Capitol Reef National Park is larger than Bryce Canyon and Zion National Parks combined and displays greater scenic variety for the visitor than either of those venerable parks. In short, it's well worth your precious time to explore!

Capitol Reef may be the national park system's best kept secret; visitation has hovered at the one-third million mark for several years. Like other national parks in Utah, it has campgrounds, hiking trails, a scenic drive, rough and remote roads to challenge the four-wheel drive family and backcountry adventure.

Capitol Reef has some extras, too. More than 2,500 "historic landscape" fruit trees provide enjoyment to the do-it-yourself picker as the cherries, apricots, peaches, pears and apples come into season. There are historic pioneer buildings to be visited and the puzzling rock art of the ancient Fremont Culture to be discovered.

The really big plus right now is that you can do these things, even in the summer, without the press of large crowds, overflowing parking areas and congested roads and trails. Quiet— even solitude—can still be found at Capitol Reef without a long trek into "backcountry."

"... the light seems to flow or shine out of the rock rather than to be reflected from it."—CLARENCE DUTTON
Try Our Short Hikes

For visitors with a little more time than a few short hours to spend, the park has some interesting hikes within a few miles of the Visitor Center. Some of these hikes are little more than scenic stroll trails. The Hickman Bridge hike is of moderate difficulty and extends about a mile, one way. There is a self-guiding booklet available at the Visitor Center for this very popular trail.

Some trails "get you on top" rather than lead you through awesome gorges. The Rim Overlook, Frying Pan, Cassidy Arch, Golden Throne, Fremont River, Chimney Rock and Cohab Canyon trails range from "fairly strenuous" to "strenuous" in difficulty. They are all on the short side, not longer than three miles, one way.

Just ask at the Visitor Center for a detailed handout about these trails.

Backpacking Takes Smarts

It's not smart to just break out the trusty back pack and head for the boondocks. You'll be in for discomfort—even trouble—especially at Capitol Reef.

First of all, you'll need a permit issued at the Visitor Center. The permit helps rangers keep track of impacts on fragile desert backcountry and enhances the chances of a search if injury strands you.

Capitol Reef has some real rough country; it's safest not to hike alone. Water will be your biggest problem for a long hike, especially in the often fierce summer heat. Most of the few springs, streams and rain-holding waterpockets are contaminated.

As you might expect, there are rules aplenty to protect both you and the environment and you'll receive a detailed information sheet when you get your permit. Some of the "no-nos": No pets, no weapons use, no camping near watersources.

Some of the easier and "close in" backcountry hikes are Spring Canyon and Pleasant Creek, Muley Twist Canyon, just below the Burr Trail, is also popular. For the cross country backpackers, 378 square miles of park present a hiking boot full of possibilities.

What About the Black Rocks?

...next to "where's the rest room?" perhaps our most frequently asked question. Well, about 25 million years ago, tremendous volcanic eruptions in central Utah brought lava flow to a point just west of Capitol Reef. After that—especially during the recent Ice Ages—the lava cap was broken up and rocks were tumbled and rolled for miles by the then-mighty Fremont River and other watercourses cutting across the Waterpocket Fold.

The "black" rocks look out of place and, in a way, they are. They are much harder than the sedimentary rocks they lie upon. Naturally very dark, they often take on the color of the soils in which they rest. Along highway 24, between Torrey and Bicknell, you can see almost a line of them that appear to be half white and half black. These rocks have been disturbed by cable laying near the highway.

Bad Guys Use Parks Too

Yes, Virginia, it's true. You're not safe from rip-off artists in national parks. In fact, there are predators who make a living from those who let their guard down in America's parklands.

Some of the favorite places for "car clouting" are trailhead parking areas. Patrol rangers, already spread too thin, concentrate their attentions there. Most "pros" can enter almost any locked vehicle doors in less than a minute. Trunks are harder to enter. If you must leave valuables in your car and you don't have a trunk, place them well out of sight.

Park rangers need your help with this problem, so report anything suspicious, pronto.

Park Has New Plan

As of 1982, Capitol Reef has a new "general management plan" to guide its administration and development into the 21st century.

The 139-page document spells out "preferred alternatives" for the three districts of the park in regard to access, visitor facilities, park support facilities, resource management and interpretation.

Some of the developments called for in the plan include expansion of the Fruita (headquarters district) campground and the construction of a new campground in the south district near the Burr Trail.

Planners and park staff believe that implementation of the new plan will increase recreational opportunities, improve visitor safety and reduce congestion.

A copy is available for review in the Visitor Center at any time.

They Are Eagles!

The towering red rock escarpment across the road from the visitor center is a favorite haunt of golden eagles. Throughout the summer, they can be seen soaring on the thermal updrafts near the cliffs or swooping down over the rock rubble to snatch up a wiggling morsel.
**“Deerest” Dilemma**

Warm weather visitors enjoy watching the mule deer herd in Fruita as they graze serenely on alfalfa at dusk. Talk about a just plain nice experience. Detective John Ware, whose beat included a herd of about 60-100, move down nightly from daytime solitude in the mesas above Fruita. Their trails crisscross the hillsides.

Like many pleasant things in life, the deer herd presence has a flip side that’s not so good. The deer are natural browsers, not grazers, and they just love the tops of young fruit trees. Even larger trees are not safe. The deer love to rub against the bark. Once the trees are stripped of bark all way ‘round, they’re goners.

The deer love to rub against the bark. Depending on the year, the potential moral issues, prejudices and emotions these conflicts always generate, e.g., the Grand Canyon burro problems, the proposal of shepherders to poison rangeland coyotes and the idea of reintroduction of large predators to parks surrounded by ranches.

If any reader has a new scheme to help rangers down from “the antlers” of their dilemma, the rangers would love to hear it. Meanwhile, this “deereest” problem is with us. Pass! I think the rangers like watching the deer too. [Editor]

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**Try Burr Trail**

If you like to see the “sights” by car or truck—and you are staying with us for more than a day or two—consider the 130 mile loop drive through Boulder, Utah and back to Capitol Reef.

In summer, the graded roads are in pretty good shape. Most of the time you will have no problem using the family sedan as long as it isn’t struggling too low. And the scenic views? "Magnificent, breathtaking, stupifying" all fit.

There’s no backtracking on this drive. You start out at the Visitor Center and move east in highway 24. Just outside the park you’ll wheel south at the Notom-Bullfrog Road junction and drive along the sharply tilted rock formations on the east face of the Waterpocket Fold. When you reach the Burr Trail junction you will ascend some thrilling switchbacks (don’t be fainthearted) and rise to the top of the Waterpocket Fold. The views are even more exciting than the ascent. When on top, consider that Mormon pioneers brought wagons over the fold in 1881 before a road was built.

As you travel west toward Boulder, the rocks become exquisitely colorful. You’ll have to pass over a few very shallow washes, but the bottoms are firm and gravelled and the inch or two of water you may find won’t prove a problem. Of course, there’s always a chance of a foot or more water in the washes following a heavy rain or snow melt. As always, watch the weather! You’re in for a real thrill when you start from Boulder to Grover over the high mountain road. Views of the Waterpocket Fold are incomparable. As a matter of fact, the first scientist-explorers to see the fold saw it from the slopes of Boulder Mountain in 1871.

Always check on road conditions and weather before you start this trek. It’s one of the best “tours” of Capitol Reef country.

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**Rocking at the Reef**

Capitol Reef is a rock watcher’s paradise but a little frustrating for rockhounds. Park regulations prohibit rockhounding and rangers take a dim view of folks working on the scenery with little hammer and sacks.

Parents can help their children understand the wisdom of protecting natural and historic objects in the nation’s parks and not leave it up to park employees to tell a child that he can’t take his/her “pretty rock” home. What harm will “one little rock” removal do? Well, despite intensive protective efforts over the years, there’s hardly a portable piece of petrified wood left at most roadside areas in Petrified Forest National Park.

By the way, the Bureau of Land Management has a rockhounding area not too far east of Capitol Reef. Ask about it at the Visitor Center.

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**It’s Butch Cassidy Country!**

The Wild Bunch—last of the big outlaw gangs—often sought sanctuary in the late 1890’s at Robber’s Roost, just east of Hanksville, Utah. Robert LeRoy Parker (Cassidy’s real name) was well known in Wayne Country and often used the old road through Capitol Gorge (now the Scenic Drive). Tradition records that the gang maintained a hideout in Grand Wash, near the Scenic Drive, but this has never been confirmed.

Two Wild Bunch gang members—“Blue John” and “Silvertip”—were arrested by Deputy U. S. Marshal Joe Bush and brought to trial in nearby Loa, the county seat of Wayne County.

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**Watch Your Kids!**

There are pitfalls for the unwary in parks like Capitol Reef. Some of the trails have steep drop offs; loose and crumbly rock is everywhere. Park rangers are amazed at the lack of care displayed by some parents who take trail hikes with their children. The kids are allowed to run hundreds of feet ahead, playing near the edge of cliffs, or scrambling over loose rocks that are prone to shifting.

One of the reasons that national parks are so appealing is that they are not full of fences or plastered with warnings. Capitol Reef contains some of nature’s most beautiful handbook but it’s no sheltered Disneyland. The park is real—with all that implies.
Red Rock Eden

The Story of Fruita and the Orchards

Most visitors to Capitol Reef National Park are curious about the thousands of fruit trees that lie within a mile or two of the visitor center. These trees—apple, pear, peach, cherry, apricot, mulberry, even Pawpaw tree Plum—are the most obvious reminder of the pioneer community that once prospered in the narrow valley of the Fremont River.

Settled Late

Settlement came late to south-central Utah; the Capitol Reef area wasn't charted by credible explorers until 1871. In the last half of that decade, Lander Day Saint (Mormon) settlers moved into the high plateau land west of Capitol Reef and established communities based on short-season farming and grazing. They then looked to the east, along the corridor of water snakking through the soaring cliffs and domes of the Waterpocket Fold—the Fremont River.

The origin of the little community at the junction of the Fremont River and Sulphur Creek is obscure. The first “resident!” may have been an 1879 squatter by the name of Franklin Young, but the first landholder of record was Nells Johnson. Others soon followed and the community that sprang up became known as “Junction.”

River the Key

The Fremont River was the key to life; without irrigation, farming would have been impossible. Unlike some of the other small settlements that grew from the further-downriver—Aldrich, Caineville, Blue Valley—Junction was usually spared the devastation caused by frequent flooding. The orchards of her residents prospered and before the turn of the century Junction was known as “the Eden of Wayne County.” In 1900 the name of the little settlement was changed to “Fruita.”

The community never incorporated. Local authority—such as it was—was vested in the Mormon “presiding elder.” The population averaged about ten families.

Although it became widely known in south-central Utah as Fruita, its orchards, Fruita residents also grew sorghum (for syrup and molasses), vegetables and alfalfa. Fruit growers usually picked the fruit prior to maturation and hauled it by wagonload to bigger towns like Price and Richfield—and beyond. This was a formidable undertaking when one considers that in 1901 it took the Mormon bishop of Torrey more than an hour and a half to travel the nine miles between Fruita and Torrey in the best weather. If the road between Torrey and Fruita was difficult, the “road” between Fruita and Hanksville—37 miles east—was nearly impossible.

The Blue Dugway

In 1883, residents of Fruita (then Junction) had built a passage through Capitol Gorge that extended to Caineville and Hanksville. This primitive roadway was called the “Blue Dugway” and it served to connect the river settlements with the rest of Utah until after World War II. The narrow wagon track was so difficult, however, that the little Fremont River communities remained some of the most isolated in America until the mid-20th century.

Along the Fremont River, barter served as the means for acquiring goods and services; cash was in short supply. Although some Fruita men worked on the state roads, annual fruit sales remained the major source of cash income.

Where Time Forgot

The one-room schoolhouse, constructed by residents in 1896, served as a community center. The desks were movable and the community enjoyed dances and box socials in the little building. Residents also held church activities there as well as in private homes.

Women often quilted together and men and boys were especially fond of baseball. “Putting up” foods was not a hobby in Fruita; it was essential for survival through the winter. Wealth through the modern era, farming techniques in Fruita remained in the 19th century. It was not until World War II that the first tractor was purchased.

Fifty years ago, Fruita was spared much of the anguish that the Great Depression brought to other communities in America. Long reliance on barter as the main method of filling basic life needs shielded the Fremont River settlers from the cash drought that plagued the nation. Contrary to what one might imagine, Fruita sheltered passionate supporters of Franklin D. Roosevelt as well as conservative “Hooverites.”

A Tolling Bell

Although it wasn’t recognized clearly at the time, the establishment of Capitol Reef National Monument in 1937 would become a tolling bell for the Fruita community. After World War II, park visitors began to arrive in increasing numbers; the road from Richfield to nearby Torrey was paved in 1940. In 1952, the pavement was extended to Fruita; the world had found the Capitol Reef country.

As visitation to the monument increased in the post war years, the National Park Service (NPS) determined to purchase all the Fruita properties still in private hands. By the late 1960s, most of this had been accomplished on a “willing seller/willing buyer” basis. Many of the residence structures and outbuildings were razed.

Although most of the structures of the Fruita settlement are gone (with the exception of the restored schoolhouse, the Pendleton-Gifford house and barn and a few others), the orchards remain and dominate the landscape. The new general management plan for Capitol Reef National Park cites the value of the orchards as a “historic landscape” and affirms the intention of the National Park Service to preserve them.

Heritage Preserved

The orchards—all owned by the American people—are maintained at a level of about 2,500 trees with 1,800 “in production.” A small crew is kept busy year-round with pruning, irrigation, replanting and spraying.

As each fruit crop comes into season, the fruit (apples, cherries, peaches, apricots and pears) is made available to the public on a “pick your own” basis. The park superintendent sets the per pound or bushel price after checking local commercial orchard prices. Although he may take the isolation of Fruita into consideration in setting prices, he is not permitted to undercut private enterprise.

Management of the orchards, especially during picking season, presents some difficult problems to resolve. Because the trees were planted as smallish family orchards originally—each with a wide variety of fruit types—fruit ripens in these “mini-orchards” at varying times. It is very difficult for park rangers to “open” orchards for picking in small “penny packets” and still exercise the control needed to protect the trees from damage and the pickers from unsafe acts.

However, as trees become overage, horticultural workers are slowly replacing the patchwork quilt-like layout of the orchards with a more orderly arrangement consisting of large tracts of monocultures, e.g., all peaches in one large orchard, all apricots in another large orchard, etc. In this way, the gross aspect of the “historic landscape” will be maintained but the fruit harvest will be much easier to manage.

For both visitors and regional residents, Fruita will continue to be the “Eden of Wayne County” into 2001—and beyond.
Toucstones of Forever

Look for the Secrets in the Rocks

By George Davidson

Not every traveler across the broken lands of the Colorado Plateau in south-central Utah is impressed.

I remember how enthralled I was as I drove to Capitol Reef National Park from a National Park Service office job back east. Pushing northwest from New Mexico, the colors seemed to become more brilliant, the contours of twisted rocks more ragged. Caught up in this geological fantasy I exclaimed, "Isn't this magnificent?"

Deflation came suddenly. My second oldest intoned from the rear seat, "What's so great about it, Dad? Nothing but rocks." The other two mumbled assent. Incredible! Where had I failed?

Three years after that deflation, I'm not sure the kids are really moved much by the isolated but spectacular environment in which I live and work. The social hurly-burly at school is often a topic of discussion—never a topic of rock on a soaring cliff. Maybe it really takes the care-weary or at least the life-seasoned to appreciate a sunset.

Preadolescent children and Utah pioneers may share a little something in common. Most of the stalwarts who gave birth to south-central Utah in the last three decades of the 19th Century couldn't find much praise for the Waterpocket Fold either. The 100 mile long spine of "standing-up" rock couldn't be cultivated in most places and, unless a cow or sheep had discovered levitation, grazing couldn't be practiced. Perhaps the only praise the Waterpocket Fold got underway at about the same time the Colorado Plateau uplift event was starting about 65 million years ago. The fold may still be upliftiing.

The sedimentary rocks of the Waterpocket Fold country look like that's for certain. Here the analogy of the ascending staircase we talked about before runs into problems unless you focus all your attention on the staircase after a very wild night on the town or, perhaps, imagine looking at it through one of those fun house mirrors.

The Titan's backbone? You know, it's odd how some things get a handle. When you think about it, calling a gigantic 100 mile long upthrust the "Waterpocket Fold" because of the fan of unconformity is a bit of a stretch. The Waterpocket Fold is much wider than that. And you know, after three years of this red rock rhapsody I'm still a mystic about Capitol Reef. Maybe you guessed as much!

The Twisted Staircase

As the whole mind-boggling event of uplift accelerated, the weathering away of rock quickened. Silt-laden water runoff eventually found access to the Pacific Ocean and, ever since, the Colorado Plateau has been "going to sea" in the muddy waters of the Colorado River and at a pretty quick pace if you remember how long it took to put all those layers down to begin with.

"Reading the rocks" on the Colorado Plateau might not be all that difficult if geomologists were dealing with fairly uniform rock layers, a few unconformities and the process of weathering. But all sorts of other events complicate things, like (1) molten rock (magma) from deep within the earth moving into subterranean cracks and fissures, pushing and disturbing the sedimentary rocks; (2) small glaciers grinding and reshaping, leaving oddball sediments of their own; and, (3) the stressing, twisting, stretching and breaking of the sedimentary rocks in "mini" versions and variations of the Colorado Plateau disruption. At Capitol Reef just such a distortion in the rock layers occurred and left us the scenic legacy of the Waterpocket Fold.

One-hundred and ninety million years ago you wouldn't have liked the Visitor Center locale either. Your time machine might leave you standing on a sand dune, the glaring white sands of a scorching, near-equatorial desert a blur in the horizon's sky.

The Mystical Within

... The soaring, jumbled, jagged rocks! Sometimes the flatlander's initial response—like mine—is enthrallment, a transfixing, an elevating euphoria. Naturally, there are lots of folks who just think the scenery is "nice." We're talking about matters of the soul. Poets of ancient times just what they do today—eroding soft and rock away. Whenever there was a significant pause in the laying down of sediments, erosion got into the act. Where geomologists find a step in the staircase of sediments has eroded away in times primeval, they find an unconformity!

While most of the geologic steps would be the same at, say, the Capitol Gorge locale as they would near the Visitor Center, a few would not. In ancient times, just as they do today, streams meandered and shorelines abided. A meandering river laid down the so-called Shinarump sandstone just on top of the Moenkopi and that's why you just can't find it in some places. As the song might refrain "The river didn't flow where the Shinarump didn't grow." The process of layering—building the sedimentary staircase—went on almost forever. Here in south-central Utah it pretty much ended about 60 million years ago. For some reason—geologists now cite—and hold fast to the condition.

The process of layering—building the sedimentary staircase—went on almost forever. Here in south-central Utah it pretty much ended about 60 million years ago. For some reason—geologists now cite—sediment(ary) staircase—went on...
**New Book Will Tell Story of Capitol Reef Plant Life**

The Capitol Reef Natural History Association has a very active publications program and hopes, by the year 2000, to have books available on every facet of the scenic, geologic, cultural and biologic resources of the park. A publication long needed has been one dealing with the diverse plant life of the park, illustrating not only where plants exist in the park, but explaining how and why they are there. What professional botanist Dr. Susan Meyer has lovingly authored is not just another "coffee table" picture book of a national park's plant life, but a penetrating and witty look into plant relationships with water, soil, animals, man—and one another. Her book—true "plant ecology"—is expected to be ready for the 1997 visitor season, somewhat later than this chapter on water.

Water is the key to understanding the lives of Capitol Reef plants. The very first plants on our planet lived totally immersed in this amiable medium, but all that changed after a hard-fought conquest of land. Land plant design is based on the need to keep from wilting in an environment where death by dehydration is the biggest threat. For desert plants, this danger is very real. Land plants also had to develop a more rigid structure, since they no longer had the buoying effect of water to help them spread their weight over a larger surface area.

Water enters the plant through its roots. You have to dig very carefully to begin to comprehend the intimacy with which plant roots clasp the soil. The delicate hairs of the feeder roots are threadlike extensions of single cells, which cling to each tiny soil crumb. The degree of interpenetration is so great that roof and soil become inseparable. Only by exposing these vulnerable living threads to the hazards of the changing soil environment can the plant draw in the water and dissolved mineral nutrients it needs. If the soil dries out too much, the feeder roots die back, and the main root branches, which are waterproofed with a corky covering, ensure that water is not leaked out into the soil again. Just as above ground, the well-timed death of small repeating units is essential to the well-being of the whole plant.

Once inside the root, the water moves upward into the stem through conducting tissue made up of clusters of tiny tubes. These tube clusters ramify into every branch and into each leaf, where they form a network of veins. As water is lost from the leaves, a pressure or potential gradient is created. This pulls water up from the roots, in much the same way that sucking pulls water up a straw. If flow up from the roots cannot keep pace with evaporation from the leaves, the leaves begin to lose water and wilt. You might think that waterproofing the leaves to seal in moisture would solve the problem, and desert plants especially do tend to do that. But it is not a perfect solution, because a plant with perfectly waterproof leaves would die—of starvation. Water is only one essential ingredient in the sugar-manufacturing process—another is carbon dioxide, which must enter the leaves in gas form from the atmosphere. Unfortunately, any pathway which permits the escape of carbon dioxide must also be an escape route for water. Plants have solved this dilemma by having tiny adjustable holes called stomates ("little mouths") scattered across a leaf surface which is otherwise more or less waterproof. The stomates open when conditions are right for carbon dioxide uptake, but close when conserving water becomes the number one concern.

The rate of water loss from leaves is greatly increased by the fanning action of the wind. If a leaf can trap a still layer of air over the stomates, the carbon dioxide can enter, but evaporation is slowed down. A covering of hair can create such a still layer. Sometimes the stomates themselves are countershaded into the leaf surface, opening into pits or crypts where they are out of the breeze.

Evaporation from the surfaces also helps to cool the leaves, and plants which live for a long time without water must find other ways to keep from parboiling their leaf protoplasm. A small leaf re-radiates heat quickly and stays close to air temperature rather than overheating, while one with a pale, waxy or hairy undersurface can reflect the radiant energy before it is converted to heat. Big, bright green leaves are a good sign that a plant can afford the water to keep cool by evaporation.

**FOR THE BIRDS...**

The chukar is a non-native permanent resident at Capitol Reef and may be thought of as a pest by some, or bonus to a checklist by others. Originally from the "Mediterranean" dry belt of Eurasia, this hardy partridge was introduced as a gamebird to the Bicknell-Torreya area west of the park. Abandoning the introduction site, the chukars drifted eastward into the bird population of the species—canyons with boulder-strewn slopes and rocky cliffs with adjoining open, grassy fields—the Reef area. As they multiplied rapidly with a typical brood of 8-15 chicks, covets of native Gambel's quail disappeared. The chukars soon became a resource management problem for the park, another difficult-to-control intrusion into the native environment.

Get A Checklist

Aimed with binoculars and patience, your visit to Capitol Reef is sure to be rewarding. Whether you are a serious birder or just curious about a bird you happened upon, stop in at the park visitor center for more information. A bird checklist, a guide to the hiking trails and a park folder are distributed there and a naturalist is sometimes available for personalized help. You may find one or more sales publications helpful.

Don't forget: A good checklist can help foster communication between the spread-thin naturalists of the park staff and dedicated visitor-birders. Be sure to stop by the visitor center with any unusual sighting information.
In 1971, Capitol Reef became a national park, one of the “crown jewels” of the National Park System. Few people remember that about 60 years ago two local men—Ephraim P. Pectol and Joseph S. Hickman—laid the foundation for national recognition of this “pleasuring ground.” Today, Capitol Reef National Park comprises 378 square miles of colorful canyons, ridges, buttes and monoliths. About 75 miles of the long upthrust called the “Waterpocket Fold,” extending like a spine from Thousand Lake Mountain southward to Lake Powell, lies within the park boundary. “Capitol Reef” is the name of an especially spectacular part of the Waterpocket Fold near the Fremont River.

Early History

Only a few decades ago, the Waterpocket Fold country was one of the most remote corners of the “lower 48.” Easy road access came only with the construction of a paved Utah 24 through the Fremont River canyon in 1962.

The earliest traces of major human activity date from about the 7th century when aboriginal peoples occupied the flood plains and high ground near the few perennial watercourses. These people—called the Fremont Culture by archeologists—were related, apparently, to the pueblo-building Anasazi of the Four Corners area. In the 13th century, all aboriginal cultures in this area underwent sudden change; the Fremont Culture settlements and fields were abandoned. A massive drought may have contributed to the changes but no one is sure what happened to these hunter-farmers. It appears that people did not again settle the area for centuries. When the first white explorers traveled in the vicinity of the Waterpocket Fold, both Utes and Southern Paiute nomads were encountered.

Despite the fact that several early expeditions passed near Capitol Reef, none of them—including those of John C. Fremont—explored the Waterpocket Fold. It was, as now, incredibly rugged—and forbidding.

Following the Civil War, Mormon church officials at Salt Lake City sought to establish “missions” in the remotest niches of the intermountain west. In 1866, a quasi-military expedition of Mormons in pursuit of Indians penetrated the high valleys to the west of Capitol Reef. In the 1870s, settlers moved into high valleys, eventually establishing Loa, Fremont, Lyman, Teasdale, Bicknell (Thurber) and Torrey. Meanwhile, men from the expeditions of Major John Wesley Powell had begun to explore the area and the first modern era explorers saw the “reef” on May 12, 1871 from the slopes of Boulder Mountain.

In the early 1880s, settlers moved into Capitol Reef country. Tiny communities sprang up along the life sustaining Fremont River; Junction (later Fruitia), Caineview, Notom, Aldrich, Giles, Clifton and Hanksville were created.

The “Fathers of Capitol Reef National Monument”

Ephraim P. Pectol was born in 1875. As a child he lived in Caineview, a flood-ravaged Mormon settlement a dozen miles east of Capitol Reef. In 1910 he went into business in Torrey and operated a store there for many years. He served as Mormon bishop of Torrey from 1911 until 1928.

Pectol was anxious that the outside world should come to appreciate the beauty of the area. He pressed a promotional campaign, furnishing stories and photos to periodicals and newspapers.

In this effort he was joined by his brother-in-law, Joseph S. Hickman, who was Wayne County High School principal. In 1924, Hickman extended community involvement in the promotional effort by organizing a Wayne County-wide “Wayne Wonderland Club.” In 1924, the educator was elected to the Utah State Legislature.

Through Hickman’s efforts, 16 acres at Fruitia were set aside as a state park in 1925. A few days after the dedication, Hickman was killed in a boating accident.

Shortly thereafter, Pectol was elected to the presidency of the Associated Civics Club of Southern Utah, successor to the Wayne Wonderland Club. The club raised $150 to interest a Salt Lake City photographer in taking a series of promotional photos. For several years, the photographer—J. E. Broaddus—traveled and lectured on “Wayne Wonderland.”

In 1933, Pectol himself was elected to the legislature and almost immediately introduced a memorial to President Roosevelt asking for creation of “Wayne Wonderland National Monument” out of the federal lands comprising the bulk of the Capitol Reef area. Federal agencies began a boundary assessment.

Meanwhile, Pectol not only guided the government investigators on numerous trips but escorted an increasing number of visitors. The lectures of Broaddus were having an effect.

On August 2, 1937, President Roosevelt signed a proclamation creating a small “Capitol Reef National Monument.” Thirty-four years later—in 1971—Capitol Reef would become a huge national park by Act of Congress, a “pleasuring ground” for America. Visitors now—and in generations to come—owe a debt of gratitude to two Utahns with remarkable energy and vision.
“Four-wheeling”—contemporary slang for the joys of exploring rough terrain with a four-wheel drive vehicle—is not a major recreational activity in America's national parks. Most park roads are designed for passenger cars and a four-wheel drive just isn't needed. And, of course, any off-road activity would not only mar the natural beauty of the park, but bring swift enforcement action from park rangers.

But 378 square mile Capitol Reef isn't like most national parks in the "lower 48." It was set aside only recently—1971—and hasn't been "developed" to the extent typical of other national parks. It isn't likely to be either, at least for the next 20 years. The recently-approved, economy-sensitive general management plan calls for almost no road improvements.

Unpaved roads—except for the Scenic Drive—mean fairly rough roads at Capitol Reef and spell enjoyment for the four-wheeler. The visitor with a four-wheel rig holds in reserve a real margin of safety with his superior traction and (usually) higher ground clearance.

Cathedral Valley Best Tour

The Cathedral Valley loop road is perhaps the best rough road "tour" in the intermountain west, let alone Capitol Reef National Park. Here are a few extra pointers for the four-wheeler.

You'll need some clearance when you ford the Fremont River, especially during spring melt or after a rain shower. There are two possible crossings at River Ford; check out both for depth. Don't worry much about the bottom; it's usually unshyled gravel. Lock hubs, pop it into low range—second gear, if you've got it, and move ahead slowly. My 258 CID six Scout likes low range (high or second) for most of the drive. Big eight may not need it.

Watch that Clay!

If it's been raining hard, reconsider your jaunt to Cathedral Valley even if you're pushing the meanest, most powerful, high clearance, wide-range (high or second) for most of the drive. Big and spells enjoyment for the four-wheeler. The visitor with a four-wheel rig holds in reserve a real margin of safety with his superior traction and (usually) higher ground clearance.

Cathedral Valley Best Tour

The Cathedral Valley loop road is perhaps the best rough road "tour" in the intermountain west, let alone Capitol Reef National Park. Here are a few extra pointers for the four-wheeler.

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