About the only river runners to mention the dam are the Kolb brothers, Ellsworth and Emery, who passed by on their river voyage in 1911. In *In Through the Grand Canyon from Wyoming to Mexico*, Ellsworth mentions how they ran into five men in a boat rowing upstream “in a long, still stretch” above Coal Creek rapid [p 104-105]. The men told the Kolbs that they were working on dam a few miles below, and followed them back down river to watch them run Coal Creek Rapid. After their successful run, the brothers tied up at the camp across the river to visit. Most of the dam site workers were gone to Green River, Utah, since it was a Sunday, but there was a small crowd there. In *The Brave Ones*, the edited diaries of Ellsworth and Emery, Emery notes “They kindly invited us to stop for dinner at their head quarters which was a mile or so below. We accepted as usual. The dinner was prepared by Mrs. Steel and the pie not being passed the 2nd time gave no chance to reflect on our manners.” [p. 71]

The late 1800s and early 1900s were a time of great boosterism in the West. Anything was possible to “men of energy, enterprise, and capital”; no project was too grandiose, no mine too inaccessible, no river too wild to be tamed. The Buell Dam fits nicely into this pattern. A 1911 article in the *Grand Valley Times* of Moab about the Buell Dam noted that the dam was supposed to irrigate 240,000 acres of land, would cost \$10million, and would include “337 miles of canals and provide good agricultural land for from 20 to 50 thousand families.” Despite the claims of newspaper editors, however, plans for the Buell Dam ultimately fell through. Ed Harmston noted in 1913 that Buell had been trying for eight years to raise enough money to complete his project, but was unsuccessful. In 1922, when the USGS/UP&L survey went through Desolation and Gray Canyons, engineer Ralf Woolley didn’t even note the Buell Dam site. By the 1930s, the damsite and Buell’s schemes were abandoned and largely forgotten. In the heady years of the Colorado River Storage Project, after World War II, the Bureau of Reclamation again turned its gaze toward the remote canyons of the Green River, with plans for a series of dams up and down the river. Included in these plans was one to be called the Rattlesnake Dam, near the rapid of the same name in Gray Canyon. Again, however, the site was deemed too remote and the benefits not enough to justify the costs, so the Rattlesnake Dam was likewise cancelled. Today’s river runners in Desolation Canyon, whether stopping at Rock Creek, or enjoying the stunning vistas as Desolation Canyon ends, or running the “thunderous hole” in Coal Creek, can be glad that the grand schemes of all the dam promoters came to naught.

**Special thanks to Jim Aton for research assistance.**