



Colorado River at mouth of Lockhart Canyon. Photo by Jim Knipmeyer

"Lost" Inscriptions Found

by Jim Knipmeyer

For the past seventeen years I have been locating and photographing old, historic inscriptions that early explorers, prospectors, settlers, and travelers left drawn or carved on rock boulders and canyon walls of the Colorado Plateau region. Some I have found on my own, many I have learned about in various readings, and a number I have been told of by friends and other interested people. Most of the names and/or dates that I have recorded are prior to 1900, unless they are of some particular significance historically since that time.

One group of inscriptions I read about was in the 1889 diary, or notebook, of Frank C. Kendrick. Kendrick was a mining engineer hired by Frank M. Brown, Colorado, to survey the route of a proposed water-level railroad from Grand Junction, Colorado, to the joining of the then-Grand River with the Green. Kendrick and four other men of his party left Grand Junction on March 29, 1889, and arrived at The Confluence on May 4.

In his diary entry for Thursday, May 2nd, Kendrick wrote the following paragraph: "At Sta [station] 7144+20 we found a little valley coming in from the South where it appears some few cattle come to water, the first below Moab. On a large rock at the East side of canon there are many Indian inscriptions. Snakes, lizards with 2 heads, men & women & cet & many things we could not make out. Also the names of many cowboys written in 87 & 88 (sic)."

It was, of course, the last sentence that attracted my attention. Using Kendrick's surveying distances I determined that his "little valley" was probably Horsetheif or Lockhart Canyon, left-bank tributaries of the Colorado at about Mile 26.5. I had also long been wondering about the name Lockhart Canyon, the national Park Service, the Bureau of Land management, or various local histories not being able to shed any light on the matter.

Eventually I heard that Mitch Williams, long-time Moab

guide and tour operator, had recalled some time before of seeing a name, "Ollie Lockhart," near the mouth of the canyon. He and others had subsequently looked for it, but without success. Therefore, in the summer of 1993 a friend of mine, Mike Ford, and I set off to search for both the reported Kendrick inscriptions and the Ollie Lockhart name. A graded road had been put in to the mouth of the canyon from the Lockhart Basin road by oil interests in the 1920's, and had been improved again by uranium prospectors in the 1950's. So we drove in Mike's Jeep rather than go by boat down the Colorado River.

A short search finally resulted in my spotting the correct location, some more recent initials and Kendrick's "Indian inscriptions" showing up first. A closer examination revealed other names lightly scratched onto the rock surface, several with dates of 1887. Then Mike spied the Ollie Lockhart, with a date of 1988, very faintly scratched into the sandstone. Other writings immediately below were finally deciphered to be the words "Silverton Colo." Our search had been a success and the Kendrick inscriptions and the Ollie Lockhart name had turned out to be at the same place and part of the same grouping!

Some of the early names are John E. Brown, James C. Blood, and Frank C. -----, with a date of "Jan 9 1887". Others are of B - Buchanan, - - Savage, and J - Blood, accompanied by a date of "Mch [March] 1887". The full date with Ollie Lockhart's name is "Feb 8th 1888".

As Kendrick had stated, most of these names were of cattlemen. John E. Brown had settled on nearby Indian Creek in the vicinity of present-day Dugout Ranch in 1887. James C. Blood was ranch foreman for the Pittsburgh Cattle Company, headquartered up near Old La Sal, from 1884 until 1887. Jehiel V. Savage was the cattle foreman for the Pittsburgh company during the 1880's.

But Ollie Lockhart is still somewhat of a mystery. Upon checking with the county historical society in Silverton, Colorado, I did find that Oliver Lockhart was a resident of that town in 1888. However, he was the county clerk, a man of the "clerical mass", and there were no indications that he was ever involved with either mining or cattle.

So what Ollie Lockhart was doing at the mouth of a seldom-visited Colorado tributary canyon a little over a year prior to the river survey of Frank Kendrick is open to question. Perhaps it is the opinion put forth by the gentleman at the historical society in Silverton, that Lockhart's presence in Utah may have simply "been a one-time vacation-adventure". After all, I have been doing that exact thing in southeastern Utah for over thirty years now!

These names and dates near the mouth of Lockhart Canyon have not, of course, really been lost. I have since learned that other people do know of them. But to my knowledge this

is the first time that they have been associated with the inscriptions mentioned by Kendrick in his 1889 diary. It is also important, I feel, that a record was made of these names and dates before they are completely erased by time and the weather.

Cryptobiotic Crust Holding the Place in Place

by Jayne Belnap

Living soil crusts are found throughout the world, from the hottest deserts to polar regions. In arid regions, these soil crusts are dominated by cyanobacteria, and also include soil lichens, mosses, green algae, microfungi, and bacteria. These crusts play many important roles in the ecosystems in which they occur. In the cold deserts of the Colorado Plateau region (parts of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico), these crusts are extraordinarily well-developed, often representing over 70% of the living ground cover.

Cyanobacteria, previously called blue-green algae, are one of the oldest forms of life known. It is thought that these organisms were one of the early colonizers of earth's land masses and integral in the formation and stabilization of the earth's first soils. Some of the earliest fossils found, called stromatolites and dating more than 3.9 billion years old, are extremely thick mats of cyanobacteria. These mats are believed to have played an important role in converting the earth's original carbon dioxide-rich atmosphere into the oxygen-rich atmosphere necessary for the evolution of life as we know it today.

Cyanobacteria occur as single cells or as filaments. The most common form found in desert soils are the filamentous type. The cells or filaments are surrounded by sheaths that are extremely persistent in these soils. When moistened, the cyanobacterial filaments become active, moving through the soils and leaving a trail of the sticky, mucilaginous sheath material behind. This sheath material sticks to surfaces such as rock or soil particles, forming an intricate webbing of fibers in the soil. In this way, loose soil particles are joined together, and otherwise unstable and highly erosion-prone surfaces become resistant to both wind and water erosion. The soil-binding action is not dependent on the presence of living filaments: layers of abandoned sheaths, built up over long periods of time, can still be found clinging tenaciously to soil particles at depths greater than 15 cm in sandy soils. This provides cohesion and stability in these loose sandy soils even at depth.

The crusts have other functions as well. They are important in the interception of rainfall. When moistened, the sheaths absorb up to ten times their volume of water. The roughened surface of the crusts slows precipitation