

Dave Rust in Glen Canyon A 1923 River Diary

Edited by Frederick H. Swanson

For access to Dave Rust's trip logs and photographs I am indebted to the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In the summer of 1923 David Dexter Rust, a school superintendent and backcountry guide from Kanab, Utah, was doing what he enjoyed most: showing his beloved canyon country to educated clients from back East. His young guests on this July excursion, Charles Berolzheimer and Arnold Koehler, were on holiday from Harvard and Cornell. Along with Rust's son Jordan, they were going to be treated to a float trip down Glen Canyon on the Colorado River.

Just getting to the river was an adventure: they had made a long horseback journey from Hanksville, crossing the Henry Mountains and riding down Trachyte Creek to the abandoned settlement of Hite. Rust's folding canvas boats were arriving by wagon from Hanksville. It was to be a voyage of rediscovery for the 49-year old Rust. He had sluiced gold from Glen's placer bars in 1897-98, using the river to travel upstream and down between mining camps¹. During those years he had the notion of taking visitors down the river for pay, to see what he called a "wonder river and a wonder canyon."²

Rust began guiding river trips as early as 1917, according to his later recollection³, but he left no record of those ventures. The following diary suggests that he was seeing the country from Hite downstream to the Crossing of the Fathers for the first time since his youthful mining days. Certainly the wonder, delight and sense of discovery he expresses are those of someone seeing the canyon with fresh, mature vision.

Rust called the 1923 excursion his "first river trip for fun," an indication that money was not the chief objective. It was more likely a test run for what became a regular river guiding venture.

They lacked gear we take for granted, such as water purifying filters and sturdy hiking shoes. In return, they enjoyed a measure of discovery, traveling without guidebooks and poking up wrong canyons. Rust had

read Major Powell's and Frederick Dellenbaugh's accounts of the Colorado, yet his excitement at seeing Music Temple for the first time is contagious.

River runners will find Rust's struggles with his boats entertaining. He used 14-foot, steel-ribbed, canvas-covered collapsible open canoes, fitted with oarlocks. These were built in Michigan and seem to have been designed for fishermen on north country lakes. They had the effect of turning Glen Canyon's relatively minor riffles, ledge drops and sand waves into exciting rapids. Rust placed a high premium on safety (according to his daughter Emma, he could not swim), and on later trips he often tied a line from his boat to his passengers. Rust usually outfitted the boats with oars and rowed facing downstream, a technique he may have learned from his friend Nathaniel Galloway, whom he had met on the Colorado during his mining days.

Rust's trip diaries are written in a personal shorthand, with many cryptic abbreviations. In the interest of readability I have filled in most of these. I have also omitted some of his more mundane observations of geology and scenery. Rust was an educated man (Brigham Young Academy and Stanford) and a good writer. One wishes he had organized these notes into a full narrative, for they carry the simple charm of one who loves the river and savors a good adventure.

The Diary Charles & Arnold—First River Trip for Fun

July 20. Launch for the big trip at 3:30 p.m. Run to Good Hope [Bar] in 4 hours including 2 stops. Arnold & Jordan have trouble breaking oars. We took an extra ash from Dandy [Crossing]. On account of broken oars (and uncertain ability) I tow their boat over Trachyte [R]apid. The Ticaboo [R]apid gave us a lot of kick — each boat paddled through canoe fashion. A good deal of the time the hind boat was cross wise. Rained at bedtime.

July 21. Find need of names for boats so for my own use I will call my boat "Powell" and Jordans's "Gilbert" since we have studied the records of these great explorers on our trip. Thankful this morning that all is well—(really something undesirable could have happened with the Gilbert).

Cool breeze, sprinkle, as we float down the graceful bends. An extraordinary panorama movie. In reality, the shapes & carvings, & weatherings are countless and full of interest & variety, in fancy, there is unlimited opportunity for personification. "Mound" canyon sure enough⁴—the river walls are deep red & usually sheer,

¹ Rust, David D., "Boating on the Colorado," Improvement Era, May 1901, P. 507-512.

² Merrill, Harrison R., "Dave Rust, Lover of the Grand Canyon," Improvement Era, April 1929, p. 471-3.

³ Testimony in the Colorado Riverbed case of 1929 (see The Confluence, vol. 4, no. 2, Summer 1997)

⁴ John Wesley Powell named the upper part of Glen Canyon "Mound Canyon" and the lower part "Monument Canyon" on his 1869 trip. He later used "Glen Canyon" to describe the entire stretch of the Colorado River from the Dirty Devil River to the Paria River (C. Gregory Crampton, Standing Up Countky, The Canyon Lands of

the top wall has all sizes of hogans for a roof. And the variety in clouds blends to make the sweetest coloring.

Solitude — not a man on the river (they say) from here to Lee's Ferry. At Tickaboo [R]anch yesterday, we might have seen a Mr. Carpenter, but his reputation and a mile walk persuaded us to pass on. So we must put up with our own (meagre) company for 10 days. Our 14 foot specials are riding fine, but the oars are a complete humbling.

Hansen Cr[ee]k boat tied just below. Lunch above small rapid, creek coming in from West. Charles feeling punk. About 3 miles to S., river turns E & at the turn we look back to see [Mount]Ellen & [Mount] Holmes—a very beautiful part of the canyon. At the next turn where the river swings back S. & then W. are big bowls & other vessels cut out of the wall. We there pulled into the mouth of Moqui Canyon but found no ground for camp so pull across opposite and stop.

Arnold in attempting to take Charles's bed out of boat drops small camera into river same—is recovered after due search—ruined for rest of trip.

Arnold sets some hooks for salmon so I suppose we will have "steak" for breakfast. All take swim. Mosquitos today noon & tonight—the first we have met. Koehler tells me they took "balance wheel" out of his head—hence so many falls. [The result of dehydration?]

July 22. Beans for breakfast, stewed apricots, coffee, bread, cornflakes, cheese, milk, sugar. Decide to explore Moki Canyon for cliff dwellings—Short distance up Canyon find yearling heifer in quicksand—boys dig her out.... Arnold falls (slips) down a slick incline rock & gets jammed. Canyon forks about 5 miles up & we explore each branch about 1/2 mile. Discover several cliff houses & granaries. Supposed to be good water in Moki [C]anyon but we find it difficult to get a decent drink. The sluggish stream was warm & polluted with cows. Surprised several cattle—visited 3 ruins of rather ordinary type. Return to camp in same place opposite the mouth of Moki. Clouds & mosquitos again. Everyone restless—watch for bites.

Up with the Son (sic)—gnats & ants—launch at 9—dredge—Mouth of Pine Alcove Cr[ee]k—just below camp run close to ledge that extends half way across river—top of submerged island. Run Bullfrog [R]apid—just below can see [Mount] Hillers & [Mount] Ellsworth.... Cha[rles] tries swimming river—does very good job, a capable swimmer. Red & then grey sandstone rises & where formation dips radically to S. & W. We camp on bar in Kane [County]. No ants or mosquitos. A good sleep in store—cool enough. Cha[rles] attempts to fix shoes.

July 24. [Utah's Pioneer Day]—I hoist flag and fuss around camp for an h[our]. Then call the Boys. Cloud—

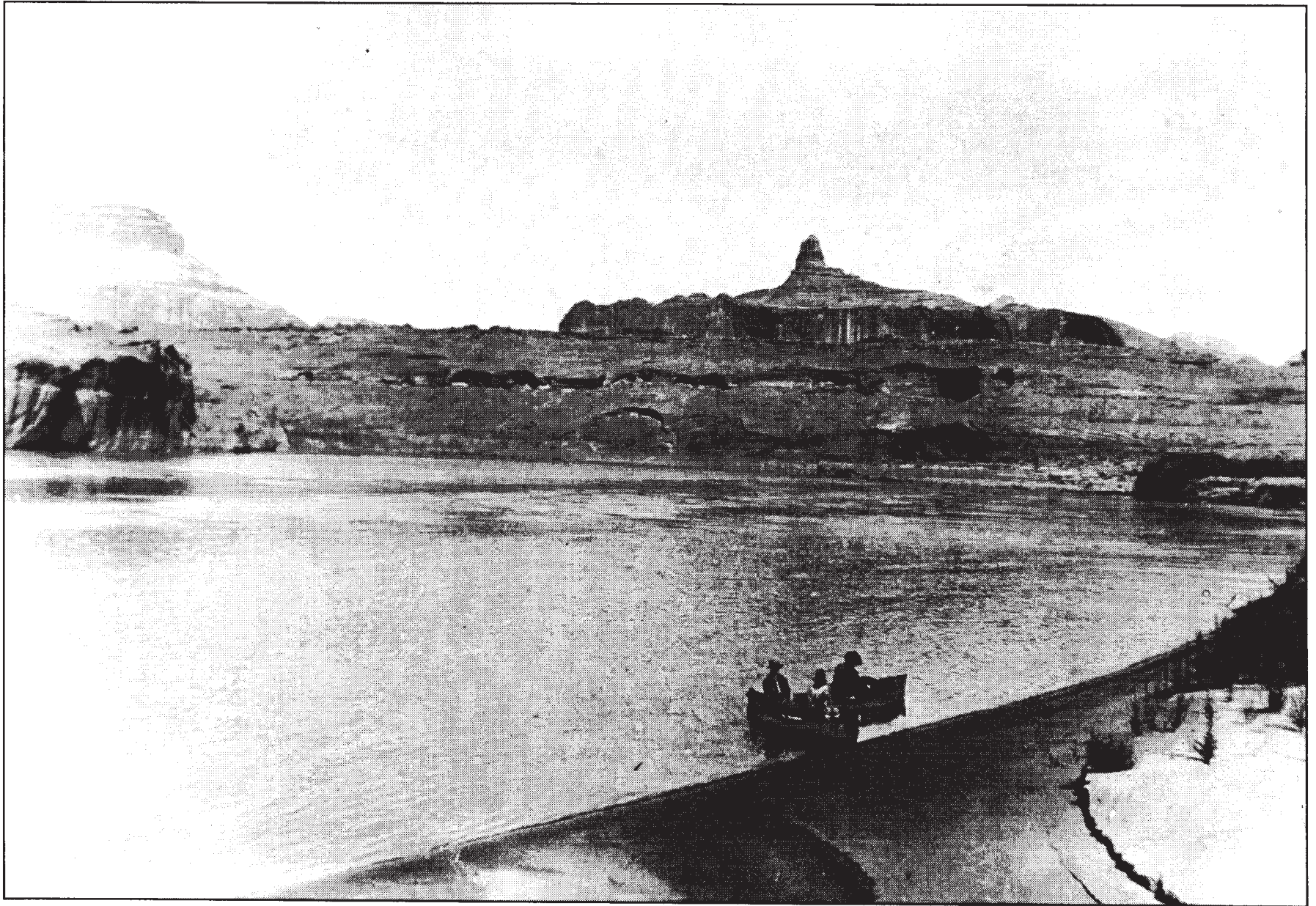
big pot of rice ready for breakfast. Jord[an] & I aren't [drinking] coffee (on account of economy). Launched at 10. Arnold succeeds in dropping toothbrush in river—Jord[an] fixes Cha[rles] shoes I repair Gilbert's oar. I climb up to view formation—we are in heart of Water Pocket [Fold].... Swift again—wide river valley between dark red walls, high, 1 mile wide. River runs N.W. for 2 or 3 miles—Great for color views—red walls burnt black. 24th of July—we have colors: white river and Red walls, Blue Sky....

Quiet water to Escalante [River]. Stop to explore it. Lunch just below in Kane [County]. All of our formal stops from Moki [Canyon] down have been in my home county but a long way from home. High class canyon below Escalante [River]—Higher sheer walls, domes bisected—Arches in forming pictured on walls....

Eating young burro, ten mi[le] on the ice—Pull on 3 mi[le] to Hole-In-Rock—we climb up where the wagons came to the floor of the Escalante Desert—then to S.E. look off toward Navajo [Mountain].... An opportune time to visit Hole-In-Rock [on] Pioneer Day—one side of wagon must have rested on faith (other on rock trail cut.) Cha[rles] & Jord[an] went on point to north of H. in R canyon [Hole-in-the-Rock Canyon] to get views & pictures toward Navajo [Mountain]—I return to boats & Arnold (who was not able to hike) & I go after water—fine spring—the boys come down and we as to whether to camp. We camped for night where the Pioneers camped before—at Mouth of little cr[ee]k & on the bank of Colo[rado].

July 25. Up early to repair Cha[rles] shoes. Tie boats on San Juan [River] shore & go E over pioneer road—then to high points to S. between Colo[rado] & San Juan. Arnold drops out in shade of dome before we reach view point. Excellent situation in center of Rainbow Rock land. Encircled by Navajo, Kaiparowits, Aquarius, Henry [mountains]. (Abajo hidden by local ridge) A thousand rainbow arches "in the making." Cha[rles] takes interest in photos. Return over hot rocks, deep tanks, on trail with good water, ate some jerky & raisins.... Paddle down to the San Juan (Crossing of Men, Women & Children) Cha[rles] climbs point between ridges to get pictures. San Juan not navigable, too swift & thin. 2 miles N.W. at the turn we come to Music Temple by Powell's description. Sure enough the most musical place we've ever seen. Everybody tries his voice. Too far from boats to carry stuff so we sleep on white sand in San Juan [C]ounty & the Piute Reservation. This is exquisite architecture. The Temple is not an auditorium but a music palace. More than expected. Should like to bring Miss Poll—or some other singer here. Feature this with Rock Cr[ee]k Rainbow trip. Try to find names of explorers but cannot—feel the solemnity & sacredness of place.

July 26. Arnold complains of rib. Very cool night, I row Cha[rles] up 1/8 mi[le] to get pictures of temple across



Glen Canyon, undated (1920s or 1930s). Photo by David Rust. LDS Historical Department, Archives. Courtesy of Fred Swanson.

river. We row across & go up a little narrow canyon—very good water echoes.

Nat[ural] bridge 800 feet above water on our right—and right in front of us is Rainbow Canyon with the Big rapid roaring just below it. We land, look around & eat lunch. Then up Rainbow we hike. Jord[an] & Cha[rles] go ahead, Arnold & I drag along easy. The Canyon is ordinary for over a mi[le] then it becomes a subway very splendid! But after a 15 mi[le] walk, up and back, we are sure it is not Rainbow but Oak Cr[ee]k—Swam 2 pools a rod long to do it—Good stunt. Shoes fading and feet sore, we reach camp & food & sleep by moonlight. Heard beavers flopping in water near my bed. Temple (high) N. of us is fine as ever even by moonlight.

July 27. Heavy rapid to run first thing. N of W around turn and we are to Rainbow. Jord[an] & Arnold are shoeless so [is Charles] & I start with [picking] of currants. 20 min[utes] up we meet 2 Navajos who want to see [Colorado River]. They ask for chiniago [?]⁵—we send message back for boys to come. The Navy's tell us there are 4 whites at Arch [Rainbow Bridge]. The trail we find very good—not many boulders to flounder. Canyon wide.... Good bathing pools in solid floor rock. Anybody, can walk it in 2½ [hours]. Hikers will go in 1½ [hours]. We go in 2½ [including] all stops.

We arrive at Arch to find clouds to help views — Shout but find no one answers so conclude we will take pictures & return to currants we cached below. The Arch still remains the magnificent single piece of rock carving. If we don't see these whites we keep inviolate the property. No white man from Dandy to Lees.

Just as we start back from Arch, meet the 2 Navajos [sic] & they say boys are not coming. Cha[rles] writes note to white men—takes color view showing Arch & [Mountain]—On we go toward River. We bathe in delicious bathtub near fork with spring of excellent water near. Rest & eat currants & jog on down to camp in 1½ [hours] (from Fork) picking up boys at bath near mouth of Cr[ee]k. Curious building at Mouth—what are they.

July 28. Start about 8. I run rapids, Jord[an] watches & comes down at first fine then his boat turns end for end—then he hesitates between channels below & bobbles. I holler.

High temples comes in on either side—See Kaiparowits. Fine pictures from mouth of Cr[ee]k coming down from E. where we stop to get H₂O. Don't enjoy the uncertain Rapid incidents—will likely run'em both myself or lead if any look rough hereafter. Here comes the boys with water.

Another Cr[ee]k from E or S. 3 mi[le] below—the Canyon gets better as we go—every turn a new reel. Rock Cr[ee]k in about 3 [hours]—Again recollections crowd upon me—the bar where I placer mined at 22.

And now we connect up the trip of last year with

Fraser⁵. The long stretch of river below is in contrast with kinky canyons above. Called Rock Cr[ee]k because big rock in river.

Lunch in mouth of small creek at turn of river. Find deer track. Jord[an] followed it down bar—we bring boats & land near lower end. We all go out and find 2 deer—one takes to river & goes downstream, the other runs by us & escapes.... Long, slim bar (willows) on E. bank to side canyon putting in from E. (Bernheimer Expedition took it to be Crossing of Padres and from this point is grand temple seen to north). Meskin Bar & more memories turn N.W. to Crossing of Fathers.—By twilight & Moonlight.—Goodnight

July 29. Up at 5:30 and went for a walk E. to follow the old trail went far enough to see [Navajo Mountain] & Soraco Pass & commanding view of Tower Butte etc.—Cha[rles] goes with me a short distance & returned home sick—camp in Reservation as has been custom since Music Temple. Cross river & explore Navajo Cr[ee]k & find trail up Cr[ee]k for ¼ & then steps cut out of south side of plateau. From Crossing to Navajo (Big) Cr[ee]k in 2½ [hours]—Warm Cr[ee]k to N. no swift water. Cha[rles] & I climb out opposite mouth of Navajo—could see Navajo [Mountain] & Kaibab Plateau and furniture between. Lunch opposite N[avajo?] Cr[ee]k.

Surprise 3 beavers 2 miles down—Sentinel Rock in 1¾ hrs. Boys see more beaver. High walls last 10 [miles] are imposing. Few side breaks today—straight walls & swift current—different from yesterday.

Lees Ferry Dam site—arrive Ferry to find it thickly populated—[an] auto on each side (2 at bottom of river). Had visitors in evening—[Frank] Dodge. Arnold & Jord[an] went to Ranch & brought milk & fruit.

July 30. Crossed & met Emery Kolb & wife & daughter, & La Rue & Freeman & Birdseye—& others saw 4 boats that are to leave here day-after-tomorrow for big Canyon expedition⁶.... Went to Ranch for lunch. (Menu: Doughgods, curdly milk, fierce coffee, horrible molasses, very good green corn.

Epilogue

One of the ironies of canyon lands history is that Dave

⁵ Rust had led an overland trip in 1922 from Lee's Ferry to the Crossing of the Fathers with his longtime client and friend George Fraser. See Fraser, George C., "El Vado de los Padres," Natural H. vol. 23, no. 4, 1923, p. 344-357.

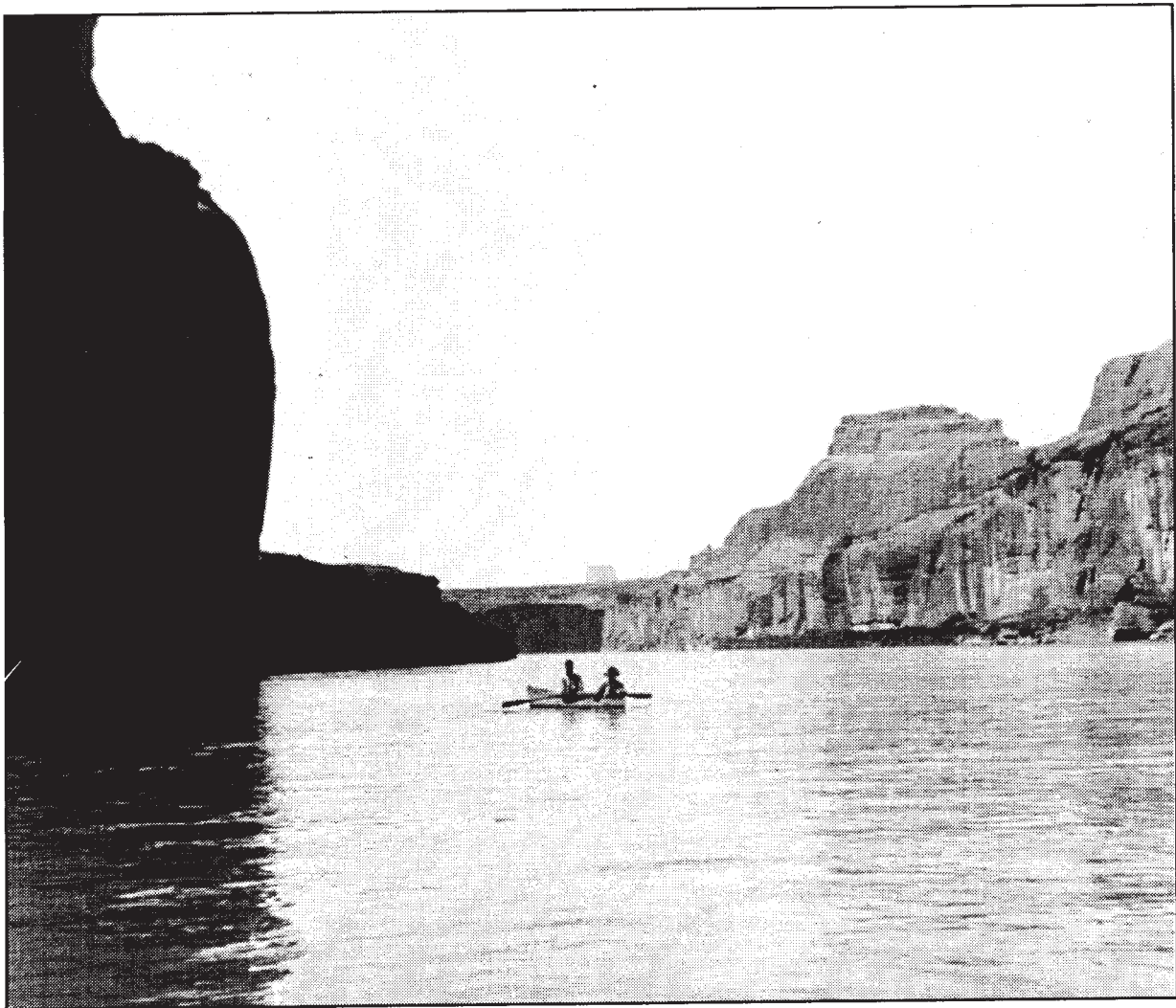
⁶ This was the USGS Grand Canyon survey of 1923. They wound up taking one of Rust's little boats downriver and losing it on a rock. See Roy Webb, Call of the Colorado, University of Idaho Press, 1994, p. 23-4.

Rust was getting river tourism started just as E. C. LaRue of the U.S. Geological Survey was locating the site for a Glen Canyon dam. In 1926, Rust guided two trips in Glen, one including Utah Governor George Dern, who wanted to see the dam sites for himself, and another with Frank Oastler, a physician who was surveying possible new national monuments at the behest of the National Park Service. Both Rust and Governor Dern were ardent reclamation supporters, and their Glen Canyon experiences did not sway them from support of the dam. Oastler was a passionate believer in national parks, and following his Utah visit he recommended that several sites in southeastern Utah, including Arch Canyon, be given national monument status, but there is no record that he supported preservation of Glen Canyon itself. Thus an opportunity to raise public awareness of Glen Canyon's treasures slipped away. In the 1930's, Rust even proposed a "wilderness park" for much of southeastern Utah, in which horse travel would be the primary mode of

tourism, but he never saw fit to question the dam building plans.

Rust continued taking one or two parties a year down Glen Canyon until World War II broke out. I consider him to be the first real, river tourism outfitter in Glen Canyon. Other guides, notably Bert Loper and Nathaniel Galloway, had taken on clients at least as far back as 1909, but these trips had as their objectives mining or scientific work. By 1938 Norman Nevills was guiding in Glen Canyon, and following the war river outfitting took off. Dave Rust had the vision early, and his trips still stand out as adventures in discovering the joys of the great canyon.

Frederick H. Swanson lives in Salt Lake City. He has written and edited publications for the Utah Wilderness Coalition and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. He would enjoy hearing from others who are interested in the travels of David D. Rust, and can be reached at fswan2406@aol.com.



Glen Canyon 1925. From Dave Rust's trip with Dr. and Mrs. Frank Oastler. Probably Dr. Oastler with hat, David Jordan Rust (Dave Rust's son) at oars. Photo by David Rust. LDS Historical Department, Archives. Courtesy of Fred Swanson.