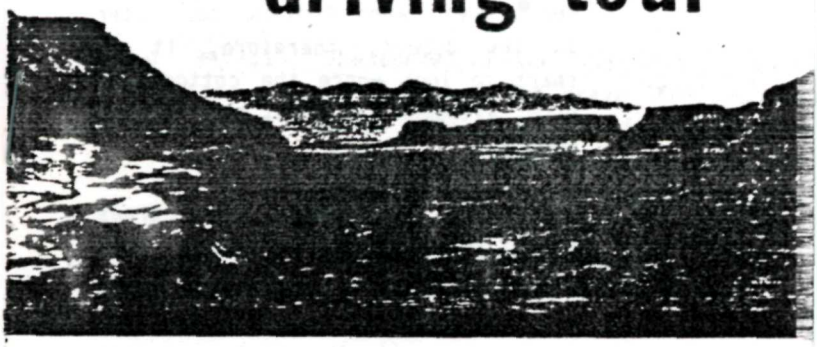
Humbug Overlook driving tour



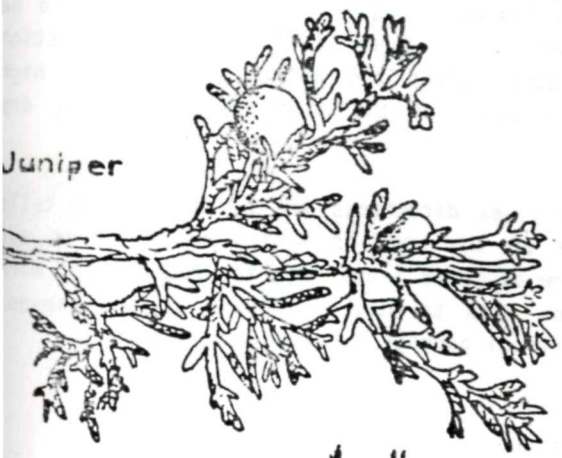
Just 7 miles from Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry is a red rock canyon with impressive scenery and opportunities for hiking. Called Humbug Canyon, this spot is also a popular campsite, although there are no developed facilities.

The road to Humbug is quite rough, and it should be avoided when wet. There is one 1/4-mile section which is quite steep and narrow. Cars with high clearance should find the road passable during dry weather.

This guide gives directions to the canyon and tells about some of the ways in which public lands are used. Allow at least 1 hour for the round trip; more time if you plan to hike or picnic at the canyon. Please carry all garbage out with you.

Miles From Start	Miles Between Points	
.7	.7	All around you are flat-topped hills. These are called mesas, a Spanish word for table. Mesas are usually capped by a hard layer of rock, which resists erosion. They are flat because the capping layer is still in the level position in which it was laid down 145 million years ago. Some mesas were used for protection by earlier peoples, as it was difficult for their enemies to climb up without being detected from the top.
1.0	.3	Turn left here.
1.5	.5	The broadleaf trees growing on the right are cottonwoods, a type of poplar. Cottonwoods need a perman-

Miles From Start	Miles Between Points	
		ent water source to survive, and will grow long roots in order to reach one. When looking for water in the desert, therefore, it is smart to look where the cottonwoods grow, although one might have to dig deeply.
.9	.4	Unlike the cottonwoods, these trees do not require a lot of water. Look closely and you will see that there are two types of trees here: the pinyon pine and the juniper, which often grow near each other. Although these can live in the drier areas, they cannot grow very big here. A cottonwood 100 feet tall is often younger than a 20-foot pinyon.



Miles From Start	Miles Between Points	
2.0	.1	The corral on the left is still used by cattlemen who graze livestock in this area. Notice its practical design -- large boulders form one side of the fence. Cattle grazing has been the main use of this land for most of this century.
2.2	.2	The clearing on the left and the road to the right are remnants of an oil exploration project which took place in 1983. Although a hole 3,500 feet deep was drilled, no oil was found. The land is being reclaimed; Bureau of Land Management personnel working with the oil company will try to restore the native plants to the site. Continue down the main road.
2.7	.5	The road cut reveals the spreading root system that is characteristic of pinyon pines. Because there is little water below the surface of the desert, many plants here collect water by extending roots in all directions instead of just down. This way they can more efficiently collect rain and snowfall. On the left is a pinyon pine which has managed to survive although it no longer collects water from the side where this road passes.
2.9	.2	Although jeep roads branch off on both sides, stay on this main section to continue the tour.
3.3	.4	Watch for gullies on this stretch of road. It is usually best to veer left around the major washout here.

Miles From Quarry	Mileage Between Points	
5.0	1.7	From here it is possible to see several roads in the distant hills which are left over from the days of intense uranium prospecting. The 1950's brought hundreds of prospectors to this area and made Emery the second most productive county in the state with regards to uranium.
6.0	1.0	On the left is a pond -- or just the dry bed of one. From this it is possible to tell when the area last received significant rainfall, as runoff is its only source of water. Although frequently dry during summer, the pond is useful for watering stock in the springtime.
6.8	.8	On the left you begin seeing roads which lead to undeveloped campsites. Stay on the main road instead of turning onto any of these.
6.9	.1	Turn left among the trees here and park. Walk ahead to the rim of the canyon and the Jump Trail sign.

Hoodoos

(Jump Trail, Humbug Canyon) Rust, your blood, and the walls of this canyon are all colored by the same mineral: iron. Just a trace of iron among the grains of sandstone is enough to cause the bright redness.

Humbug Canyon is typical of badlands scenery. The steep slopes here cause rain and melting snow to run off quickly and remove soil as it forms. Therefore, few plants are able to grow.

Also typical in badlands like this are hoodoos, figures resembling animals, mushrooms, and people, which have been formed by weathering rocks. Layers of different hardness weather at different rates, leaving behind these unusual forms.

The Jump Trail gives a close-up view of a badland. It descends about 1/2 mile to the canyon floor, and joins a wash which is suitable for hiking.

Going up the wash eventually leads one to a site with huge boulders and trickling water. The downstream end of the wash leads out of Humbug Canyon to flat lands used for cattle grazing. How do you think it got the name Humbug?

Although hiking down the Jump Trail is simple, coming back up is strenuous for some. Be sure to carry drinking water with you along the trail.

Returning to Main Road

Check mileage reading again and start over. Leave the way you came, heading in the opposite direction from the Jump Trail sign. Turn right onto the road.

1.2	1.2	Though you may not see them, there are several types of wild animals which inhabit this area. Many, like coyotes and foxes, are shy of humans. Others, such as owls and mice, are active at night when few people are around. However, you may see rabbits and prairie dogs along the road and golden eagles, turkey vultures, or American kestrels above. Animal tracks, droppings, nests, and gnawings also tell about the wildlife of the area.

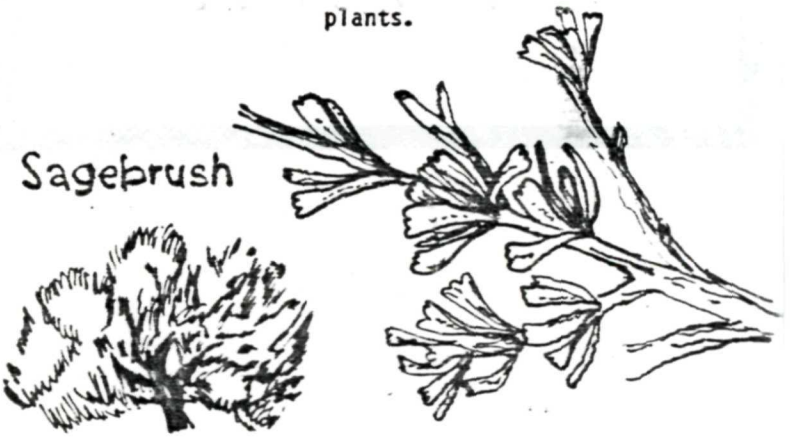
1.6	.4	In several places along this road are dips and gullies which have been cut by fast moving water. As water moves, it carries loose particles with it, eroding the landscape. Although these gullies are small, the same process which

Miles From Start	Miles Between Points	
		formed them carved out the canyon you just left. Erosion may seem like an annoyance to the driver, but without it our landscape would be much less interesting to look at.

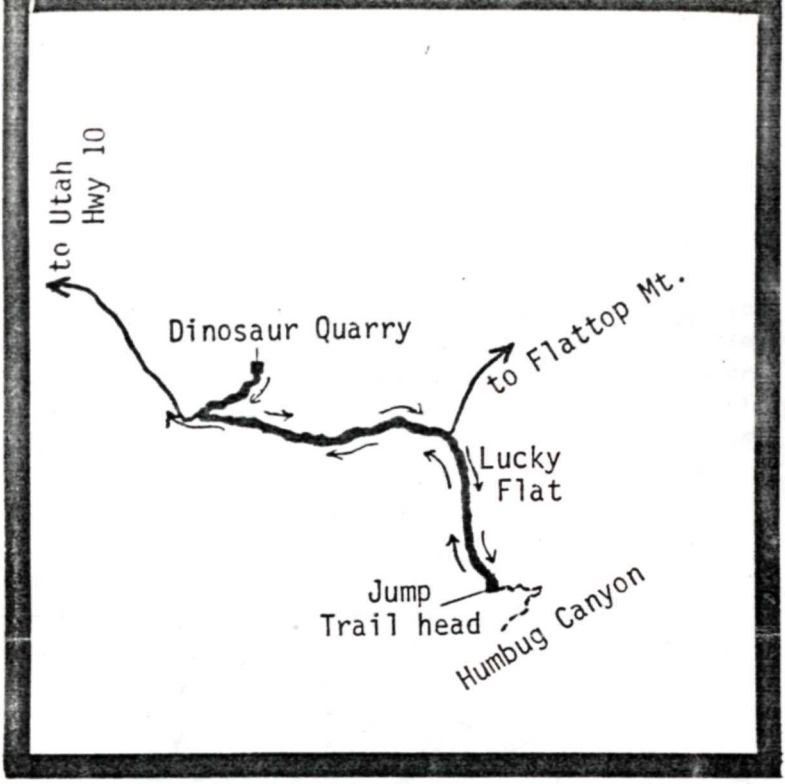
1.9	.3	Stay on the main road here, veering to the left. The road to the right leads to Flat Top Mountain, which, as the name indicates, is not actually a mountain but a large mesa. The road to Flat Top is rough and should not be traveled by passenger cars.

2.6	.7	If you are here in midsummer you will see lavender blossoms on 3-foot stalks all around. Even at other times of year you can hardly miss the green or dry stalks of thistles. Thistles are not native to Utah but were introduced from Europe. They compete with native plants for space, light, and water, and are difficult to eradicate.

Miles From Start	Miles Between Points	
3.1	.5	Along this wash are green shrubs with delicate leaves on long branches. These are tamarisk, another plant which is not native to Utah. It was introduced from the Mediterranean region over 150 years ago as an ornamental plant. It is now considered a nuisance because it invades damp areas and crowds out the native plants.



5.3	2.2	The gray-green shrubs here are native to the Western U.S. Any gourmet cook who crushes a leaf of this shrub can instantly tell from the smell that it is sagebrush. However, true sages used for seasoning come from plants in another family, not these. Sagebrush provides food for deer and pronghorn antelope.
5.9	.6	This concludes the tour. Perhaps you have learned a bit more about the desert and its inhabitants and perhaps it now seems a bit less barren. To return to the dinosaur quarry, turn right. Otherwise, turn left, and after 5 miles you will reach the "T" intersection from which you can choose to head north to Price or south toward Huntington.



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