

Cities of Stone in Utah's Canyonland

*Where the Green River
joins the Colorado,
bristling pinnacles and
arch-studded canyons form
a little-known wonderland that
may become a national park*

By W. ROBERT MOORE

National Geographic Staff

Photographs by the author

ON AND ON it stretched beneath our wings—a vast city of towering skyscrapers, massive domes, and bridges beyond an architect's dreams. Yet it was a city without a blueprint, the work of nature, not of man, and it had taken hundreds of thousands of years to build.

The only thing missing is the people, I thought. They'll come someday—thousands of them—to see these sights.

"It's one of the most spectacular spots in all Utah—and one of the least known," said Harlon W. Bement, Director of the Utah State Aeronautics Commission, as he nosed the Beechcraft down for a look at long-deserted cliff dwellings.

Sandstone colossus hewn by rain, frost, and wind, Druid Arch derives its name from a striking resemblance to England's Stonehenge, popularly associated with Druids. Here, in southeastern Utah's canyonland, a magnificent scenic wilderness awaits Congressional sanction as a new national park.

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KODACHROME BY W. ROBERT MOORE, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF © N.G.S.

Riders Strain to Free a Jeep Trapped by Quicksand in Horse Canyon

The author and his party explored some 300 miles of canyon country—much of it unmapped. Here, where storms occasionally send flash floods pounding through The Narrows, they struck a treacherous spot. Two Jeeps raced safely across, but the third foundered. The others pulled it out.

Some canyons stop even Jeeps, and visitors must take to horse or foot to reach many of these wonders.

station wagon of Burnett A. Hendryx, our tour organizer from nearby Panguitch.

Arranging to switch from Jeep to horseback farther along the trail, we drove northward on U. S. Highway No. 160 for 13 miles. Then we turned westward onto a gravel road leading to Dugout Ranch, surrounded by irrigated alfalfa fields and massive red buttes in Indian Creek Valley (see map of author's route, next two pages).

Until a few years ago this cattle ranch was isolated. But not now. Uranium seekers and oil exploration crews have combed the desert valleys. So much traffic passes through the ranch holdings that on one gate I saw a sign with this pointed reminder: "It takes only a minute to close the gate, but it may take hours to pick the shot out of your hide if you don't."

Opening—and closing—several gates, we continued into wilder canyon country. We skirted the bold landmarks of North and South Six-shooter Peaks and reached Cave Spring for a noontime lunch pause.

Cave Spring is no imposing landmark. It isn't even much of a spring. The cave is an eroded undercut in the base of a sandstone cliff, the spring only a tiny puddle of water in a stone depression. It accumulates from an almost imperceptible drip that comes from a crack in the rocks.

But for centuries Cave Spring has afforded refuge and fresh water for Indians and others roaming the canyons. Several floor stones are hollowed and worn where prehistoric natives ground corn. The roof is smudged black by the many fires they kindled. More recently, ranch hands had been camping here while rounding up cattle that grazed in the canyons.

From Cave Spring we turned southward into Salt Creek.

"If you fall into this creek you'll get mighty dusty," someone remarked.

From this height the erosion-clawed land reminded me of a maze into which scientists might put white mice to test their ability to find their way out.

Next day we would become the mice, seek-

The Author: W. Robert Moore described seldom-visited canyon country of the western United States in "Escalante: Utah's River of Arches," in the September, 1955, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. Chief of GEOGRAPHIC's Foreign Editorial Staff, he has written 64 articles on subjects ranging from the American West to the Congo, Chile, Australia, and the ruins of Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

ing our way in and out of these kinking canyons by Jeep, horseback, and on foot.

The area we had seen is part of a 332,000-acre wonderland which Congress has been asked to set aside as Canyonlands National Park (map, page 657). Legislation sponsored by Senator Frank E. Moss of Utah has the strong support of the Kennedy Administration.

If the new park is created, thousands of visitors to these remarkable canyons will enjoy sights that only a handful have ever seen. Then perhaps such a fanciful name as The Needles—a title bestowed on one region of towering pinnacles—will be as famous as

Devils Garden in Arches National Monument.

In the next few years this entire corner of Utah will be transformed by creation of huge Lake Powell behind the growing Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado. Although the lake will not reach to The Needles area, it will enable boats to come within a few miles and will open many remote regions to exploration and enjoyment.

Into the Maze by Jeep, Then Saddle

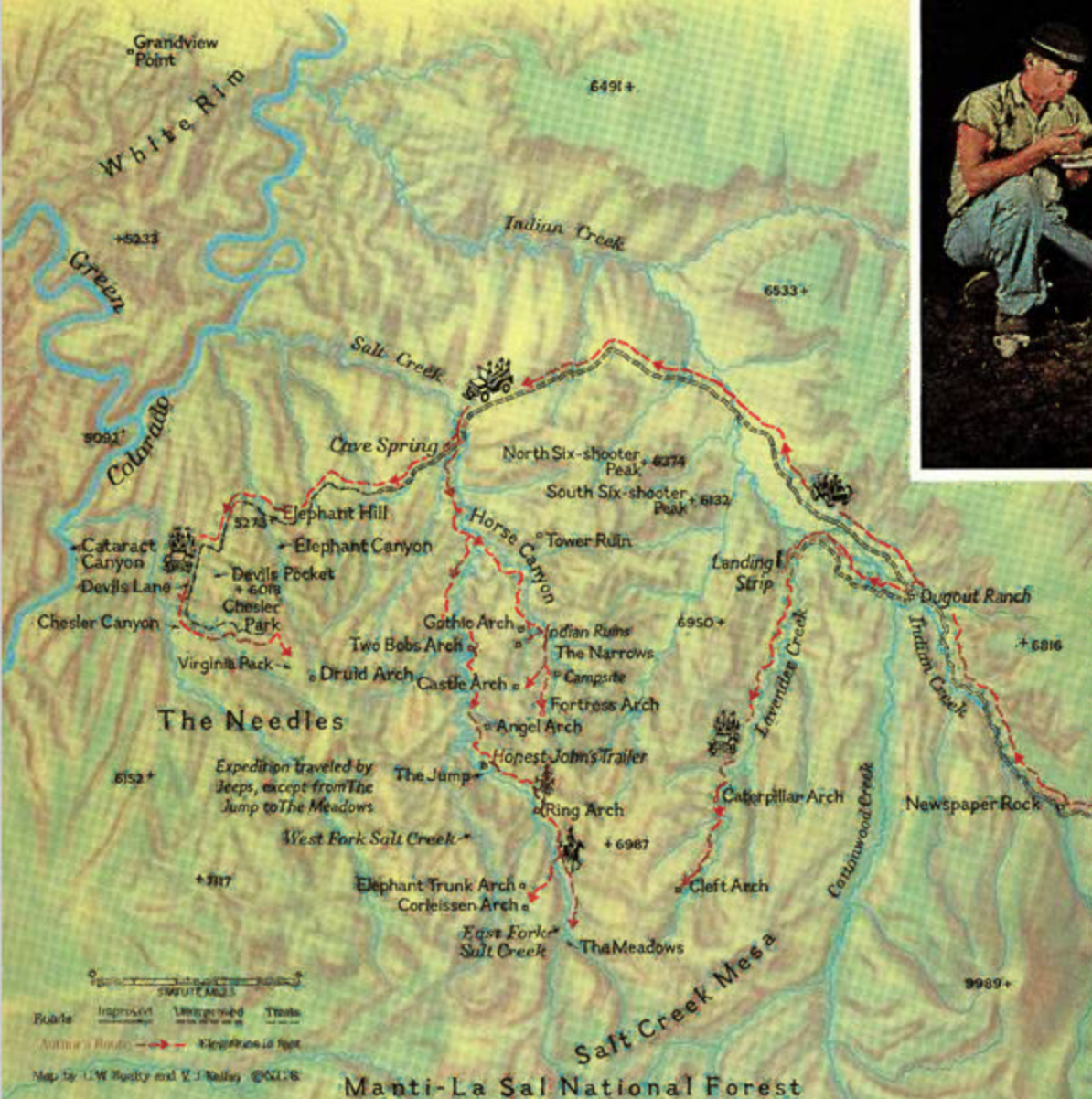
Cold rain whipped around us at Monticello as our party of 11 stowed food, bedding rolls, and other gear into three Jeeps and the

We got dusty without falling in. The Jeeps plowed through a salt crust and threw up choking clouds of sand as we bucked our way through tangled brush and along dry streambeds that in rainy seasons can become raging torrents in the space of minutes. In places we did strike water—shallow puddles and small streams where springs came to the surface. Wherever there was moisture, we had to be alert against quicksand.

After leaving Cave Spring, we followed the Salt for three miles to its junction with Horse Canyon. Intrigued by this large tributary, we decided to explore it before going up the main canyon.

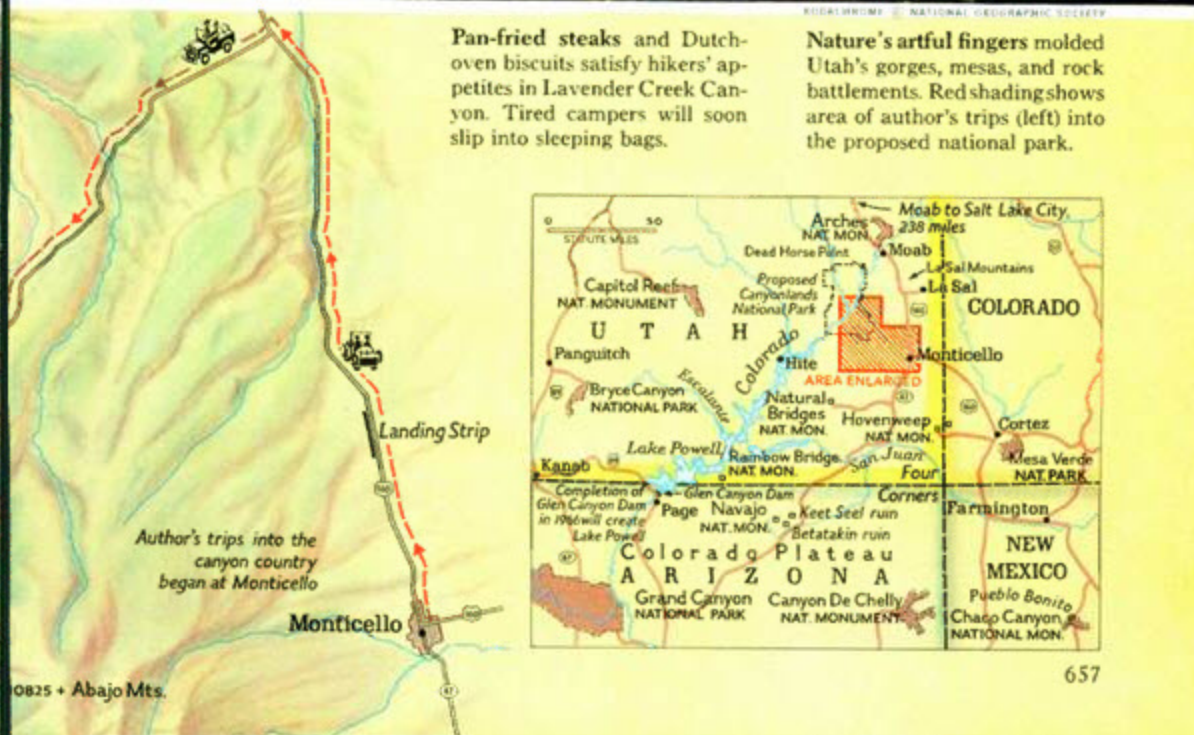
Though we were heading upstream, the cliffs thrust higher and higher above us. In contrast to the almost solid red sandstone walls that I had seen in the Escalante River area on an earlier trip to Utah, the canyons here were broken by numerous gulches and ravines. In places they opened into broad side valleys; elsewhere erosion-hewn walls crowded close in upon us.

656 Then we rounded a bend in Horse Canyon and came in view of Gothic Arch.



Pan-fried steaks and Dutch-oven biscuits satisfy hikers' appetites in Lavender Creek Canyon. Tired campers will soon slip into sleeping bags.

Nature's artful fingers molded Utah's gorges, mesas, and rock battlements. Red shading shows area of author's trips (left) into the proposed national park.



Strictly speaking, this is not an arch but a window high above the canyon floor, like Castle Arch (opposite page). Gothic, however, is triangular.

Some formations, such as Gothic, Castle, and Druid Arch (pages 652-3), have been divided into irregular blocks by cracking or jointing; these cracks have been opened up by the work of rain, frost, wind, plant roots, and sharp temperature changes.

Other formations, like Cleft Arch (pages 668-9 and 677), have resulted from gradual erosion of a cliff wall by swirling waters of a stream, as well as from weathering action.

Finger Marks 800 Years Old

While we were vainly seeking a way up the cliff to Gothic, we came upon a small cluster of Indian storehouses nestled in a protected ledge. Though abandoned perhaps 800 years ago, their stone-and-adobe walls still stand almost intact. And in the mud smeared on their inner surfaces we found the perfectly imprinted finger marks of the long-forgotten cliff dweller who had daubed them there.

In the thick deposit of dust on the storehouse floors, we discovered corncobs, dry and hard as bone. The primitive Indian farmers obviously gained no bumper yields from the flint corn they planted in the canyons; no cob was longer than two or three inches.

Potsherds strewed the ground. Some were painted with black patterns on a white base; others showed corrugations on their dark clay surface. The wall of a rock alcove displayed a row of pictographs; one portrayed a hunter drawing a bow.

Who were these canyon dwellers? Archeologists call them Anasazi, a Navajo term meaning the "ancient ones." The name applies to that large group of prehistoric Indians who once inhabited much of the plateau region of the American Southwest, particularly Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado.

They are best known, however, for the two main periods of their cultural development—first as primitive Basket Makers and later as the Pueblos. In the latter period they built and then abandoned such extensive community centers as Pueblo Bonito, Hovenweep, and the spectacular cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde, Betatakin, and Keet Seel.*

Archeologists do not know for certain all the reasons that caused the Indians to move on, but drought was one of the main factors. By the middle of the 13th century the whole northern portion of the plateau had been completely abandoned.

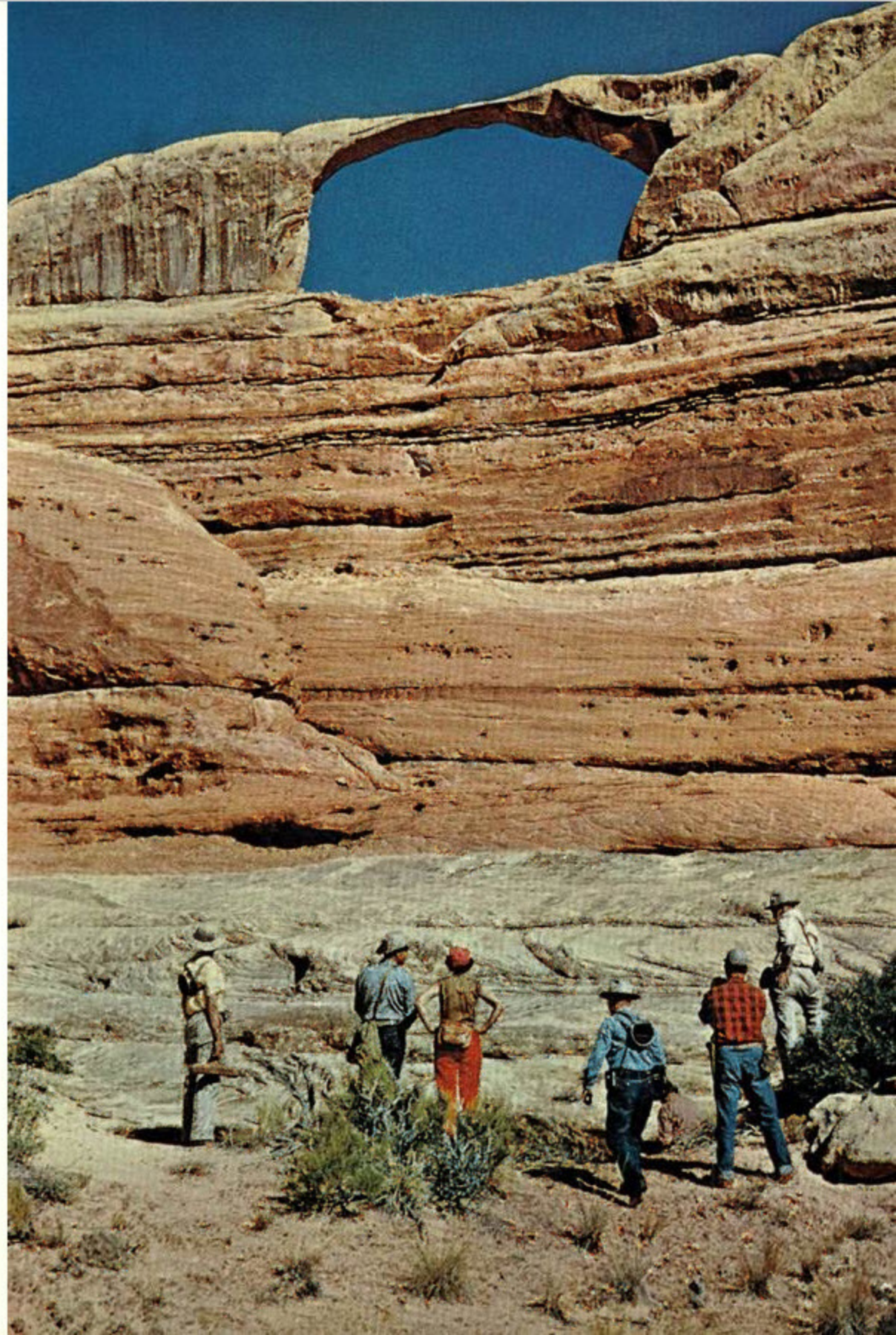
*See NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: "Searching for Cliff Dwellers' Secrets," by Carroll A. Burroughs, November, 1959; "Ancient Cliff Dwellers of Mesa Verde," by Don Watson, September, 1948; and "Indian Tribes of Pueblo Land," by Matthew W. Stirling, November, 1940.

Window in the sky, Castle Arch surmounts an impregnable rampart. Thin tongue of rock roofs an opening some 130 feet wide. Members of the author's party tried to climb to it, but projecting ledges foiled them.

Hearty desert blossoms like the claret-cup cactus (left) and yellow cactus (below) defy summer's blistering sun and arid sands.



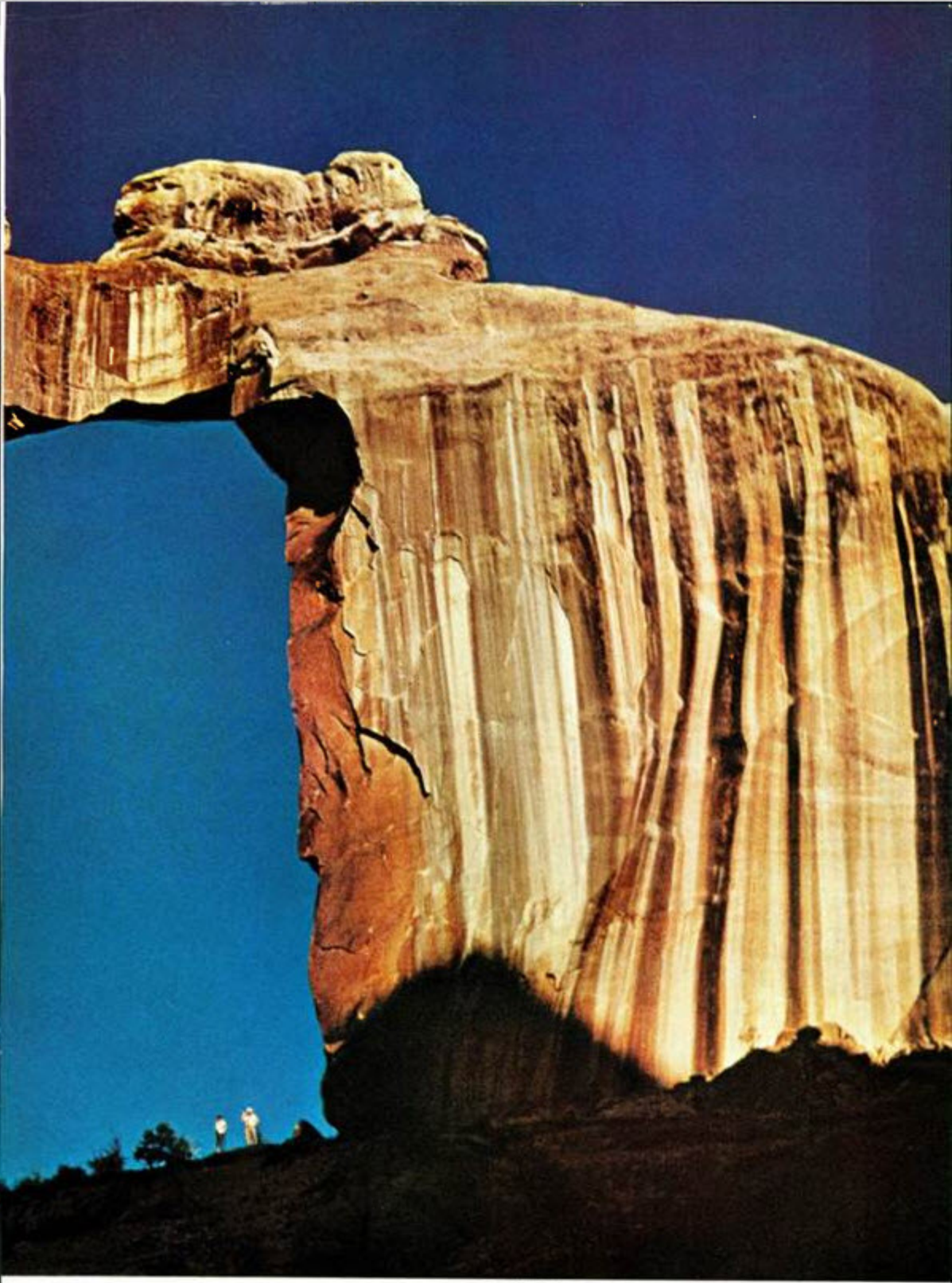
KODACHROMES © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY





**Angel Arch Glows Like Living Flame
in the Glare of a Descending Sun**

Men appear as Lilliputians in a yawning cavity 150 feet high and 130 feet wide. Walls bear stains of "desert varnish"—a lustrous dark patina of



iron and manganese oxides leached from the rocks by water. Late afternoon shadows creep up the base of the arch. Graceful figure of the angel ap-

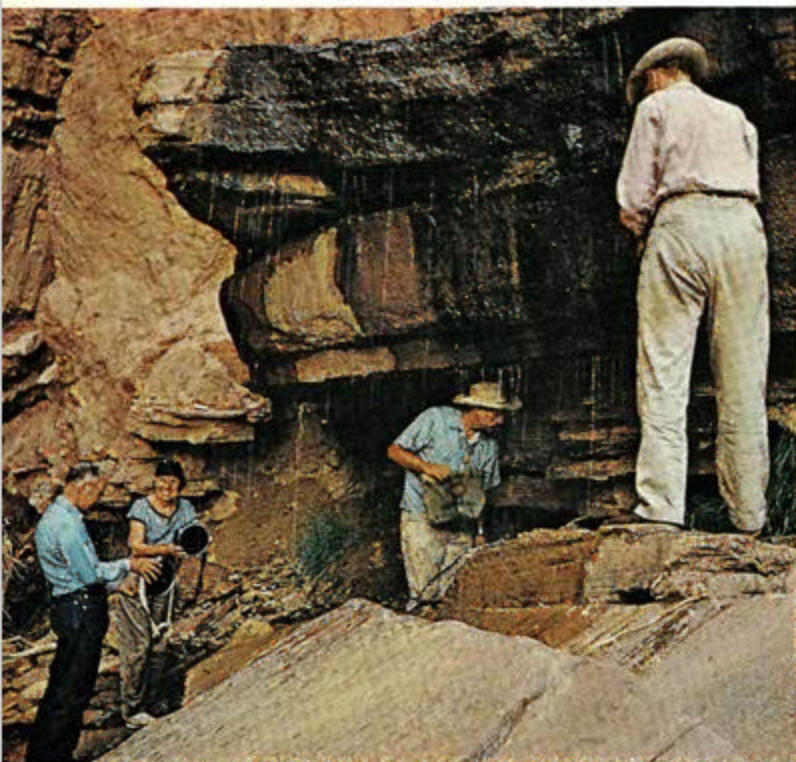
pears to better advantage from the opposite side. Viewed here from the west, only the head, a projecting knob of rock at upper left, shows clearly.

The canyons of the Salt lie on the northern rim of the Pueblo lands. While we found no settlements to compare with Pueblo Bonito or Mesa Verde, we saw abundant evidence that hundreds of Indians had occupied this now-empty region. They grew corn, beans, and squash in the narrow alluvial flats and hunted game in the hills.

Threading the canyons, we came upon scores of their dwellings and storehouses, arrow-chipping grounds, and examples of their rude cliff art. Many small structures lie tucked in caves and rock niches; others are remnants of sizable communities. Some perch on incredible cliff ledges beneath sheltered overhangs; often they cannot be reached without using ropes or hewing new footholds.

About the dry, dusty settlements lay pieces of yucca sandals the primitive hunter-farmers wore, and bits of yucca cord they had twisted. Some cord fragments still were wrapped with rabbit fur and bird skins, which the Indians ingeniously fashioned into blankets. Instead of weaving them, they twined the fur- and feather-wrapped cords tightly together in parallel rows to produce light, warm coverings.

Rocky roadblock halts the author's caravan at East Fork of Salt Creek. Leaving Jeeps behind, the visitors continued on horses that had followed the cars. They fill canteens and water bag.



KODACHROME © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

A mile or so beyond Gothic Arch we came to a canyon stricture, The Narrows. Here the stream has cut a channel through cliffs, forming a gap scarcely wider than our Jeeps.

I rode with Bob Robertson, a student at the University of Utah. He gunned the motor to hurry through, but the instant we hit a bend we made a sudden squashing halt. My side of the Jeep dipped sharply, the wheels sank nearly out of sight, and I found myself almost sitting in quicksand. It took the other two Jeeps to haul us to solid ground (page 654).

A short way above The Narrows, springs filled several pools and gave birth to a pleasant little stream. We set up camp on a grassy bank beside the water and spent the night serenaded by crickets and croaking frogs.

Dawn Pistol Wakens Campers

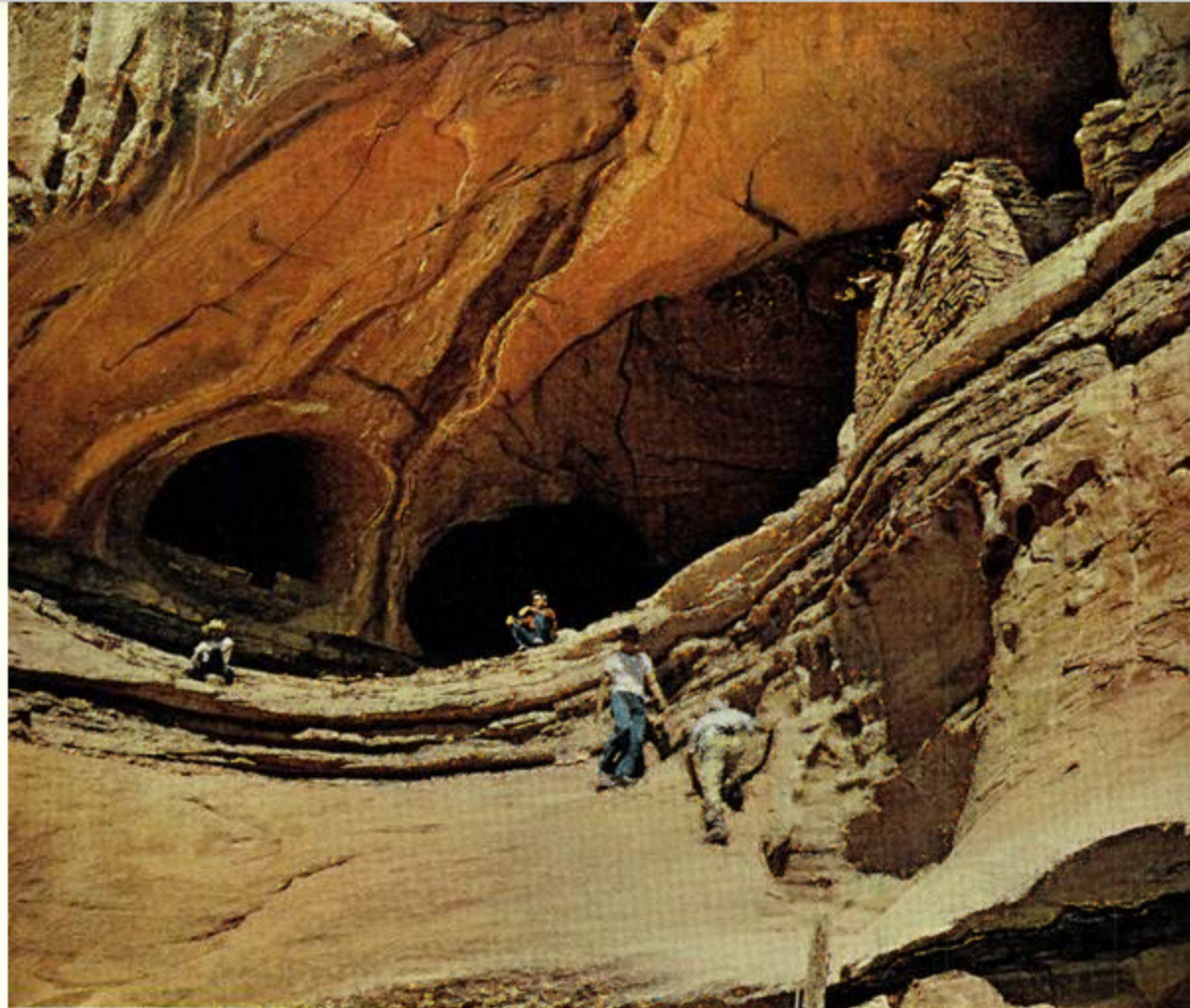
Next morning, and every morning thereafter, we were awake at five o'clock. Harlon Bement saw to that. If the dawn didn't wake us, he did—by firing his pistol. Then Burnett Hendryx and Bates E. Wilson, Superintendent of Arches National Monument, would fortify us for the trail with breakfast; both were masters at cooking on an open fire.

As we moved up the canyon, we spotted several Indian ruins on ledges. But our main goal was to find two arches—Castle and another, yet unnamed. We had photographed both from the air.

Again we rounded a bend and, in a side canyon, saw Castle Arch etched pink and white against the blue sky. Abandoning our Jeeps, we scrambled through brush and over slick-rock to get nearer.

At length we reached a natural amphitheater where red and white sandstone walls reared sheer above us. And in the high cliff rimrock stood the inaccessible arch, a delicately hewn band of rock framing a vast opening (page 659).

This spectacular arch had been photographed



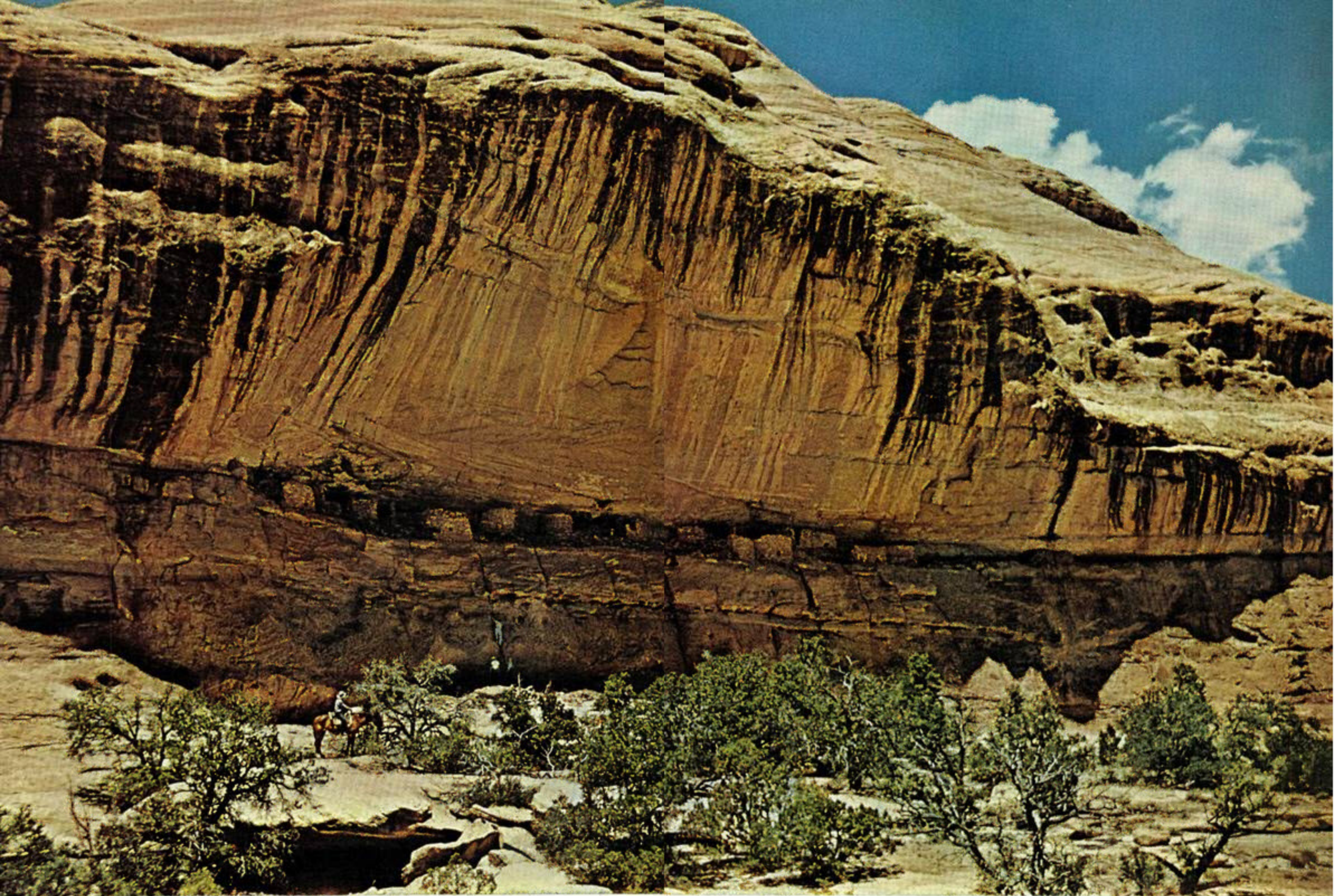
KODACHROMES BY W. ROBERT MOORE (ABOVE) AND NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER OTIS IMBODEN © N.G.S.

Cliff-face Caves Housed Stone Age Americans

Climbing stone steps worn smooth by prehistoric feet, visitors explore Tower Ruin high above a tributary of Horse Canyon. Here Indians dwelled centuries before Columbus discovered the New World. By the late 1200's, the inhabitants had abandoned these rock alcoves.



Centuries old, a sandal comes to light in an Anasazi house perched hundreds of feet above the Colorado River. Visitors peer through the combination door and window of a shelter that Indians may have used for storage.



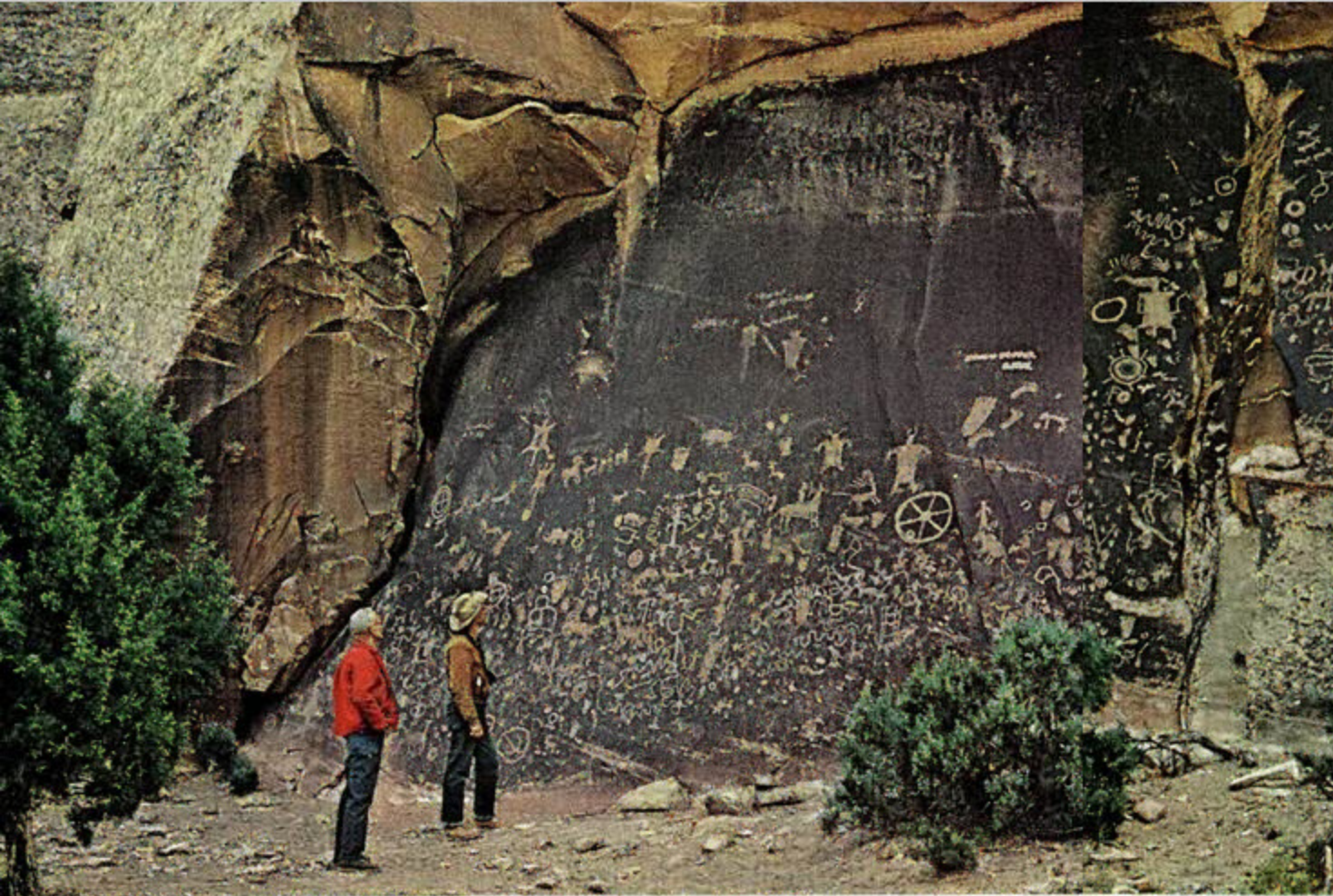
**Frowning Brow of Rock Sheltered
Tenants of a Two-story Apartment**

Ruins of more than 40 stone-and-adobe structures line the ground level and upper floor of this long-abandoned community settlement in East Fork.

Occupants farmed the fields at the foot of their homes; cliff dwellers at Mesa Verde, 100 miles away, tilled mesa tops. Sheer walls forbid access

to the upper level, as the distant climbers learned; the inhabitants used ladders or ropes. Nearby the expedition found arrowheads and other artifacts.

KOBACHROME BY BURNETT A. HENDRYX © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



Doodler's paradise, its meaning lost in antiquity, marches across Newspaper Rock in Indian Creek Canyon. Archeologists speculate that the wall may have flanked a trail where prehistoric artists used hard stones to cut animals, human figures, and symbols in a crust of "desert varnish."

Cave relics include bits of cord, potsherds, stone axhead (left), sandstone scraper (right), and the well-preserved heel of a yucca-fiber sandal.



and named earlier by photographers Ray and Virginia Garner and by Merle Winbourne of the National Park Service. From one angle in the curving gorge the cliff top resembles a castle, with the arch-cut rock extending like a bold flying buttress.

Later we hiked up another fork of the canyon and found the second arch, as massively rigid in appearance as Castle seems fragile. Erosion has carved an opening, perhaps 80 to 90 feet wide, through a heavy humped spur that rears above a rock-strewn defile.

The battlemented appearance of the sandstone layer capping the arch, as well as the big columnar end of the rock spur, suggested a crumbling mountain stronghold. We named it Fortress Arch.

Returning from upper Horse Canyon toward the Salt, we detoured across a valley to see Tower Ruin, an Indian dwelling in a high cliff-face cave near a towering rock pinnacle (page 663).

Within the cave, reached by a breathtaking scramble up steep slickrock and a final boost

up a juniper log, we found houses almost perfectly preserved. One structure, about 6 feet square and 6½ feet high, apparently had served the Indians as a storehouse; the other, slightly larger, as a dwelling. Walls, roof timbers, and roofs remained intact, even to the stone slabs the Indians used to cover the entrances through the ceilings. The projecting ends of the logs holding the roofs were charred, indicating that the builders had used fire to cut the poles to length.

Walls Plastered by Savage Hands

Back in Salt Creek, we headed upstream. Our route skirted a rock wall worn thin by a sharp loop of the stream. In places the stone is broken into toadstool-shaped columns and punctured by small windows.

Near one window we saw white hand marks on the rock. The prints had been made by placing the spread hand against the wall and splattering white paint around it, leaving an outline of palm and fingers.

These prints overlay older cliff markings,

and they seemed so fresh we thought at first they had been made by some whimsical recent visitor. But from the window we saw other hand prints marking a cliff on the opposite side of the canyon. No modern passer-by could have put them there, for the rock drops sheer. The early Indian artist who made them obviously worked from a now-vanished ledge.

Near the cliff window we also came upon a flaking ground where the Indians fashioned arrowheads. Flakes of jasper and chalcedony strewed the slope. Among them were several arrowheads, broken during the shaping.

The arrow makers may have chosen this site as camp for the same reason we stayed to eat lunch there—water. A clear, cold spring pours from a small crevice beneath a rock at the base of the cliff and trickles away into the sandy streambed.

Three or four miles farther along the Salt, Bob Robertson and I spied an arch in a butte dominating a side gulch. Swinging around a wide bend, we saw it again, this time from the opposite side.

Ballooning figure, painted on a cave wall by primitive Indians, is red, white, and blue. Visiting Explorer Scouts labeled it the "all-American man."



KODACHROMES © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



Erosion, Gnawing at Soft Sandstone,
Sculptures Lavender Creek's Labyrinths

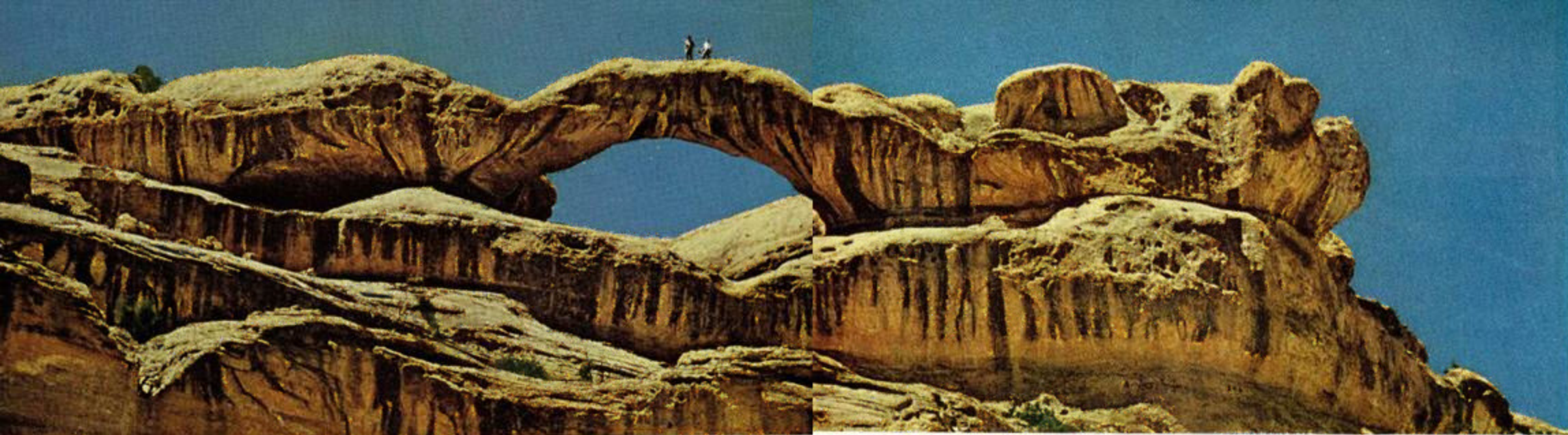
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Hogback ridge in the distance separates Lavender Creek and Salt Creek, only a few miles apart. When the ridge proved unscalable from the Salt

Creek side, the author retraced his steps and rode 53 miles around it to enter this maze from the dry stream at lower left. He took this view on a pre-

liminary aerial survey. Cleft Arch, the canyon's most unusual formation, appears just to the right of center (see also page 677).

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KODACHROME © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Eyes right, Caterpillar Arch lifts its hump atop a wall in Lavender Creek. Explorers

scaled the monster's back, but slickrock sides balked attempts to reach the opening

Two thick, rounded humps, linked by a narrower wedge of rock, form the crest of the butte. A large hole has broken through the wedge, suggesting a low, arched gateway flanked by the two broad, stubby towers. To us it became Two Bobs Arch, two Bobs having seen it simultaneously.

Some ten miles above the junction of Salt Creek and Horse Canyon, we came to another side gorge. Near its upper end stands Angel Arch, one of the most striking formations we had seen from the air. To reach it, we switched from Jeep to horseback.

From the air, Angel Arch had appeared large. From the rocky defile beneath the high cliff shoulder upon which it perches, it became even more imposing.

We scrambled up gullies and over massive broken boulders to get nearer. Some of our more agile climbers followed a rock seam to the arch opening itself. The rest of us stayed behind to photograph it as purple evening shadows crept toward the base (page 660). The arch gains its name from the contour of the rock on one side of the opening.

Eagerly, we returned the following morning to see it from the east, where the angel shows best. A projecting rock lump forms her head, which she holds modestly bent, gazing down into the canyon. She leans against the side of an arch, one wing folded down over her loosely draped figure.

Wilson and Hendryx managed to climb to the arch from this eastern face, finding a much

easier route here than on the western side.

Next morning we packed our gear back in the Jeeps and continued along the Salt. In the upper part of its course the channel divides into two branches, East and West Forks. We chose the longer eastern one.

Before reaching the junction, we passed below a high Indian cliff ruin commanding a wide sweep of the canyon. We climbed to its ledge, upon which perch well-preserved Indian storage houses. Here Bob Robertson found a stone fleshing knife, fragments of twisted cord, and sherds to add to the artifacts he and Alan Wilson, Bates Wilson's son, were collecting for the University of Utah. From this aerie we spotted other ruins dotting outlying cliffs.

"Honest John" Seeks Lonely Canyon

Two miles up East Fork, at a narrow bend of the canyon, we came to a rock shelf known as The Jump, over which the streambed makes a sharp drop. It barred our Jeeps; again we had to proceed by horse.

Below The Jump we found a car trailer that had been somehow dragged up the rough canyon. On a tree beside it was a sign: "Honest John Uranium Corp. No Trespassing."

Honest John wasn't home. Apparently he had not been there for some time. We set up camp in his dooryard—the tamarisk-covered sand flat—and hiked back and forth to The Jump to get water and take chilly showers under the slender threads of water dropping

from its ledge. In the bedrock at its base we found masses of flint-hard jasper, which the Indians used extensively for arrowheads.

During our first night in camp at The Jump, strong wind rose, hurling dust at us like a sharp sandblast. I propped up my duffel bag as shield to my sleeping bag and covered my head to ward off the stinging sand. When I awoke next morning, the wide ground sheet upon which Burnett and I had spread our beds was all but hidden by a dune.

Fortunately the wind had dropped, and the day dawned clear. Back in the saddle, we clambered up a high talus slope, got around The Jump, and continued up the canyon.

Here in East Fork of the Salt, we saw our most extensive and striking Indian remains. One rock alcove contained several storehouses or dwellings. And on the wall behind them an early Indian artist had painted four angular faces in red.

Within a cliff cave a short distance away, an artist had produced a far bolder, more ornate painting. It was our prize find of the entire trip. Working with red, white, and blue pigments, the artist had portrayed a ballooned figure more than four feet high. Its colors still bright, the painting is unmarred except that some unknown visitor before us had outlined the figure with chalk (page 667).

Farther along the canyon we came upon a two-story community settlement that I had glimpsed earlier from the air. It nestles within a huge cliff undercut. One row of stone-

and-adobe ruins extends the length of a long gallery ledge, some 30 or 40 feet above ground level; a second row edges the base of the cliff below them (page 664).

Some are almost perfectly preserved, even to the poles, sticks, grass, and mud of the roofs. Of others only foundations remain.

Here Bates Wilson turned up part of a well-preserved sandal, woven of yucca fiber. At a kitchen midden, Harlon Bement found two rounded pieces of pottery, each about two inches across. A hole had been drilled in their centers; they may have once served as spindle whorls—flywheels to keep a spinning shaft in motion longer. Potsherds, broken arrowheads, and stone flakings strewed the ground.

Erosion Works With Imagination

Between the cave where we had found the Indian painting and the cliff settlement stands Ring Arch, the most symmetrical in the canyons. Weathering agents have cut an oval opening some 150 feet high by 100 feet wide through a thin red sandstone wall, leaving only a narrow rock band about the top of its curve. The end of the adjoining rock spur is sculptured into the shape of a huge jug handle, complete even to the finger opening.

Leaving East Fork and moving westward to explore side canyons, we saw two other impressive arches. We rode as far toward them as we could and then climbed the rough slopes of the ravines. While Bates Wilson led a group seeking a way up the steep slickrock

slope to one arch, Hendryx and Bement set off for the other. Later, while I photographed Bates's group in the one opening, I heard a triumphant echoing shout and saw the second group waving from the other.

Bates Wilson came back to report that the arch opening he had measured was 125 feet 6 inches across by 36 feet high. We gave it the name Elephant Trunk Arch, for with a little imagination the formation looks like the bulky heads of two elephants, their joined trunks arched against the sky.

Bement and Hendryx found theirs to be

among the largest of all the arches we saw on the trip. It punctures a rock wall that links two higher cliffs; its opening stretches just over 166 feet in length and is slightly more than 100 feet high. They named it Corleissen Arch for the late Harley J. Corleissen, former Chairman of the Utah State Road Commission.

Narrow Ridge Forces Wide Detour

Eastward beyond these arches the canyon broadens to form The Meadows. And just beyond rise the walls of Salt Creek Mesa, backed by Manti-La Sal National Forest.

Only a narrow hogback ridge separates East Fork's drainage from the upper end of long Lavender Creek, a branch of Indian Creek (page 668). But to reach an arch in Lavender that we had seen from the air, we had to retrace our path through the Salt, return to Dugout Ranch, then thread nearly the full length of Lavender Creek—a distance of 53 jeep miles (map, page 656).

The arch we were seeking offers an unusual example of geological action on a tongue of rock that once formed a kink in the stream. Water sweeping around the cliff had worn deep alcoves on either side and had left a thin wall between them.

Then the rock tongue was fractured lengthwise into two narrow slabs. Erosion, working independently on each slab, created two large irregular openings which overlapped and formed an arch some 130 feet wide by 80 feet high. Had there been no fracture during the formation of the arch, the span would have been more than double its present width.

Because of its unusual appearance as a result of the splitting, we gave it the name Cleft Arch (page 677).

Near the top of the lofty wall on the opposite side of the canyon, we saw a small, delicately arched rainbow of stone. Several other arches have perforated Lavender's walls. One similar to Ring Arch, but smaller, has been cut by a stream dropping from a higher cliff face. During

Circling over the Colorado in a helicopter, Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman and his 14-year-old son Michael plot their position. Bridgelike strip reinforces the Plexiglas window of the closed door. Secretary Freeman accompanied Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall (extreme left) on a survey of the canyons.

KODACHROME BY OTIS IMBODEN © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY



KODACHROMES BY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER OTIS IMBODEN © N.G.S.

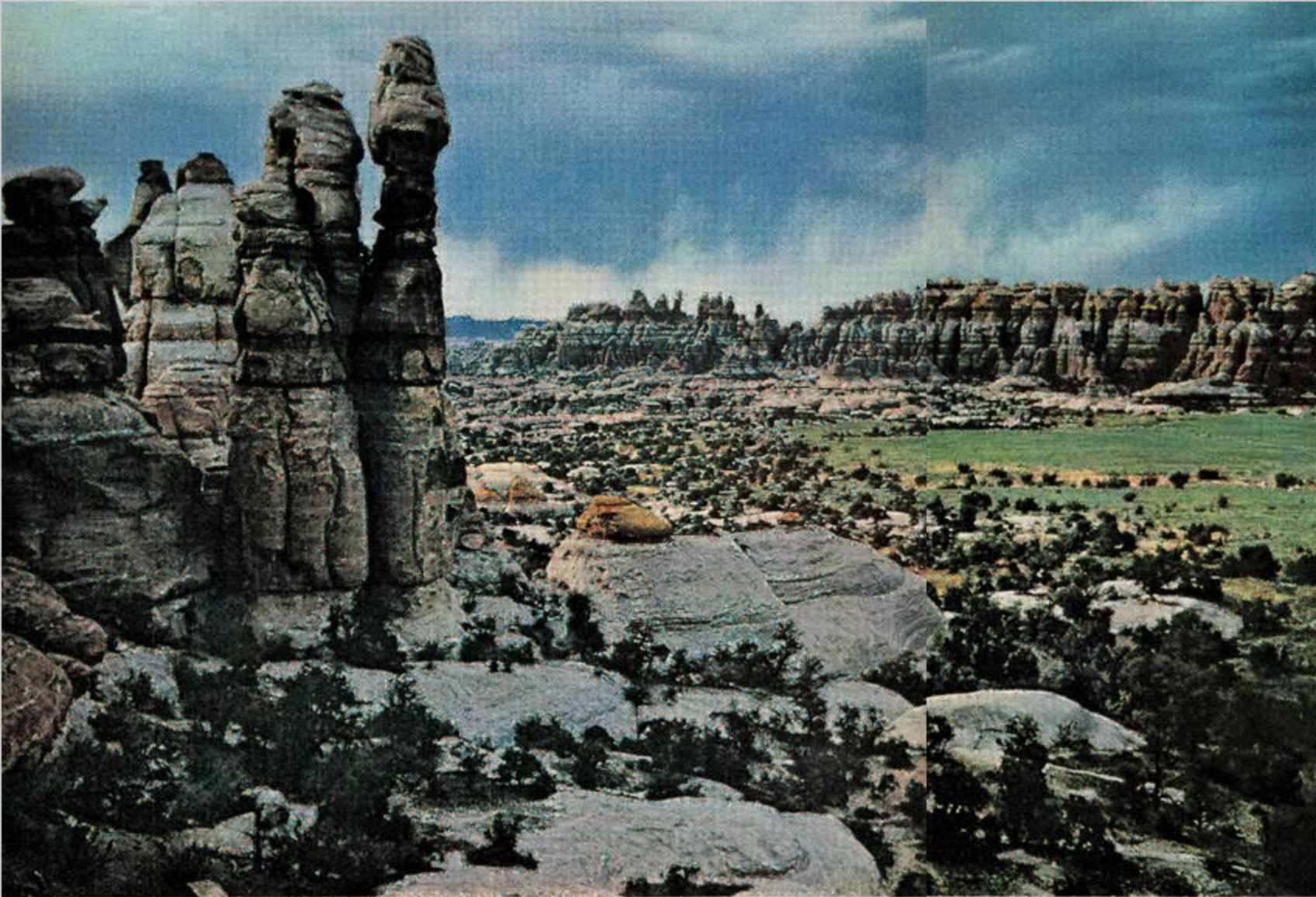
Helicopter Picks Its Way Through Stone Sentinels

To inspect proposed national park land, Secretary Udall made a five-day swing through the canyons of southeastern Utah last July. Returning to Washington, D. C., he told NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: "Canyonland is a complex of natural wonders unequaled anywhere. It will make one of the most remarkable areas ever added to our national park system."

A U. S. Air Force H-21 settles down in Chesler Park.

Boatman serves pancakes to Secretary Udall and 12-year-old Gordon, son of Frank E. Moss, United States Senator from Utah, at their river campsite near Dead Horse Point. Here the Colorado meanders gently between canyon walls.





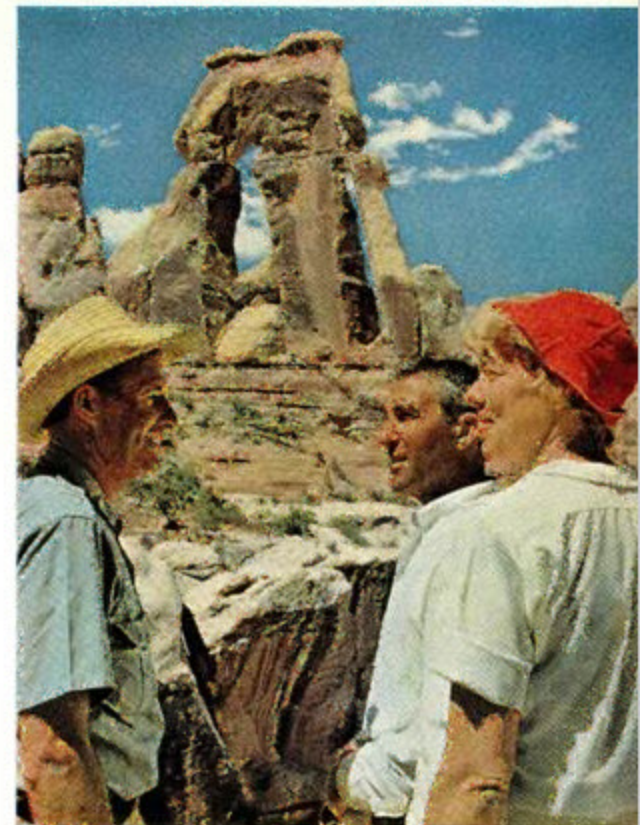
KODACHROMES BY W. ROBERT MOORE (ABOVE) OTIS IMBODEN, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF © N.G.S.

Fifty-story-tall minarets of rock ring Chesler Park in The Needles region. Horizontal cracks and ridges in the spires mark strata deposited eons ago when a sea covered the area. Piñons and junipers dot the meadow.



Hands across the centuries, Mrs. Stewart L. Udall and daughter Lynn match palms with the painted prints of prehistoric Indians on a wall in Devils Lane.

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View of Druid Arch rewards the Udalls after a hot, grueling climb from Chesler Park (pages 652-3). Bates E. Wilson, the first white man to approach Druid on foot, guides the hikers.

Broad-billed hats shade the Udalls on a Colorado cruise with river-boatman Don Smith as pilot.



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rains, the opening acts like the mouth of a wide pitcher.

We turned our Jeeps across the sagebrush flat to gain a closer view of it, and had gone only a short distance when all of us shouted almost in unison: "There's another arch!" Along the rimrock of the canyon wall ranged a series of scallops and cavelike undercuts that suggested an enormous creeping caterpillar. One of these humps arched free to frame a sky opening (page 670). We named this formation Caterpillar Arch.

The Needles—Nature's Skyscrapers

Lavender Creek marked the end of our exploration on this trip; after we returned to Monticello, the party disbanded. But later, with Bates Wilson and three friends from Moab, I returned to probe The Needles.

Again we came to Cave Spring, and from there drove to Devils Pocket, a pleasant hollow lined with green springtime grass and massed patches of flowering beeweed, yellow as mustard. Above and about us soared sheer cliffs and pinnacled walls.

We clambered up out of Devils Pocket and down again into Devils Lane, a quarter-mile-wide corridor extending several miles. Some of these long canyons crease The Needles area.

"Geological explanation for their formation," Bates said, "is that underlying layers of salt have dissolved. This made the floors sink to their present levels."

We rode for two miles along the grassy avenue of Devils Lane and then turned into Chesler Canyon, named after a stockman who ran cattle there. Finally we climbed into a spectacular oval of meadow. This is Chesler Park, rimmed by towering red spires above skyscraper walls—The Needles (page 674).

Just southeast of Chesler Park, reached by a roundabout route along Chesler Canyon, lies Virginia Park, another rock-encircled open space remarkably similar to Chesler. Save that they lack water, here are two of the most delightful camping spots in the West.

The liveliest invasion of Chesler's seclusion came last year when Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall arrived by helicopter to investigate the possibility of the area's becoming a national park (pages 672-5). While here, the Secretary also sought one of the same

goals we did: Druid Arch, at the head of Elephant Canyon. This was another of the arches that Harlon Bement had found on his flights. Swooping low over the rock rim of Chesler, Bement spied it, a big double-slotted opening, puncturing a high shoulder of rock (pages 652-3).

"Even after we knew where it was," Bates Wilson said, "it took Alan and me two years to discover which canyon fork it occupied."

When they did locate it, they found no accessible way to the arch itself. Nor did we, who had to content ourselves with a face-on view of the arch from a slickrock ledge across the deeply cut canyon.

While we were photographing Druid, white, fleecy clouds came scudding across the sky. Within minutes they had massed into a solid cover and turned black. The wind honed itself to a cutting edge.

Back in camp, we huddled close to the fire and ate an early dinner. Though it was late May, the clouds spat flurries of snow.

We awoke next morning to find a thin layer of ice in our water buckets, but sunshine again flamed on The Needles. Forty miles away, the La Sal Mountains glistened with new whiteness. Their snowy crests served as guideposts on our way out of the canyons.

Flying Survey Makes New Discoveries

In Moab I joined Harlon Bement for another air trip over the region. On this flight the erosion-gouged landscape no longer seemed as chaotic as it had at the outset. Now I was able to fit together the patterns of the canyons and locate the arches, Indian ruins, and our campsites.

During this quick aerial recapitulation, we spotted three other arches we had not seen before. Subsequently, Harlon telephoned me in Washington. "I've just flown over the area again," he said. "We've located six new arches in a side canyon just beyond Ring Arch. And there's another right across the valley that looks like a honey!"

I was not surprised that he had found more. Our aerial flights and two ground trips had probed only a portion of this fantastic region. And it may be years before visitors succeed in cataloguing all the arches of Utah's cliff-hung canyonland.

THE END

Cleft Arch's dual walls of rock soar like flying buttresses. Blue sky peeps through slits where spans of the freak formation, split lengthwise by rock fracture, fail to meet.

KODACHROME BY W. ROBERT MOORE, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF © N.G.S.

