



Men identified as Kay, Ainge, and Neilson removing a dinosaur femur from the Carnegie Quarry during 1912-14. Earl Douglass photograph, courtesy of Carnegie Museum.

Utah, the National Park Service, and Dinosaur National Monument, 1909-56

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LIKE OTHER STATES IN THE AMERICAN WEST in which the federal government owns a great deal of land, Utah has had a long and sometimes stormy history of entanglements with various public land agencies. One chapter of that story centers on the state's relationship with Dinosaur National Monument under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS). For many years Utah residents have enjoyed various benefits associated with this monument which spans the border of northeast Utah and northwest Colorado. Deep canyons spliced by the Green and Yampa rivers beckon river runners and sightseers alike, and with the world renowned dinosaur quarry near Jensen, the monument has long been one of the major tourist attractions between Salt Lake City and Denver. Coupled with the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area north of it, Dinosaur National Monument contributes greatly to the economy of the Uinta Basin and the state's northeast corner.

Yet, Dinosaur National Monument has not always been a source of pride and profit. For many years residents of the Beehive State felt deeply frustrated with the preserve, particularly during its early history when scientists from the Carnegie Museum and other institutions competed over rights to gain access to the precious skeletons. Utah residents felt at the time that a vital part of the state's natural history was being "mined" for the benefit of scientists and institutions from outside the state, and they held the federal government—and in particular the National Park Service—partly responsible. The federal government had originally established the monument to regulate scientific excavations, but this noble aim did not work to Utah's advantage because institutions "back East" continued to enjoy the primary benefits of the dinosaur quarry. For more than three decades after the excavations bitter feelings persisted toward the Carnegie Museum and other institutions outside Utah as well as toward the NPS which had a hand in helping them. The story of Utah's relationship with Dinosaur National Monument brings to light the primary dilemma of most western states with large amounts of federal land: how to maintain "rights" to the resources. In this case the resources happened to be rare skeletons.

Attitudes toward the monument developed from the economic conditions present in the northeast corner of the state. Much like northwest Colorado, the Uinta Basin and surrounding region were isolated from the corridors of economic development and the centers of population in the Intermountain West. Far from Salt Lake City and the Wasatch Front, the remote Uinta Basin and neighboring territory in Colorado developed relatively late in the nineteenth century, largely in

response to the open range cattle industry and the efforts of a few hardy homesteaders. Tiny towns like Vernal and Roosevelt, Utah, and Craig and Rangely, Colorado, sprouted in the 1880s and 1890s. The region's economy grew slowly, its fate determined by the vagaries of the weather, distant cattle and sheep markets, and the decisions of people like David Moffat, a Denver businessman whose wealth and influence carried great weight in northeast Utah and northwest Colorado. Moffat stirred great excitement in the region after he promised to build a railroad from Denver to Salt Lake City. But Moffat's death in 1911 dashed those hopes. The Denver & Rio Grande purchased the Moffat line and built the Dotsero cutoff which bypassed Rangely and Vernal. As a result, this border region remained isolated from the more prosperous areas in Colorado and Utah.¹

What finally brought this remote corner of Colorado and Utah into the spotlight was no economic boom but a remarkable scientific discovery—one of the most remarkable in the American West and one of the most memorable in the history of North American paleontology. The story began around 1900 when Andrew Carnegie, the wealthy steel magnate, opened his New York newspaper and gazed at a picture of a huge skeleton of a brontosaur, a long necked, long-tailed dinosaur now called a sauropod. Carnegie examined the picture and accompanying story with fascination. Learning that the beast had been found in Wyoming, he began to make plans to uncover a similar skeleton and place it in his own prestigious Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh. He soon dispatched his scientists to the American West to search for remains of the enormous animals.²

In 1902 paleontologist Earl Douglass took employment with the Carnegie Museum. A Minnesota native, Douglass taught school in South Dakota before earning a master's degree at the University of Montana. Then, armed with a fellowship from Princeton University, he continued his graduate work in paleontology, collecting dinosaur and

¹Few studies of the border region of northeast Utah or northwest Colorado exist. In addition to scattered references in general state histories see Frederic J. Athearn, *An Isolated Empire: A History of Northwest Colorado* (Denver: Colorado State Office, Bureau of Land Management, 1977). On Moffat and the railroad see Steven F. Mehls, "David H. Moffat, Jr.: Early Colorado Business Leader," (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1982), and Robert G. Athearn, *Rebel of the Rockies: A History of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962); *Vernal Express*, April 3, 1914.

²This information was presented by John S. McIntosh at Dinosaur National Monument in June 1984. Professor of physics at Wesleyan University, McIntosh is a leading authority on Jurassic sauropod dinosaurs, and he has extensively researched the history of the Carnegie Quarry at Dinosaur National Monument.



Earl Douglass. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Utah Library. This photograph was probably taken early in the distinguished paleontologist's career.

mammal remains between the Yellowstone and Musselshell rivers near Melville, Montana. In 1908 his keen interest in mammals took him to the Uinta Basin in northeast Utah where reports of mammal bones had been made. Rumor had it that dinosaur bones existed there too. In 1909 Douglass's superiors at the Carnegie Museum asked him to devote all his time to the search for dinosaur remains.³

Douglass was not entirely certain where to look, but he had one good clue. Among the numerous layers of rock strata north of Jensen, Utah, he saw the distinctive purple, red, and gray colors of the Morrison formation running for several miles east and west. Some years earlier Jurassic age dinosaur quarries had been found in the same layer at two locations in Wyoming, Como Bluff and Sheep Creek, and at another near Canon City, Colorado. Aware of these finds, Douglass spent weeks walking along the Morrison outcrops, his eyes scanning the slanted cliff faces for dinosaur remains. Finally, one day in August 1909, he looked up at the hard layer of sandstone and feasted his eyes on a portion of the tail section of a *Brontosaurus*, nowadays properly called *Apatosaurus*, the ancient bones still in their original position. "It was a beautiful sight," he

³My information about Earl Douglass comes from a variety of sources, including an interview of his son, Gawin Douglass, in the summer of 1984. He furnished additional information by correspondence (Douglass to author, March 3, 1986); copies of Earl Douglass's correspondence are in the paleontology library at Dinosaur National Monument. The bulk of his papers are in Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

exclaimed. "Part of the ledge had weathered out and the beautifully petrofied [*sic*] centra lay on the ground. It is by far the best looking Dinosaur prospect I have ever found."⁴

The tail section seemed to Douglass like a fine nugget of gold, and it proved to be only one nugget in a treasure chest of skeletons lying in the Morrison layer. Within a few weeks he rejoiced that the almost complete skeleton of *Brontosaurus* was there, an unprecedented discovery. He uncovered sixty-four tail vertebrae, more than twice as many as had ever been found in specimens of this dinosaur. The nearly complete neck demonstrated that the animal had a very long body from head to tail, a much longer body than scientists had previously believed. Just a few leg, foot, and breast bones were missing. In subsequent weeks his astonishment grew as he uncovered a second huge skeleton of *Brontosaurus* lying underneath the first. Now aware of the incredible potential of this quarry, Douglass wrote to W. J. Holland, director of the Carnegie Museum, and exclaimed, "so far as I know no dinosaur quarry like this has ever been found before. Sheep Creek is not in the same class with this. One couldn't have prayed for anything better and have been at all reasonable in his requests."⁵

For the next several years, furnished with Carnegie's funds, Douglass spent his time on the cliff face to the west of the original skeletons. Working with a small crew he removed outer rock layers with charges of dynamite and rock drills, taking extreme care not to damage the bones. During the 1917 work season the western face of the outcrop ceased to reveal paleontological treasures, so he turned to the cliff face east of the original finds. The excellent specimens he found there occupied his time for another seven years.⁶ Douglass and his crew sometimes worked year round, fighting the cold and snow and using bulky rock hammers, steel chisels, and creaky block and tackles to uncover and remove the heavy bones. Unlike other bone quarries, this one sat on a steeply angled sandstone cliff and the men had to cling to it while doing the backbreaking work. When a bone appeared, they

⁴Earl Douglass to W. J. Holland, August 19, 1909, in "Douglass Letters to the Carnegie Museum," Dinosaur National Monument; see also William Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978), pp. 425-28.

⁵Douglass to Holland, December 2, 1909, and June 4, 1910, in "Douglass Letters," Dinosaur National Monument.

⁶Linda West and Dan Chure, *Dinosaur: The Dinosaur National Monument Quarry* (Jensen, Ut.: Dinosaur Nature Association, 1984), pp. 5-9. For another well-written account of Douglass and his discoveries see Wallace Stegner, "Notes on a Life Spent Pecking on a Sandstone Cliff..." in his *Mormon Country* (Bison Books edition; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), pp. 302-18.

removed it with small wedges and sledgehammers, then covered it with a plaster of paris material. Douglass drew detailed maps to record the exact position of each bone on the cliff face. The bones had to be placed carefully in wooden crates before being hauled by horse-drawn wagon to the railroad at Watson, Utah, for shipment to Pittsburgh. Over 350 tons of fossil bones were lifted from the quarry face.⁷

For fifteen years Earl Douglass dedicated himself to the Carnegie Quarry, as it came to be known. It was a decade and a half that changed his life and earned him a reputation as a distinguished paleontologist. Year by year he grew more amazed. The quarry contained nearly twenty complete skeletons of major Jurassic dinosaurs, including *Diplodocus*, *Dryosaurus*, *Stegosaurus*, *Barosaurus*, and *Camarasaurus*. One of the *Camarasaurus* skeletons was that of a young animal. Only seventeen feet long, the little *Camarasaurus* was the prize skeleton of the quarry, lacking only a few ribs and tail bones. It had a perfectly preserved skull—a highly unusual find—and proved to be the most complete sauropod skeleton ever found anywhere in the world. Most of Douglass's twenty skeletons were beautifully preserved. The juvenile specimens helped to reveal the growth pattern of the beasts. The variety of adult genera marked the Carnegie Quarry as one of the best windows into the middle period of dinosaur history ever opened. George Otis Smith of the U.S. Geological Survey called the quarry "an unrivaled deposit of extraordinary paleontological interest."⁸

All of this naturally focused attention on northeast Utah and the small towns lying in the shadow of the Uinta Mountains. Vernal residents especially grew excited about activities at the nearby quarry, and some visited Douglass regularly. Douglass, in turn, began to see that the dinosaur quarry offered a rare glimpse into an ancient world. As he noted in his diary in 1915, the educational possibilities were impressive:

How appropriate that [the fossils] or part of them be exposed in relief as they were buried, to show the tragedy of their death and to reveal

⁷West and Chure, *Dinosaur*, pp. 5-9. The physical content of the material that Douglass and his crew removed (as well as what is now exposed in the quarry) has been a source of confusion. The remains are composed of silica, a material that replaced the original components such as blood cells and marrow, and also some of the original nonorganic bone (calcium phosphate). Since the material contains both bone and fossil, the correct term is "fossil bones." The author is indebted to Linda West of the Dinosaur Nature Association for a careful explanation of this (West to author, November 21, 1989).

⁸West and Chure, *Dinosaur*, pp. 5-9; McIntosh presentation, June 1984; Smith to Stephen Mather, January 15, 1916, box 580, Dinosaur National Monument containers, National Park Service Central Classified Files, 1907-39, 79, National Archives Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited with the appropriate box number, NPS, RG 79, NA.

something of their lives and surroundings. How appropriate to build a fair sized building over them to protect them, to have this a thing of substantial beauty modeled after nature, to have this large enough to contain related fossils and other curiosities... to help to appreciate nature in her wonderful ways.⁹

Douglass soon became a leading proponent of a public display of skeletons and, in time, a spokesman for the town of Vernal to the National Park Service. But his vision would not be realized for many years. While Douglass dreamed of making the quarry known to the public with some type of public exhibit, his employers at the Carnegie and other scientists had their own designs on the quarry's wonders.

Some of the most interested observers of Douglass's quarry came from the Smithsonian Institution, a fact that had great bearing on the future of the quarry. Douglass first became aware of their interest in the fossil bones around 1912 when he began to look for a way to protect the quarry from vandals. Since the land was public domain, the Carnegie Museum had been obliged to request a permit to excavate from the Department of the Interior, and permission had been granted. After a few years, however, Carnegie Museum director W. J. Holland became concerned that the precious skeletons could not be adequately guarded unless Douglass took stronger control over the land. That implied ownership. In 1912 Holland wrote to Secretary of the Interior Walter Fisher asking to purchase the land under the Timber and Stone Act.¹⁰ Douglass then filed for the land, claiming that the bones were minerals. Unfortunately, from the Carnegie's point of view, neither the Timber and Stone Act nor federal mining statutes allowed land containing dinosaur fossils to be purchased. Only lands containing "valuable deposits of building stone" were available under the Timber and Stone Act, and the commissioner of the General Land Office and an assistant secretary of the interior refused to regard dinosaur bone as a mineral.¹¹

This legal blockade by the GLO masked certain professional jealousies among scientists and their institutions. The government's refusal of the land purchase had been deliberate, an effort to protect

⁹Journal of Earl Douglass, October 28, 1915, Diary 33, box 7, Earl Douglass Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

¹⁰Holland to Fisher, February 12, 1912, "Carnegie Museum Permits" file, box 1982, Department of the Interior Central Classified Files, 1907-36, Office of the Secretary, 48, National Archives. Hereafter cited with the appropriate box number, CCF, RG 48, NA.

¹¹Holland to Secretary of the Interior, March 12, 1912; Acting Secretary of the Interior to Holland, (day not given) February 1912; Andrieus A. Jones to Douglass, August 6, 1915, "Carnegie Museum Permits" file, box 1982, CCF, RG 48, NA.



"Elder 'Dad' Goodrich," who assisted Earl Douglass in 1909, with the first bones uncovered at the Carnegie Quarry. USHS collections.

scientific resources from falling into the hands of private museums. For many years the federal government's own National Museum had had high hopes of adding dinosaur skeletons to its fossil collection at the Smithsonian Institution. Scientists there had become intrigued with the skeletons Douglass had found in Utah, and nearly every week it seemed that more treasures might soon be found. At the same time, they felt increasingly dismayed by what they regarded as an arrogant attitude on the part of the Carnegie Museum, which seemed completely unwilling to share the treasures of the Utah quarry. When the National Museum inquired about the possibility of obtaining an original skeleton—or at least a cast replica—it received a stiff refusal.

The Carnegie Museum refused to send any original material anywhere except to Pittsburgh, and at the same time it began to send cast replicas to museums abroad. This greatly irritated the curators at the National Museum, especially director Charles Walcott. He thought that if replicas of the beasts should be sent anywhere they should be sent to the principal museum of the United States government, not abroad; but the opposite was taking place and Walcott resented it.¹² Moreover,

¹²Walcott's concern with private museums taking advantage of scientific resources on public lands first appeared in 1909 even before Douglass located the first skeleton. See Charles Walcott to Richard Ballinger, April 22, 1909; Ballinger to Walcott, May 12, 1909, "General Permits," 1900-1910, box 1982, CCF, RG 48, NA; see also George Otis Smith to Stephen Mather, January 15, 1916; Walcott to Mather, January 25, 1916, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

Andrew Carnegie had the money to remove every last bone from the quarry if he so wished, and perhaps none would be left for the National Museum. George Smith of the Geological Survey, who worked closely with scientists at the National Museum, noted that the Carnegie Museum "if it is so inclined, [would] be able practically to gut the fossiliferous pocket and rob it of its best contents."¹³ With total control over the rare specimens, the Carnegie might choose to withhold all the original remains or refuse to send any casts to the National Museum.

Walcott soon began to pressure the Department of the Interior to take firmer control over the Utah quarry. The means to establish such control were certainly available. Since the land was public domain a presidential proclamation could be drawn up under authority of the Antiquities Act to make the Carnegie Quarry into Dinosaur National Monument. Such a move would protect the interest of the National Museum as well as other private institutions by strengthening regulations for excavation at the quarry. In practical terms, establishment of a national monument would enable the National Museum to review the annual requests from the Carnegie Museum for rights to excavate and have veto power over them. Walcott especially wanted the National Museum to be able to share in the work at the quarry, although in 1915 he well knew that he did not have the needed funds. Still, he wanted to ensure that there would be no obstacles blocking his path when such funds became available.¹⁴ In other words, the Carnegie could proceed at the quarry for the time being, but the creation of a national monument would guarantee that the National Museum would have the power to prevent the Carnegie from monopolizing the quarry.

In the Progressive Era ensuring a method of fair competition seemed the best solution to Walcott and Smith, and they recommended this to Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane in 1915. The secretary soon wrote to President Woodrow Wilson recommending establishment of Dinosaur National Monument. Such a step would protect the National Museum, Lane informed Wilson, and prevent Douglass's rare treasures from being "scattered among institutions of learning the world over."¹⁵ Wilson issued the necessary proclamation on October 4, 1915. Dinosaur National Monument, in short, resulted not merely from a routine presidential signature but from a political decision to prevent

¹³Smith to Mather, January 15, 1916, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

¹⁴Walcott to Mather, January 3, 1916, box 1982, CCF, RG 48, NA.

¹⁵Franklin Lane to Woodrow Wilson, September 27, 1915, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA; Smith to Jones, December 21, 1915, Walcott to Mather, January 3, 1916, box 1982, CCF, RG 48, NA.

the Carnegie Museum from hoarding the fossil bones for all time. This fundamental fact underlay the stormy relations between the state of Utah and the caretakers of Dinosaur National Monument for the next several decades.¹⁶

From Earl Douglass's point of view little had changed. He continued his work under Holland's direction, still hoping that a public exhibit of skeletons could be erected. Yet the following years proved disappointing to Douglass and to the state of Utah. Despite the presence of a national monument, the Carnegie Museum continued to reap the primary benefits of the quarry. The federal government did little to aid other interested parties, including scientists from Utah. In 1916 Congress created the National Park Service, which took control over the Carnegie Quarry. The NPS found itself at the center of a growing rivalry among museums and forced to act as a referee. In the years to come many residents of Utah felt that it performed the task with little distinction. Utahns continued to be frustrated by the rapid and effective "mining" of the quarry by the Carnegie Museum.

As it happened, so did Charles Walcott, who quickly realized that national monument status had done little to weaken the Carnegie Museum's stronghold over the quarry. Holland continued to behave as if his institution alone should have rights to the quarry, exacerbating relations with the National Museum and other institutions and paleontologists. Walcott constantly reminded Holland that the National Museum wished to display one of the skeletons or receive cast duplicates, and he grew dismayed by Holland's resistance.¹⁷ According to David White of the Geological Survey, Holland ignored the National Museum's requests, citing the expense of making replicas. But White told Horace Albright of the National Park Service that the duplication process was not so costly.¹⁸ While Holland gave the impression of performing a noble scientific endeavor at the quarry, his devotion to science did not seem to include a spirit of sharing.

¹⁶Holland told George Smith of the USGS in 1915 that he suspected "that certain parties in Utah would like to take possession of this quarry, which we have opened up at large expense, under the impression that there is something exceedingly wonderful there which it would be to their credit and glory to acquire. Personally I am sure that our work ought not to be interrupted by anyone, but that we should be permitted to carry it on to completion there." Holland to Smith, December 11, 1915, box 1982, CCF, RG 48, NA.

¹⁷A reading of the correspondence of Walcott and Holland reveals Walcott's growing exasperation. See Walcott to Mather, January 25, 1916; Holland to Mather, February 24, 1919, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA. See also Walcott to the secretary of the interior, January 30, 1922, and F. M. Goodwin to Holland, January 31, 1922, box 1982, CCF, RG 48, NA.

¹⁸David White to Horace Albright, May 12, 1919, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

he saw no reason to allow the University of Utah to work at the quarry, unless of course those paleontologists were too incompetent to find other bone quarries elsewhere in the West.¹⁹ When NPS director Stephen Mather asked Holland where other such quarries might be, Holland waffled. He had not meant to imply that he knew exact locations, only that any reputable scientist ought to know where to look.²⁰

Holland directed his most sarcastic remarks to residents of Vernal, many of whom had taken a strong interest in the dinosaur quarry from the beginning. Douglass's unbelievable discoveries had been noted in the *Vernal Express* for years. For a decade residents had made the twenty-mile trip to the quarry from their homes, curious about dinosaur remains. Douglass, for his part, was proud of his work and had always been glad to show them around. Local people had sold him food and supplies and occasionally pitched in and assisted him. To many of these residents it now seemed only just that the government reward them properly by constructing some type of dinosaur exhibit. The Vernal Commercial Club and Chamber of Commerce, mindful of potential profits from such a plan, urged the National Park Service to provide needed public facilities and personnel and to place a skeleton on display. To encourage visitors, the Chamber of Commerce placed a sign on the main highway south of the quarry.²¹

When Holland learned of Vernal's interest he scoffed at the town's sentimental dreams. After the Carnegie Museum completed its work Dinosaur National Monument would only be a hole in the ground, the quarry "a gash in the rocks on the mountain side."²² No skeletons would remain, so obviously none could be displayed. Taking note of Douglass's idea of a public display, Holland wrote to the NPS that he did not doubt that "the erection of such a building would give employment to some of the unemployed in Vernal and might enhance the value of certain acres at present covered with sage-brush in that vicinity. I do not, however, think that the people of the United States would be justified in undertaking any such wild scheme." Noting that he paid a large amount of federal taxes, he added that the government would be foolish "to preserve what is in truth only a 'hole in the ground,' so that people living

¹⁹Holland to Arno Cammerer, December 2, 1919, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

²⁰Holland to Mather, September 29, 1921, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

²¹Douglass to Mather, August 17, 1924; William Anderson to National Park Service, May 9, 1922, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

²²Holland to Arno Cammerer, November 8, 1921, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

twenty-five miles away may have a place to resort to gratify their curiosity when they have nothing else to do.”²³

Douglass, nevertheless, pressed ahead with efforts to persuade the NPS to erect some type of public exhibit. Having spent fifteen years at the quarry, Douglass knew it intimately and thought it likely that more bones might be embedded in the cliff and could be removed if additional funding was available. During his last year of excavation he located another large section of sandstone beneath the initial layer he had found so rich in skeletal remains. He became convinced that the quarry’s wonders had been only partially revealed.²⁴

With Vernal’s Chamber of Commerce and Commercial Club in mind, Douglass emphasized in letters to the NPS that Dinosaur National Monument had rich potential as a tourist attraction. He noted that the Victory Highway from Denver to Salt Lake City had recently been completed and that Utah and the federal government had begun to make plans for another road to connect the Victory Highway with Wyoming to the north. These roads would soon place Dinosaur in the spotlight of a tri-state region. Within the space of a few miles, travelers could enjoy the scenic Uinta Mountains with their “beautiful groves, forests, parks, clear streams, and lakes” and visit the quarry on the same afternoon. In correspondence with the NPS Douglass lauded the quarry’s educational value, much as he had in his diary years before. Employing eloquent prose, he wrote that

people are naturally impressed by the past and are eager to know more of its mysterious records, to know the stories and histories which are revealed by the rocks. The spirit is similar to that which makes the Mesa Verde Park, the tombs of Egypt, and ruins of Ninevah [*sic*] so attractive, but this takes us immensely farther back.²⁵

With encouragement from Douglass, the Commercial Club and Chamber of Commerce sought help from Utah Congressman Don B. Colton in 1924. He soon introduced a bill to fund additional excavation and wrote to NPS director Stephen Mather strongly objecting to characterization of the quarry as a hole in the ground and urging development of the site.²⁶ It was not to be. The NPS had no money for

²³Ibid.

²⁴Douglass to Mather, January 30, 1926, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

²⁵Ibid; Douglass to Don B. Colton, April 21, 1926; Charles DeMoisy, Jr., to Colton, March 25, 1924, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA; *Vernal Express* (n.d.) May 1924.

²⁶Colton to Mather, April 17, 1924; Colton to Albert B. Fall, February 26, 1923, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA. Colton introduced his bill, H. R. 9064 for the first time on May 3, 1924, in the first session of the 68th Congress.

Dinosaur and insisted that Holland's view was correct. Mather sympathized with Douglass's dream, but the hard truth was that the NPS could barely maintain the other thirty monuments under its care, many of them fragile archaeological sites in the southwest threatened by vandals and the elements. In fiscal year 1923 Congress appropriated only \$12,500 for these monuments.²⁷ The NPS also had to maintain national parks of a truly sterling quality. Clearly, a display for an out-of-the-way sandstone ridge in Utah did not rank high in Mather's mind. The agency refused to support Colton's bill, and it died almost as quickly as it was introduced.²⁸

Colton's efforts, Douglass's eloquence, and petitions from businessmen in Vernal could not change the situation. The Park Service agreed only to send Douglass some metal signs to place on the quarry face to discourage private excavation. There would be no exhibit, no building, no display. After 1924 the NPS virtually abandoned Dinosaur National Monument. Five years later the agency sent Rocky Mountain National Park superintendent Roger Toll to examine the quarry. Toll reported that the sandstone ridge had been leveled, that Douglass had stripped it of its bones, and that nothing remained to indicate the fantastic graveyard of beasts, except "a few fragmentary bones"²⁹ This came as little surprise to the NPS, and it confirmed the wisdom of the decision not to expend funds on the quarry.

Plans for some type of public display were revived ever so briefly in the 1930s. A Jensen man offered his services to the NPS to help watch over the remaining fossils; he was hired with a token stipend of \$12 per year.³⁰ Meanwhile, the town of Vernal maintained contact with the Park Service, continuing to hope that the quarry might be further developed. The NPS assisted the American Museum of Natural History in the early 1930s with its plan to send paleontologists to excavate and expose another dinosaur skeleton and to restore public interest in the quarry.

²⁷Cammerer to William Anderson, May 17, 1922; Cammerer to C. C. Case (director of Geological Museum, University of Michigan), December 22, 1924, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA. See also Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 243-75, concerning Mather's role as Park Service director in the 1920s. For a keen analysis of how national monuments were treated as "second class sites" during these years see Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp. 89-116.

²⁸Cammerer to William Anderson, May 17, 1922; Cammerer to Colton, April 18, 1924; Cammerer to Mather, May 27, 1924; Cammerer to Douglass, August 25, 1924, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

²⁹Roger W. Toll, "Report to the Director, National Park Service, on Dinosaur National Monument," November 29, 1929, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

³⁰National Park Service to Thomas Smith, December 13, 1930, box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

The agency also planned to build a parking lot and a small shed over the quarry face, something it had been unwilling to do just a few years earlier.³¹

However, when the nation entered the Great Depression all plans for the monument were shelved. Under legislation enacted during the New Deal, Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration allowed some work at the quarry but it was not paleontological in nature. As a means of helping unemployed in Vernal and Jensen, the WPA hired men to widen the gap in the softer beds in front of the quarry face. Then, if the NPS could some day find funds for additional excavation the rock face would be more accessible. WPA workers also completed a number of small building projects at Dinosaur.³²

Hope that the quarry might become a mecca for tourists and scientists had faded fast. The years between Earl Douglass's discovery of the remarkable skeletons and the Great Depression had been exciting to the sparse population of northeast Utah. Never before had their tiny corner of the world been given national attention by such distinguished scholars and institutions. After enjoying a bit of national publicity, however, residents felt disappointed by the "abandonment" of the quarry and greatly disillusioned by the government's management of what now seemed to be a rather peculiar national monument. Douglass's find had provided a measure of hope that the region itself might be discovered; now that hope seemed to be rapidly fading away.

Utah residents who blamed the National Park Service for abandoning the quarry overlooked two important points. The land was public domain, and the federal government had not acted illegally in establishing the national monument. Moreover, the NPS had little control over its own budget, which was surely inadequate for properly developing the variety of parks and monuments under its jurisdiction. Residents of Vernal and nearby communities, however, continued to resent the fact that the agency lacked funds to continue excavations and that the NPS made no effort to place any remaining fossil bones on display. In their minds the federal government and outside scientists had mined the quarry until nothing remained. As they watched the dinosaur skeletons transported out of Utah to a distant museum in

³¹Horace Albright to Thomas Vint, May 14, 1931, along with other pertinent correspondence, is contained in box 580, NPS, RG 79, NA.

³²Barnum Brown to Earl Trager, March 24, 1937, box 2159, NPS, RG 79, NA; West and Chure, *Dinosaur*, p. 13.

Pittsburgh, residents felt that an important part of the state's natural history had been removed forever and that Utah had little to show for the whole affair.

Determined to prevent a repetition of this episode, some Utahns began to plan for a state museum where fossils uncovered in the future might be housed. Such a museum had not been considered during the 1920s or 1930s since Utah had lacked the needed funds and had struggled to survive economically. However, World War II brought large-scale changes to the state. A massive influx of industry, manufacturing, oil refineries, and federal defense contracts altered the economy tremendously and also brought additional funding for the state to promote its tourist attractions. As part of this effort after the war, the state's Department of Publicity provided funds to establish the Utah Field House of Natural History. The museum opened in Vernal on October 29, 1948, accompanied by much local fanfare. It had been more than twenty years since Earl Douglass left the quarry and the Carnegie Museum finished its work, but Utah residents had not forgotten their interest in finding a home for fossils found in the state. According to the museum's director, G. E. Untermann, the primary reason for the new museum was to preserve and place on display fossils from Utah "in the place of their origin."³³ Untermann's words carried a sense of determination, along with faint echoes of the bitter memories of the Carnegie Museum and National Park Service.

Much to the dismay of Untermann and other residents of Utah, the entangled relationship between the state and Dinosaur National Monument had by no means ended, as events of the following years starkly revealed. In 1948 Untermann traveled east to the Carnegie and other museums to try to find "surplus Utah fossils" that might be returned and placed in the Field Museum. Not surprisingly, he found the majority of such fossils at the Carnegie Museum (although the Smithsonian Institution had also performed excavations at the quarry in 1923). Upon his return, having compiled a list of surplus materials, Untermann requested \$5,500 from the Department of Publicity to pay for shipping costs.³⁴ Untermann corresponded with Leroy Kay of the Carnegie Museum over the next several months to make the needed arrangements. A former resident of Utah, Kay understood Unter-

³³Untermann to Clinton Vernon, October 23, 1949, Field Museum Records, Vernal. The author is grateful to Sue Ann Bilbey, present curator of the museum, for supplying copies of the correspondence from the late 1940s and early 1950s.

³⁴*Ibid.*

mann's interest in securing some of the original Carnegie material and worked diligently to satisfy the request.³⁵

Unfortunately, Untermann's request did not take into account the federal government's continuing role in managing the original fossil bones or the fact that the NPS had a renewed interest in Dinosaur National Monument. The agency had recently taken the view that additional bones might be found in the monument quarry and had developed plans to resume excavations in the early 1950s under the direction of Theodore E. White, formerly of the Smithsonian Institution. It appeared that Earl Douglass's original vision of a dinosaur display at the monument might be realized.³⁶ As matters developed, the NPS and the Field Museum soon clashed, reviving Utah's old wounds from the early history of the quarry. Within a few months all the old suspicions toward the federal government and the Carnegie and other museums were reawakened in Utah.

With plans to resume excavation at the quarry proceeding, NPS officials hoped that the monument would become the major "dinosaur" attraction in northeast Utah. Untermann and his colleagues at the Field House Museum in Vernal had informed the Park Service that they did not seek to take public attention away from the monument—which might have been easy to do had they wished to display a great deal of dinosaur material. Instead, they wanted the Field Museum to house a wide variety of geological, historical, and paleontological materials from the Uinta Basin to highlight a broader part of the region's natural history. The museum's founders had no wish to make the facility into a dinosaur exhibit. According to John Doerr, chief naturalist of the NPS, an understanding had been reached that the Field Museum would have only "a very modest display of dinosaur material to serve as an introduction to the main dinosaur display to be developed" at the monument. Doerr and other NPS planners felt comfortable with the Field Museum plans, certain that they would not detract from the nearby monument.³⁷

Then late in 1949 when Doerr and other NPS officials learned of Untermann's efforts to retrieve "surplus" material from the Carnegie Museum, they feared that the Field Museum had changed its plans to

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Steven F. Mehls, "Dinosaur National Monument: A Study of the Evolution of Private Sector-Public Sector Support of Science in the West," *Forest and Conservation History* 34 (April 1990): 80.

³⁷Doerr to Untermann, March 3, 1950, box 8, G. E. Untermann Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

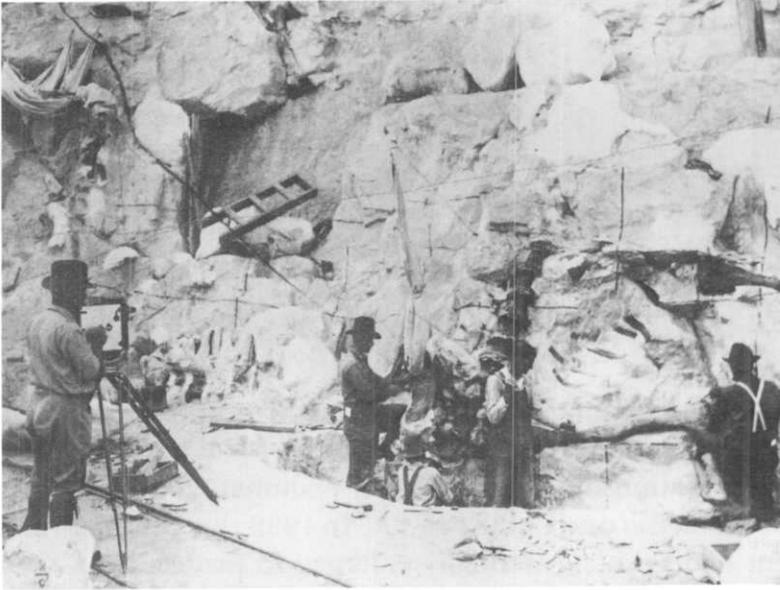
suit local opinion and intended to compete directly with the quarry for the public's attention. Without intending to stir Utah's wrath, the NPS took steps to thwart Untermann's plans. In the first place, as Doerr informed Untermann, the Park Service might need some of the surplus material itself for display purposes—particularly if the renewed excavations at the quarry did not reveal additional fossil bones. Moreover, the original dinosaur material had been collected under authority of the Antiquities Act—which meant that the Carnegie had been legally designated as the depository of the dinosaur material. This legal designation remained in effect and could not be easily ignored, despite the passage of three and a half decades since establishment of the monument. The federal government remained interested in guarding scientific resources. Doerr told Untermann, “we must not overlook the interests of the Smithsonian Institution in any redistribution of the scientific objects,” adding that “it is to be expected that the Carnegie Museum should retain the materials collected under the Act until proper use and distribution can be determined by the Federal Government.” The National Park Service stood fast. Doerr would not approve shipment of surplus material from the Carnegie to the new Field House Museum in Vernal.³⁸ Taking such a stance did not win the NPS much applause in Utah. Once again the state's interest in exhibiting specimens of its natural history seemed thwarted by a distant federal government.

An enraged G. E. Untermann lost no time in responding. He told Doerr that the surplus material he sought from the Carnegie was not dinosaur fossil bone but mammal material, quickly adding that the only reason that Doerr questioned the Field Museum's request was because the Park Service suspected it to be dinosaur material. Second, Untermann thought it ludicrous that the Carnegie Museum could still be regarded as a depository for the federal government after so many years; he wryly suggested to Leroy Kay that his museum should collect rent from the government.³⁹

Untermann scolded Doerr most emphatically for what appeared to be a move to delay development of exhibits at the Field House Museum until the NPS had a chance to return to the quarry and excavate additional skeletons. Insisting that the Field Museum's plans would not interfere with resumed excavations at the monument, Untermann said

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Untermann to Kay, April 20, 1950, box 8, Untermann Papers.



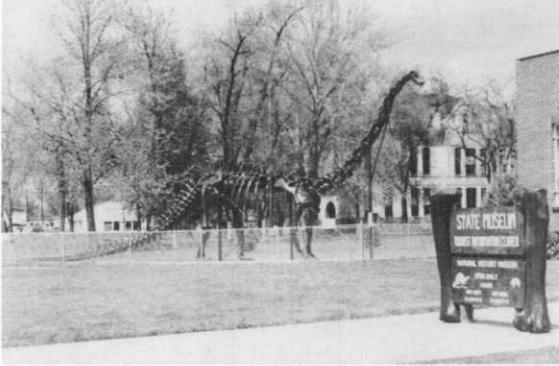
Plotting exact location of bones as they are removed from quarry. USHS collections.

that Utah residents resented having “to wait until some distant and unknown future for the Park Service to make the first move, a move it has been unable to make in the past 35 years. We are people of action who do things out here, and we don’t relish being hamstrung by a Government Agency which has been unable to get its wheels rolling.”⁴⁰ Letting off steam to Leroy Kay, Untermann sharply criticized Doerr and the Park Service: “His suggestion is fantastic. If he thinks we are going to sit here sucking our thumbs until the Quarry is developed, he’s crazy.”⁴¹ Quite obviously, Utah residents still felt at the mercy of NPS officials and scientists outside of Utah and frustrated by their inability to control the natural history inside state boundaries.

The story did not end there. As the situation unfolded in the following months the Field Museum in Vernal finally won rights to obtain some of the surplus material from the Carnegie Museum. The NPS eventually granted the Field Museum’s request, in part because most of the material was not dinosaur related and some had been collected from places well beyond the quarry. In April 1950 Untermann happily accepted the first shipment of fossils from the Carnegie Museum, returned to Utah after an absence of a generation. Additional material came in the following years, and the Field Museum quickly

⁴⁰Untermann to Doerr, March 8, 1950, box 8, Untermann Papers.

⁴¹Untermann to Kay, March 9, 1950, box 8, Untermann Papers.



Natural history museum in Vernal, Utah. USHS collections, Thorne Studios photograph, gift of Ernest E. Untermann.

became a major tourist attraction in Vernal, nicely supplementing the quarry and adding to interest in northeast Utah's fossil heritage.⁴²

Still, Utah's relationship with Dinosaur National Monument was anything but calm at the onset of the 1950s. In 1938 the boundaries of the monument had been substantially enlarged to protect the Green and Yampa rivers and surrounding canyons. A new phase in the relationship between the state and the monument had begun, though in some ways it appeared to many in northeast Utah that little had changed. The National Park Service, its budget greatly reduced during the war, could do little to build roads or otherwise open this vast area for public use. Local residents in Colorado and Utah once again found themselves frustrated. Untermann, ever alert to the pulse of local opinion in the Uinta Basin, informed John Doerr of the resentment harbored toward the NPS. With a vast preserve all but inaccessible, Vernalites blamed the agency for being miserably slow to provide for public use. As Untermann vividly summarized their point of view toward the monument, the Park Service "ain't doin' nothin' with it."⁴³

Not suprisingly, Vernal residents and the great majority of those who lived in Utah and nearby states applauded when an entirely different plan for Dinosaur National Monument emerged after the war. Issued from the Salt Lake office of the Bureau of Reclamation, the plan called for construction of a multiple-purpose dam below Echo Park in the heart of Dinosaur National Monument. As the bureau made its plans public and indicated that the dam would play a prominent role in the Central Utah Project, many in Utah rejoiced. With a huge dam and

⁴²Untermann to Kay, April 20, 1950, box 8, Untermann Papers; Untermann to Kay, August 5, 1952. (The author thanks Elizabeth Hill of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History for mentioning this second letter, contained in the museum's archives.) See also *Vernal Express*, August 13, 1953.

⁴³Untermann to John Doerr, October 1, 1949, box 10, Untermann Papers.

reservoir, the monument would finally provide tourist dollars to the state and fulfill the promise that it once held when Earl Douglass uncovered dinosaur skeletons.

It was not to be. The proposed Echo Park dam sparked the biggest conservation crusade to date in the twentieth century. A host of organizations, including the Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, and National Parks Association, opposed the dam with a flurry of publicity. Appealing to Congress to protect the spirit behind the national park system, conservationists and wilderness enthusiasts eventually forced lawmakers to delete the dam from the Colorado River Storage Project. In April 1956 the dam met its final defeat.⁴⁴ The controversy left a great deal of bitterness throughout Utah, in some ways even deeper than that generated by years of wrangling with the Park Service over dinosaur remains. Once again residents felt exploited by "outside" organizations and the federal government and greatly disappointed with the turn of events at the national monument.

The wounds inflicted by the loss of Echo Park dam were deepened by decades of antagonism over the federal government's management of the preserve. With the end of the dam controversy in 1956 came an unhappy reminder of the old dilemma about access to the resources in Dinosaur National Monument. The loss of the dam reaffirmed the desire of state residents to have greater power in determining how the land in the preserve could be used and at the same time suggested the futility of that goal. How was it possible to live with Dinosaur National Monument without having to cater to pressures from scientists or conservationists who generally did not reside in Utah? That question had been a dominant one for more than a generation, and it took a number of years before increased visitation to the monument finally helped to provide an answer. Certainly Dinosaur was not the only federal reserve in Utah that caused residents of the state frustration, nor was it the only one that seemed to preclude them from having a voice in how it should be managed. By the end of the 1950s, however, more than a few in Utah felt that they had been reminded of their colonial status with regard to this particular federal reserve at least one too many times.

⁴⁴The author is completing a monograph on the Echo Park controversy for publication. For summaries of the battle see Michael P. Cohen, *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892-1970* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), and Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (3d ed., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). See also Wallace Stegner, ed., *This Is Dinosaur: Echo Park Country and Its Magic Rivers* (2d ed., Boulder, Colo.: Roberts Rinehart Inc., Publishers, 1985).