

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument

By Richard G. Beidleman*

Colorado's Black Canyon of the Gunnison certainly ranks among the foremost chasms of the world in terms of dimensions and renown. Starting at Sapinero, where the ancient pre-Cambrian rock complex first becomes evident, the Gunnison River has cut an ever deepening gorge to westward for a distance of some fifty miles until, swinging northwest, the river leaves its walled confines and joins the North Fork of the Gunnison River in the North Fork Valley near Delta.

The deepest and most spectacular portion of this chasm, a twelve-mile length, has been included within the boundary of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument, which was established by the presidential proclamation of Herbert Hoover thirty years ago on March 2, 1933. Here the gorge depth ranges from 1,730 to 2,725 feet, while the width narrows to 1,100 feet at the rim and as little as 40 feet at the bottom, at the latter site the river completely inundating the chasm floor. The depth and narrowness of the Black Canyon is emphasized by the sheer, black-stained, lichen-covered, variegated pre-Cambrian walls and the periodic gloom that shrouds the depths.

There are other canyons in the world with greater over-all dimensions, and some whose fame exceeds that of the Black Canyon. Regardless of these competitors, however, Colorado's Black Canyon of the Gunnison is memorable for its narrowness, depth, and impression of somber solitude. It is small wonder, then, that there developed in the past efforts to have

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The author is indebted to Reverend Mark T. Warner, now of Denver, who carefully reviewed this article and made a number of pertinent suggestions and additions. I am also indebted to personnel at the National Archives in Washington who made available manuscript material dealing with the establishment of Black Canyon National Monument. Where documents were not available, the *Montrose Daily Press* was used extensively as a source for historical background. This history in much briefer form was originally prepared for the National Park Service as an appendix to the Black Canyon museum prospectus.—Author.



the most spectacular section of this gorge set aside as one of our country's national monuments.

As early as 1901, the scenic value of the Black Canyon was being publicized. F. H. Newell, Chief Hydrographer for the U. S. Geological Survey, told the editor of the *Montrose Enterprise* in that year that the Black Canyon of the Gunnison "is the grandest scenery on the continent, and that something should be done to invite tourists and sightseers to look on its wonders." Newell thought that the canyon was "unrivalled, even by the Grand Canon of the Colorado."

In the late 1920's local citizens in Montrose began agitating to have the Black Canyon designated as a national monument, with a bridge eventually to be built to span the chasm. This proposed bridge, mentioned as the "highest bridge that will ever be built in the world," would be 1,250 feet in length and extend 1,950 feet above the Gunnison River.

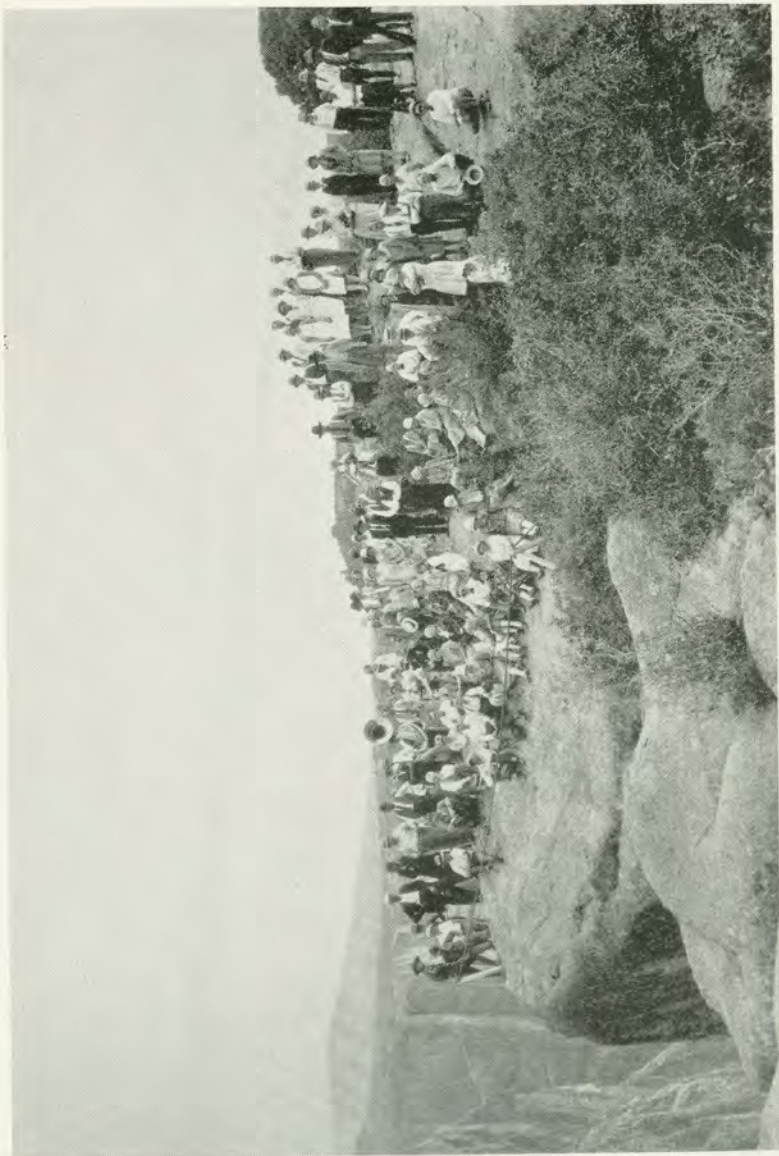
One of the first vocal protagonists was Douglass Lytle, a rancher who lived between Bostwick Park and the canyon's south rim. During the summer of 1928, he told the county agent, Harry A. Ireland, about the existence of the spectacular gorge so close to Montrose and suggested that perhaps the Montrose Lions Club, of which Ireland was a member, could be interested in constructing a "passable road." to the rim.¹ Ireland brought the matter to the attention of the club, which was interested and which set up an investigative committee composed of Ireland, L. J. Foster, superintendent of the Uncompahgre Reclamation Project, and Reverend Mark T. Warner, minister of the local United Presbyterian Church.²

Soon after its appointment, this committee made a reconnaissance trip with Lytle to the canyon, getting a panoramic view of the countryside from Signal Hill and then proceeding to the rim near what later was to become known as Lions Spring. The men were enthusiastic about the possibilities of the area and heartily recommended the road-building project to the club.

On March 8, 1929, the Lions Club voted to sponsor construction of a "scenic drive" to and along the canyon rim. The

¹ Lytle commented that "there was a canyon up there that was worth seeing and a road should be built so people could get to it."—*Montrose Daily Press*, ca January 25, 1934. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

² A great deal of the following information on local activities relative to the establishment of the monument was made available to me by Reverend Warner in a letter of December 31, 1962, or came from a lengthy article, "Black Canyon Drive Is Dedicated," in the September 2, 1930, issue of the *Montrose Daily Press*.



Walker Art Studio

Road Dedication Ceremony at Chasm View
Sept. 1, 1930

committee ran a rough survey for the proposed road, marking the route out with red strings hung on the brush. Work days for the club were designated during the summer of 1929, and members armed with picks, shovels, axes and pruning shears began the job of clearing. Reverend Warner took John Howell, Montrose County Commissioner, and H. T. Reno, resident state Highway Engineer, to the canyon in November and sold them on the idea of building a good county road. Later the board of county commissioners endorsed the project, as did the Montrose city commissioners, the Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations and individuals, including the *Montrose Daily Press* and especially its news editor, Warren F. Wilcox.³

Work was begun on the approach road in May, 1930, the road right-of-way being donated by Lytle⁴; and the road was dedicated on September 1, 1930, a mellow autumn Labor Day, with a gala celebration.⁵ Picnickers from Montrose, Delta and the towns of the North Fork Valley gathered in a clearing near the "bridge site" for a festive feast, topped off with ice cream and cake served by the Lions and delicious coffee brewed by J. H. Bantley. A canvas was erected as protection against the sun, with seats set up under it, and water was provided from a large tank chilled with several hundred pounds of ice. The many cars were directed to safe parking spaces by uniformed men of Company D [Colorado National Guard] under the direction of Sheriff McAnally.

Prior to lunch visitors, even Robert Curtis on his crutches, took the opportunity of viewing the canyon from several vantage points protected by hastily erected railings; and from their "stage" at the canyon rim Professor Loyde Hillyer and his fifteen band members rendered a number of selections to regale the audience. Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Walker were busy taking photographs of the scenery and festivities, and T. Stambaugh of the American Automobile Association was gathering material for an article on the Black Canyon in the A.A.A. magazine. Shortly after one o'clock, only forty-five minutes after it came off the press, copies of the Montrose newspaper

³ Wilcox, among other activities, contacted the man who had built the bridge over the Royal Gorge, wrote Director Albright, took influential authors to the proposed bridge site, and generally boosted the proposed monument "in and out of season."

⁴ Lytle also permitted Lions Spring to be used by visitors and eventually deeded to the government the land he owned within the monument area. Rather obviously, Lions Spring was named in honor of the Montrose Lions Club and not, as many present-day visitors anticipate, after mountain lions which might frequent the spring.

⁵ This celebration was described in detail in "Black Canyon Drive Is Dedicated," *Montrose Daily Press*, September 2, 1930. The following account is based upon that article.



Walker
Lions Club Road Committee: J. F. Warren, "Casey" Jones, and F. H. Posey,
and County Commissioner John Howell (on right).

telling of the dedication, the ink barely dry, were distributed to the gathering.

At 2:00 p.m. the dedicatory ceremony began, presided over by Harry Ireland.⁶ Accompanied by Gene McGregor on the cornet, everyone sang *America*; and Reverend Warner pronounced the Invocation. Ireland portrayed some of the early history of the area and called upon Sam Hartman, the oldest inhabitant present, to relate some of his pioneer experiences associated with the canyon. Then County Commissioner Howell spoke about his impressions of the canyon, commenting "Fortunate indeed are the people of the Uncompahgre Valley both now and in the future in having at their very door this beautiful scenery. Every effort should be made to make it more accessible to the general public."

Howell went on to suggest that an approach road also be built to the north rim and that the Lions Club should seriously begin to make plans for the bridge, ". . . nothing very big or impossible about it, if we all work together." He facetiously continued:

If this is not soon done the men who pushed along the work and built this road this summer, with myself will come up here some dark night and build it for you.

The Long Long Trail on the upper end can be improved so that the most of you could walk down to the bottom of the canyon. . . . And then just above us down the Lone Tree Trail it would be possible to build a power cog railway so that any of you could easily go down and stand close to the perpendicular walls and be near the many cataracts and falls.

It was then Reverend Warner's turn to address the crowd. He reviewed the history of the road development and expressed the hope that the scenic area might eventually be set aside as a national park or national monument. Gus Foster offered a resolution on behalf of the gathering, thanking all who had made possible the creation of the road. And finally with a bottle of Lions Spring water colored with Uncompahgre grape juice which she hurled into the depths of the canyon, Bernice Warren formally christened the road: "In the name of the people of the State of Colorado, I break this bottle of wine and christen this highway the Black Canyon Scenic Drive."

Reverend Warner's suggestion that this newly opened area be established as a national monument was not an original idea. In July of 1929, Warren Wilcox, *Montrose Daily Press* news editor, had called the scenic canyon to the attention of the

⁶ It was Harry Ireland and Warner who one morning, soon after the county road had been constructed, went up to the canyon and gave names to many of the points of interest, later having signs made to mark these points. Many of Ireland's and Warner's names are still in use.

National Park Service with the hope that it might be set aside as a national monument. Then early in February, 1930, the Lions Club through Attorney John L. Bell had made a request of the N.P.S. that the Black Canyon be given such consideration, although no specific area for inclusion was recommended. However, at the time the Park Service did not favor establishment of a monument there.

In May, 1931, the Lions Club, through Attorney L. C. Kinikin, again approached the Park Service with a similar request, this time specifying a smaller parcel for inclusion, most of which was public land. The Acting Director of the N.P.S., Arno B. Cammerer, expressed interest in the request and suggested the possibility that a Park Service representative might visit the canyon in the coming fall or winter. Actually, this visit was to materialize some time later.

The monument idea gained regional impetus in January, 1932, when the Grand Junction Lions voted to assist the Montrose group. During the same month national interest was centered on the Black Canyon by an article on the proposed monument and bridge which appeared in the national Lions Magazine. By October 20, 1932, more than 800 visitors from thirty-one states had ventured up to the south rim on the new road during the course of the year and had signed the loose-leaf register there.

Among the fall visitors was Roger W. Toll, representing the National Park Service, who stopped in at the *Daily Press* office on October 14, and asked if Warren Wilcox would take him up to the canyon. Toll was very impressed by the scenery he encountered, and while in the Montrose area described to the local people the steps they should take in having the area made a national monument. On November 1, he submitted a favorable report to the National Park Service, recommending the creation of the national monument and suggesting that the proposed monument include a small area on either side of the canyon, as well as the canyon itself, from the Gunnison Tunnel river portal to Red Rock Canyon. This land had already been withdrawn from public use by the Reclamation Service which, at the moment having no further use for it, might be favorable to transferring it to the National Park Service.

In his official report Toll commented:⁷

The Black Canyon of the Gunnison is one of the most spectacular gorges of the United States. The land is available. Public sentiment seems to favor the establishment of a na-

⁷ Roger W. Toll, "Report to Horace M. Albright, Director, N.P.S.," November 1, 1932. Nat. Arch. File 2052 (RG 79), Black Canyon.



Lion, Dec Walker

Men most active in building the first road to Black Canyon rim, in 1930. Left to right: C. C. Sheats, John Howell and J. A. Gibson, County Commissioners; Lions, in white shirts, Art H. McAnally, Rev. Mark T. Warner, F. H. Posey, "Casey" Jones, Dr. F. Shermernhorn, W. D. Asbury, J. F. Warren, and Harry Ireland. Sitting are: H. T. Reno, Highway Engineer; L. J. Savage and Sam Hartman.

tional reservation. The area is accessible by road. Scenically it seems to qualify for a national monument and is free from some of the complications that are found in a number of other proposed areas.

Unfortunately, early in the fall, the Montrose Lions Club had disbanded, as a consequence of the depression. Wilcox, undaunted by this loss of organized support, told Reverend Warner of Toll's visit and challenged Warner to "push" the drive for creation of the monument as he had pushed the road-building project.

This challenge Warner gladly accepted. He went directly to Leslie Pinkstaff, president of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce, told him of Toll's favorable impression, and suggested that "the time was ripe for pushing the national monument project." Pinkstaff heartily agreed and named Warner a one-man committee to proceed with the project, since Warner was the only member of the old Lions Club committee still in the community.

Warner, now representing the Montrose Chamber of Commerce, corresponded with Toll about the proposed monument, and Toll, in return, outlined the proper steps which should be taken in presenting the project to the Park Service. Warner decided to prepare "packets of propaganda material" on the Black Canyon to be sent to influential and concerned persons, including Toll, Horace Albright, Director of the National Park Service, Colorado's United States Senators Edward P. Costigan and Karl C. Schuyler, and western Colorado's United States Representative Edward T. Taylor of Glenwood Springs.

The county surveyor, J. E. McDaniel, helped Warner outline the boundaries of the proposed monument and make up a number of blueprint maps for the packets, based upon old Bureau of Reclamation maps. Dexter Walker of the Walker Art Studio in Montrose provided several sets of representative hand-colored photographs of the canyon and Warner wrote a descriptive brochure covering all aspects of the history, natural history, and scenic features of the Black Canyon.⁸ Finally, into each packet went an appropriate letter of transmittal; and the packets were put into the mail by Christmas of 1932. Also, on behalf of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce the Colorado congressmen were asked to take up the monument creation

⁸ Albright was especially appreciative for Warner's contribution: "I wish to thank you in particular for the manuscript which you compiled, giving us in considerable detail, descriptive data on this area."—Letter, Albright to Warner, January 7, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

with the National Park Service.⁹

On December 5, 1932, Albright finally approved a recommendation by the N.P.S. Branch of Planning, acting on Roger Toll's report, that the Black Canyon "be tentatively approved as a national monument project and that the Reclamation Service be approached to ascertain their attitude on the possibility of this area being used as a power project."¹⁰ The Bureau of Reclamation replied that it would have no objection to the establishment of the monument if this action "would not close for all time any further power and reclamation development."¹¹

The Park Service had received written or telephoned requests for action from many sources in addition to the Montrose Chamber of Commerce,¹² including the Montrose Mayor and City Council, C. E. Adams, editor of the *Montrose Daily Press*, Uncompahgre Valley Water Users' Association, the Montrose Rotary Club, State Senator Lee Knous and Senator Schuyler, Senator Costigan and Representative Taylor.¹³ On January 20 the Western State College Outing Club at Gunnison endorsed the undertaking. And the Montrose County Commissioners, after endorsing the monument, designated the road to the south rim as a public highway.

One state organization especially active in the monument movement was The Colorado Association of Denver which seconded the recommendation of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce on February 2, 1933: "It [Black Canyon] is a sight well worth traveling far to see, and if given the dignity and prominence of being named a national monument many people more than now will visit it."¹⁴

Acting on behalf of the many individuals and organizations supporting the creation of the monument, Director Albright approved on January 13, a recommendation by Conrad Wirth that "a proposed proclamation be submitted recommending the establishment of the Black Canyon National Monument," accompanying the recommendation with a map showing the Black Canyon land status, reclamation withdrawals, power

⁹ Senator Schuyler had received a petition from the Montrose Chamber of Commerce. He commented to Albright: "It appears from the literature submitted to me that this [establishment of the monument] can be accomplished at a very low cost and that it will add materially to the National Park System. Doubtless you have received photographs and descriptive matter of this proposed site and I would appreciate hearing from you and an expression of your views as to whether or not this is feasible at this time."—Letter, Schuyler to Albright, January 10, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

¹⁰ Letter, Wirth to Albright, January 6, 1933.—*Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² ". . . We have received a good array of petitions and letters from official and unofficial organizations in Colorado, all urging the establishment of this monument."—Letter, Albright to C. E. Adams, Editor, *Montrose Daily Press*, January 7, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

¹³ Letter, Wirth to Albright, January 6, 1933.—*Ibid.*

¹⁴ Letter, Dudley R. Griggs, Secretary, Colorado Association, to Albright, February 2, 1933.—*Ibid.*

site location, suggested boundary line, and the boundary line recommended by the Montrose Chamber of Commerce through Mark Warner.¹⁵

At this time the proposed boundary line was submitted to the United States Land Office so that a proper description for inclusion in the proclamation could be obtained.¹⁶ On checking the land status, the Land Office discovered that the proposed monument lay within the area subject to the Ute Indian Treaty of June 15, 1888. This might mean that any new disposition of the land under the Public Land Laws would entitle the Indians to a remuneration of \$1.25 an acre, a provision of the Treaty. And if it did become necessary to reimburse the Indians for the land, Albright felt, then the establishment of the monument would require congressional action and an appropriation, rather than just a presidential proclamation.¹⁷

There had been an instance in which a forest preserve had been created on Indian land, and subsequently the Indians had to be reimbursed under treaty provisions. However, Taylor rationalized that forest reserves were a source of commercial return to the government, whereas a monument involved "no return to the Government and it is set aside for the benefit of the citizens of the United States, including the Indians."¹⁸ Thus, in Taylor's interpretation "the Indians would have no claim against the Government for this area," under the circumstances.

With respect to the possible impasse, Conrad Wirth of the National Park Service commented "personally, it looks to me as if the legal interpretation of the Treaty as it affects the establishment of the proposed national monument should be decided by the Solicitor,"¹⁹ while Moskey, also of the Park Service, noted pessimistically ". . . I see no way out. I believe the forest decision equally applicable to the inclusions of these lands in a monument."²⁰ Taylor remained firm in his opinion that the proclamation should be prepared: ". . . It is not our business nor the Secretary's business to anticipate the court's decision. If the area were established and it was contested by the Indians, it would be up to the Court of Appeals to render a decision. If the decision went against the Government, it

¹⁵ Letter, Wirth to Albright, January 6, 1933; approved by Albright, January 13.—*Ibid.*

¹⁶ Letter, Wirth to Albright, February 10, 1933.—*Idem.*

¹⁷ Letter, Albright to Schuyler, January 26, 1933.—*Ibid.*

¹⁸ Letter, Wirth to Albright, February 2, 1933.—*Ibid.*

¹⁹ Letter, Wirth to Albright, February 10, 1933.—*Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

would then be up to [Taylor's] committee to set up a policy to pay for the land."²¹

Wirth and Moskey took the Indian treaty matter up with Albright on February 6, and he felt the only thing to do was proceed with the proclamation, transmitting it through the Indian Service as well as the United States Land Office. Brooks of the Park Service was detailed to prepare the proclamation, together with a letter of transmittal to President Hoover, while Conrad Wirth wrote a letter to the Indian Service explaining "our contacts" and the effect this move might have with respect to the Ute Indian Treaty."²² Wirth also made a special study of the Indian lands problem and on February 10 provided Albright with a three and one-half page report which pointed out all the inherent difficulties.²³

Before the proclamation could be presented to the President, it had to have the approval of the Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur. Hence, on February 17, Albright discussed the matter with the Secretary, expressing his own opinion and informing him that Representative Taylor recommended the monument's establishment by proclamation "regardless of the possibility of imposing an obligation on the Government by so doing."²⁴ Albright noted that whether or not the government would be obligated for \$1.25 an acre was really a matter for Congress and the Federal courts to decide.

The Secretary, after careful review and strongly influenced by the Indian lands situation, finally concluded, however, that he "did not see how he could recommend it to the President for establishment by proclamation."²⁵ Reluctantly, Arno Cammerer (N. P. S.) on February 20, wrote Taylor that "it is apparent that the Secretary wishes to adhere to this decision, and there is nothing we can do to further this proposed monument at this time."²⁶

Representative Taylor, fortunately, remained undaunted. When Wirth visited him the following day, Taylor suggested that the Park Service go ahead and set aside the proposed monument area, despite the Secretary's disapproval, while he would introduce legislation into Congress, authorizing the monument's establishment and payment of \$1.25 per acre to the Indians for the 17,019-acre tract, keeping the bill before

²¹ Letter, Wirth to Albright, February 2, 1933.—*Ibid.*

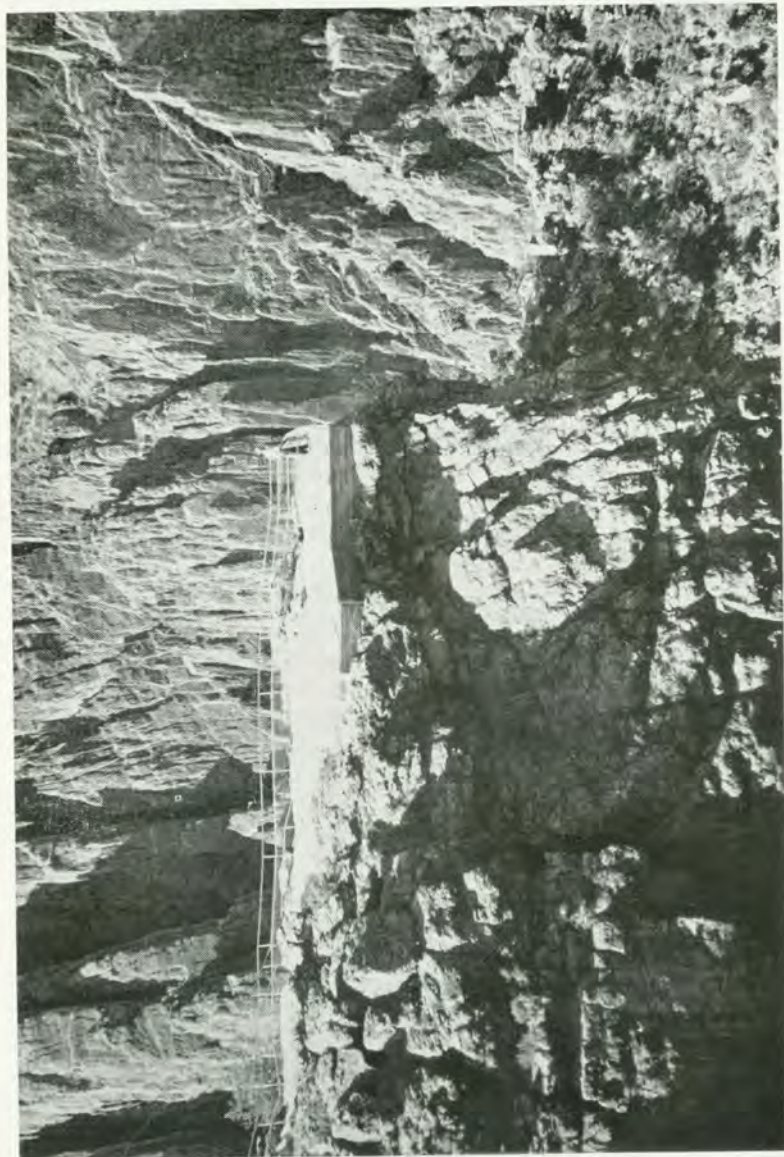
²² Letter, Wirth to Brooks, February 6, 1933.—*Ibid.*

²³ Albright memorandum: "History of the Establishment of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument," March 1, 1933. This represents a good summary of the history.—*Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Letter, Cammerer to Taylor, February 20, 1933.—*Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*



Gunnison Point in Black Canyon

Congress until it was passed.²⁷ Taylor also discussed the matter with Commissioner Rhoads and Assistant Commissioner Scattergood of the Indian Service, and they agreed not to oppose the proclamation.

Then suddenly the Secretary of the Interior changed his mind and offered to transmit the proposal for the establishment of Black Canyon National Monument, and one extending the boundaries of Colorado National Monument, to the President as soon as the proposals were drawn up.²⁸ This new development caught Taylor by surprise. He had at long last decided to give up the immediate fight, planning instead to reintroduce the matter into the next session of Congress and before a new Secretary of the Interior.

The Park Service immediately completed the two proclamations and took them to the Indian Service for approval. That agency, however, did not feel its endorsement necessary, inasmuch as the lands concerned were actually under the jurisdiction of Congress. The Land Office reacted in the same manner, declining to initial the proclamations but not opposing them. This latter agency stated to the National Park Service that "the President had the right to sign such a proclamation although by so doing he would obligate the Government to the payment of \$1.25 per acre."²⁹

The Black Canyon National Monument proclamation and letter of transmittal were then delivered by Mr. Burlew to Secretary of the Interior Wilbur, who signed the letter on February 28, and sent the two documents on to the President.³⁰

On March 2, President Hoover endorsed the following proclamation setting aside the most spectacular portion of the Black Canyon as a new Colorado national monument, "the last executive order he will issue affecting that state."³¹

Whereas it appears that the public interest would be promoted by including the lands hereinafter described within a national monument for the preservation of the spectacular gorges and additional features of scenic, scientific and educational interest;

Now, therefore, I, Herbert Hoover, President of the United States of America, by virtue of power in me vested by Sec. 2 of the act of Congress entitled "An Act For the preservation of American antiquities" approved June 8, 1906 [34 Stat. 225], do proclaim and establish the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument and that subject to all valid existing rights, the following described lands in Colorado, and same are

²⁷ Albright memorandum, *op. cit.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*; also, Letter, Lawrence Richey to Wilbur, March 2, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

³¹ *Denver Post*, March 3, 1933.

hereby included within the said national monument:
[follows a detailing of the included lands]

Warning is hereby expressly given to all unauthorized persons not to appropriate, injure, destroy, or remove any feature of this monument and not to locate or settle upon any of the land thereof.

The Director of the National Park Service, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, shall have the supervision, management, and control of this monument as provided in the act of Congress entitled "An Act To establish a National Park Service, and for other purposes", approved August 25, 1916 [39 Stat. 535], and acts additional thereto or amendatory thereof.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this 2nd day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and thirty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred and fifty-seventh.

Hoover's signature pen was sent to Representative Taylor who, in turn, presented it to the Montrose Chamber of Commerce through Mark Warner.³²

As soon as Taylor heard the good news, he hastened to telegraph Charles Adams in Montrose.³³

After three days' conferences with secretary of the interior, director of national park service, commissioner of Indian affairs, and commissioner of general land office, President Hoover today signed the proclamation creating Black Canyon National Monument and also an executive order making the addition I requested to the Colorado National Monument. Kindly advise Rev. Warner.

³²The letter of transmittal, signed by Lawrence Richey, Secretary to the President, and dated March 2, read as follows: "I have the pleasure in sending you herewith the pen used by the President today in signing the proclamation establishing the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument in Colorado." Taylor kept the original letter of transmittal and sent Warner a copy.—Letter, Warner to Beidleman, December 31, 1962.

Reverend Warner called to my attention an interesting sidelight on Taylor, who worked so tirelessly for the establishment of the Monument. As a hobby Taylor collected gavels, especially ones made of native materials from projects he had supported in the West. When he called this hobby to Warner's attention, Warner took the matter up with Leslie Savage, a banker of Crawford who, representing the communities of the North Fork Valley, had worked with Warner in promoting the Black Canyon; and they decided to present Taylor with a gavel made from materials collected within the new Monument.

On December 30, 1938, Savage sent out three men, Wes Erickson, Clarence Drexal and John Lynch, with a team and sled to search the North Rim for a wood sample suitable for the head. They spent all day in the search, finally returning late evening with two specimens of juniper and one of pinon. Meanwhile, on January 5, Reverend Warner and D. E. Walker went up to the South Rim, covering the last few miles by ski, to collect samples of mountain mahogany, serviceberry, and Gambel's oak and some pieces of granite. Wes Erickson of Paonia actually made the gavel, using a juniper head, a handle of mountain mahogany, and some polished stones and chunks of pink and gray granite ornamenting the head and end of the handle. The George J. DeVinny jewelry store of Montrose added inscribed silver bands, not made of Black Canyon material but nevertheless representative of Colorado.

When finally completed, this ornate gavel was sent to Senator Ed Johnson who presented it to Taylor on behalf of the Montrose Chamber of Commerce and the Consolidated Chamber of Commerce of the North Fork Valley at a meeting of the Colorado State Society of Washington on March 17, 1939, at the Wardman Park Hotel.

³³This telegram was cited in the *Montrose Daily Press* of March 2, 1933.

After reading the telegram, Adams immediately phoned Warner, asking him to come to the *Daily Press* office.³⁴ Warner, of course, was delighted by the news. The two men stepped out of the office into the street, where they shared the good fortune with a growing crowd of businessmen who were congregating to see what all the excitement was about. During the exchange, Reverend Warner pointed out a dome-shaped hill in the distance, rising above the canyon's south rim, and noted that it was his favorite vantage point in the newly created monument. When Warner "had finished lauding the merits of that particular bump on the canyon rim, Mr. Adams with a big grin clapped his hands together and said, 'By jolly, we'll call that hill Warner Point.'"

Within a month the Montrose Chamber of Commerce, indebted to Warner for his active role in promoting the establishment of the monument, recommended to Director Albright that if a custodian were to be appointed for the new monument it be Mark Warner.³⁵ The Park Service replied that at the moment no custodial services, either part-time or full-time, were anticipated.

Warner and his colleagues, however, were not to be forgotten by the local citizens. On Friday evening, January 26, 1934, the Montrose Chamber of Commerce held its annual meeting and banquet.³⁶ Towards the end of the evening's program, President Hauser casually called upon Attorney Paul Littler to say a few words about the creation of Black Canyon National Monument as "one of the big things of the community the past year." Littler sketched the history of the establishment, including the diligent endeavors of Lytle, Wilcox, and Warner. Then he asked these three men, much to their surprise, to come forward, and presented each with "one of those Walker Art Studio's beautifully enlarged photographs of the Black Canyon, hand colored and beautifully framed, 22 x 27 inches." On the back was a list of the 72 business firms and individuals who had cooperated in financing the purchase of the pictures.

Warner, "being the more accustomed to speech-making before the large audiences conveyed to the meeting the sincere thanks and appreciation of the three, saying that it had been a pleasure to have performed any service on behalf of the

³⁴Letter, Warner to Beidleman, December 31, 1962. The following account was related by Warner.

³⁵Letter, N. M. Fleming, Secretary, Montrose Chamber of Commerce, to Albright, April 5, 1933. Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

³⁶The account of this annual meeting and banquet was published in the *Montrose Daily Press* about January 25, 1934. A copy of the article is in Nat. Arch. File 2051 (RG 79), Black Canyon.

monument that had been done.³⁷ The other two endeavored to stammer their appreciation but were well nigh speechless from the surprise."³⁸

So it was that three decades ago this spring Colorado's Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument came into being. Since then the many physical improvements, especially the new, paved south rim road, and the spreading fame of the monument have encouraged increasing numbers of tourists and local sightseers to visit this recreational area. In accordance with National Park Service policy, no bridge has ever been built to span the gorge; nor has any superhighway or maintained trail penetrated its depths. As a consequence, Black Canyon remains today as one of the great wilderness chasms of the world.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Incidentally, after the monument had been created, Warner, together with J. E. McDaniel and Russell E. Hauser, were designated by the Montrose Chamber of Commerce as the "Black Canyon Committee of the Chamber of Commerce"; and this committee "worked together directing and promoting every interest pertaining to the later development of the monument" up to 1940, when Warner left for military service. After the war he resumed his position on this committee until moving to Denver six years ago.



"The Narrows"

Walker Art Studio