3 / The Wetherills in Grand Gulch

Grand Gulch drains nearly all the territory south west of the Elk Mountain from the McComb Wash to the Clay Hills—about 1000 sq. miles of territory. . . . The canon is from 300 to 700 feet deep—and in many places toward the lower end the bends are cut through by waters making natural bridges. . . . To enter the canon a party must be equipped with suitable pack animals and expect to spend 3 days on the road from Bluff.

—Richard Wetherill, 1897

On November 29, 1893, Richard Wetherill led a small group of men westward out of Mancos, Colorado, toward Grand Gulch, to assemble yet another collection of ancient Indian "relics." After a short stop for supplies in Bluff, Utah, the men headed north on December 11. In a letter written only six days later, addressed from "First Valley Cottonwood Creek 30 miles North Bluff City," Wetherill noted:

> Our success has surpassed all expectations. . . . In the cave we are now working we have taken 28 skeletons and two more in sight and curious to tell, and a thing that will surprise the archaeologists of the country is the fact of our finding them at a depth of five and six feet in a cave in which there are cliff dwellings and we find the bodies under the ruins, three feet below any cliff dweller sign. They are a different race from anything I have ever seen. They had feather cloth and baskets, no pottery—six of the bodies had stone spear heads in them.[1]

In these spare words, Richard Wetherill announced that he had found the material remnants of a culture totally new to the scholarly community—one that had preceded the cliff dwellers.

Richard Wetherill never wrote about his motivations for exploring Grand Gulch, but his desire for knowledge about the prehistoric Southwest undoubtedly played a leading role. From McLoyd and Graham he had learned about the wealth of sites in the Gulch. His brothers John and Al had accompanied McLoyd into Grand Gulch and the canyons of the Colorado early in 1893, and their stories may have excited Richard's interest.[2]

The artifacts displayed by McLoyd and C. H. Green in Durango must have especially captivated the elder Wetherill brother.[3] Among the familiar cliff dweller artifacts were several that looked unlike anything of cliff dweller manufacture. With his sharp eyes and intimate

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Signature site in upper Butler Wash.

knowledge of cliff dweller artifacts, Richard Wetherill was unlikely to have missed seeing that some sandals were constructed rather differently from those he had seen in the cliff houses of Mesa Verde. Although made of the same materials, they lacked a notch for the little toe that cliff dweller sandals nearly always had. And skulls found in association with these sandals lacked the familiar flattened shape of cliff dweller skulls.

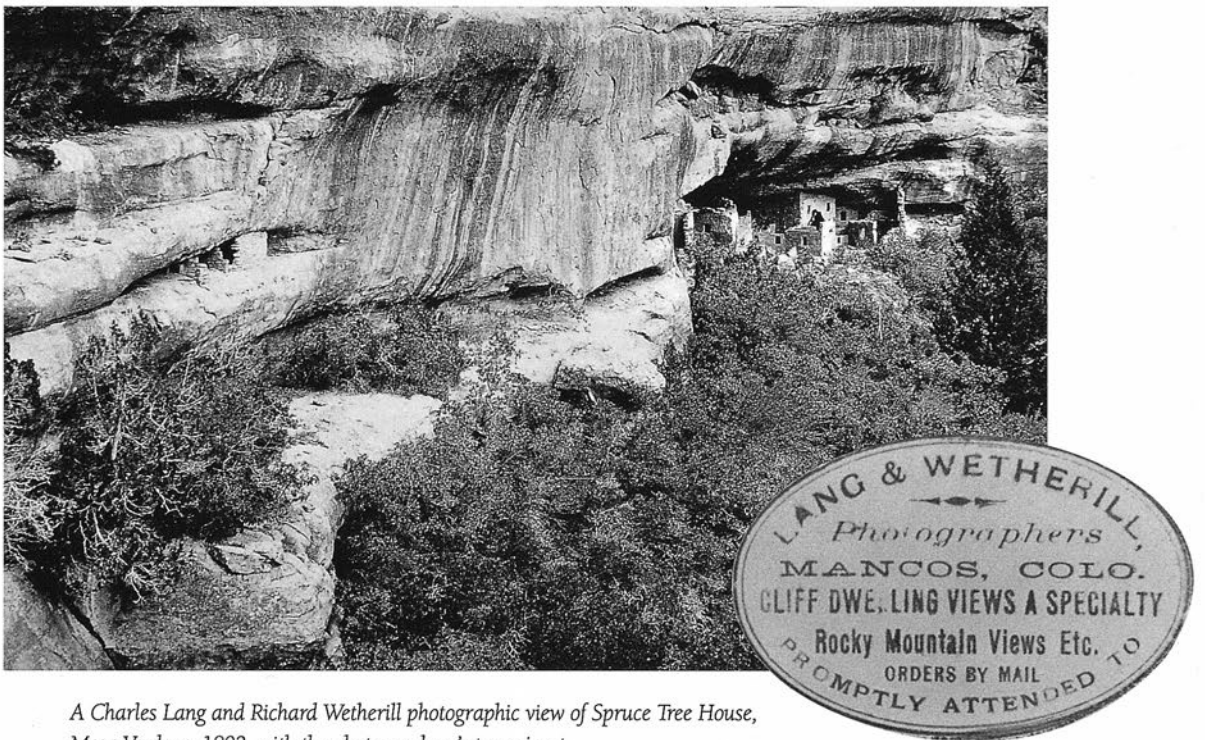
Rivalry with his former partner, Charles McLoyd, was, we suspect, just as important as Wetherill's intellectual motivation. In their articles for the *Illustrated American,* neither Warren K. Moorehead nor another writer, Lewis Gunkel, mentioned Richard Wetherill by name, although each referred to the Wetherill family and their knowledge of local archaeological sites. Moorehead may also have been referring indirectly to the Wetherills when he commented that "cowboys and Indians, tempted by the flattering offers made them by the traders, have despoiled the ruins of the relics easiest of access."[4] The attention McLoyd received from Moorehead, coupled with the archaeologist's veiled criticism of Richard Wetherill's work, must have rankled.

D. W. Ayres, who knew the Wetherill family, had accompanied McLoyd and Green on their expedition to Grand Gulch in June 1891, and he probably talked with Al and Richard Wetherill about what the party had found.[5] In addition, Charles Lang, a friend and partner of Richard Wetherill's, may have been in the Gulch prior to 1890 and photographed some of the cliff dwellings.[6] In the summer of 1893, Richard Wetherill entered into partnership with Lang. The *Mancos Times* carried the following advertisement:

> Lang & Witherill [sic], Photographers. Mancos, Colorado. Cliff Dwelling Views a Specialty! Rocky Mt. Views, orders by mail promptly attended to.[7]

Lang's descriptions and photographs of the Gulch likely provided all the extra incentive Richard Wetherill needed to head west in search of new archaeological riches.

Members of the Green Expedition in Grand Gulch, 1891. Left to right: Reverend C. H. Green(?), Charles McLoyd(?), D. W. Ayres (with violin), Robert Allan (reading Wetherill's 1888 catalog).



A Charles Lang and Richard Wetherill photographic view of Spruce Tree House, Mesa Verde, c. 1892, with the photographers' stamp inset.

THE BIGGEST IMPEDIMENT WETHERILL NOW FACED WAS LACK OF FUNDS. IN ORDER to amass a sizable collection in Grand Gulch, he would need pack animals and wranglers to handle them, as well as provisions for many weeks. His opportunity came in the late summer of 1893, when Colorado state officials asked him to look after his Mesa Verde collection at the Chicago world's fair, the World's Columbian Exposition. They wanted a knowledgeable person there to greet visitors and answer questions.

This must have been an exciting time for the rancher-turned-archaeologist. His first collection, which by then belonged to the state of Colorado, was housed in the Anthropological Building at the world's fair, together with archaeological and ethnological collections assembled by such notables as W. H. Holmes of the U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology and George A. Dorsey, a student of Frederick Ward Putnam's and later an ethnologist for the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. The H. Jay Smith Exploring Company displayed the second Wetherill collection inside a life-size replica of Battlerock Mountain, a stark sandstone outcropping in McElmo Canyon, southwest of Cortez, Colorado. The company had built this colossus expressly for the fair.

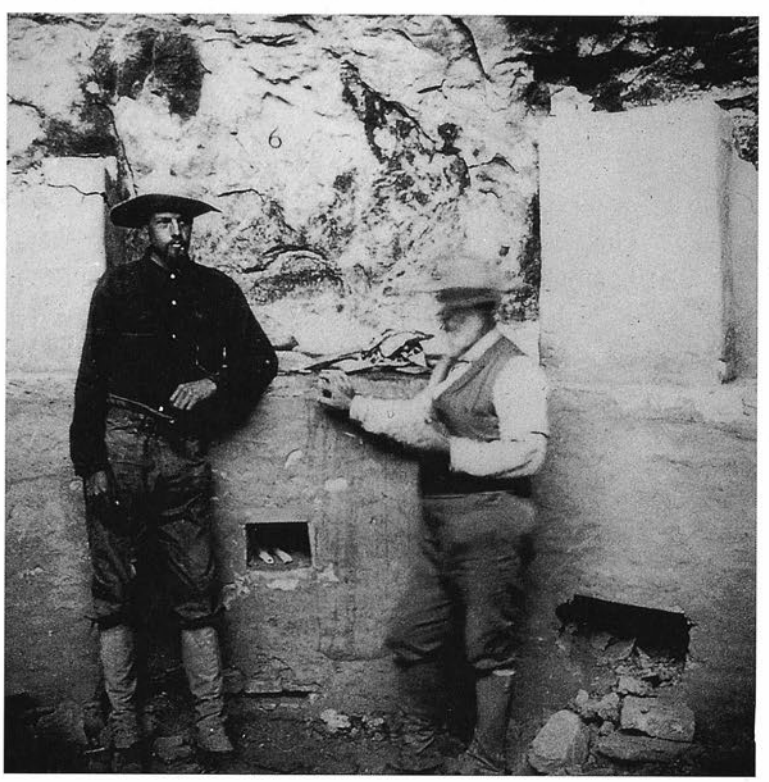
Richard Wetherill talked to a lot of people in Chicago, but to none who would prove so important to him as the brothers B. Talbot Hyde and Fred Hyde, Jr. Wetherill had first met the pair in 1892 when they visited Alamo Ranch with their father.[8] The young men, then eighteen and twenty, respectively, were the grandsons of Benjamin Babbitt, a businessman who had made his fortune in New York City manufacturing Bab-O soap. The brothers entertained a lively interest in archaeology. As heirs to the Babbitt soap fortune, they also had money to spend. Wetherill convinced them to fund a collecting expedition into Grand Gulch during the upcoming winter, with the idea of donating the collection to the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Richard Wetherill was determined to plan this expedition thoroughly and to record his archaeological finds in rigorous detail. After his experiences with Nordenskiöld, he probably was appalled at McLoyd's relative lack of documentation. Commenting on McLoyd and J. Howard Graham's excavations in Mancos and Cliff Canyons, Al Wetherill later noted:

> The men went to work among the buildings with a will, working in all the cliff dwellings along the main [Mancos] canyon and a short distance up side canyons, mostly in the main part of Cliff Canyon. They did not, however, keep a record of which house, room, or canyon they found the material [in]. Neither were there any photographs of the articles found, nor room positions in the building given. They did no destruction to any standing walls, but they threw the dirt and broken walls of one room into another that had already been worked. They pretty well dusted out the lower parts of Cliff Canyon. To them, all was just so much stuff to get out to market.[9]

Considering the praise that Moorehead had heaped on McLoyd's Grand Gulch excavations in his articles for the *Illustrated American*, Richard Wetherill probably felt he had to demonstrate his own grasp of scientific archaeology. Because the Hydes planned to donate the collection he made to the American Museum, he also wanted to live up to a new standard that would bear scrutiny from professional archaeologists. He had been in correspondence with Frederick Ward Putnam, who was Chief of Ethnology for the Columbian Exposition, and had a copy of Putnam's pamphlet on archaeological method.[10] He also had certainly talked with Putnam in Chicago.

After leaving Chicago in October, Wetherill journeyed to New York by way of Niagara Falls and Saratoga Springs to visit Julia Cowing, a young woman who had visited the Wetherills in



B. Talbot Hyde (left) and Frederick Ward Putnam at Mesa Verde, c. 1892.

Mancos and in whom he had a romantic interest.[11] In a letter written from Brooklyn, Wetherill proposed to Talbot Hyde the following methods:

> I arrived here night before last and will commence on Monday to outfit with such articles as cannot be procured at Durango. I send a form of work [a record sheet twelve by thirteen inches, ruled off in squares] that will meet all requirements unless something else occurs to you that would be of special interest. I find that there are none printed but I can do as heretofore, secure blanks and mark them myself in this manner—viz:

1 number of house or ruin	2 number of article	3 name of article	4 number of room
5 number of section	6 depth	7 number of floors if any	8 remarks number of room

> Every article to be numbered with India ink and fine pen or with tube paints white, red or black. Plan of all houses and sections to be made on paper or book to be ruled both ways. Drawing of article to be made on paper with numbers and name. Photograph each house before touched, then each room or section and every important article as found.
>
> I think you will find this will meet all the requirements of the most scientific but if you have any suggestions whatever I will act upon them. This whole subject . . . is in its infancy and the work we do must stand the most rigid inspection, and we do not want to do it in such a manner that anyone in the future can pick flaws in it.[12]

This plan clearly reflects the standards for documentation that Wetherill had learned from Nordenskiöld. In practice, however, his implementation fell short; he apparently never kept such a record book, although he did take notes and assemble an informative catalog.

Richard Wetherill's initial party consisted of himself, Al and John Wetherill, Charles Lang, Harry French, and James Ethridge. They headed out of Mancos by way of Cortez, then turned south for a few miles and took McElmo Canyon west toward Bluff. Wirt Jenks Billings from Denver joined the party there, along with Bob Allan, who had been part of Green's 1891 exploring party. Allan lived in Bluff, but his family raised a dairy herd on Milk Ranch Point overlooking Cottonwood Wash. He was probably suggested as a team member by Charles Lang, who had met him during Lang's earlier explorations in southeastern Utah.

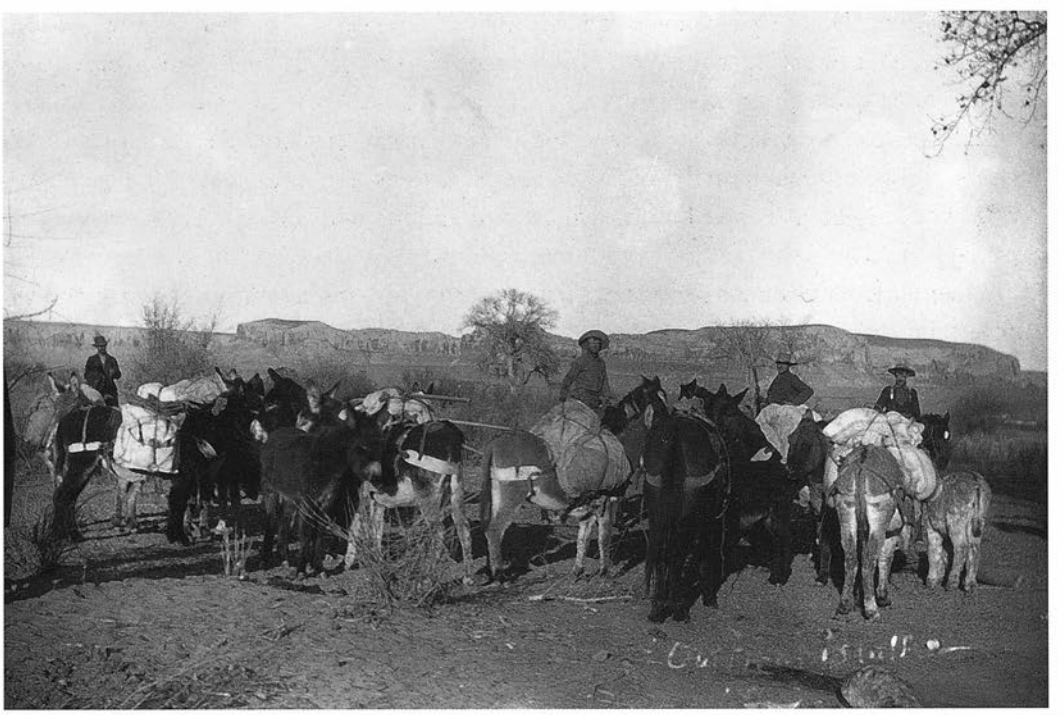
In Bluff, Wetherill hired more horses and burros and bought a month's worth of supplies. On December 11, the men left the town, riding north along Cottonwood Wash, a broad, sandy drainage that empties into the San Juan River just west of town.[13] As Harry French explained in a letter years later, each member of the expedition had specific duties:

> Richard Wetherill was in charge, Alf [sic] Wetherill, cook; Charlie Lang, photographer. C. N. [Wirt Jenks] Billings kept account of everything we took out of these ruins and sent a copy with the collections to the Natural History Museum, New York City; John Wetherill had the nice job of rustling up the burros when we moved camp. Sometimes it took him a day or two to find them. Bob Allen [Allan] accompanied by one other man would take the collections in to Bluff City and bring out supplies. He made every trip as Bluff was his home and he was acquainted with the people and conditions. Jim Ethridge and myself were the two that went ahead looking for a new camp site whenever we moved. Jim had been in part of that country before, which was a help to us in locating our camps. When we made these trips ahead we would start at day break so we could make it back to our camp at night.[14]

The Hyde Exploring Expedition was an arduous venture. Except for a short reprieve in Bluff around Christmastime, the party spent four months in the field, sleeping out or in tents every night, traveling or digging in the ruins by day. Expedition members were fortunate that the winter of 1893–94 was unusually mild:

> The entire party never went into Bluff City together except Christmas 1893. While we were there, we were generously entertained by the high moguls of the Mormon Church. This was arranged by Bob Allen [sic], who was a Mormon. . . . This particular winter was wonderful for our trip. It was a mild, open winter and we had very little snow.[15]

Paradoxically, Richard Wetherill and his crew made their most significant find before even reaching Grand Gulch. After examining six other alcoves on their way up Cottonwood Creek, the men reached the alcove they called Cave 7 on December 17, discovering there clear



The Hyde Exploring Expedition leaving Bluff City in 1893. Left to right: Richard Wetherill, James Ethridge, Wirt Jenks Billings, John Wetherill.

MEMBERS OF THE HYDE EXPLORING EXPEDITION

Expedition Member	*Duty*
Robert (Bob) Allan	Guide/wrangler
Wirt Jenks Billings	Recorder/excavator
James Ethridge	Excavator
Harry French	Excavator
Charles Lang	Photographer
Al Wetherill	Excavator/cook
John Wetherill	Wrangler/cook
Richard Wetherill	Expedition leader

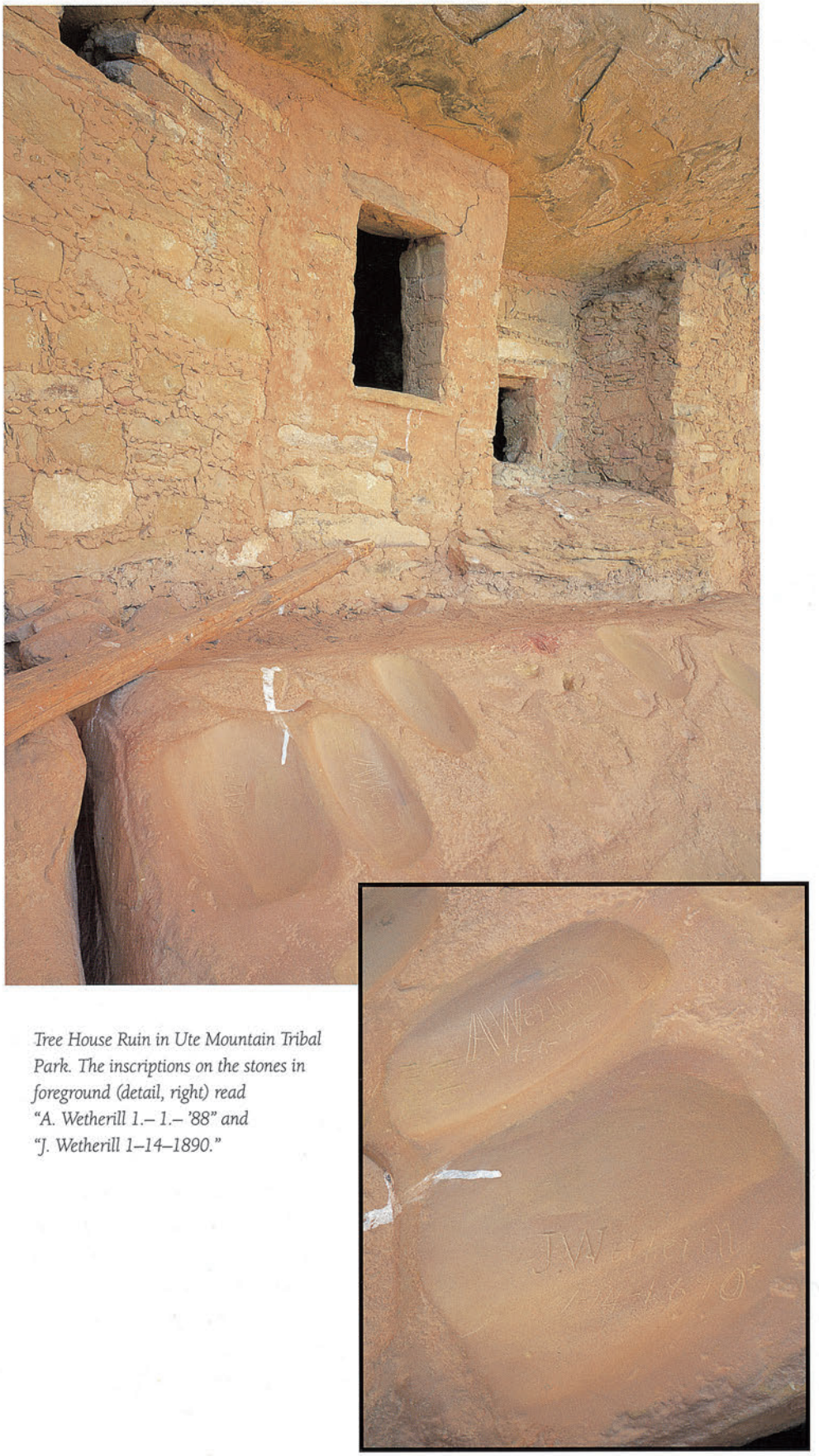
Charles B. Lang signature, Ute Cave, Allen Canyon.

evidence of the Basketmaker people. In a letter to Talbot Hyde written from Bluff on December 21, Wetherill elaborated on this exciting find: "We have only worked one Cave [,] there is hundreds of them here, but all of this class of digging is deep. . . . You would be much interested that we have now taken 90 skeletons from one cave [,] the heads are different from the Cliff Dweller."[16]

It was young Talbot Hyde who named the newly found people. The manner in which the term came about reveals Richard Wetherill's tendency to share with others the credit for his discoveries. He wrote Hyde, who was paying for much of the Wetherills' work, "We find that the basket people, or whatever you may name them, (which you should do. I named the cliff dwellers, and you should have the honor at least of naming these, since it is your expedition) . . ."[17] Hyde suggested "Basket Maker," which Wetherill thought was "more distinctive than anything I could have thought [of] for a name."[18]

Wetherill did have some reservations about the term, perhaps because basket making was a universal practice among the historically known tribes of the region. Nevertheless, he began to use the name, and after T. Mitchell Prudden and George Pepper, another professional archaeologist, used it in articles they published about Richard Wetherill's work, it caught on. The archaeologist Charles A. Amsden later shortened it into a single word, noting, "I prefer this form, Basketmaker, as the simplest form of an awkward and essentially meaningless term, for most of the world's peoples are makers of baskets."[19]

After celebrating Christmas in Bluff, the expedition apparently headed out again sometime before the end of December. We surmise this because Billings signed his name in Cave 10 (now named Fishmouth Cave) in Butler Wash on New Year's Day, 1894. Years later, Harry French reported that the Hyde expedition took many artifacts from this alcove, but Wetherill's 1894 notes make no mention of them, and the artifacts' current location is unknown. After exploring Cave 11—the location of which has yet to be rediscovered—the expedition turned west, and sometime before January 8 reached its prize, Grand Gulch.



Tree House Ruin in Ute Mountain Tribal Park. The inscriptions on the stones in foreground (detail, right) read "A. Wetherill 1.– 1.– '88" and "J. Wetherill 1–14–1890."

Most of what we know about the route the Hyde Exploring Expedition took, and the alcoves and sites it explored, comes from doing reverse archaeology. Searching through archives, participants in the Wetherill–Grand Gulch Research Project found written records few and short on detail. But luckily, members of the Hyde expedition had a propensity for writing their names on the canyon walls. Sometimes they also included the date. These inscriptions have proved to be a gold mine for historical research.

Throughout the Southwest, historic graffiti—names, messages, and dates—document expeditions, journeys, adventures, discoveries, and social occasions.[20] Sometimes they mark a homestead, a mining claim, or a camp now long forgotten. Historic inscriptions have been found on canyon walls and boulders and at archaeological sites, often well preserved because of their placement in hidden and sheltered spots. Sadly, others have deteriorated through natural processes or have been destroyed by vandals.

When readable, the inscriptions not only give us important dates but also, through their style and placement, afford insights into the personalities and characters of the individuals who recorded their moment of history. Each person had his or her preference about where to place a signature, some showing off their climbing skills by scrawling a name high on an inaccessible ledge, others incising an inscription neatly on a site feature such as an ax-grinding groove or the lintel of a doorway.

Tracking down and recording more than four hundred signatures and other inscriptions in southeastern Utah has been a formidable task and is still far from complete. The quest for relevant inscriptions has taken researchers into many of the region's major canyons. Their most intensive efforts have focused on Grand Gulch, which encompasses some seventy-five miles of main canyon and another seventy-five miles of side canyons. Because Ancestral Pueblo people lived on both sides of the gorges, research teams have been faced with exploring roughly three hundred miles of canyon in Grand Gulch alone, searching carefully in and around each archaeological site.

New pairs of eyes and different lighting conditions continually produce new discoveries. Ambient light changes throughout the day and throughout the year. The best times to examine faint inscriptions are in the early morning and evening. In winter, the sun's low angle can also improve the visibility of markings on the rocks.

It took the project team nearly five years to find and decipher the signature of H. R. Ricker, a member of the 1891 Green Expedition, in Perfect Kiva and that of Charles McLoyd in Green's Burial Cave 1. Although these sites had been examined many times by different groups in the spring and summer, better lighting conditions in the winter of 1991 finally made the names discernible. As late as July 1994, a previously unseen date was found inscribed on the wall of Cave 7. In that case, early morning light helped delineate the faint markings.

In 1992, participants in an Outward Bound instructors' workshop in Cottonwood Wash found, among debris left by contemporary pothunters, a rock bearing the finely carved name of C. B. Lang.[21] This same rock had been overlooked several times by the Wetherill–Grand Gulch team. Sometimes researchers have simply missed an entire inscription site. In 1992, hiker Jeffrey Minker found a panel in what was likely the last site excavated by the Whitmore Exploring Expedition, Richard Wetherill's second trip into Grand Gulch, in 1897. It contains the names Charlie Mason, "Wetherill," and James Ethridge, and the initials "W.E.E."

In documenting these inscriptions, it often helps to use a magnifying lens to follow the scratches. Sometimes, reversing a pair of binoculars and looking through the large end tends to pull together large, faint letters made by abrasion, charcoal, or bullet lead. Because tracing the inscriptions directly—through sheets of clear Mylar, for example—would begin to destroy them, Wetherill–Grand Gulch researchers sketch each image instead. The recorder takes care to draw only what can actually be seen and to avoid adding interpretations. Several colleagues working together help maintain everyone's objectivity.

These inscriptions have enabled us to trace the paths the different expeditions followed, the archaeological sites they dug, and the campsites they used. Together with letters, journals, maps, and photographs, they have yielded up the routes of McLoyd and Graham's 1891 expedition, Green's 1891 trip, the 1893–94 Hyde Exploring Expedition, and the 1897 Whitmore Exploring Expedition. They have also helped us identify alcoves previously lost to history, such as Cave 7.

With continued documentation of the historic inscriptions, we have high hopes of retracing other expeditions and giving provenience to additional artifacts taken from the Four Corners region. Unfortunately, signatures are a disappearing resource. We estimate that natural erosion and human vandalism have damaged or obliterated some two-thirds of the inscriptions known so far. But by correlating the still-decipherable signatures, especially those accompanied by dates, with information gleaned from letters and expedition notes, members of the Wetherill–Grand Gulch Research Project have successfully reconstructed the route Richard Wetherill and his companions took when the Hyde Exploring Expedition struck out for Grand Gulch.

After turning west at the head of Butler Wash, Wetherill's party headed for Graham (now Bullet) Canyon, following the same route to Grand Gulch that Charles McLoyd had taken three years earlier. Bob Allan may have led the team, because he knew the trail McLoyd and Graham had built into the upper reaches of Graham Canyon in 1891. On January 8, 1894, shortly after the party must have entered the Gulch, Harry French inscribed his name in Cave 14, or Perfect Kiva.

The men worked several of the alcoves in Graham Canyon on their way to the main canyon. Writing in his notes about the cultural material found in Cave 12, Richard Wetherill also dropped hints about his opinion of McLoyd and Graham's earlier excavations:

> Graham Canyon Burial Cave 1:
> Headless mummy with Sandal on feet—dug out and left by McLeod [sic].
>
> This cave is in Grand Gulch and one from which McLeod and Graham took so many mummies and baskets, several spots were left untouched. This child was in a grave 2 ft. deep around it was mummy cloth—similar to the previous. A string of black beads upon the neck. White ones upon the arms. A bag of corn meal up on top of it [see p.94] and several sandals. Found exposed on surface—dug out 1 year ago.[22]

We know from Wetherill's later summary of the 1897 Whitmore Exploring Expedition that the 1893–94 team dug in Caves 12 through 16 in Graham Canyon. The notes of the Hyde expedition itself, however—available today in the American Museum of Natural History—are not as complete as Richard Wetherill originally planned to make them. We are not sure why.

Wirt Jenks Billings apparently kept most or all of the notes. Although Wetherill put together an annotated catalog, Billings's notes and any drawings he made have since disappeared, and the notes we now have are cursory at best. Fortunately, Wetherill's summary of his second expedition into Grand Gulch contains several references to caves visited in the first, which have helped greatly in tracing the route of the first expedition.

Upon reaching the junction where Graham Canyon meets Grand Gulch proper, Richard Wetherill sent Al and John south, toward the San Juan River, to search for likely sites in which to dig along the main canyon. The rest of the party turned north, toward the head of Grand Gulch. Inscriptions bearing the same date but in widely different parts of the canyon tell us the group must have split up about January 25.

Al and John Wetherill visited side canyons and sites along the way, leaving their signatures and drawings in Step, Dripping, and Cow Tanks Canyons. They rode past the rincon called Polly's Island, past a Pueblo III site called the Grand Hotel because of its finely executed stone walls, and on past Bannister Ruin.[23] In the lower part of Grand Gulch, they found untouched Basketmaker burial caves.

Artifact assemblage from the burial of a Basketmaker child, removed from Cave 12 by the Hyde Exploring Expedition of 1893–94 and now in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History. Pictured items include four coiled baskets, one filled with piñon, parched and popped corn, and squash seeds, another holding bone needles woven together; a tanned mountain sheep skin; two large apocynum fiber bags, one filled with cornmeal; a polished mountain sheep horn; and a small fiber bag containing yellow ochre and chipped stone flakes.

Burial site and rock art panel in Cut-in-Two Cave, Grand Gulch.

The balance of the expedition team excavated several alcoves in the upper canyon, including Cut-In-Two Cave (Cave 19), from which they took buried body parts and the preserved mummy of a tall old man who had suffered a deep cut across the back and abdomen. The poor fellow had been crudely stitched together sometime before his death by means of cord made of braided human hair:

> Mummified remains of Arms and hands from elbows and legs and feet from knees showing evidence of having been cut off before burial with them was 734 [Wetherill's catalog number for the mummy]. Mummy in bottom of circular grave. Man nearly 6 ft. tall. Knees drawn up on Hands on Abdomen. Was cut in two at loins and sewed together again with hair string. (One of the most curious specimens ever found).[24]

They also dug in Rope Ruin (Cave 18), Turkey Pen Ruin (Cave 20), and Green Mask Alcove (Cave 17), so named for its striking Basketmaker painting of a green mask.[25]

Judging from the signatures and dates, it appears that upon John and Al Wetherill's return, the group packed up the artifacts, loaded them on burros, and returned to Bluff during the first three days of February. After resupplying in Bluff and resting for a short time, they headed directly for the lower reaches of Grand Gulch, where they excavated in caves near Red Man, Rope, and Water Canyons.

Richard Wetherill's letters to the Hydes and others, written in the field and in Bluff, tell much about his movements and interests. In many alcoves the party found human remains—sometimes skeletons, but more often Basketmaker "mummies" that had been well preserved by the remarkable dryness of the Grand Gulch alcoves. In a letter to Talbot Hyde on February 4, 1894, Wetherill noted:

> It is now three weeks since I left here [Bluff] for Grand Gulch. We worked in two caves two days where McLoyd dug out so many mummies [probably Cave 17 (Green Mask Alcove) and Cave 19 (Cut-In-Two)]. I sent Al and John fifty miles down the canyon to look at some caves. In the meantime, the rest of us moved seven miles up the canyon to some ruins that McLoyd worked [perhaps what is now called Split Level Ruin]. On Al's and John's return from the lower end of the canyon, they told of several caves that had been overlooked entirely by previous explorers. They dug a few minutes in each and found human remains. The next day after their return we worked in a cave that had a cliff house in it, and which had been previously worked [Cave 19 (Cut-In-Two)]. There we found nine mummies more or less perfect, one of them a remarkable specimen, and a greater find than any we have yet made. I saved all the skeletons from the first cave [Cave 7] as I thought you would want them for study, but I will not save any more; the distance is too great, but will save all skulls.

The last dated inscription that we know of for the Hyde Exploring Expedition—though it does not give the date for the end of the trip—is James Ethridge's name, which he wrote, along with "February 22, 1894," in an alcove near Rope Canyon. One of the Wetherills and Wirt Jenks Billings also left their names on the canyon walls nearby. The alcove now known as Wetherill Cave in lower Grand Gulch contains numerous inscriptions, which suggests that it served as a camp and excavation location. After having dug a total of thirteen caves (numbered 17 through 29), the Hyde expedition left Grand Gulch with its collection and returned temporarily to Bluff.

By March 14, the group was again at work in the upper reaches of Butler and Cottonwood Washes, now excavating in Double Cave.[26] Richard Wetherill described this alcove as the "Place where the Great Battle took place,"[27] a reference we find puzzling because we have found no record of any artifacts from the cave that might explain it.

By the end of March, the expedition had run out of money and credit. Wetherill had planned to push south of the San Juan, but instead laid off his men when they reached Bluff. Earlier, on February 4 and again on March 20, he had written to Talbot Hyde, urging the young man to send money he had promised. Wetherill had been unable to pay his men, and he owed merchants in Bluff several hundred dollars.

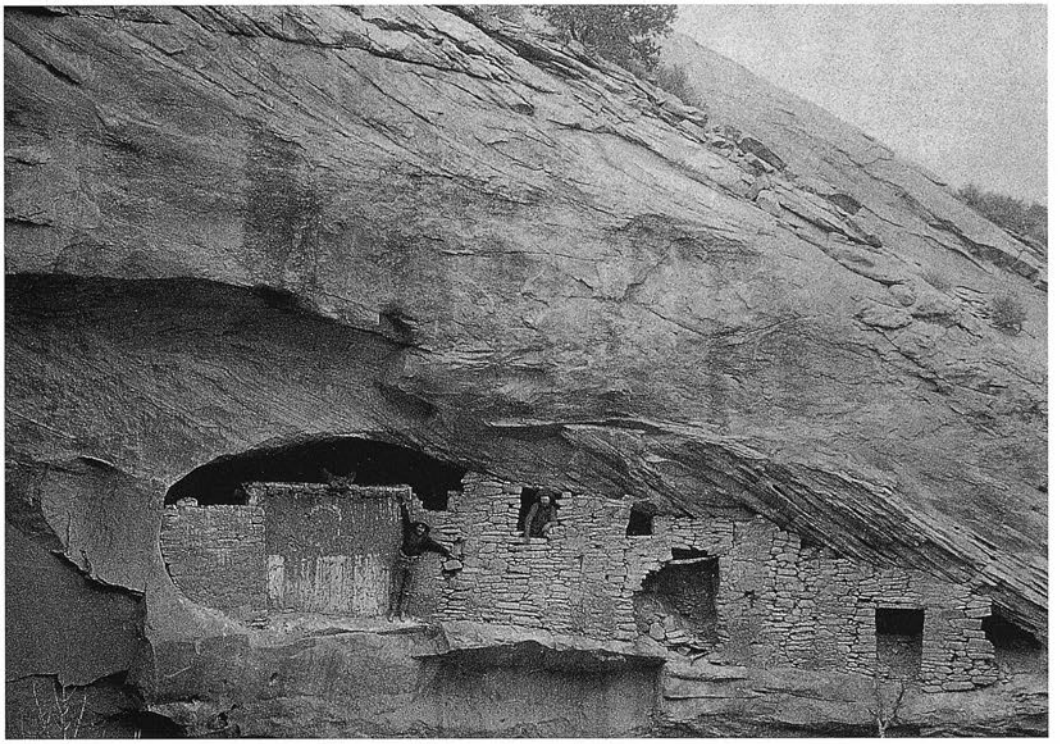
While they waited for Talbot Hyde to come through with the cash, the men took the opportunity to work some placer claims along the San Juan, searching for meager traces of gold washed down from the hills. Richard Wetherill stayed behind to continue the work he loved. On March 28 he again wrote to Hyde:

> I am in the field where I like to work and have no thought for anything else while here, but it is necessary to have supplies enough as soon as I can so that you can write a couple of articles for the *American Archaeologist.* They are anxious to have it. I told Mr. Moorehead [editor of *American Archaeologist* in 1894–95] that I would write them with your permission if you did not wish to but I think you should do it, by all means. . . . while the boys were waiting they have gone down the canyon to locate some placer claims for themselves.[28]

This letter reveals both Richard Wetherill's passion for archaeology and his constant struggle to fund it. The expedition was continually short on supplies because the Hyde brothers were slow in sending money. Wetherill's appetite for digging was such that he undoubtedly could have spent whatever the Hydes sent and more as well. He apparently contributed a substantial part of his own assets to the task, funds he could ill afford, considering the precarious state of finances back home. The family ranch was heavily in debt. Father B. K. Wetherill, in poor health, was unable to manage it, so all duties fell to the five brothers. Richard Wetherill's personal sacrifices are well documented and illustrate his deep commitment to the archaeological work he was doing, contradicting the claim some have made that he was primarily interested in excavating for the money he occasionally earned selling artifacts.

Sometime between March 28 and April 11, 1894, Richard Wetherill reassembled his expedition party, crossed the San Juan, and explored Chinle Wash. There the party visited Poncho House, a large Pueblo III site that Wetherill referred to as Long House because it was over five hundred feet long.[29] Poncho House was the Hyde expedition's last major stop before returning to Mancos.

By the end of their trip, team members had documented or excavated some thirty-three alcoves and cliff dwellings in Grand Gulch, Allen Canyon, and Butler Wash, through which they traveled on the way back to Bluff. They had made 52 pages of field notes and assembled a collection of 1,216 items, both artifacts and human skeletons. Most of these items were gathered in Grand Gulch, but 428 came from Cottonwood Wash and 71 from Poncho House. Wetherill shipped the relics to Mancos, and by April 11, 1894, he was back at Alamo Ranch working on the collection. It took him roughly two months to sort and catalog his finds before he crated and shipped them to the Hyde brothers in New York. The Hydes presented the collection to the American Museum of Natural History a year later, in the fall of 1895.[30]

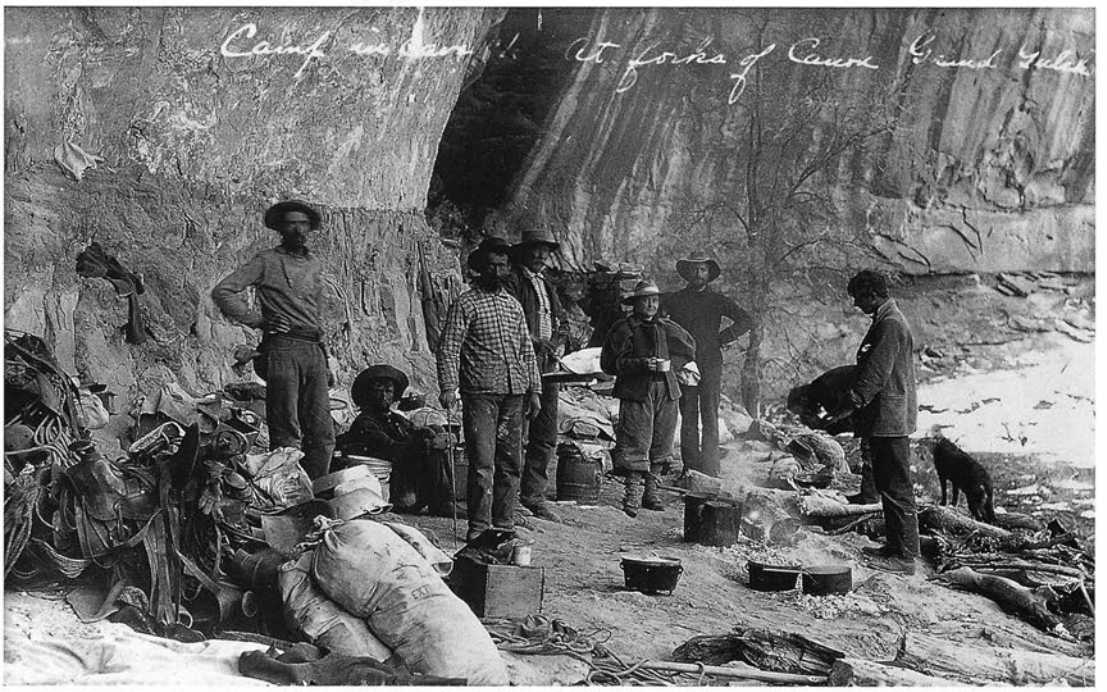


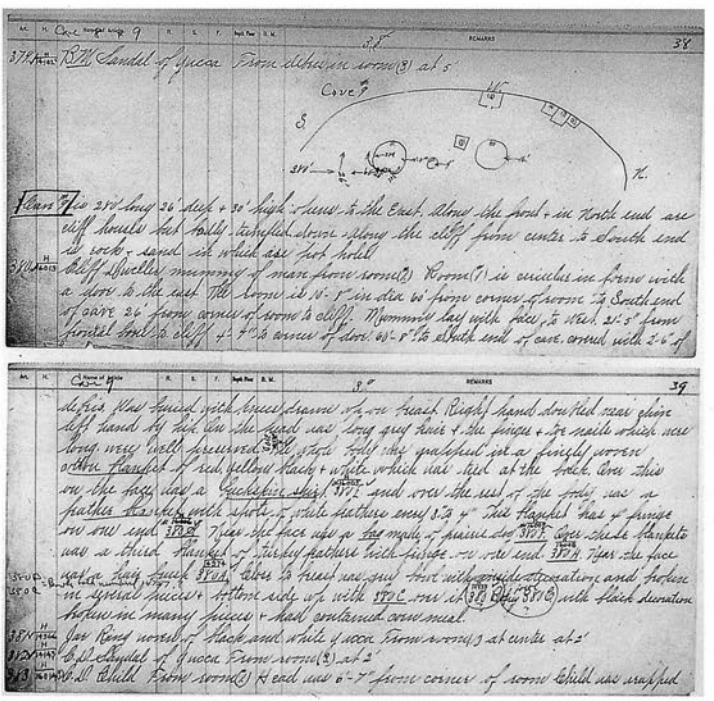
Hyde Exploring Expedition members at a cliff dwelling in Butler Wash, 1894. Left to right: James Ethridge (leaning on wall), Harry French, and Wirt Jenks Billings (in window opening).

Richard Wetherill's second major expedition into Grand Gulch was a vastly different experience from the first.[31] Whereas the winter of 1893–94 had been relatively mild, now the canyon showed its harsh side. Snow blanketed the landscape, and bitter cold reigned. Forage for the animals was hard to find. Wetherill took many photographs, but because he used a "wet plate" process, they froze before they could be developed, and few survived.

On this trip Wetherill took thirteen people into the Gulch. One member of the party was his new wife, the former Marietta Palmer, whom Wetherill had met a year earlier when she and her family visited Alamo Ranch. The Palmers—Sidney LaVerne, Elizabeth Ann, and their children—were musicians who toured the Southwest, earning their living by playing concerts in the small towns and cities. LaVerne Palmer had heard of the Wetherills and their finds at Mesa Verde and became intrigued by the opportunity to explore the many Indian ruins in the area. Marietta Palmer was twenty when she married Richard Wetherill on December 12, 1896. Richard was thirty-eight. They were married in Sacramento, California, and returned to Alamo Ranch on December 30.

Richard Wetherill launched the Whitmore Exploring Expedition under circumstances rather different from those of the Hyde expedition. This time, he was driven largely by a desire to document as well as he could the culture he called the Basket Makers. He also wanted to revisit Grand Gulch before other groups, possibly better funded, could encroach on territory where "he felt he and the Hydes had prior interests."[32] Having heard in October from Charles Lang that the Field Museum was planning to send an expedition into Grand Gulch, Wetherill immediately wrote to Talbot Hyde, attempting to interest his patron in outfitting a second Utah





Above: The 1897 Whitmore Exploring Expedition's Camp 4. Left to right: Orian Buck, James Ethridge, George Hairgrove, Levi Carson, Marietta Palmer Wetherill, Teddy Whitmore, Charlie Mason, Hal Heaton, unidentified dog. Left: Marietta Wetherill's 1897 field notes and excavation plan of Cave 7.

immediately wrote to Talbot Hyde, attempting to interest his patron in outfitting a second Utah expedition.[33] Hyde wrote back that he and his brother would be unable to fund it.

Then, unexpectedly, help arrived from a Harvard student by the name of George Bowles and his tutor, C. E. Whitmore. Young Bowles was bent on adventure and had the money to pursue it with style. Wetherill suggested that Whitmore and Bowles fund an expedition to Grand Gulch. Whitmore was more than willing to approve the endeavor, and the two men joined Wetherill immediately in preparing to leave in early January 1897. The weather and an experience with some Indians near the end of the expedition were to provide much higher adventure than either of them had bargained for.

Despite her youth and relative inexperience with winter camping, Richard Wetherill's new bride, Marietta, insisted on joining the expedition team. After all, she argued, they would need someone to take notes and keep excavation records. Wetherill reluctantly agreed.[34]

The party seems to have left Alamo Ranch on or just after January 13, 1897; the ranch ledger shows that Whitmore paid his boarding charges that day.[35] On about January 18, Richard Wetherill led the party of twelve men and one woman out of Bluff, Utah, first north by way of Cottonwood Wash and then west to Wetherill Canyon (now known as Kane Gulch), where they entered Grand Gulch.

One of the Wetherill brothers had found this route during the first expedition. To Richard Wetherill, it was an improvement over the treacherous Graham Canyon route, partly because it enabled him to use horses and mules for packing, rather than burros. To Marietta Wetherill and the newcomers, it must have seemed foolhardy. On the way down, they lost one of their horses over the edge, the contents of its packs scattering on the rocks two hundred feet below. The young woman gritted her teeth and followed the others down. Later she commented, "It was so crooked that even a rattlesnake would have a hard time getting down without breaking its back."[36]

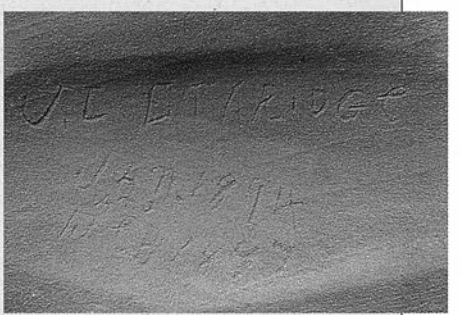
With a larger crew this time, efficiency multiplied. Not only did Richard have more people to help with the digging, but he also had Marietta to help take notes—the originals of which reveal each of their handwriting. Because Richard and his brothers were already familiar with Grand Gulch, they could focus their efforts on choosing sites and supervising the excavations.

The party stayed in the Gulch about a month, visiting or excavating some twelve sites—all of which the Wetherill–Grand Gulch Research Project has identified by tracking down signatures of the participants. James Ethridge was the only member of the expedition who dated his signatures on the canyon walls. Without those dates, project members would never have been able to trace the movements of the Whitmore expedition.

The Wetherills' notes on each alcove were accurate and detailed. Although they did not describe the party's route, it was implicit in the sequence of cave numbers assigned. By using the notes, together with Richard Wetherill's summary and site maps and Ethridge's signatures, the project team was able not only to confirm the expedition's route but also to determine the exact proveniences of some of the most important archaeological finds. The detailed site maps, which show the placement of burials and major artifacts, enabled Wetherill–Grand Gulch personnel to identify the original locations of artifacts in their alcoves with surprising precision. For example, team members pinpointed the exact provenience of the mummy someone in the Whitmore expedition dubbed "Joe Buck," which was found in Cave 9 (an alcove now known as Kokopelli and the Dancers), and of the two cliff dweller mummies in Cave 11 (Green Mask Alcove) that the Wetherills called the Prince and Princess.

MEMBERS OF THE WHITMORE EXPLORING EXPEDITION

Member	Primary Role
George Bowles	Excavation, note taking, and sightseeing; financier
Orian H. Buck	Excavation
E. C. Cushman	Care of pack animals
James Ethridge	Excavation
George Hairgrove	Kitchen
Hal Heaton	Kitchen
William Henderson	Unknown
C. C. Mason	Excavation
Clayton Tompkins	Artifact inventory and packing
Clayton Wetherill	Care of riding stock
Marietta Wetherill	Recorder
Richard Wetherill	Leader, photographer
C. E. Whitmore	Financier



J. L. Ethridge signatures, January 1894 and February 1897, Cut-in-Two Cave (Cave 12/19), Grand Gulch.

Marietta Wetherill's account of the discovery of the mummy Joe Buck provides insights into Richard Wetherill's archaeological methods. It also reveals some of the humor the party engaged in, this time at the expense of Orian Buck, who helped with the excavation:

> They dug a little ways down and found they were coming to a body. Usually after they dug the first shovelful, they saw a rim of pottery or maybe a knee, and they got the brushes out. They used whisk brooms and a finer brush and then all the digging was done with a small garden trowel in those days. Mr. Wetherill insisted on photographing and measuring before he ever started to dig. I measured from front to back then the height by holding up a stick and measuring the stick.
>
> They found this marvelous mummy in there. They called the mummy Joe Buck after one of the fellows on the trip. I don't know who did it but the boys all blamed me when Buck got mad every time anybody would say that mummy looked like him. The mummy was covered first in a plain turkey feather blanket. The warp of those blankets was yucca string, and the feathers were taken off the quill and wound around the string. That was covered with another blanket with little blue bird feathers in it. The marvel of marvels was a blanket made of cotton, beautifully woven and intricate as a design [sic] in red, black, yellow and white.[37]

For the excavators, the discovery of the Prince and Princess was probably the highlight of the 1897 expedition. In an interview given in the 1940s, Marietta Wetherill described the event:

> Under the basket was another basket and beneath that was a turkey feather blanket with bluebird feather spots. Under that was another feather blanket with yellow spots from wild canaries, perhaps. A small basket, which had a design similar to an Apache basket I have, laid at one end.

Detail of the cotton blanket in which the mummy "Joe Buck" was found.

"Oh, she's alive!" I said when Mr. Wetherill lifted the basket from her face. I couldn't believe she was dead. You can't imagine how quickly these mummies begin to wither when the air gets to them.

"She sure does look asleep, doesn't she?" Mr. Wetherill said.

We called her "Princess." Her body was painted yellow and her face was painted red and her hair was long. She had sandals on her feet and a . . . necklace of shell beads. She lay in another basket a bit larger than [the] one covering her. Moisture never reached the little grave. She had just dried.[38]

Near the Princess, the Whitmore expedition crew found the mummy they called the Prince. These accumulated discoveries soon created a storage problem for the Wetherills. One night, snow began to fall in the canyon after Richard and Marietta had fallen asleep. As Marietta remembered it years later, her husband suddenly sat up and announced that it was snowing. Her mind foggy with fatigue, she pulled the blankets closer and went back to sleep. The next thing she knew, Mr. Wetherill—she always called him Mr. Wetherill, even when addressing him directly—had returned, asking, "What would you like me to do? Would you like them at your head, or at your feet?" Marietta Wetherill awoke fully to the sight of her husband holding two of the mummies they had dug up. "At the foot, Mr. Wetherill. At the foot of the bed."[39]

Decorated Basketmaker baskets in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History, probably photographed in 1906 as part of George Pepper's "Basket-Maker" exhibit.

THE HARSH WINTER WEATHER, COMBINED WITH LACK OF BROWSE FOR THE ANIMALS and the recovery of relatively few artifacts, caused Richard Wetherill to leave Grand Gulch in late February, earlier than he had planned, and head south across the San Juan. "No grass what ever was found," Wetherill wrote. "The animals subsisted on the grain fed them with the tops of brush which they picked. Before leaving there many were weak and thin."[40]

Wetherill split his party up into three groups, who agreed to meet at Marsh Pass in Arizona a few weeks later. He sent Orian Buck, Charlie Mason, and George Bowles with the strongest of the horses to Mysterious Canyon, some forty miles southwest of Grand Gulch, beyond Navajo Mountain. He and the rest of the party rested in Bluff while they prepared for the next trip.

After a few days, Clayton Wetherill, William Henderson, and Jim Ethridge headed due west for Moqui Canyon, which empties into the Colorado above Hall's Ferry. They were to look for Basketmaker remains in the canyon's large alcoves. They found that McLoyd and others had been there before them, and they unearthed little of interest in the empty Basketmaker cists.

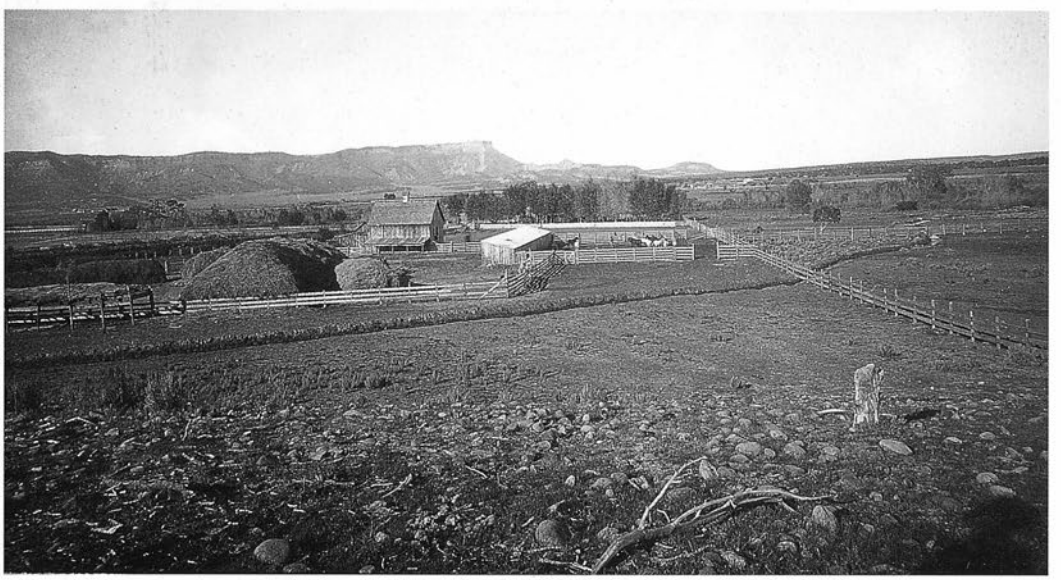
Leaving Marietta with Bob Allan's family in Bluff, Richard and the rest of his group headed along Chinle Wash southwest toward Marsh Pass. On the way, they explored many sites that Wetherill had not seen before, including ones around Agathla Needle near Kayenta and at Moqui Rock. They also returned to Kiet Siel in Tsegi Canyon, which the Wetherills had explored in 1894, this time taking measurements of the imposing ruin and diagramming its floor plan. Unfortunately, the map Wetherill made has since been lost, although his notes survive.

In April, shortly after Richard Wetherill's party explored Kiet Siel, the three groups reunited as planned. Although the quest to Moqui Canyon had turned up little, Buck, Mason, and Bowles had brought many artifacts out of Mysterious Canyon. Sadly, the Wetherill–Grand

Gulch Research Project has so far failed to discover the current whereabouts of these items or the artifacts from Tsegi Canyon.

The men had one last excitement before heading back to the relative quiet of Bluff. Not long after the three small groups met up in Marsh Pass, Whitmore and Bowles, who had been out on a ride, failed to return as expected. The rest of the party began to search the maze of nearby canyons. In the midst of the search, an unidentified Indian approached Richard Wetherill, telling him that the two young men had been captured. The Indian demanded several hundred silver dollars as ransom, threatening dire consequences if the money was not paid quickly.

It must have rankled Wetherill to accede to this demand, but in wild, unfamiliar country he had little choice. The two Easterners could have been held anywhere. He quickly sent one of the men to Bluff to secure the ransom. By the time the rider returned with the cash and Whitmore and Bowles were released, the two had been forced to spend three full days and four cold nights atop Moqui Rock, a large sandstone outcropping near Agathla Needle.



The Wetherill family's Alamo Ranch, photographed in 1891 by Gustaf Nordenskiöld.

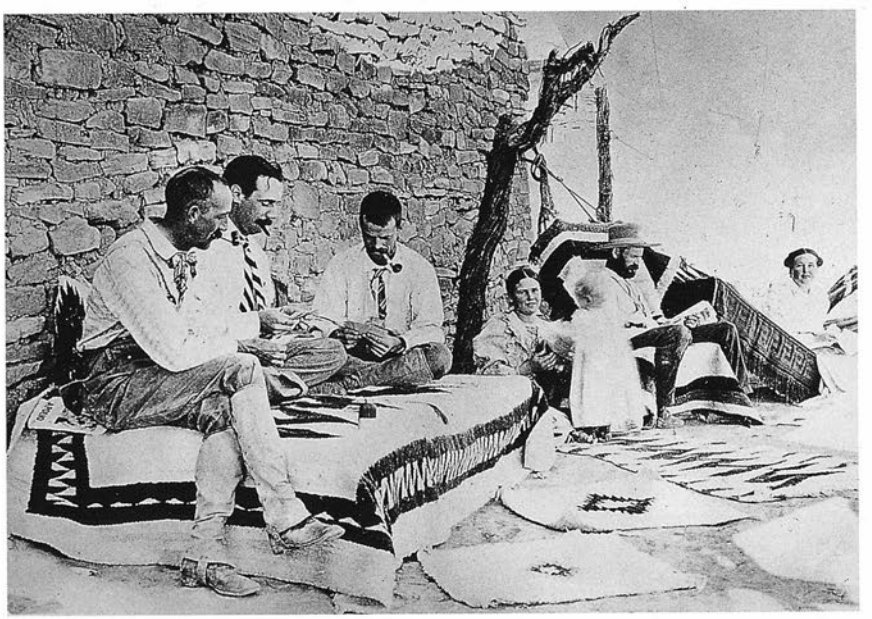
By early May, Richard and Marietta Wetherill were back in Mancos. As Richard reported in a letter to T. Mitchell Prudden on May 17:

> This expedition has been a successful one and contains material that I don't believe can ever be found again. We did not succeed in finding any more of the Basket Makers Caves South of the San Juan or about Navajo Mountain. The home of the Pah Utes. But we found a very interesting region for a desert country. Laguna Creek with two fine lakes and a fine Cliff House of 122 rooms [Kiet Siel] which was rich in Relics. . . . On the High mesa East and North of Navajo Mt. are ruins similar to those in Chaco, New Mexico.

In numbers of artifacts and human remains acquired, the Hyde Exploring Expedition was the more productive and important of Richard Wetherill's two trips into Grand Gulch. It

confirmed the existence of Basketmaker culture and documented that culture with remarkable thoroughness, considering Wetherill's lack of training. His accomplishment, however, achieved recognition by the professional community only after his untimely death some years later in Chaco Canyon. In the summer of 1912, archaeologist A. V. Kidder and artist S. J. Guernsey began excavations in northern Arizona that unearthed similar Basketmaker materials. Kidder later gave Wetherill full credit for discovering the Basketmakers:

> Apparently the first application of the principle of stratigraphy to Southwestern problems was made by Richard Wetherill, when in the nineties he defined the Basket-Maker culture, and then determined, by discovering its remains below those of cliff-houses, that it represented an earlier chronological period rather than a mere local development.[41]



T. Mitchell Prudden, George H. Pepper, Clayton Wetherill, Mary Wetherill (Clayton's wife), Richard Wetherill, Jr., Richard Wetherill, and Marietta Wetherill at the Wetherill trading post at Chaco Canyon, 1899.

The Whitmore expedition, though it made no comparable discoveries, also produced artifacts of importance, and the written documentation that has survived from it is better than that from the Hyde expedition. It was Richard Wetherill's last trip to the area. Even before heading into Grand Gulch that second time, he had turned his sights south and east to the imposing buildings of Chaco Canyon in northwestern New Mexico. He had led the Palmer family there in the fall of 1895 and explored the canyon thoroughly. It was on their return trip in the early spring of 1896 that he proposed to Marietta Palmer. Later that summer, he excavated in Chaco Canyon at Pueblo Bonito under the direction of George Pepper, a student of F. W. Putnam's.

In 1898, Richard and Marietta moved permanently to Chaco Canyon to continue exploring there. To support themselves, they established a trading post on the west side of Pueblo Bonito. On June 22, 1910, Richard Wetherill was shot to death in Chaco Canyon, apparently by an angry Navajo, Chis-chilling Begay, who was convicted of his murder.

Wetherill's death brought to a close the early phase of Southwestern archaeology, when entrepreneurship counted more than scientific accuracy or accountability in unearthing prehistoric remains. Even before Wetherill's death, Congress had passed laws to protect prehistoric ruins on federally managed public lands and was creating mechanisms to begin protecting those lands. Mesa Verde National Park was established in 1906, the first national park designed specifically to protect historical resources. That same year, the Antiquities Act was passed and signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt. By then, several groups were urging Congress to create a national park service to oversee and protect the growing numbers of federal parks and monuments. Each park operated as a separate unit until 1916, when the National Parks Act was signed by President Wilson.

The time of such men as Richard Wetherill and Charles McLoyd had passed. Their collections, for better or for worse, were stored away in museums throughout the country—ignored, for the most part, by the scientific community.