

In Search of the Small Settlement Observed by the Domínguez-Escalante Expedition on August 13, 1776

By Tom West

Preface

Let me introduce myself. I grew up with stories of our family history with two notable historical events influencing me personally. My paternal grandfather survived the Johnstown Flood of May 31, 1889, when he was barely four years old. His father, however, was killed in that flood leaving his mother to raise a son and daughter. She married her former husband's brother a year later. Grandpa was able to get a third-grade education before being indentured to a plumber.

The second notable event was when my maternal great-great grandfather was killed at Sand Creek on November 29, 1864. His death orphaned his six-year son and three-year old daughter. His son was raised by relatives in Vermont and Massachusetts. His daughter contracted Scarlet Fever, lost her hearing and ability to speak. As a result, she was unable to travel with her brother to join relatives in the Eastern U. S. and never saw him again although they did correspond with each other. She was later adopted and in 1874 was the eighth student to enroll in Colorado's newly formed Institution for the Education of Mutes, now the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind.

These stories excited my imagination as a young boy and were responsible for my interest in researching my family history. This interest was pursued through tracking the genealogy of my family, researching the Johnstown flood and Sand Creek massacre. While not a trained historian, my scientific background as a research chemist and family history research prepared me to research the history of the Ancestral Pueblo site I monitor.

There are similarities between scientific and historical research. Many times, the conclusions of research in either field are provisional and await new information to modify existing hypotheses or theories. In this way, scientific and historical conclusions are in tension with what we seem to know now and the revelation of new information that can unseat old knowledge. Well, this is what this little historical exploration is all about; bringing together historical information from a variety of existing sources and putting together the results to form conclusions concerning the title of this work.

I have to tell you, this has been as fun as mixing stuff up in the lab, letting it stew awhile, and seeing if the new stuff has any value. The mixtures of this study have come from many literature and personal sources.

What I've been up to is really the fault of retired archaeologist Kristie Arrington who first piqued my interest to identify which of the ruins near present day Dolores, Colorado were those noted in Escalante's journal on August 13, 1776. She is a clever mentor, laying out a few breadcrumbs to see if I am teased into investigating them and where they lead. So come along with me and see what she started.

Ruth Lambert from San Juan Mountains Association Site Steward Program offered encouragement to me on this historical journey of mine.

Dr. William D. Lipe spent a great deal of time in several email exchanges with me and critiquing my investigations as they proceeded. He provided references I had not uncovered and wise council how I might handle the information I gathered. Dr. Lipe was instrumental in me getting a copy of the National Register of Historical Places Inventory – Nomination Form for the Escalante Ruin. This form was kindly provided by

Rebecca Simon, History Colorado, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and she also provided wise council.

Nik Kendziorski, Archives Manager/Interim Co-Director Center of Southwest Studies provided digital maps of the Tenth Annual Report of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories (Hayden Survey). The map of Southwestern Colorado was of special interest for this study.

The Reference Staff at the Research Center of the Utah State Archives & Utah State History quickly responded to a request about field reports of Dr. Robert W. Delaney from The Route of the Domínguez-Escalante Expedition 1776-77. Valerie, from their reference staff, provided an important memo from W. L. Rusho to Dr. Delaney about two sets of ruins visible from the Dolores River bottom.

Anna Riling, Owner/Cartographer of Four Corners Mapping & GIS, kindly provided me with two 1952 georeferenced aerial photos of the bend of the Dolores River area as well as georeferencing the Hayden map of Southwestern Colorado. The aerial photos were especially useful for viewing the Dolores River bottom at the bend prior to the McPhee reservoir covering the area in water.

All of the above people, without exception, were all too happy to assist me on my quest and the project was much more enjoyable for having their help. Thank you.

Introduction

Mention the date July 4, 1776, and the first thought that comes to most American's minds is the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War against England that soon followed. There is also a long and rich history of the Spanish in what is now Florida, Kansas, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Colorado, and Utah. Just think about the many Spanish names of our cities, states, counties, mountains, rivers. Our foods and vocabulary are rich with Spanish influence. A large portion of our population is Hispanic.

This story about a 1776 Spanish expedition led by the Franciscan priest Fray Francisco Antanasio Domínguez and recorded by Fray Francisco Silvestre Velez de Escalante in his journal. The expedition was planned to start on July 4, 1776; however, delays postponed the start until July 29, 1776.

The Spanish government's purpose of the expedition was to open a communication route from Santa Fe to Monterey, California that would avoid hostile tribes (Herbert E. Bolton, 1950:9). The general route was to the northwest through Ute territory. Much of this route up to the Gunnison River was known to local tribes, trappers, prospectors, and from the earlier expeditions of Juan Rivera in 1765. The two Franciscans also had a desire to see where Spanish settlements and Missions might be best established along the route and this became apparent from Escalante's journal entries. Finally, as Franciscan priests, they were interested in converting tribal members to Christianity.

On July 29, 1776, Domínguez and Escalante in the company of eight other principals left Santa Fe, New Mexico on horseback on their journey through what is now the Four Corner States of New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona. In their company was Don Bernardo Miera y Pacheco who served as cartographer (Figures 1a and 1b; John L. Kessel, 2017). Escalante's journal of their expedition weaves an epic tale of exploration, hardship, and overcoming great obstacles. Most recently, Fray Angelico Chavez translated one of the copies of the journal and this translation was documented in 1976 (Ted Warner, 1976). It is interesting that there is hardly mention of outfitting the expedition. Food and supplies are assumed to be on pack mules. Bolton suggested they drove a herd of cattle as food on the hoof (Herbert E. Bolton, 1950:13) but there is no mention of taking a herd of cattle with them in Escalante's journal. On several occasions from October 23, 1776, to November 15, 1776,

the expedition resorted to eating horses to avoid starvation (Ted J. Warner, 1976).

While the goal was Monterey, it is a curious route they took since on August 17 they turned northeast in a long and rugged detour that helped to deplete their supplies while getting further away from Monterey. It wasn't until September 2 they turned to the northwest.

Along the way, Domínguez and Escalante sought divine intervention twice by casting lots to choose between two paths. The second time, on October 11, the cast lots probably saved their lives since on this date, they pointed to Santa Fe and not Monterey.

This expedition of more than 1700 miles counts among the epic western journeys despite neither reaching Monterey nor converting any tribal members. There is so much more to this story than this brief outline, but it is time to turn to our goal of discovery and we again take up the expedition at Santa Fe.

As the expedition travelled from Santa Fe into what is now Colorado, they passed by a number of landmarks that can easily be identified today from their names and descriptions in Escalante's journal. Some of these landmarks up to the bend of the Dolores River at present day Dolores, Colorado include Piedra Parada (Chimney Rock), Río de Los Pinos (Pine River), El Río Florido (Florida River), El Río de las Ánimas (Animas River), Sierra de la Plata (the La Plata Mountains), El Río de San Lázaro (Mancos River), and El Río de Nuestra Señora de Dolores (Dolores River). It is here at the Dolores River where it "runs southwest to this place, and from here makes a turn" (Ted J. Warner, 1976:16) that my historical exploration began.

And it began with the August 12, 1776, journal entry that describes the expedition crossing to the north side of El Río de Nuestra Señora de Dolores, or Our Lady of Sorrows, where the river makes a turn to the north. They made camp along the river bottom and explored the area south of the river the next day. On August 13, 1776, Escalante recorded the following observation in his journal: "Upon an elevation on the river's south side, there was in ancient times a small settlement of the same type as those of the Indians of New Mexico, as the ruins which we purposely inspected show" (Warner, 1976:16 – 17). It is the generally accepted view that the Escalante Ruin situated above the Canyon of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum is the ruin described by Escalante (Bureau of Land Management and National Parks Service).

IN SEARCH OF THE RUINS NOTED BY ESCALANTE

The Escalante Ruin

As a Site Steward for an Ancestral Pueblo Ruin near where the Dolores River bends to the north (henceforth referred to as the SSR or Site Steward Ruin), I became interested in the history of the ruin in relation to the 1776 Domínguez and Escalante Expedition (DE Expedition). A brief remark by retired archaeologist Kristie Arrington while I was on a site visit with her tweaked my interest. She suggested the ruins observed by Domínguez and Escalante were possibly the site we were monitoring that day since its location and description are consistent with the journal entry. My historical research also revealed there were other Ancestral Pueblo sites in the vicinity of Escalante Ruin and SSR that made up a larger ancient community in the area. All these sites fit the general location of the ruins observed by the DE Expedition. My quest for the identity of the ruins observed and noted by Escalante included discovering the reasons that the National Parks Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarded Escalante Ruin as the ruin first investigated in 1776 by the Domínguez-Escalante Expedition (National Parks Service, accessed February 13, 2022, and BLM, accessed February 13, 2022).

I believe the assignment started on November 27, 1973, when the National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form for Federal Properties was filed for the Escalante Ruin and entered into the Register on

November 20, 1975 (National Register of Historic Places, 1975). The Nomination form was submitted by two archaeologists and two historians. In the “Description of the Present and Original (if known) Physical Appearance” section of the nomination form, it is stated, “This ruin, a surface Pueblo constructed with shaped sandstone blocks and mud mortar, was in ruins in 1776 when Father Escalante observed it.”

In the “Statement of Significance” section, the submitters state, “On August 13, 1776, the Domínguez-Escalante Expedition camped just below the present site of Dolores, Colorado, near the Dolores River. Of two nearby ruins, the Escalante Ruin is credited with the distinction of being carefully examined by the friars. Fray Escalante recorded this visit in his diary. This notation was the first reference to a prehistoric ruin in the present State of Colorado.”

In 1975 and 1976, the Department of Anthropology of the University of Colorado started a two-year partial excavation and stabilization at the Escalante Ruin site that is now located beside the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum. The purpose of this BLM sponsored project was for the site “to be open for public viewing as part of the Escalante Trail, a Bicentennial project tracing the path of the 1776 Domínguez and Escalante Expedition” (Judith Ann Hallasi, 1979:215). In the historical study conducted by the University, sites described by the 1859 Macomb Expedition (John N. Macomb, 1875), the 1876 United States Geological and Geographical Survey (F. V. Hayden, 1878), and a J. Walter Fewkes 1919 article (J. Walter Fewkes, 1919) were used in support of the conclusion that the Escalante Ruin was observed by the DE Expedition. While they noted that Newberry’s description of the ruins observed by the Macomb Expedition “does not seem as consistent with the excavations” (Judith Ann Hallasi, 1979:224), their analysis concluded with the following statement: “The descriptions of the site as presented above all seem to indicate the same site might have been viewed by the observers. The difference in the descriptions were probably due to the vegetation growing on the site which obscured a complete view of the ruin; and also due to the unfamiliarity of the observers with the shape and form of the ancient Anasazi ruins. Although Escalante’s reference is very brief, the hill on which the Escalante Ruin rests is distinctive enough in its position and size to have been the elevation which Father Escalante had ascended.”

My interpretation of the University of Colorado citations concluded that Macomb and Fewkes were not referring to the Escalante Ruin. The Macomb Expedition described a site much different than and about a mile from Escalante Ruin (Stephen K. Madsen, *Exploring Desert Stone*:201 John N. Macomb, 1875:88). The most notable differences are the location and the presence of numerous kiva depressions that are not apparent at the Escalante Ruin.

W. H. Holmes in the 1876 Hayden Geological and Geographical Survey does describe Escalante Ruin in the following statement: “On the west bank of the Dolores, near the second bend, I came upon a cluster of these standing stones on the summit of a low, rounded hill, and in the midst of a dense growth of full-grown piñon pines.” This location fits perfectly with Escalante Ruin on the map provided in the University of Colorado report (Judith Ann Hallasi, 1979: 216). Holmes further states: “At two other localities near the south bend of the Rio Dolores I observed similar groups of standing stones, about which was the usual accompaniment of pottery and flint chips” (F. V. Hayden, 1878:386 and 400).

Finally, Fewkes provides a clear description of the location of the ruins he described as Escalante Ruin (J. Walter Fewkes, 1919:36). This location is about a half mile from the Escalante Ruin at the Museum and cannot be confused with the Escalante Ruin near the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum since the structure he describes is markedly different than the partially excavated ruins near the museum. Fewkes’ ruin is shown on Delaney’s map from *The Route of the Domínguez-Escalante Expedition 1776 – 1777* (David Miller, 1976, page 43) and it clearly is at a different location than the Escalante Ruin.

I conclude that the National Register of Historic Places and the University of Colorado neither proved nor

disproved the premise that Escalante Ruin was observed by the DE Expedition since they and others described two ruins at the south bend of the river. It is my opinion that there is good reason to attempt to better determine what site Escalante wrote about in his diary since alternate nearby sites were mentioned by the National Register and University of Colorado but apparently were not fully evaluated.

Other Possibilities – SSR and Fewkes “Escalante Ruins”

The University of Colorado already has provided some of the key references to carefully consider. Let’s start with the 1859 Macomb Expedition. This effort was initiated by the U. S. War Department charging Captain John N. Macomb, Jr., “with finding a practicable route for military supplies from Sana Fe, New Mexico, to the southern settlements of Utah Territory-in the event of future conflicts with its inhabitants” (Steven K. Madsen, 2010: page xvi). Macomb employed the services of geologist Dr. John S. Newberry and civil engineer Charles H. Dimmock to provide a field map. The Expedition also followed and mapped the Old Spanish Trail from Abiquiu, New Mexico to Ojo Verde, Utah Territory (John N. Macomb, 1875:5-6). For our purposes, we will limit ourselves to their journey from the Mancos River, their Camp 19, to their camp on the Dolores River where it bends to the north (Steven K. Madsen, 2010:156-157 and 218-219).

Camp 19 was on the Mancos River near the junction of the East and West Branches. Their camp would be very near to that of the DE Expedition on August 10, 1776. The Macomb Expedition left Camp 19 on August 9 and travelled about 15 miles NW to Camp 20 near Nutria del Dolores (Lost Canyon). On August 10, they travelled 5 miles to Camp 21 on the south side of the Dolores River. Camp 21 was described as about 1 mile from where the trail descended to the Dolores River according to the Topographical Memoir of Charles H. Dimmock (Steven K. Madsen, 2010: 201). The hill overlooking the camp had extensive ruins which were credited to those documented by Escalante according to Newberry (Steven K. Madsen, 2010: 219). Their description of the ruins matches those of SSR in size and the descriptions of room blocks and kiva depressions (John N. Macomb, 1875: 88) but does not match in location or description of the ruins with the Escalante Ruin. This set of ruins should be considered as a possible site recorded in Escalante’s diary in addition to the Escalante Ruin.

H. W. Holmes, the geologist in the 1876 Hayden Geological and Geographical Survey, reported on the ancient ruins examined during the summers of 1875 and 1876. Holmes noted three sets of ruins, one at the second bend and two near the south bend (Figure 2). The University of Colorado map is consistent with the 1965 USGS Topographical Map of the Dolores West Quadrangle (Figure 3) so that the Escalante Ruins location at the second bend is a reasonable description of its location and we can see this clearly when the USGS map is georeferenced to Google Earth with pins showing the location of the Escalante Ruin and Fewkes Escalante ruins (Figure 4).

Fewkes description and location of “Escalante Ruins” are quite specific; “The name Escalante Ruin given to the first ruin recorded by a white man in Colorado, is situated about 3 miles from Dolores on top of a low hill to the right of the Monticello Road, just beyond where it diverges from the road to Cortez. The outline of the pile of stones suggests a D-shaped or semicircular house with a central depression surrounded by rooms separated by radiating partitions. The wall on the south or east sides was probably straight, rendering the form not greatly unlike the other ruins on hilltops in the neighborhood of Dolores” (Fewkes, 1919:36). Bolton, in referring to Fewkes Escalante Ruin, commented that “the relic is still to be seen beside the highway” (Bolton, 1950:28). This site is about 0.5 miles from the Escalante Ruin.

The National Register, the University of Colorado, and 1876 Hayden Expedition all agree in that there were three notable sets of Ancestral Pueblo ruins near the bend of the Dolores River where the DE Expedition had set up camp. This conclusion was also noted in the Title of Robert W. Delaney’s map of the area around the bend of the Dolores River; “Map showing Domínguez-Escalante route to the Dolores River near the present site of Dolores City. Three ancient Indian settlements are located. One of these was visited by members of the 1776

expedition.” (David E. Miller, 1776, page 43). These three sites are the Escalante Ruin, SSR, and Fewkes Escalante Ruin. Delaney and McDaniel further note, “The exact site of the Anasazi ruin visited by members of the expedition is a matter of some controversy at this time (June 1975). A museum is being constructed and ruins are being stabilized at the “Escalante Ruin” which may or may not be the one mentioned by Escalante.”

The number of sites can reasonably be reduced to two if we consider that Fewkes describes a single structure, not a small village. Also, the structure described is unusual and very much like the Emerson Ruins nearby. This structure, in my opinion, is the least likely one to have been observed by the DE Expedition despite Fewkes claim to the contrary.

What evidence is there to support either the Escalante Ruin or SSR as the ruins noted by Escalante? There are several important factors that may impact which ruins were observed by the Spanish friars. These are, where the expedition crossed to the north side of the river on August 12, the location of the DE camp and where the expedition crossed the Dolores River to examine the ruins. All these factors are influenced by the topography of the area and the location of the river channel in the steep-sided river valley.

We can get an idea where the expedition crossed the Dolores River by following their progress from the Río de San Lázaro (Mancos River) to the Dolores River. As the DE Expedition left the East Bank of the Río de San Lázaro they travelled northwest from an area of good pasturage to an area of sagebrush and little pasturage. This description matches that of Charles Dimmock of the Macomb expedition who described their trek from the Mancos to their camp 20 in Lost Canyon as “broken country, desolately sterile & parched (Steven K. Madsen, 2010:157). This suggests that both the DE Expedition and the Macomb Expedition followed the same route. The topography of the area is readily visualized from the 1965 USGS Dolores West Quadrangle Topographical map (Figure 3) that shows the area before McPhee Reservoir was constructed. The riverbanks on the north and south sides are both steep in most places offering few access points near the bend in the river. One of the most accessible approaches to the Dolores River near the bend is through Lost Canyon. Larry Pleasant, a local resident of Dolores, also believes the DE Expedition followed Lost Canyon to the Dolores (David E. Miller, Editor, 1976, page 52). This is the route that the Macomb Expedition took on the five miles from Camp 20 to Camp 21 (Steven K. Madsen, 2010;201).

After the DE Expedition passed through the dry sagebrush approach to the river, a beautiful river valley presented itself. Escalante described the Dolores River area as follows; “Here there is everything that a good settlement needs for its establishment and maintenances regards irrigable lands, pasturage, timber, and firewood” (Ted J. Warner, Editor, 1995:16). The expedition crossed the river into the lush river bottom to set up their camp.

We can get an idea of how the valley looked in 1776 from a sketch and lithograph from the 1859 Macomb Expedition, just 83 years after the DE Expedition (Figures 5 and 6). Both Charles H. Dimmock, the expedition’s topographer, and Dr. J. S. Newberry, the expedition’s geologist, made sketches of the Dolores River where it bends to the north (Steven K. Madsen, 2010: 63). The Newberry sketch is lost but a J. J. Young lithograph from his sketch is in agreement with the Dimmock sketch (Steven K. Madsen, 2010: Plate V. between pages 210 and 211). These drawings capture not only the beautiful view of the river valley but how the river wound its way down stream moving from the south side of the valley to the north side at the same location as seen in the 1965 USGS Dolores West Quadrangle map (Figure 3) and two 1952 aerial photographs of the area georeferenced to Google Earth (Figures 7). The view of these drawings is of the river valley from the hill above the Macomb camp 21. This is the same hill with extensive ruins consistent with the SSR. The view from this hill where SSR is probably located matches the view presented by Dimmock and Newberry. The view from the Escalante Ruin hill is quite different since it is nearly one hundred feet higher than the hill above the Macomb expedition Camp 21 and about a mile further downstream.

The DE Expedition campsite location can be estimated when we consider that the DE Expedition travelled a quarter league to the north (0.66 miles) after breaking camp on August 14 before turning northwest. Even though Escalante did not mention it, they would have had to cross the Dolores River at this point since the river came close to the steep north hillside.

When Delaney and McDaniel visited this area in 1975 to trace the DE Expedition Route at the bend of the river, the Dolores River valley would have appeared much like the Dimmock sketch and Newberry lithograph since McPhee Reservoir did not exist in 1975 (David E. Miller, Editor, 1976). This will allow us to estimate the location of the DE camp by measuring 0.66 miles from an estimated river crossing at an area before the river would no longer allow further progress to the north. This little exercise would put us essentially at the DE camp on Delaney's map (David E. Miller, 1976, page 43).

The estimated location of the camp puts the expedition nearer to SSR and Fewkes Escalante Ruin than to the Escalante Ruin next to the museum. The expedition would be in a position to possibly see signs of a ruin from their camp. This becomes a distinct possibility when we consider a 1975 memo from W. L. Rusho to Delaney (Research Center of the Utah State Archives & Utah State History and Figure 8). In this memo, Merton Taylor, a well-known long time Dolores resident, spoke with W. L. Rusho about his recollection of the ruins in the area. When Taylor was young, there were two conspicuous ruins on hills south of the river. One of these is the Fewkes Escalante Ruin and the other is consistent with SSR. These two ruins were visible from the river, according to Taylor, while he indicated BLM designated Escalante Ruin never was.

Further to this point we can return to Holmes and his observation concerning the Escalante Ruin. Holmes noted that the ruins at the second bend were in a "dense growth of full-grown piñon pines." He goes on to say, "That the placing of these stones occurred at a very early date is attested by the growth of the forest, which is at least three or four hundred years old. In a number of cases the stones are deeply embedded in the sides and roots of the trees." The dense growth of trees and the higher elevation of the Escalante Ruin would add to the difficulty of seeing the ruins from the river. Even today, walking up the path to the ruins, they are not visible until you are almost on top of them even though the undergrowth at the crest of the hill has been removed.

If Domínguez and Escalante saw the ruins from the river, that would explain why they crossed the river the next day to inspect the ruins and to take the polar elevation of the site. If only their instruments were more accurate and precise, we might have the real latitude of the ruins they inspected. The latitude they measured is about 1° too far north. There are steep cliffs near the estimated location of the campsite. If they travelled north then crossed the river, they would be near a natural small drainage that allows for an easy ascent to the hills south of the Dolores River. Highway 145 (1965 USGS West Dolores Quadrangle map) came up from the river valley using this drainage and turned south to Cortez. Even today there remains a short section of road descending to the reservoir from the south. This drainage would be a natural exit point from the river valley and would put the DE Expedition close to the area upon which SSR rests. It is most likely that SSR was the set of ruins noted by Escalante if this reasoning is correct.

In summary, the DE camp would be in closer proximity to SSR and Fewkes Escalante Ruin than Escalante Ruin. Fewkes Escalante Ruin and SSR would be visible from the river and Escalante would not. The difficulty of seeing the Escalante Ruin from the river was compounded by a dense growth of trees in addition to being 100 feet higher than the close by hills. If DE crossed the river north of their camp, they had an easy access point to the hills at the south bend with two sets of ruins on them. Since Fewkes described a single structure, not a small settlement, SSR were the ruins they most likely examined based on the evidence presented.

I want to end by putting into context the ruins in the area of the bend of the Dolores River. All the ruins mentioned in the study were part of an Ancestral Pueblo community (Ian Thompson, 1994). This community started with the site I am privileged to monitor (~1050 – 1125 CE). Escalante Ruin, situated adjacent to the

Canyons of the Ancients Visitors Center and Museum, was occupied later (~1130 – 1180 CE). Fewkes “Escalante Ruin”, and other nearby ruins, were also part of this community. While Escalante noted only one of these ruins, the whole community might be considered part of this discovery. Whether the Escalante Ruin is the site the Domínguez-Escalante Expedition explored or not the value of the Escalante Ruin is that it is open to the public and provides some stabilized ruins to observe. The nearby museum offers a wonderful collection of artifacts to view, provides historical context to the ruins in the Canyons of the Ancients, and Museum staff and volunteers are interested in answering question to the curious.

Last, and most important, all the Native American ruins discussed in this account and ruins throughout the United States are sacred to native descendants of ancestral tribes. We all have a responsibility to treat them with awe and respect.

POSTSCRIPT

The BLM, National Park Service, University of Colorado, and National Register all claim that the Escalante Pueblo was the first record of an archaeological site in present-day Colorado (BLM accessed October 24, 2021, National Park Service, accessed February 13, 2022). Juan Rivera’s Journals of his 1865 expeditions described some ancient ruins near the Los Pinos River in present-day Colorado (Baker, 2015). Rivera’s Journals were discovered around 1969 and translated in 1984 so the University of Colorado and National Register would not have had this information at the time they made their claim. David Roberts in *Escalante's Dream*, also pointed out that Juan Maria Rivera stumbled upon other Anasazi roomblocks on the Los Pinos River in 1765 according to an entry in Rivera's journal (Roberts, 2019:85). This information informs us that the Escalante Ruin was not the first record of an archaeological site in present-day Colorado.

History, like science is only correct until new information challenges old beliefs. In this historical exploration, I’ve tried to put these historical puzzle pieces together to form a clearer picture of Escalante’s record of the ruins at the bend of the Dolores River. The evidence presented supports the view that SSR was the most likely set of ruins observed by the DE Expedition. Perhaps in the future, some missing pieces can be discovered, and the puzzle can be completed with more certainty.

Tom West
March 4, 2022

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<http://vm136.lib.berkeley.edu/EART/maps/g4300-1777-m52.html>

Figure 1b
A Portion of Miera's Map of the Domínguez-Escalante Expedition Near
the Bend of the Dolores River

<http://www.vocesdesantafe.org/explore-our-history/historical-documents2/864-bernardo-de-miera-y-pacheco-map-of-the-1776-Domínguez-escalante-expedition>



Figure 2

Closeup of Hayden Map at Bend of Dolores River

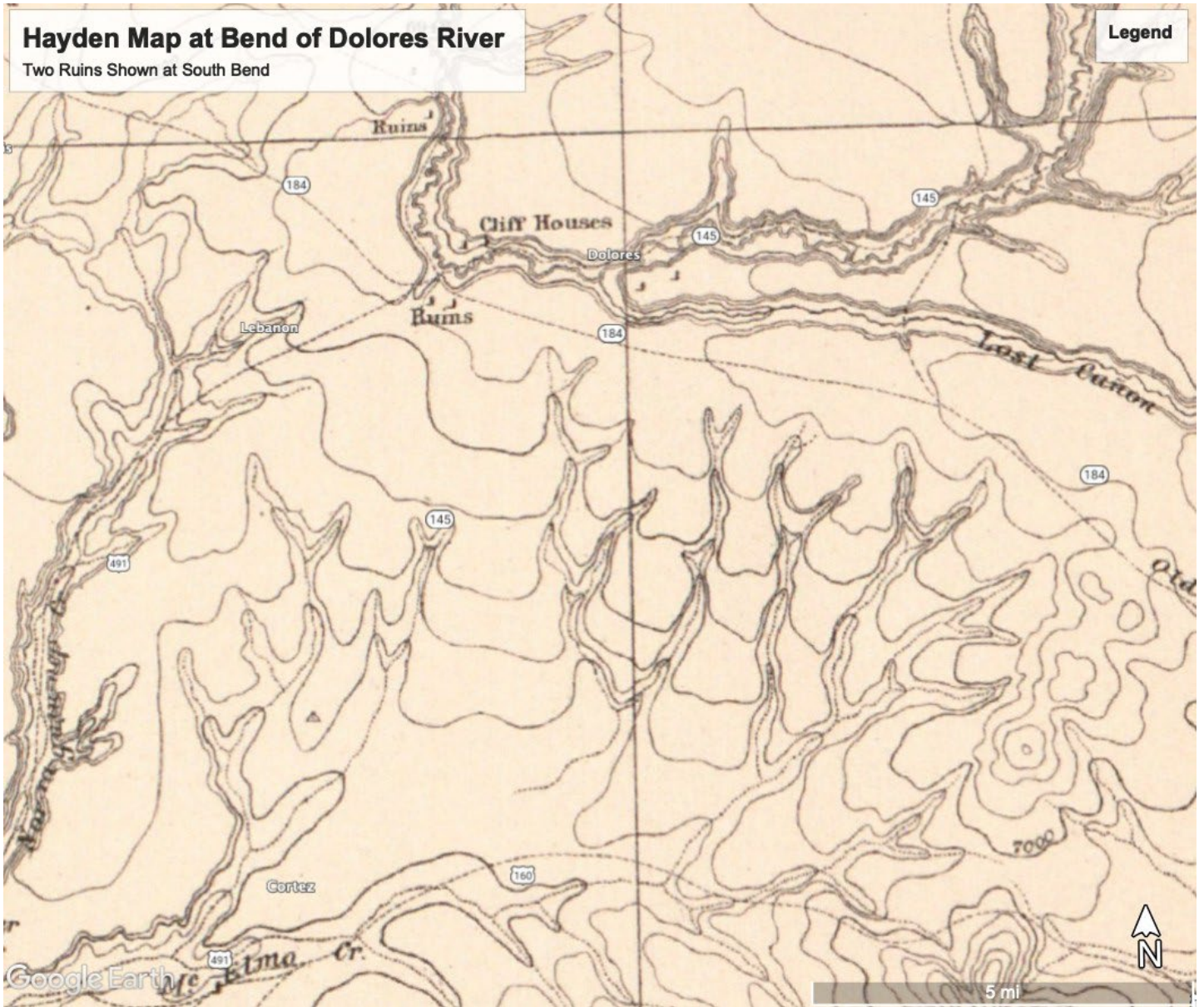


Figure 3

Closeup of the 1965 USGS Topographical Map of the Dolores Quadrangle

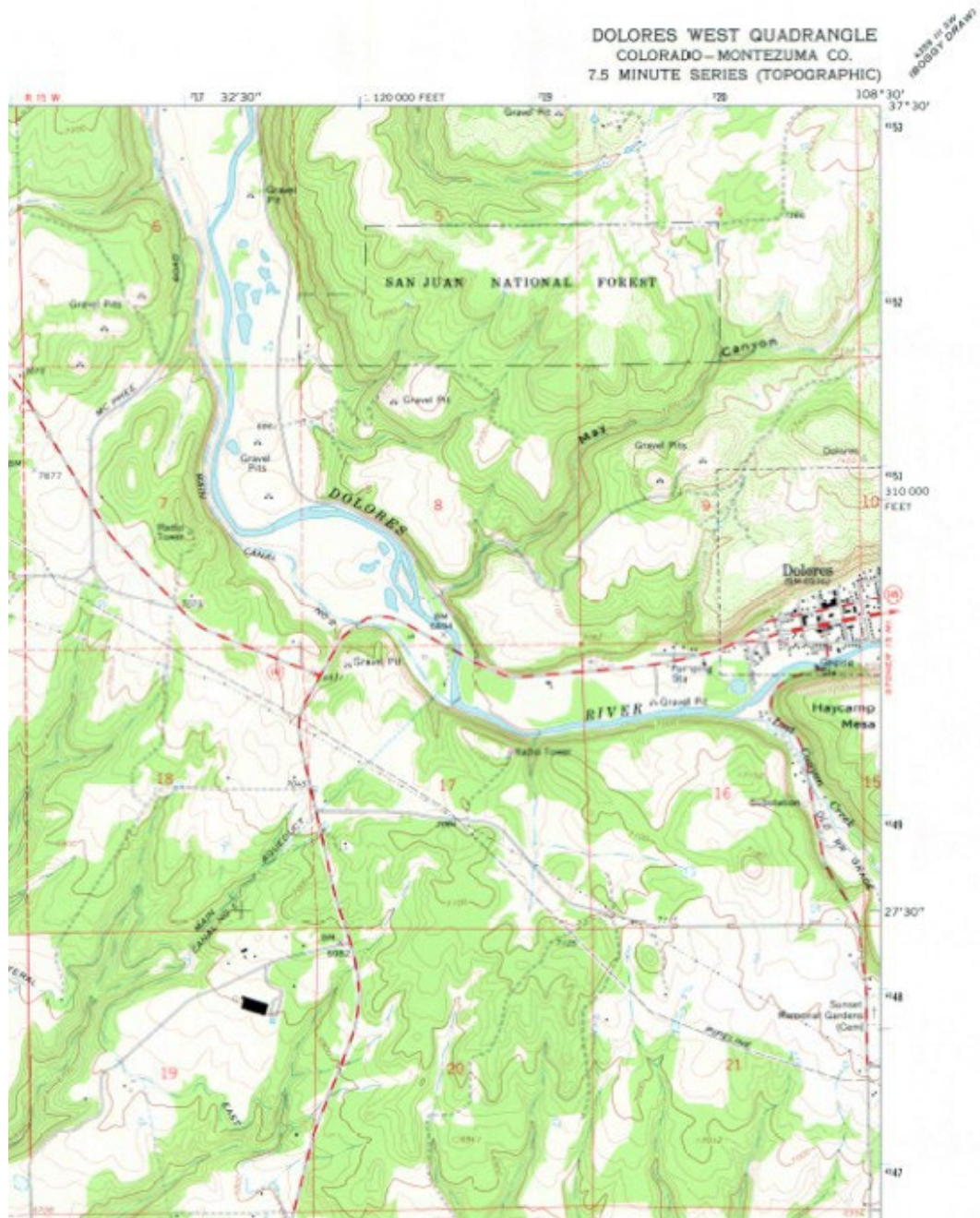
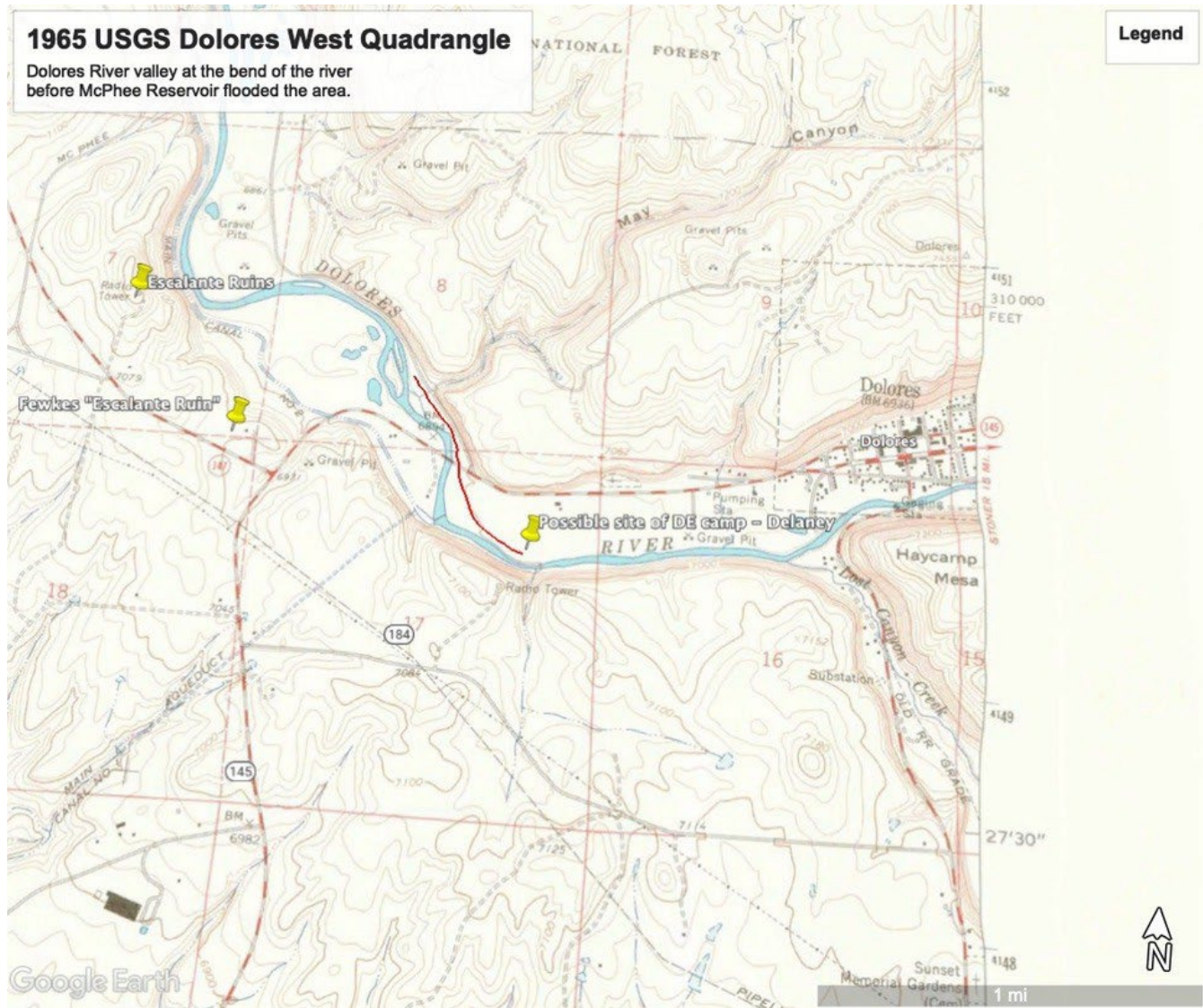


Figure 4

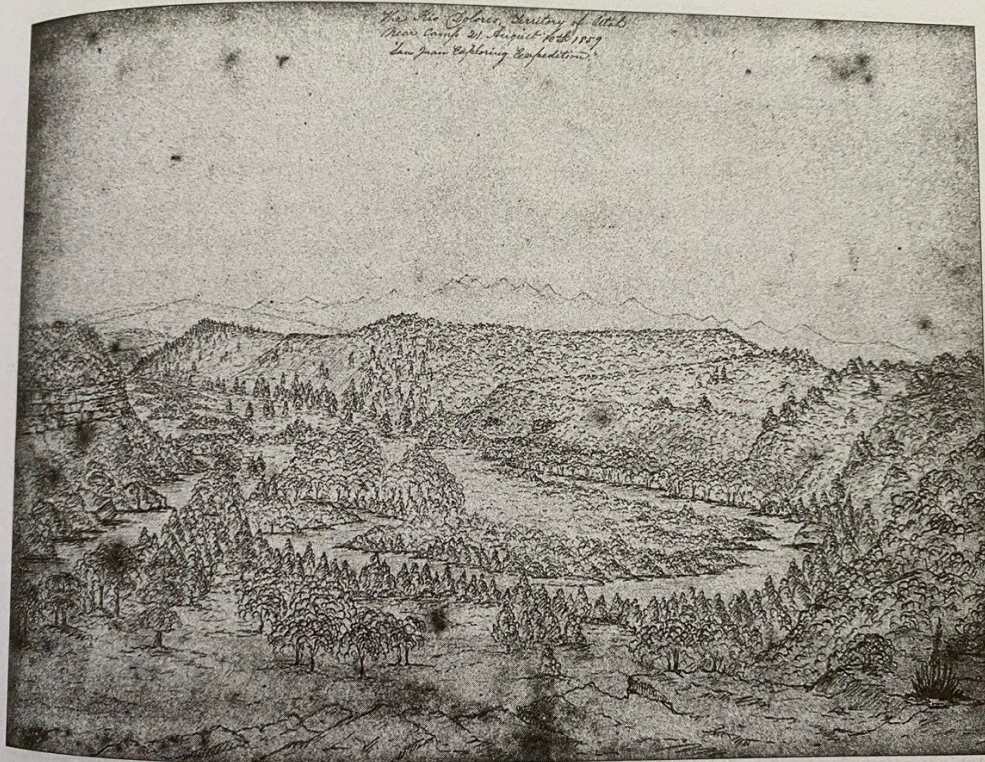
USGS Map of West Dolores Quadrangle Georeferenced to Google Earth



The red line is the estimated route of the DE Expedition to cross the Dolores River on August 13 and 14, 1776.

Figure 5

Charles H. Dimmock Sketch of the Dolores River
Near the Bend



Charles Dimmock Papers, Special Collections Research Center,
College of William and Mary

Sketch of the Rio Dolores near Macomb's Camp 21, in present Colorado, by Charles H. Dimmock.

Figure 6

Dolores River View at Bend of the Dolores Lithograph from a J. S. Newberry Sketch

PLATE V. RIO DOLORES & SIERRA DE LA PLATA. FROM NEAR CAMP 21



J. J. Young from a sketch by Dr. J. S. Newberry.

T. Sinclair & Son. lith. Phila.

Figure 7

1952 Aerial Photographs at the Bend of the Dolores River



Figure 8
Rusho Memo to Delaney

Memo from 4/22/75

W. L. RUSHO

Bob Delaney
Ft. Lewis College
Durango, Colo.

Dear Bob:

After the Cortez meeting last Thursday Dave Miller, Mel Smith and I drove to Dolores to get some idea of the possible D-E camp, their route and the so-called Escalante Ruin. We looked it over a bit and then talked to Merton Taylor, a history buff who owns Taylor Hardware. Anyway I thought you might like to know what Taylor had reasoned out.

When Taylor was quite young (say 50 years ago) there were two conspicuous ruins on hills south of the river. One located just northwest of the junction of the Monticello Road with the old Cortez Road is apparently the one described by Fewkes in BAE Bulletin #70 (see xerox page attached). Taylor says that this ruin and the one on the hill across the road have now been destroyed by gravel operations. The ruin now designated by the BLM as the Escalante Ruin was never visible from the river, but the other two were.

Since Escalante calls it a "settlement" on the hills then perhaps the BLM ruin can still be called the Escalante Ruin even though it's probably not the one D-E saw from their camp, nor was it the one they visited.

All this has some bearing on the probable route of D-E and on the location of their camp.

You may of course wish to talk to Taylor yourself. He has some interesting early photos of the Dolores River Valley.

W.L. Rusho

cc: Dave Miller
Mel Smith
Don Rickey, BLM, Denver