

**RUNNING
El Rio de Nuestra Señora de Dolores
in May 1956**

**by Black George
12 March, 2007**

Despite its transitory character, boating was undoubtedly attempted on the Dolores River, but no significant record of early navigation is known. Thus, the first trip to be described which might benefit future travelers took place a mere 60 years ago. In 1948, Preston "Pres" Walker (editor of the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel), and Pres's wife Becky plus their dog, Ditty, and Otis "Dock" Marston (Colorado River Historian), and his wife, Margaret, traversed the river for 207 miles from near the town of Dolores to the river's junction with the Colorado River, and continued 35 more miles on high fast water to "Matrimony Spring" near Moab, Utah. Pres and Dock rowed a Nevills San Juan type of boat (punt), a wooden craft tapered toward bow and stern, and blunt at both extremities. The group departed from a bridge about a mile downstream from the town of Dolores on May 15 and reached Gateway, Colorado, on May 20. Then, after a two day layover including a trip to Grand Junction, they embarked at Gateway on May 23 and reached the Colorado River and Moab, Utah, on May 25. Walker's account, accompanied by 11 photographs, was published in the Daily Sentinel shortly after the trip (Walker, 1948), and Marston's account, a copy of his diary, was published a year later in Colorado Magazine, (Marston, 1949).

References

Walker, Preston, 1948: Dolores River Tops For Scenery, Fast Water. Sentinel writer tells of experiences on 1st boat trip down Western River." The Daily Sentinel, Sunday May 30, 1948, Vol. 55 (LV), No. 192, p. 6,7; 11 photographs. Grand Junction, Colorado.

Marston, Otis R. [aka "Dock" and "Doc"], 1949: Running the Dolores River, 1948; Diary of Otis Marston: Colorado Magazine, The (published by the State Historical Society of Colorado), October 1949; Vol. 26, No. 4, p. 258-270.

Figures (as follows)

Figure 1: Dolores River and its canyon. View upstream from the rim above the Mucho Grande Mine (Sec. 1, T. 42 N., R. 18 W.) Slick Rock District, Colorado. 26 May 1973.



Figure 2: Canyon of the Dolores River below the Dove Creek pumping station.
December, 1954.



Figure 3: U. S. Geological Survey Slick Rock Camp, a trailer camp for the families of government employees exploring for uranium. November 1954. The camp was located along Colorado Highway 80, now paved and designated Colorado 141, 3 miles from the Dolores River toward Egnar (that's Range spelled backwards).



Figure 4: Slick Rock (town) circa 1956. Located at Dolores River Mile 48.5, one mile downstream from Colorado State Highway Bridge. River flows from left to right across view.

