

*Lee's Ferry, The Colorado River,
and the Development of the Bureau of Reclamation*

Douglas E. Kupel, Ph.D.

City of Phoenix, Law Department

Paper Prepared for

Bureau of Reclamation's Centennial History Symposium, 2002

July 1, 2001

ABSTRACT

Lee's Ferry, The Colorado River, and the Development of the Bureau of Reclamation

Douglas E. Kupel, Ph.D.

City of Phoenix, Law Department

Paper Prepared for:

Bureau of Reclamation's Centennial History Symposium, 2002

Lee's Ferry is both the physical and spiritual center of water history in the arid West. The location has played a critical role in the development of the Bureau of Reclamation as we know it today. As a physical place, Lee's Ferry is the crucial dividing point between the Upper and Lower Basin states as defined by the Colorado River Compact of 1922. Measurements taken at Lee's Ferry govern the amount of water credited to each of the basins, as well as allocations between states within each basin.

As a symbol, Lee's Ferry represents the central role the Colorado River played in the development of the Bureau of Reclamation. First settled as a remote place of exile for fugitive Mormon leader John D. Lee as he sought to escape Federal authorities, Lee's Ferry is now the true "ground zero" for Federal influence on the Western landscape.

The 100-year anniversary of the Newlands Act, which created the U.S. Reclamation Service, now known as the Bureau of Reclamation, will be celebrated in the year 2002. This occasion marks an appropriate time to reflect on the development of the Bureau over time. As the prime focus of Federal activities on the Colorado River, events at Lee's Ferry have made a

decided impact on the direction of the Bureau. City of Phoenix water historian Doug Kupel examines the role of Lee's Ferry as a concrete location and spiritual center for the reclamation movement in a paper prepared for the Bureau's Centennial Symposium.

Lee's Ferry is located between the two largest dams on the Colorado River. Just upstream of Lee's Ferry is the massive Glen Canyon Dam, which creates Lake Powell. Downstream from Lee's Ferry and on the west side of the Grand Canyon is Hoover Dam, which backs up the waters of the Colorado to form Lake Mead. Glen Canyon was constructed in the 1950s and represented the last of the giant projects completed by the Bureau. Hoover Dam, completed in the depression decade of the 1930s, represented the beginning of a new era for the Bureau.

What few people realize today is that there was considerable debate about the relative merits of the two dam locations in the twenties. This vigorous debate pitted representatives of two Federal agencies against each other: The venerable US Geological Service, tracing its heritage back to the 19th century ideals of John Wesley Powell, and the upstart U.S. Reclamation Service, representing a 20th century conception of water use. Reclamation Service officials lobbied hard for construction of a dam on the lower Colorado to provide needed flood control for Southern California and Arizona while producing hydroelectric power for ready customers in Los Angeles. USGS officials, notably hydrologist E.C. LaRue, argued for the construction of a dam at Glen Canyon to regulate the flow of water between the Upper and Lower basins.

The Bureau won this skirmish between the two agencies and construction of Hoover Dam sent the Reclamation Service on a path of growth and achievement unparalleled in modern

history. Eventually, the Bureau of Reclamation would return to the site of its earlier triumph. Construction of Glen Canyon Dam capped a long era of later achievements.

The location of Lee's Ferry carries with it a touch of irony. John D. Lee was sent there by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Later-day Saints (Mormon Church) as an exile to build and operate a ferry. He built the Lonely Dell Ranch for Emma Lee, his 17th wife, a few miles below Glen Canyon Dam. By 1873 Lee had build a ferryboat named the *Colorado* and established the first ferry service across the river. Lee was captured by Federal authorities and executed in 1877 for his part in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The ferry ran continuously until 1928. It was replaced by Navajo Bridge, which was completed across Marble Canyon in 1929.

Established as a refuge from Federal authorities for exile John D. Lee, Lee's Ferry is now the physical and spiritual center of the Federal contribution to Western water history. As scholars look back on the centennial of the Bureau of Reclamation, an examination of the history of Lee's Ferry and the turf battle between the Bureau and the USGS over the future development of the Colorado River provides needed insight. It adds a valuable perspective for westerners concerned with the next hundred years of water history. Known today primarily as the departure point for the thousands of white-water rafting thrill-seekers and world-class trout anglers, the future of Lee's Ferry will be every bit as significant as its past.

Introduction

Lee's Ferry is both the physical and spiritual heart of water history in the arid West. As a physical place, Lee's Ferry is the crucial dividing point between the Upper and Lower Basin states as defined by the Colorado River Compact of 1922. Measurements taken at Lee's Ferry govern the amount of water credited to each of the basins, as well as allocations between states within each basin.

As a symbol, Lee's Ferry represents the pivotal position of the Colorado River in the development of the Bureau of Reclamation. First settled as a remote place of exile for fugitive Mormon leader John D. Lee as he sought to escape Federal authorities, Lee's Ferry is now the true "ground zero" for Federal influence on the West. As the focus of Federal activities on the Colorado River, events at Lee's Ferry have made a decided impact on the direction of the Bureau.

Despite its key role in history, the history of Lee's Ferry itself had been left relatively unexamined. Recent work by historian P.T. Reilly and others have only now added new chapters to the complex saga of Lee's Ferry. This new research provides support for the contention that Lee's Ferry is one of the most significant locales in the landscape of Federal water policy.¹

Lee's Ferry is located between the two largest dams on the Colorado River. Just upstream of Lee's Ferry is the massive Glen Canyon Dam, which creates Lake Powell. Downstream from Lee's Ferry and on the west side of the Grand Canyon is Hoover Dam, which backs up the waters of the Colorado to form Lake Mead. Glen Canyon was constructed in the 1950s and represents the last of the giant projects completed by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Hoover Dam, completed in the depression decade of the 1930s, represented the beginning of a new era for Reclamation.

What few people realize today is that there was considerable debate about the relative merits of the two dam locations in the twenties. This vigorous debate pitted representatives of two Federal agencies against each other: The venerable U.S. Geological Service, tracing its heritage back to the 19th century ideals of John Wesley Powell, and the upstart U.S. Reclamation Service, representing a 20th century conception of water use. Reclamation Service officials lobbied hard for construction of a dam on the lower Colorado to provide needed flood control for Southern California and Arizona while producing hydroelectric power for ready customers in Los Angeles. USGS officials, notably hydrologist E.C. LaRue, argued for the construction of a dam at Glen Canyon to regulate the flow of water between the Upper and Lower basins.

The Bureau won this skirmish between the two agencies and construction of Hoover Dam sent Reclamation on a path of growth and achievement unparalleled in modern history. Eventually, the Bureau would return to the site of its earlier triumph. Construction of Glen Canyon Dam capped a long era of later achievements.

The location of Lee's Ferry carries with it a touch of irony. John D. Lee was sent there by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Later-day Saints (Mormon Church) as an exile to build and operate a ferry. He built the Lonely Dell Ranch for Emma Lee, his 17th wife, a few miles below Glen Canyon Dam. By 1873 Lee had build a ferryboat named the Colorado and established the first ferry service across the river. Lee was captured by Federal authorities and executed in 1877 for his part in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The ferry ran continuously until 1928. It was replaced by Navajo Bridge, which was completed across Marble Canyon in 1929.

Geology

The spectacular landscape dominating the canyon country of Northern Arizona is the product of eons of geologic activity: shifting of continents, global rising and falling of sea levels and creation of highlands now worn and redeposited. At times, deserts dominated the landscape; sometimes, freshwater or saltwater seas invaded, leaving rivers to erode the most recently deposited layers. Prevailing winds abetted the process. Periods of erosion account for missing rock strata, layers appearing elsewhere in sequence. Two geologic processes are most responsible for the canyon of the Colorado Plateau: 1) an uplift of the ground itself, and 2) erosion of the rock by many years of constant water flow.

The last uplift of the Colorado Plateau began about 60 million years ago. Uplift made the land rise. The meandering streams of the Colorado River ran faster and faster. As the land rose, the constant erosion of the water cut the canyons that today dominate the Colorado River. This erosion sliced through many geologic layers, which are now visible. Navajo sandstone, the dominant formation, is made of sand dunes hardened by pressure from deposits above them. The deposits eventually wore away and exposed today's sandstone. Other layers contain sea deposited sediments; still others hold fossils of land or marine organisms that lived millions of years ago. Petrified wood and fossils of dinosaur bones, seashells, and small sea creatures are found in several rock strata in this area.

The deep canyons left by uplift of the Colorado Plateau and the downward force of erosion made access across the vast chasm of the Colorado River very difficult. Only at a few locations from its confluence with the Green River in Central Utah to the lower valley near Topock, California, does the Colorado open its banks to easy access. For hundreds of miles the

canyon of the Colorado is an insurmountable barrier, isolating the lands of the Arizona strip north of the river and placing them with easier access to Utah than to the state capitol at Phoenix.

One of the few places along the canyon where Colorado River can be reached with relative ease is at its confluence with the Paria River. Here, between the depths of Glen Canyon on the upstream side and Marble Canyon on the downstream side, is a break in the canyon walls for a stretch of two miles that allows a difficult and dangerous crossing of the river. Now Anglicized, the word Paria derives from the Indian name Pahreah, meaning a stream of water having willows growing along its banks.²

European Discovery

Early Spanish explorers traveled the northern frontier of New Spain (today's Mexico) looking for an overland route to California. Some of these explorers left us detailed accounts of their expeditions. In 1776, two Spanish priests began an expedition that provided the first written record of Lee's Ferry. Father Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Father Silvestre Velez de Escalante set out from Santa Fe in July to pioneer an overland route from New Mexico to Monterey on the California coast. After 3 months, the party reached the vicinity of today's Cedar City in Utah, where they encountered an early snow. The inclement weather influenced a decision to turn back to Santa Fe before the full onset of winter. Following the advice of Paiute Indians, Dominguez and Escalante searched for a shallow ford of the Colorado.

Inadvertently turning too far south, the two priests reached what is today known as Lee's Ferry. On October 26, the party reached the Colorado River at the mouth of the Paria River.

Here, the river proved too deep to ford on horseback, and too swift to swim across. The men christened their camp *Sal si Puedes* (get out while you can) and they did just that by moving upstream along the Paria River canyon until they reached the Colorado Plateau. The explorers climbed out of the river bottom and made camp near what is today's Wahweap Marina on Lake Powell. They spent four more days searching for a way across the river. Finally, on November 7, they chopped steps in the sandstone wall at a location now called Padre Creek and safely led their pack stock to the banks of the Colorado. Here the crossing was wide but shallow. The site known as the "Crossing of the Fathers" today lies beneath the waters of Padre Bay in Lake Powell.³

Mormon Crossing Era

The early development of Lee's Ferry is closely associated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormons). The river crossing is named for Mormon pioneer John Doyle Lee. The crossing was a key location on the major transportation route for Mormon immigrants to Arizona and, after 1877, for travelers returning to Utah along the "Honeymoon Trail" to the LDS Temple at Saint George to solemnize their unions.

The establishment of the Mormon Church dates to an event in American history known as the "Second Great Awakening," a period of religious revival and evangelicalism in the late 1820s and early 1830s. This revival was national in scope, but had two centers: in the south and in western New York state. In 1830 Joseph Smith received a revelation and a new type of Christian church began. Because of some unusual tenants of the religion, its practitioners were subject to opposition and distrust from more traditional, established religions. One of these early tenants of

the LDS Church was polygamy, the practice of men taking more than one wife. From its original location in New York, members of the LDS church moved to Ohio, then to Illinois, and finally on the long trek to the Great Salt Lake in what would become the Territory and later the State of Utah. Members arrived at the present-day location of Salt Lake City on July 24, 1847.

John D. and Emma Lee, 1871-1879

John D. Lee was born in Kaskasia, Illinois on September 12 1812, and converted to Mormonism at the age of twenty-six. Lee joined Joseph Smith in western Missouri in 1838, then moved with other church members to Nauvoo, Illinois, after violence forced them west. Lee was a leader in the community and constructed a substantial house in Nauvoo. After further violence, including the murder of Joseph Smith, Lee and the rest of the Mormon faithful began a westward trek. During the move Lee was a leader and able assistant to Brigham Young on the trip to Utah. After establishing a home in Salt Lake City, Lee headed his church's call to settle in the southern portion of Utah. Lee and his wives settled and built houses at Parowan, Harmony, and Panguitch in southern Utah.⁴

While living near Harmony, Lee participated in a massacre of immigrants en route to the Pacific Coast. In the summer of 1857 a wagon train under the command of Captain Charles Fancher set up camp at Mountain Meadows, a popular resting spot on the trip west. At the time leaders of the LDS Church were in a bitter struggle with the Federal government over control of the Utah Territory and were anticipating armed intervention at any moment. The immigrants, many of them from Missouri, taunted the Mormon settlers with tales of how Smith's followers

had been driven from the state. On September 11, 1857, local Mormon leaders and Ute Indians joined forces in an attack on the wagon train. Viewed ostensibly as a military campaign against a hostile force, the attack was a massacre from which only seventeen children escaped death. While in many ways a payback for tremendous mistreatment over the years, the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857 forever marked its antagonists with the taint of bloodshed and violence.⁵

The massacre opened southern Utah to additional Mormon settlement. Called Utah's "Dixie," because of its comparatively warm climate and southern location, this portion of the territory included the communities of Saint George, Harmony, Panguitch, and Cedar City. This process of colonization was an integral part of church expansion. In addition to southern Utah, church leaders began to look southward into Arizona. Of particular interest for Mormon proselyzers were the sedentary and urban Hopi Indians.

In 1858, 1859, and 1860, Mormon leaders sent expeditions to the Hopi. Led by pioneer Jacob Hamblin, the missionary parties crossed at what would later become Lee's Ferry. These early efforts toward converting the Hopi to the Mormon religion proved disappointing. In time, Mormon leaders directed their attention to the neighboring Navajo. In contrast to the Hopi, who received the Mormon missionaries with indifference, the Navajo were openly hostile to those they considered intruders in their land. By 1860 the Navajo were in a state of open conflict with the US government, a situation which ended only with the Navajo's defeat at the hands of Kit Carson. While many Navajo lost their lives during the conflict, many more died during the infamous "long walk" to the Bosque Redondo reservation in New Mexico.

The relationship between the Mormons, the Navajo, and the Hopi took on the form of an uneasy truce after 1865. Mormon missionaries remained anxious to convert additional souls, but they also coveted the few well-watered locations in Arizona for settlements. Resident American Indians looked to protect their lands.

As one of the few locations where the Colorado could be crossed, the Paria River confluence served an important military purpose to the Mormons. Control of the crossing prevented incursions by Native Americans north of the river while providing a base of operations for Mormon colonizing to the south. In October of 1869 Hamblin posted guards at the river crossing to control access at this strategic point. Hamblin christened the post “Fort Meeks” in honor of camp leader William Meeks. By 1870 Hamblin had cleared a patch of land along the Paria and planted wheat. As historian A. Gary Anderson has noted, “this crossing on the Colorado River was not unknown when John D. Lee arrived, nor was the idea of a ferry new.”⁶

Although US President James Buchanan had issued a full pardon for participants in the massacre in 1858, for John D. Lee and other Mormon leaders associated with the event even the passage of time could not wash the stain clean. In 1870 LDS church officials excommunicated Lee and others for their participation in the event. While church officials were outwardly preparing to fix the entire blame for the affair on Lee, inwardly they still considered Lee as one of their own. Despite the excommunication, for Lee, a faithful member of the flock since 1838, relinquishment of his loyalty to the church would come slowly if at all.

To Lee and the Mormon leadership, the confluence of Paria Creek with the Colorado River served two important purposes. For Lee, it provided a remote and isolated area free from

the watchful eyes of Federal authorities. For the church, it was an important link in the Mormon colonization of Arizona.

Lee and two of his families set out for the remote location, arriving shortly before Christmas in 1871. Mormon historian Juanita Brooks credits Emma Lee with naming the locale “Lonely Dell” based on the pioneer wife’s initial observations. Wives Emma and Rachel took up residence, one in a dugout and one in a rock structure. In May of 1872, Rachel moved to a location today known as “Jacob’s Pools,” leaving Emma Batchelder Lee as the woman in charge of Lee’s Ferry. Emma was indeed the driving force behind the ferry and the Lonely Dell Ranch, as Lee himself was often absent.⁷

The arrival of Lee created two centers of activity at the confluence of the Paria and Colorado Rivers. The ferry across the Colorado operated from the water’s edge, downstream from the juncture of the two rivers. The residential area, starting with some rough cabins and corrals, was upstream along the Paria. This sheltered location back from the Colorado gave the residents some protection from storms that frequently passed through the canyon.

During December of 1871 Lee constructed crude shelters for his two wives and their children. Based on accounts from Lee’s diaries, Mormon historian Juanita Brooks described these early structures:

By January 12 they had finished building two small rooms. One was a dugout with its back and two sides set into the hillside. It had a flagstone floor, and a willow and sod roof. Later, this would be a cellar, and a place where the children could sleep during the scorching midday hours. The larger room was of rock laid up with mud and lime mortar, and had a dirt floor and roof, but two small windows and a solid door.⁸

These first dwellings were mere shelters from the elements. As time went on, Lee constructed a more presentable cabin of driftwood for Emma. He had the assistance of Tommy Smith who arrived in 1872 with lumber for a new ferryboat and considerable carpentry skills. Professor Harvey C. DeMotte, a member of John Wesley Powell's 1871-72 expedition down the Colorado, left us with a description of the building as it appeared in 1872:

The house of logs and innocent of floor, whose foundations were not laid with square and compass, stood with gable pointing toward the south of east; along one side a shade, composed of leafy boughs, served well the purpose of verandah, from the outer edge of which suspended blankets hid the sun's rays from the evening meal.⁹

John Wesley Powell's trips down the Colorado have received well-justified attention by historians through the years. While Powell and his men achieved a significant accomplishment by being the first to travel downstream on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, the records of Powell's exploits also give us some insight into conditions at Lee's Ferry. Powell took two trips through the Colorado, one in 1869 and a second in 1871 and 1872. The second trip was actually undertaken in two parts, with a break at Lee's Ferry.¹⁰

Powell first visited Lee's Ferry on August 4, 1869. His crew spent the night there, noting the remains of Indian and Mormon campfires. Powell returned on September 30, 1870, during a reconnaissance trip in preparation for his second voyage. Accompanied by Jacob Hamblin, Powell and his men constructed a flat boat called the *Cañon Maid* to use as a ferryboat to cross the river. Recognizing that Lee's Ferry was an important access point on the river, Powell used it as a location to split his second trip down the Colorado. In 1871 the party left Green River, Wyoming in May and arrived at Lee's Ferry in October. The men cached one boat on each side

of the river and disembarked. The Powell party returned to Lee's Ferry in the summer of 1872 to resume their trip.¹¹

The main difference between the two trips was that John Doyle Lee had arrived at the mouth of the Paria to establish his residence. Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, a member of Powell's party, noted that in addition to constructing a cabin, "Lee had worked hard since his arrival early in the year and now had his farm in fairly good order with crops growing, well irrigated by the water he took out of the Paria. He called the place Lonely Dell, and it was not a misnomer."¹²

With a good knowledge of Lee's predicament, members of the Powell expedition were not above having some fun with Lee. Dellenbaugh describes one incident:

Our camp was across the Paria down by the Colorado, and when Brother Lee came back the following Sunday he called to give us a lengthy dissertation on the faith of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), while Andy, always up to mischief, in his quiet way, delighted to get behind him and cock a rifle. At the sound of the ominous click Lee would wheel like a flash to see what was up. We had no intention of capturing him, of course, but it amused Andy to act in a way that kept Lee on the *qui vive*.¹³

In addition to constructing lodging, Lee quickly turned his attention to the establishment of a garden patch. One of his first tasks was to complete a dam on the Paria River to impound water for irrigation. Thus began a continual battle to maintain the dam in the face of frequent floods and to keep the crops watered during times of drought.¹⁴

In 1872, church authorities desired to open Arizona to colonization and assigned Lee to operate a ferry. A boat was completed by January of 1873. In April of 1873, church officials sent Joseph W. Young, James Jackson, and twenty-five others to improve roads to and from the ferry site. Jackson assisted Mrs. Lee during the frequent absences of John D. Lee from the site.

In 1874, conflict between Mormons and the Navajo led church officials to fund construction of a “Fort” on the banks of the Colorado River. In January of 1874, three Navajo men were killed by settlers in Grass Valley, Utah. Although the protagonists were not Mormons, the incident escalated tensions between Mormon settlers and the Navajo. In May of 1874 Jacob Hamblin suggested that the Mormons construct a Fort at Lee’s Ferry to protect the river crossing.

Marshall William Stokes captured Lee in Panguitch on November 7, 1874. It took two trials for Federal authorities to convict Lee of participation in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Lee was executed at the site of the massacre on March 23, 1877.

Following Lee’s capture and execution, his wife Emma operated the ferry. Warren M. Johnson took over operation of the Ferry from Emma on November 30, 1879. Johnson operated the ferry for sixteen years, until 1896. James S. Emmett then took over. One of Emmett’s improvements was the introduction of a cable-ferry in 1899 and the construction of a new access road. Emmett continued to operate the ferry until it was purchased by Coconino County in 1910. Custodians for Coconino County ran the ferry until the construction of Navajo Bridge made it obsolete. The last ferry run was in 1928. Navajo Bridge opened in 1929.

Lee’s Ferry and Charles H. Spencer, 1909-1912

These three years were ones of rapid change at Lee’s Ferry. The Grand Canyon Cattle Company purchased the Lonely Dell Ranch from James S. Emmett in 1909, and Coconino County owned the ferry location after 1910. But the greatest change originated from former teamster, bullwhacker, and expert yarn-spinner Charles H. Spencer. Spencer had convinced himself, and

soon proved very adept at convincing others, that small amounts of very fine gold could be found in the depths of the geologic strata uncovered by centuries of the Colorado's relentless erosion. The only problem, for Spencer and others, was how to recover it. The Spencer mining operation endured for only a short time, until February of 1912, but it left a lasting mark on Lee's Ferry.¹⁵

Spencer arrived at Lee's Ferry in May of 1909. He listened carefully as Jerry Johnson, Warren Johnson's son, related the exploits of Robert B. Stanton's early attempts at gold mining along the Colorado. Spencer developed enthusiasm for his project and sent a member of his party to Flagstaff to record several mining claims. He lured financial backers in Chicago to join the operation, incorporated as the Black Sand Gold Recovery Company. By June, Spencer and his crew had established a camp on the left bank of the Colorado, near the location of the original ferry and across the river from the Fort.

After several unsuccessful attempts to recover gold from the sands along the left bank of the river in August and early September of 1910, Spencer decided to move his operations to the more developed and spacious right bank. On September 10 and 11, 1910, Spencer and his crew moved to the right bank, making over the old Fort as a mess hall and erecting two tents nearby to serve as the cook's commissary.¹⁶

After establishing his foothold on the right bank, Charlie Spencer re-grouped to obtain more capital from his Chicago backers. He returned at the first of the year in 1911 and embarked on a massive building program that would change the appearance of Lee's Ferry dramatically. He formed a new company, called the American Placer Corporation, to serve as a holding company for the operation.

Buildings erected by Spencer in 1911 included: an office building to the west of the Fort (American Placer Corporation Office); an addition on the west end of the old Fort; a new mess hall and cook's house; three bunkhouses (west, center, and east); a blacksmith shop; and a laboratory (assay office). Other Spencer contributions included smaller features such as root cellars, chicken coops, outhouses, and a powder storage magazine. The powder magazine, a large dugout excavated out of the right bank, was located up the Colorado River past all other improvements. The most unusual Spencer addition was the construction of a steamboat, christened the *Charles H. Spencer*, that lowered its anchor in the Colorado.¹⁷

Despite the ability of Charles Spencer to convince others that there was gold in the deposits at Lee's Ferry, he was unable to actually locate any mineral wealth. His talents lay in the area of promotion, not production. The final blow came when his steamboat could not buck the forceful current of the Colorado. It had been constructed to transport coal for the boilers of the gold operation. Without a fuel source, not withstanding the lack of gold, the operation was doomed to failure.¹⁸

After the *Charles H. Spencer* failed in its maiden voyage in December of 1911, the workers began to drift away. When the investors cut off the money supply, even Spencer himself abandoned his project. Although Spencer would continue to return to Lee's Ferry many times over the next forty years, he never matched his construction efforts of 1910-1911.

USGS / Reclamation Controversy over Dam Construction (1921-1933)

The next scheme of big dreamers that concerned Lee's Ferry centered on a resource that appeared to be plentiful: water. Plans had been circulated for a dam on the Colorado to provide flood control, generate hydroelectric power, and impound water for use in California and Arizona since the great flood that created the Salton Sea in 1905. Engineers, politicians, and developers in California and Arizona vied to be the first to lay claim to the vast water resources of the Colorado.¹⁹

Eugene Clyde LaRue of the U.S. Geological Survey played a key role in the development of dams on the Colorado. Although LaRue's ideas were discredited by the politicians of the day, his observations about the flow of the Colorado proved prescient. LaRue began a comprehensive study of the Colorado in 1912. His ultimate conclusion, published in 1916, was that the flow of the Colorado was not sufficient to irrigate all of the lands available for agriculture. To conserve water, LaRue advocated construction of a series of comparatively small dams. This would reduce the total water surface exposed to evaporation, thus conserving stored water for irrigation in both California and Arizona.²⁰

Officials at the U.S. Reclamation Service, once a part of the USGS, pursued a different vision for the Colorado. The Reclamation Service conducted its own studies, relying on the work of J.B. Lippincott. The California-based engineer advocated construction of a large dam on the lower Colorado. Lippincott explained that the advantage of the lower Colorado River dam is that it would be closer to power and water use in California. This idea did not set well with Arizonans who hoped to divert water from the Colorado for use in the desert state.²¹

As it turned out, the Californians were better prepared and financed. They struck first, in 1921. The Southern California Edison Company entered into a cooperative agreement with the

United States Geological Survey to conduct a survey of the Colorado River with a view toward determining potential dam sites. Like other travelers before and after, the Edison men selected Lee's Ferry as the base of their operations because of its easy access to the river and land transportation.²²

In addition to surveying the river for possible dam sites, the Edison and USGS party erected a stream gaging station at Lee's Ferry. Placed in operation in 1921, the stream gage represented the first firm Federal foothold at the ferry, an ironic addition to a location selected by John D. Lee to hide from U.S. government authority. The Federal presence at Lee's Ferry had begun.²³

Another irony in the Edison program was that the USGS hydrographer E.C. LaRue worked closely with the California company. Because of his prior experience, LaRue was a logical choice to head the survey of potential dam locations upstream and downstream from Lee's Ferry. Both the USGS and the Edison Company provided funds for the project. Although LaRue would later come to a conclusion regarding dam locations that was at odds with the electric company, this association was used by his enemies to discredit LaRue's objectivity.²⁴

The Edison Company leased land from the Navajo Nation on the left bank of the Colorado for their headquarters. In 1922, the Edison men erected a boathouse there that served as the base of their operations. This work coincided with meetings of the Colorado River Commission conducted by Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. These discussions led to agreement on a compact that divided the waters of the Colorado between the upper and lower basin states. However, Arizona refused to ratify this Santa Fe Compact of 1922. The Compact had the effect of splitting the Colorado River drainage into two basins, the upper and lower. The

location of the division between the basins was specified in Article V of the Compact as a hypothetical point one mile below the mouth of the Paria River.²⁵

Separate Reclamation Service investigations of the Colorado culminated in 1922 with the publication of the Fall-Davis Report, named for Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall and Reclamation Service Chief A.P. Davis. The Fall-Davis report recommended the construction of a high dam at Boulder Canyon that would serve several purposes: flood control, generation of hydro-electric power, river regulation, and storage of water for agriculture. The report essentially followed the earlier Lippincott plan.²⁶

Despite the assistance of the Edison Company, LaRue and the USGS pursued a vision of Colorado River development that differed from the Reclamation Service. LaRue compared the two plans in his second report on the Colorado, published in 1925. LaRue stated that the USGS plans "are based on the theory that major regulation of flow by storage can be developed by dams at or above Lees Ferry." With a large dam at Lee's Ferry as its centerpiece, LaRue then called for a series of smaller dams and reservoirs downstream. These would allow for the generation of hydroelectric power while conserving water for agriculture. The smaller dams would reduce water loss from evaporation. According to LaRue, building a dam at Lee's Ferry would regulate the flow of the river and allow for a comprehensive development of the Colorado's resources.²⁷

The Bureau of Reclamation pursued a different vision. Davis and other Reclamation officials preferred the recommendations of the Fall-Davis report which called for the construction of a large dam in Boulder Canyon on the lower Colorado. Accompanying the large dam was a second dam, downstream, that would recapture power releases and allow for

agricultural diversions. The large dam was eventually named Hoover Dam, and the smaller was christened Davis Dam.

The Davis plan had the strong backing of the California congressional delegation. The basic elements of the plan were introduced as the Swing-Johnson bill in Congress, named for Representative Philip Swing of San Diego and co-sponsored by Senator Hiram Johnson. The bill eventually became law as the Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928. Construction of Boulder Dam (later Hoover Dam) began in 1930 and was completed in 1936.

Despite the rejection of LaRue's idea for an upstream dam, the USGS soon developed Lee's Ferry into a significant scientific outpost. With the arrival of stream gagers at the ferry, the old Spencer era mining buildings began to see new use. Edison gager Irving Cockcroft and his wife Margery moved into the old Fort on August 20, 1921.²⁸

The Cockcrofts established a post office in the American Placer Corporation Office building. The place opened for business on August 12, 1922, and Irving Cockcroft erected a sign stating that the building was the "Lee's Ferry Post Office." Since that time, the building has frequently been referred to as the "Post Office." Another change was the conversion of the east Spencer Bunkhouse into a school. This was done in 1921 under the impetus of Jerry Johnson, but it benefitted the children of the river gagers working for Southern California Edison as well as children of the Mormon residents of Lonely Dell Ranch. The building served a school for about four years.²⁹

The United States Geological Survey assumed complete control for the stream gaging operation at Lee's Ferry on November 1, 1923. On that day Edison gager Irving Cockcroft turned

over the equipment to USGS employee Jim Klohr. The new man brought his family and the small group soon settled into the old Fort, using the Spencer addition as a bedroom.³⁰

Another result of the USGS activity on the Colorado was the designation of the spring at Lee's Ferry, located in the bluff behind the cable ferry, as a public water reserve. The experience of the Edison crew and the USGS men showed the importance of this water supply. By order of the Secretary of the Interior, numerous springs in Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Wyoming, and New Mexico were designated as "public water reserves" in order to protect the water supply in isolated and arid locations for the public use. Public Water Reserve No. 107, issued on April 17, 1926, included:

All land within a quarter of a mile of a spring on the north bank of Colorado River near the old site of Lees Ferry east of the mouth of Paria River, and located approximately in what probably will be, when surveyed, Sec. 13.³¹

Charlie Spencer resumed operations at Lee's Ferry early in 1931, sending several laborers to begin sluicing operations on the Chinle Formation. Spencer's men treated the buildings and grounds as if they were their own, resulting in conflict with USGS hydrologist Charlie McDonald. The two groups, USGS gagers and Spencer miners, eventually agreed on exclusive use of separate buildings. While this solved the problem for the moment, it soured the USGS on any further dealings with Spencer. Officials in Washington, D.C. began to contemplate how they might prevent any further trespass by Spencer on the stream gaging operation. After Spencer's backers ran out of money in April of 1931, the brief mining boom came to an end.³²

USGS Outpost at Lee's Ferry, 1933-1945

The United States Geological Survey consolidated its control over the old ferry site in 1933. On January 18, 1933, President Herbert Hoover issued an executive order setting aside lands near the existing gaging stations on the Colorado and Paria Rivers as an administrative site. President Hoover declared that Section 13 and lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 in Township 40 North, Range 7 East and an unsurveyed portion of what, when surveyed, would be Section 18 in Township 40 North, Range 8 East, were reserved “for occupation and use by representatives of the Geological Survey.”³³

The USGS soon undertook an improvement campaign on the property. It erected a fence to the east of the Fort, west of the westernmost Spencer Bunkhouse (demolished 1943) to demarcate its administrative zone. The Survey also considered demolishing several of the Spencer buildings at this time. These included the old school house (east Spencer bunkhouse), the chicken house (center bunkhouse, a.k.a. feed and storage room; demolished 1967), and the saddle barn (west bunkhouse, demolished 1943), and the Spencer addition to the Fort.³⁴

After 1933 the center of USGS residential activity shifted from the Fort to Spencer’s old mess hall (demolished 1967). The USGS converted the mess hall into a residence for its stream gagers. This building became known as the “stream gager’s residence.”³⁵

The depression decade led itinerant hydrographer Frank Dodge to become more of a permanent resident at the ferry site. A fairly frequent visitor to the ferry since 1919, Dodge secured part-time work with the USGS as an assistant hydrologist in 1932. The decision to hire Dodge was justified on the basis that a second person was needed to make readings during periods of high water. Dodge upgraded Spencer’s old laboratory (assay office) building

(converted into sediment lab 1947; demolished 1967) into a makeshift residence. Over the years, this building became known as “Dodge’s Cabin.”³⁶

A reunion of Mormon pioneers held at Lee’s Ferry in 1935 gave the USGS an incentive to clean up its buildings and grounds. The event took place over three days in October. The reunion marked a turning point for Lee’s Ferry. A sense of the passage of time and the growth of historical perspective gave rise to a sense of history about the old place.³⁷

However, recollections of the past did not always prove accurate. In 1936 historian Frank Kelly visited the area with former resident Robert B. Hildebrand who reminisced about his boyhood at Lee’s Ferry. Hildebrand posed for photographs in front of several buildings, one of which he called the original Lee cabin. Other visitors, struck by the apparent age of the Samantha Johnson Cabin, incorrectly began to associate the old building with John D. Lee. Kelly gave these memories a stamp of approval when he described Lee’s Ferry in a 1943 article:

Although some of the old buildings have been destroyed, Lee’s original one-room log cabin fortunately has been preserved. Behind it stands his old blacksmith shop, where horses were shod and emigrant wagons repaired, with giant leather bellows still in working order.³⁸

As the years passed, and as additional visitors arrived at Lee’s Ferry, the story of the Lee cabin and blacksmith shop took on all the elements of truth from constant retelling. With the departure of Jerry Johnson from the property in 1934, no one remained on site that had direct knowledge of the earlier period. Lee’s Ferry had now entered the realm of history, but that history took on aspects of myth. As tales were told and retold, some of the stories were embellished.³⁹

As part of the USGS operations in the thirties, Government Land Office surveyors returned to the Lee's Ferry area in 1937 to survey Township 40 North, Range 8 East. The GLO surveyors noted eight stone buildings and one mine shaft at the old Ferry site. The surveyors described the area in their notes as follows:

In section 18 there is a strip of land on the north side of the river about one-fourth mile wide and one-half mile long, whereon there are a group of stone cabins, a part of the settlement known as Lee's Ferry. This strip of land is covered by proclamation to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Geological Survey, and a representative of this government bureau occupies one of the cabins. The remainder of the cabins were not occupied at the time of the survey ... There is an old mine shaft in section 18 near the group of stone buildings near the base of the canyon wall, but no operations are being carried on at the present time and there is no evidence of valuable mineral deposits.⁴⁰

The land survey coincided with an improvement to the grounds by the USGS late in 1937. The Survey built a water tank and pipeline to convey water from a well to the stream gager's residence (demolished 1967). The engineers added a septic tank, to compliment a six-foot by nine-foot bathroom they attached to the building. The arrival of indoor plumbing at Lee's Ferry was not the most dramatic event which ever took place at the site, but it was a significant improvement.⁴¹

In 1942 the USGS undertook another clean-up of the property. Many of the remaining metal objects from the Spencer mining era were collected as part of a war-effort scrap drive. The only items that remained after the operation were those that were too large to move, such as the boilers Spencer had freighted to the site in 1910. In 1943, the west Spencer Bunkhouse, closest to the ravine and in the worst shape, was razed for stone used to refurbish other buildings.⁴²

Change of Tide: World War Two

A number of factors came together during World War Two which brought an end to Arizona's opposition to the Colorado River Compact of 1922 and started its battle for authorization of the Central Arizona Project. The first was the war itself. World War Two generated a tremendous demand for food and fibre raised in Arizona, resulting in an increase in agricultural production and a corresponding rise in water use. Combined with the arrival of defense industries and workers into the state, Arizona experienced an increased demand for water. The need for improved relations with Mexico, spurred by the war, started treaty negotiations in 1941 that resulted in an agreement on water use from the Colorado in 1944. The election of Governor Sidney P. Osborn (who started the first of his four consecutive terms in January of 1941) brought a mature political leader to the executive chair, one who understood that Arizona must change its tactics in order to move forward.⁴³

As one of his first legislative efforts, Governor Osborn requested approval of a combined "Water and Power Authority" that could take charge of the state's efforts to develop its resources. In 1941 and again in 1943, during the 15th and 16th Legislatures, Osborn asked for approval of this initiative but was refused each time. In 1943, he received permission from the Legislature to create a State Land Department that would meet some of his goals for more centralized resource planning.⁴⁴

Also in 1943, Osborn persuaded the Legislature to give permission for a committee to negotiate a contract with the Secretary of the Interior for water from the Colorado River. As a condition, the Legislature reserved its prerogative to approve the actions of the committee. This first step opened the door to a final solution in 1944. Governor Osborn convened a special

session of the 16th Legislature on February 15, 1944, to consider the ratification of the Compact and the authorization of a contract with the Secretary of the Interior for the use of Arizona's 2.8 MAF designated in the Boulder Canyon Project Act. The legislators responded, and by the end of the special session on February 24, 1944, had passed both measures. In addition, the 16th Legislature allocated \$200,000 for use in a cooperative study with the Bureau of Reclamation to devise plans for bringing the water to Central Arizona. Governor Osborn signed the measures ratifying the Compact and authorizing the contract on February 24 and "ended the most controversial issue in the state's history, and marked the beginning of Arizona's fight to put the waters of the Colorado River to beneficial use."⁴⁵

Reclamation Service Arrives at Lee's Ferry, 1946-1962

The post-war period saw a renewed level of activity at the USGS compound. In 1946 a survey crew from the Bureau of Reclamation arrived to investigate possible dam sites and rights-of-way associated with the proposed Central Arizona Project. In 1947 the USGS turned Frank Dodge's old residence – Spencer's assay office – into a new sediment laboratory. That same year the Survey constructed a new hydrographer's residence, measuring 18 by 30 feet (demolished 1967). The survey followed this by constructing a new building for guest housing (USGS Residence) in May of 1950. Many of the stones for the new buildings were salvaged from old Spencer buildings, contributing further to the deterioration of the mining legacy at the ferry.⁴⁶

The contract between the State of Arizona and the Bureau of Reclamation facilitated studies of potential routes to bring Colorado River water to Central Arizona. The Bureau of

Reclamation, spurred by the contribution of \$200,000 from Arizona into its study fund, turned its attention to examining plans for the project. During the summer of 1944, US Senator from Arizona Ernest McFarland chaired hearings on the Colorado. On June 6, 1944, the Bureau issued a report which discussed the possibility of diverting water to Central Arizona. The Bureau continued to study the matter, trying to resolve a controversy over the route the water would take.⁴⁷

John T. Sanders made the first Reclamation mark on Lee's Ferry. He arrived on March 21, 1946, and began to take stream flow measurements in anticipation of constructing Glen Canyon dam upstream from Lee's Ferry. On October 25 a large party of Bureau of Reclamation employees from the Salt Lake City office arrived at Lee's Ferry. Their first order of business was to improve the road from State Highway 89 to Lee's Ferry. Most of this work had been accomplished by November 7.⁴⁸

More Reclamation employees arrived in December of 1946. They brought boats and barges to facilitate their work on Glen Canyon Dam. Reclamation workers established a base camp at Lee's Ferry. Surveyors fanned out from Lee's Ferry to begin the preliminary survey work for the new dam. Workers drilled a well in January of 1947 and by the end of March the operation resembled a small city.⁴⁹

The studies convinced Reclamation officials that E.C. LaRue's old plan of a large regulating dam at Glen Canyon was still a solid one. It took additional work to convince politicians in Washington, D.C. and the West that it was a good idea. The plan eventually reached fruition as the Colorado River Storage Act. The measure passed Congress on March 28, 1956. President Dwight Eisenhower signed it into law on April 11.

President Eisenhower touched off the first blasts signaling the start of construction of Glen Canyon Dam by telegraph from the Oval Office on October 15, 1956. The long-deferred dream of USGS Hydrographer E.C. LaRue was about to become reality under the auspices of the Bureau of Reclamation. Construction of the dam, completed in 1966, resulted in the creation of Lake Powell, a water recreation wonderland. Glen Canyon Dam also tamed the Colorado through the Grand Canyon, allowing for the development of a white water rafting industry headquartered at Lee's Ferry. The cold water released from the bottom of the dam turned out to be perfect for trout, resulting in the development of a stretch of world-class trout fishing river at Lee's Ferry.⁵⁰

In 1959 USGS personnel apparently burned at least one of the two cabins at the cable ferry site, and possibly both. The burned cabin was the Frank Johnson Cabin, used by Johnson as a residence while he tended the ferry. A second cabin, christened the "Louse House" by travelers who picked up some unwanted companions there, had already lost its wooden upper walls and roof by 1959. According to Crampton and Rusho in their 1965 report, "The cabins were burned by the U.S. Geological Survey for the alleged reason that the agency had neither the men nor the funds to police the buildings against an increasing number of careless tourists." C. Gregory Crampton photographed both structures on September 20, 1959, and reported that the Frank Johnson "Cabin had been burned and was still smoldering when visited."⁵¹

The Glen Canyon Dam construction project resulted in a number of scientific studies of the history and archaeology of the Glen Canyon region. In June of 1960 C. Gregory Crampton of the University of Utah published his study of historical sites in Glen Canyon from the mouth of the San Juan River to Lee's Ferry. These studies represented some of the first professional

historical work at Lee's Ferry. Unfortunately, due the pressure of completing the studies in a short amount of time, errors crept into the text of these early reports that have confused the history of Lee's Ferry to this day.⁵²

The Consortium at Lonely Dell, 1964-1974

In 1964 a group of investors decided to purchase the Lonely Dell Ranch property, the location of Lee's original cabins on the Paria. Known casually as "the consortium," the group shared a vision of turning the place into a destination resort for vacationers. Heading the group was Phoenix architect Denver "Dee" Evans and his wife Jean. Evans, son of noted architect Robert F. Evans who had developed the Jokake Inn and the Paradise Inn in the Phoenix area, hoped to duplicate his father's success with the construction of a resort at Lee's Ferry. Included in the investment group was E. Reesman Fryer, descendant of Mormon immigrants who had crossed at the Ferry in the 19th century. Fryer and his wife Ione had a different vision for the Lonely Dell Ranch, one of preservation of its rich heritage.⁵³

Five other individuals or married couples formed the consortium: Allen Luhrs and Alma Luhrs, John and Alta Luhrs (both couples doing business as Luhrs & Luhrs, a partnership), Robert L. and Charlotte Brown, Joseph Louis Refsnes, and Jack and Edythe Whiteman. All were wealthy Phoenix residents. John and Alta Luhrs later sold their share to the partnership, which then created six undivided interests.

According to historian H. Lee Scamehorn, the group acquired the property "to produce unadulterated seed. The site was sufficiently isolated that plants grown there would not be

contaminated by vegetation from other agricultural lands.” While this explanation seems plausible, it is more likely – given the interest of Evans and Fryer in history – that the property was acquired primarily for its historic attractions. In 1987 Fryer described his labor of love: “I replanted orchards and rebuilt ditches... I think I worked every bit as hard as John D. Lee and Warren Johnson ever did.”⁵⁴

The consortium made a large change in the landscape of the property. On June 9, 1965, the new owners began construction of two large holding ponds into which Paria River water could be diverted and impounded. These irrigation facilities served a large orchard of fruit trees that the owners planted south of ranch buildings.⁵⁵

According to historian Scamehorn, the consortium had a large amount of work to do. Years of neglect and deferred maintenance left the Lonely Dell Ranch in poor condition. Scamehorn observed:

Lee’s Ranch showed obvious signs in 1964 of advanced deterioration caused by prolonged neglect... The condition of the property demanded a heavy expenditure for what the partners called “salvage” operations... The ranch buildings also needed extensive repairs. The stone house [Weaver Ranch House] was described by the partners as “primitive.” It had to be rebuilt, expanded, and modernized to make it habitable. The so-called Lee cabin and other buildings required refurbishing. Hand-split shingles were put on the cabins, and in other ways they were restored to the appearance they might have had in the 1880s.⁵⁶

The ambitious “salvage” program of the partners was cooled a bit in 1967 when the National Park Service expressed an interest in acquiring the property. The two sides, Park Service and partners, began extended discussion about acquiring the Lonely Dell Ranch property. The main sticking point in the discussions was price. Events reached a climax in 1971 when the

Park Service filed suit to condemn the property. This lawsuit was dismissed on a technicality in 1973, opening the way for renewed negotiations.⁵⁷

National Park Service at the Ferry Site, 1962-1974

In 1962 the National Park Service took over administrative control of the Lee's Ferry property from the USGS. However, USGS stream gaging work continued. The NPS presence began with periodic ranger patrols to the site approximately once per week. Permanent duty began on May 19, 1963, with the appointment of Ed Mazzer as the Sub-District ranger.

Improvements which accompanied permanent status were the installation of two trailers, one of which served as the Ranger's residence and the second as the Ranger's Office. That same year the Park Service constructed a new bridge across the Paria River, ensuring better access to the Lee's Ferry site.⁵⁸

The acquisition of the old ferry site by the Park Service led to increased development for recreational use. It also led to additional historical investigations and the first steps toward preservation of the historical buildings at the site. On October 6, 1964, NPS Ranger Phil Martin and historian P.T. Reilly conducted a survey of the stone buildings at Lee's Ferry.⁵⁹

The Park Service then issued a contract to historians C. Gregory Crampton and W.L. Rusho to examine the historic buildings at Lee's Ferry. The two men undertook a field visit to the site on December 10 and 11, 1964. The two scholars completed the report in January of 1965, noting:

It should be stressed that this paper has been put together quickly to meet an early deadline and it is therefore not complete in factual detail nor is it a work of

thorough-going scholarship which would have required a longer time to produce. Indeed, the history of Lee's Ferry is amply significant to justify a complete and scholarly study.⁶⁰

In October of 1965 the Park Service sponsored additional research at Lee's Ferry. Architect Walter A. Gathman and draftsman Donald A. Krueger, working for the Park Service's Division of History Studies, surveyed the 1874 Fort at Lees Ferry. On the basis of the Crampton and Rusho report, Park Service officials felt that the Fort was the most significant building in the old Ferry area.⁶¹

In March of 1966 the Park Service took action on the studies. After NPS regional historian Bill Brown examined the Fort in person, the Park Service undertook a stabilization treatment. Under the direction of HABS architect Charles Pope, workers sprayed the interior wooden features of the Fort with an epoxy preservative.⁶²

Differences between the Park Service and the USGS over the future of the property led to an unfortunate incident in 1967. On February 7 and 8, 1967, the USGS demolished nearly all of the remaining Spencer buildings at the Ferry site. Both the Park Service and the USGS failed to provide an adequate explanation for the destruction. As best as can be surmised, the Park Service and the USGS felt that the Spencer buildings lacked historical significance. However, William E. Brown, NPS Regional Historian for the Southwest Region based in Santa Fe, admitted that:

"Review of the record on the Spencer Buildings indicates that it would be less than candid to avoid a conclusion that a mistake may have been made. If so – let it be noted – it was one of omission, not of commission."⁶³

In the fall of 1967 the Park Service returned to address the remaining historic buildings at Lee's Ferry in a more positive manner. The condition of the north wall of the American Placer Corporation Office had deteriorated to such a point that immediate stabilization work was needed. Roland Richert of the NPS Ruins Stabilization Unit examined the building on August 30, 1967. Richert returned to Lee's Ferry and between September 18 and 22 worked with skilled mason Willie Yazzie.⁶⁴

NPS personnel returned to Lee's Ferry in 1969 to complete the job of historic building documentation begun in 1965. During the intervening years, many of the Spencer Buildings had been demolished by the 1967 action, leaving representatives of the Division of Historic Architecture, part of the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, to document the remaining buildings. These included the American Placer Corporation Office, the Chicken Coop, the Lee's Ferry Fort Root Cellar, and the Spencer Bunkhouse.⁶⁵

While history continued to be a big draw for tourists at Lee's Ferry, the introduction of trout into the now-frigid waters of the Colorado River that emerged from the depths of Glen Canyon Dam began to lure increasing numbers of tourists starting in the sixties. Many fished from the banks at the river's edge, while others ventured forth in boats. Still others eschewed fishing entirely. Lee's Ferry developed into the prime point of embarkation for raft trips through the Grand Canyon. By 1969, more than 3,000 people were making the river run through the Grand Canyon each year. The change even captured the attention of a writer for the New York Times, who described the bustling scene in 1969 as follows:

A lively, year-round outdoor recreation center has sprung up at this scenic and history-saturated spot in the shadow of the Vermillion Cliffs. The development, situated along the Colorado River at the northern end of the newly created Marble

Canyon National Monument, consists of a motel, a store, a service station and a marina alongside the river and a 28-unit public campground on a bluff nearby. The campground is operated by the National Park Service, and is complete with roofed shelters, tables, firepits, trailer turnouts and toilet facilities.⁶⁶

National Park Service at Lees Ferry and Lonely Dell Ranch, 1974-present

The National Park Service consolidated its ownership of Lee's Ferry and the Lonely Dell Ranch in 1974 when it acquired the interest of the consortium in the ranch property. This acquisition resulted in full Federal control of the area. It is also significant as the first time since 1909 that both properties had been in the same ownership.⁶⁷

In 1976, in conjunction with the Nation's bicentennial and in preparation for rehabilitation work at the property, the Park Service undertook several examinations of the property. This included an environmental assessment of improvements to the roads, boat ramps, parking lots, and proposed raft boarding jetty. The Park Service issued the assessment in January of 1976. In March, the Park Service forwarded a completed National Register nomination of the Lee's Ferry portion of the property to officials in Washington, D.C. The National Register accepted the nomination on May 15, 1976.⁶⁸

Later in the year, the Park Service contracted with University of Colorado historian H. Lee Scamehorn to prepare a historic structure report for the combined property. Scamehorn completed his report in August of 1976. The Scamehorn report is valuable for its detailed analysis of events leading to the purchase of the property from the consortium. However, the report's description of buildings at the Lonely Dell Ranch portion of the property contained several errors. These errors were repeated in later works. Scamehorn noted that questions have

been raised about the authenticity of the claims that buildings on the ranch were constructed by Lee, but he did not offer a definitive conclusion.⁶⁹

The historic structure report paved the way for Park Service improvements to the property in 1976-77. Additional rehabilitation work took place in 1983 and 1984. In 1986 the Submerged Cultural Resources Unit of the National Park Service began investigations of the Spencer mining era historic features at Lee's Ferry.⁷⁰

The project resulted in a report published in 1987 that documented both the vessel and the mining remains. While the report is an excellent and detailed account of the Spencer operation, the authors noted that "much of the physical evidence of an important chapter in regional history was removed with the structures" during the 1967 destruction of the Spencer buildings by the USGS.⁷¹

The historical evaluation program of the 1990s ended with the completion of a revised National Register of Historic Places nomination in July of 1997. Prepared under the direction of Ann Hubber of Historical Research Associates in Missoula, Montana, the 1997 nomination was an attempt to re-organize and correct the two previous National Register nominations, completed in 1976 for Lee's Ferry and in 1978 for the Lonely Dell Ranch.⁷²

Today, visitors to Lee's Ferry are struck with the isolation and desolation of the area. While a thin veneer of civilization has been applied in the form of improved roads and tourist facilities, even those who arrive in modern motor homes and automobiles recognize the sacrifice made by the pioneers who arrived in wagons to cross the mighty Colorado. The buildings that remain at Lee's Ferry and the Lonely Dell Ranch offer mute testimony to that earlier era, an era

in which pioneers and settlers clung closely to life at this crucial transportation outpost. Above all, visitors are reminded that it is the Colorado River that made Lee's Ferry such a needed link in the development of Arizona. The river today still retains some degree of its menacing quality, captured in the words of historian Sharlot Hall during her 1911 visit:

This wild river takes its toll every few months; the very waves as they pass look fierce and tameless and hungry... It was this same wild current that Father Escalante feared to cross in 1776; he turned back after coming down and riding into the river twice. I don't blame him. Death sits mighty close to the bank here.⁷³

Established as a refuge from Federal authorities for exile John D. Lee, Lee's Ferry is now the physical and spiritual center of the Federal contribution to Western water history. As scholars look back on the centennial of the Bureau of Reclamation, an examination of the history of Lee's Ferry and the turf battle between the Bureau and the USGS over the future development of the Colorado River gives us a better understanding of the mission of the two agencies. The past activity at Lee's Ferry provides a valuable perspective for westerners concerned with the next hundred years of water history.

Endnotes

1. The history of Lee's Ferry presented here originated as part of a project published by Robert G. Graham and Douglas E. Kupel, Historic Structures Report for Lee's Ferry and Lonely Dell Ranch, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (Phoenix: Alliance Architects, 2000).
2. For a good summary of the area's geologic history, see David A. Phoenix, "Geology of the Lee's Ferry Area, Coconino County, Arizona." U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin No. 1137. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963.
2. For a good synopsis of the Spanish era, see W.L. Rusho, "Living History at Lee's Ferry," Journal of the West 7 (January, 1968): 64-69.
4. The most detailed biographical information about Lee is contained in Manetta (Prince) Henrie, Descendants of John Doyle Lee, 1812-1877 (Provo, Utah: privately printed, 1960).
5. A recent summary of scholarship on the Mountain Meadows Massacre is Samuel W. Taylor, "Ghost From the Grave," Restoration 7 (3) (July, 1988): 3-9.
6. A. Gary Anderson, "Events at Lee's Ferry, or Lonely Dell, 1864-1928," in H. Dean Garrett and Clark V. Johnson, eds., Regional Studies in Latter-Day Saint Church History (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1989), p. 19.
7. Juanita Brooks, Emma Lee (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1978), p. 78. Historian P.T. Reilly credits Jacob Hamblin with the name Lonely Dell; see his Lee's Ferry: From Mormon Crossing to National Park (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999), p. 23. In an interview with the author on July 29, 1999, historian W.L. "Bud" Rusho supported Reilly's contention, believing that the dialog cited in Brook's work was most likely impressionistic rather than literal.
8. Juanita Brooks, John Doyle Lee: Zealot, Pioneer Builder, Scapegoat (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1992), p. 308.
9. The description is from Elmo Scott Watson, ed., The Professor Goes West (Bloomington: Illinois Wesleyan University Press, 1954), pp. 99-100. Despite DeMotte's contention that Emma's Cabin was constructed without benefit of "square and compass," Lee descendant Edna Lee Brimhall donated a carpenter's square the family believed "was used by John D. Lee when he built his house at Lee's Ferry" to the Arizona Historical Society. See Arizona Historical Society (AHS) Manuscript MS 97, collection of Mrs. Edna Lee Brimhall, Tucson.
10. For a description of early travel on the Colorado, see Otis "Dock" Marston, "Early Travel on the Green and Colorado Rivers," The Smoke Signal (Tucson Corral of the Westerners) 20 (Fall, 1969): 231-236. For a brief summary of the first Powell expedition see Elwood Bear, "John Wesley Powell – He Tamed the Colorado" Civil Service Journal (January – March, 1969): 3-7.
11. W.L. Rusho, Desert River Crossing (Salt Lake: Tower Productions, 1998), pp. 20-26.

12. Frederick S. Dellenbaugh, A Canyon Voyage: The Narrative of the Second Powell Expedition (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996; originally printed New York: Putnam, 1908), p. 211.
13. Ibid., pp. 211-212.
14. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 25.
15. For a first-person account of Spencer's operations, see A.H. Jones, "Review of Mining Operations on the San Juan and Colorado Rivers Promoted and Conducted by Charles H. Spencer, et. al., 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911," manuscript on file, Glen Canyon NRA Archives, 1960.
16. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 228.
17. Ibid., p. 242.
18. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 248. For a summary of the steamboat fiasco, see W.L. Rusho, "Charlie Spencer and his Wonderful Steamboat," Arizona Highways 37 (8) (August, 1962): 34-39.
19. For a description of the controversy surrounding the allocation of water from the Colorado River, see John Upton Terrell, War for the Colorado River (Glendale: A.H. Clark, 1965).
20. Eugene Clyde LaRue, "Colorado River and its Utilization" U.S. Geological Survey Water Supply Paper No. 395 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916). The best description of LaRue's career is found in W.B. Langbein, "L'Affaire LaRue" Journal of the West 22: 2 (April, 1983): 39-47.
21. Langbein, "L'Affaire LaRue," p. 41.
22. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 281.
23. Ibid., p. 282.
24. Langbein, "L'Affaire LaRue," p. 44.
25. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 289. See also Joyce and Josef Muench, "Taking the Measure of the Colorado River," Arizona Highways 23 (6) (June, 1947): 4-7.
26. Langbein, "L'Affaire LaRue," p. 42.
27. Eugene C. LaRue, "Water Power and Flood Control of Colorado River Below Green River, Utah" U.S. Geological Survey Water Supply Paper No. 556 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1925), pp. 69-73.

28. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 283 and 297. See also Toni Carrel, ed., Submerged Cultural Resources Site Report: Charles H. Spencer Mining Operation and Paddle Wheel Steamboat (Santa Fe: National Park Service Submerged Cultural Resources Unit, 1987), p. 32.
29. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 297.
30. Ibid., p. 303.
31. Information on the public water reserves is found in the records of the Arizona State Office of the Bureau of Land Management, Phoenix. Public Water Reserve No. 107 was later confirmed by Secretarial Order No. 160 (April 8, 1932); Secretarial Order No. 166 (July 16, 1932); and Secretarial Order 265 (December 23, 1940). It turned out that the spring was located in what, when surveyed, was Section 18 of Township 40 North, Range 8 East.
32. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, pp. 352-56.
33. Executive Order No. 6002, January 18, 1933, on file at the Arizona State Office, Bureau of Land Management, Phoenix.
34. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 381.
35. Ibid., p. 352.
36. Ibid., p. 353. For additional information, see Frank B. Dodge, "The Saga of Frank B. Dodge," manuscript #18714, on file at Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1944.
37. Glynn Bennion, "There Are Stories Told of the Old Days at Lee's Ferry," The Deseret News (Salt Lake City newspaper), November 9, 1935.
38. Charles Kelly, "Lee's Ferry on the Colorado," Desert Magazine 7 (1) (November, 1943): 5-8.
39. The custom of holding reunions at Lee's Ferry, first started in 1935, still continues. See Kate Ruland-Thorne, "Lee's Ferry Reunion," Arizona Highways 65 (14) (September, 1989): 14-15; 30-31. This article is also a good example of how historical myths are perpetuated by constant retelling. For Reilly's analysis of the Kelly contribution to history, see Lee's Ferry, p. 394.
40. Survey Notes for Township 40 North, Range 8 East, Book 4162, page 32, Arizona State Office, Bureau of Land Management, Phoenix; Township plat of Township 40 North, Range 8 East, officially filed September 5, 1941, Arizona State Office, Bureau of Land Management, Phoenix.
41. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, pp. 401-02.
42. Ibid., pp. 418-19.

43. The best work on the early history of the Central Arizona Project is Rich Johnson, The Central Arizona Project (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1977).
44. State of Arizona, Acts, Memorials and Resolutions of the Regular Session, Fifteenth Legislature (Phoenix: State of Arizona, 1941), Senate Bill 74; State of Arizona, Acts, Memorials and Resolutions of the Regular Session, Sixteenth Legislature (Phoenix: State of Arizona, 1943), Senate Bill 72.
45. State of Arizona, Acts, Memorials and Resolutions of the Regular Session, Sixteenth Legislature (Phoenix: State of Arizona, 1943), pp. 228-232.
46. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, pp. 425-433.
47. A good understanding of contemporary Reclamation thinking about the potential development of the Colorado River in the post-WWII era is found in a three part series that appeared in The Reclamation Era in 1946. Titled "Corralling the Colorado" the series featured articles by Carl P. Vetter (September, 1946): 190-192; Oscar J. Buttehdahl (October, 1946): 218-229; and William E. Warne (November, 1946): 240-256.
48. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 425.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 426.
50. The best summary of Glen Canyon Dam history is by Russell Martin, A Story that Stands Like a Dam: Glen Canyon and the Struggle for the Soul of the West. (New York: Henry Holt, 1989). See also Jared Farmer, Glen Canyon Dammed: Inventing Lake Powell and the Canyon Country (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999).
51. C. Gregory Crampton and W.L. Rusho, A Report on the History of Lee's Ferry, Arizona (Salt Lake City: Prepared for the National Park Service, 1965), p. 13; Crampton photographs PO197 48b:1:4 and 48b:1:5, September 20, 1959, University of Utah Special Collections. In his book, P.T. Reilly dates the fire to 1964 and the reports the arsonist at Larry Lopp; see Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 447.
52. C. Gregory Crampton, "Historical Sites in Glen Canyon, Mouth of San Juan River to Lee's Ferry," University of Utah Anthropological Papers No. 46 (June, 1960).
53. Docket 226 of Deeds, p. 24, Coconino County Recorder, Flagstaff.
54. H. Lee Scamehorn, Historic Structure Report Lee's Ranch, Historical Data (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1976), p. 17. Scamehorn based his conclusion on information obtained by appraiser H.B. Embach during a telephone conversation with Dee Evans. See H.B. Embach, "Appraisal Report: Property of Denver E. Evans, et. al." Phoenix: Prepared for National Park Service, 1966, p. 3, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area Archives, Record Group 17516, Folder 12. The Fryer quote is from Ruland-Thorne, "Lee's Ferry Reunion," p. 31.

55. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 450. The provenience of the orchard has caused some confusion. The National Register nomination prepared in 1997 incorrectly attributes the modern orchard to the National Park Service (section 8, p. 46). This error may have been based on the Lonely Dell Ranch Cultural Landscape Inventory prepared by Peggy Froeschauer-Nelson in 1996 which stated "A modern orchard covering a little over two acres has been planted and is currently maintained by the NPS." Froeschauer-Nelson further states specifically "the orchard is a modern addition planted by the Park Service." Both quotes from page 2.
56. Scamehorn, Historic Structure Report, p. 18. It appears that any modifications made by the consortium to the Weaver Ranch House were few, despite what they may have told the appraiser.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-24.
58. The USGS continued to have a resident hydrographer at Lee's Ferry until August 4, 1976. After a short period during which the facility was serviced from Flagstaff, in 1977 the gaging station was equipped with satellite telemetry. See Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 524.
59. P.T. Reilly, "Survey of Stone Buildings, Lee's Ferry," October 6, 1964, Manuscript Collection No. 275, Box 8, Special Collections, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff.
60. Crampton and Rusho, Report, p. iii.
61. Walter A. Gathman and Donald A. Krueger, "Lee's Ferry, Coconino County" HABS/HAER Survey Ariz. 58, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (October, 1965; Revised January, 1969).
62. Reilly, Lee's Ferry, p. 451.
63. NPS Regional Historian William E. Brown to Dr. C. Gregory Crampton, letter on file William E. Brown Collection, Manuscript No. 1350, Utah State Historical Society, February 15, 1967.
64. Roland Richert, Ruins Stabilization Report, The Old Post Office, Lee's Ferry, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area (Globe: NPS Southwest Archaeological Center, 1967), p. 1.
65. Gathman and Krueger, "Lee's Ferry."
66. John V. Young, "A New Boom at Lee's Ferry: Recreation Seekers Replace Ore Prospectors," New York Times (February 23, 1969): XX 13.
67. Docket 511 of Deeds, pp. 400-403, Coconino County Recorder, Flagstaff.
68. Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, "Environmental Assessment of Proposed Road, Ramps, Parking Lot, and Raft Boarding Jetty at Lee's Ferry," Glen Canyon NRA, January 1976; Temple A. Reynolds, "Lee's Ferry Historic District National Register Nomination," 1974, on file at Arizona SHPO.

69. Scamehorn, Historic Structure Report, pp. 24-29. Perhaps the most egregious error in the Scamehorn report was attributing a 1916 date to the Weaver Ranch House. Scamehorn based his conclusion on records at the Coconino County Assessor in Flagstaff, but the original records have since been destroyed and his research could not be duplicated.

70. Toni Carrel, ed., Submerged Cultural Resources Site Report: Charles H. Spencer Mining Operation and Paddle Wheel Steamboat (Santa Fe: National Park Service Submerged Cultural Resources Unit, 1987), pp. 2-4.

71. *Ibid.*, p. xix.

72. Ann Hubber, "Lee's Ferry and Lonely Dell Ranch National Register Nomination," manuscript on file, Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, 1997.

73. The quotation is from Sharlot M. Hall, Sharlot Hall on the Arizona Strip: A Diary of a Journey Through Northern Arizona in 1911, edited by C. Gregory Crampton (Flagstaff: Northland Press, 1975), p. 53. The original diary is at the Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott.