Segment 3: From Montrose to the head of Douglas Creek, Colorado

From their **August 26** campsite on the Uncompahgre the expedition continued downstream past the present town of **Montrose**, crossed to the east bank some six miles northwest of La Cienega and continued along the east bank. After an easy march of approximately 15.5 miles the company camped in a meadow approximately two miles north of present **Olathe**.

Doubtless, the main Indian trail followed the Uncompahgre River downstream. Rivera's 1765 expedition had gone that way as far as the Uncompahgre-Gunnison River confluence. But the Dominguez-Escalante expedition was now being guided by a Sabuaganas Indian (named Atanasio by the padres) who had promised to lead the Spaniards to a main camp of his people, location of which turned out to be high on the Grand Mesa. As a result, the company left the **August 27** campsite traveling in a slightly east of north direction, crossed an almost level tableland to reach the south bank of **Gunnison River** and camp **August 28** about a **half mile east of present Austin**. Two nights were spent at this camp. Meanwhile Andres Muniz and the Indian Atanasio had been sent ahead to seek out the main Subuaganas (Ute) camp.

The following morning the absent men returned in company with fiveSabuaganas and one Laguna Indian. The Lagunas (lake dwellers) were another branch of Utes living at present Utah Lake. Since the padres were intending to strike westward toward Monterey, California, they immediately began making offers to this Utah Lake Ute to act as a guide to lead the expedition westward into his own country. Eventually their offers were accepted, and the new guide was given the name Silvestre. His services proved invaluable during the following weeks as he led the company westward to Utah Lake.

Seeking a main camp of the Sabuagana Utes, the company crossed to the **north bank of the Gunnison** and continued eastward roughly following the route of present **Colorado Highway 92**. The night of **August 30** found them camped near the **mouth of Leroux Creek** slightly west of present **Hotchkiss**.

Continuing up the **north fork of Gunnison River** for several miles, the expedition crossed that stream to the south bank, passed through the present town of **Paonia**, recrossed the river some two miles beyond, and continued along the north bank to **Hubbard Canyon**. This stream they followed northward approximately seven miles for the evening camp of **August 31**. The expedition was now ascending the **Grand Mesa** in search of the Indian camps. Their efforts were rewarded the following day as they continued up **Hubbard Creek** into present **Hubbard Park** where they encountered "eighty Yutas, all on good horses and most of them from the encampment to which we were going." After this meeting the padres continued on to present **Cow Creek**, followed it eastward for a couple of miles to an excellent campsite at the confluence of **Fawn and Cow creeks**. This **September 1** camp was at an 8,600-foot elevation. Nearby was the long-sought Ute camp of some 30 tents. Father Dominguez and interpreter Muniz went at once into the Indian camp to explain the objectives of the expedition, to preach Christianity to the natives, and to convince them that the purpose of the company was entirely peaceful. The conference lasted until dark, **September 1**.

Early the next morning the conference continued. The main thrust on the part of the Indians was an attempt to dissuade the Spaniards from continuing westward. But the padres were determined to push forward, and finally were able to convince the Laguna, Silvestre, that he should keep an earlier promise and guide them to his people. Also on **September 2** a second Laguna Indian, a boy of eleven years, stepped forward, wishing to accompany the expedition. His offer was accepted. Given the name of Joaquin, he eventually accompanied the padres all the way back to Santa Fe. (The addition of Silvestre and Joaquin increased the expedition's number to 14.) Meanwhile the Indian camp was breaking up and the Spaniards were happy to get on the move. The trail they followed led **westward up Cow Creek**, over into **Dyke Creek** and thence by way of a **pass westward from Chimney Rock**. They camped on **upper West Muddy Creek just inside present Mule Park**.

September 3 found the expedition again in motion. After crossing northward to avoid a high elevation—they were already traveling at the 9,800-foot level—the company passed over into **Plateau Creek** (Escalante's deep arroyo) which they followed downstream to **the meadows**.

On **September 4** the company continued down **Plateau Creek** past the **mouth of Buzzard Creek**. About two miles below **Collbran**, Plateau Creek was forded to the north bank; they followed it downstream to the approximate site of **Fuller Bridge**. From that point the expedition left Plateau Creek northward, crossed **Hayes Mesa** and camped on the upper waters of **Jerry Gulch**. The following day the trek continued across **Battlement Mesa** about a **halfmile east of Castle Peak**, then down **Alkali Creek** to the plain of the **Colorado River**. The party camped on the north bank of the Colorado after having forded that stream about a **mile and a quarter downstream from the present Una bridge**. The date was **September 5**.

On **September 6** Silvestre led the expedition westward to **Roan Creek** where they arrived about a h**alf mile below the point where Logan Wash enters the Roan**. The party then followed **Roan Creek** upstream past the confluence of **Clear Creek** to camp at the **mouth of Brush Creek**. The following morning the party traveled one league westward to the point where **Carr Creek** joins the Roan. The travelers progressed **up Carr Creek** for three leagues, then climbed a difficult shale hill northeastward to reach the **divide between the drainages of the Colorado and White rivers**. The campsite of **September 7** was located approximately three quarters of a mile north of the Rio Blanco county line in the northwestern quarter of Section 32.

Segment 4: From the Head of East Fork Douglas Creek to the Green River

From the crest of the divide that separates the Colorado and White River drainages, Silvestre had been able to point far ahead to the **Uinta Mountains and westward to the Wasatch**, beyond which his people lived. The **Cliff Ridge of the Blue Mountain Plateau** was also clearly in view and the Indian guide doubtless pointed out the general route westward along the base of that ridge. Ten days later, from the vantage point of "Silvestre's Overlook," the faithful guide would point back to the same ridge on which they were now standing—**September 7**.

September 8 found the expedition moving down the **East Fork of Douglas Creek** to camp below the point where **Cathedral Creek joins that stream**. The following day's march was a long one of some 25 miles. By nightfall the padres had threaded **Douglas Creek** all the way to its **confluence with White River at the site of present Rangely**. Camp was set up on the **north river bank** with good pasturage and plenty of water. During the day the company had passed, and Escalante had made note of two sets of Indian paintings. As a result he named the present Douglas Creek, **Canon Pintada**—Painted Canyon.

Because Silvestre informed the fathers that the next water was more than a day's journey distant, the expedition decided to rest at the White River camp until noon, then continue for a half-day. The route was toward the northwest over not too difficult terrain where numerous buffalo tracks had blotted out any sign of a regular trail. The route was east and north of present **Highway 64**. About eight miles northwest of Rangely the company was forced to make camp without water or forage for the animals.

Continuing a few miles the company found a small spring, insufficient to water the horses. From a ridge three leagues farther on the padres saw a grove of cottonwood trees directly to the north. Although Silvestre doubted that water would be found there, he thought it might be possible. The site is the location of **K Ranch** located right on the Utah-Colorado boundary about a mile and a half north of the point where U.S. 40 crosses that line today.

During the day the men had picked up a fresh track of a buffalo and soon located the animal. After a chase of some ten miles the big bull was killed and the meat brought into camp. Escalante reported that much more meat was obtained from that beast than would have been had from a domestic bull. In honor of the kill the padres named the site Cibolla Creek—Buffalo Creek (present Cliff Creek). They remained there **two nights**.

On **September 13** the expedition traveled westward along present **Cliff Creek**, passed several springs known to Silvestre, turned to the northwest from **the narrows** where Cliff Creek falls into the Green River Plain, and established camp in a grove of huge cottonwoods on the **east bank of Green River, opposite the mouth of present Brush Creek**. There the company remained until **September 16**. U.S. 40 parallels Cliff Creek for several miles west of the Utah-Colorado Boundary.

On the morning of **September 16** the expedition was again on the move. After breaking camp they headed upstream one mile to the **Old Ute Green River ford**. (During the 1975 study considerable controversy developed regarding the actual location of that ford. However, a careful examination of the Escalante diary and the actual terrain leads to the conclusion that the "traditional" crossing site is the correct one.) Once across the stream the company followed its right bank downstream. **Brush and Ashley Creeks were noted and forded**, the latter about where U.S. 40 bridges it today. After crossing Brush Creek the direction was to the southwest taking the travelers farther away from Green River which continues in a southerly direction for several miles. The trail headed for a pass in **Asphalt Ridge** now known as **Collier Pass**. From the pass a difficult trail led down hill into **Collier Hole** to again arrive at **Green River** and to camp in the meadows located on the west bank, a couple of miles below **Horseshoe Bend**.

From this campsite the party turned more to the west, again leaving Green River which continues toward the south. Overlooking the confluence of the **Uinta and Duchesne rivers** is a high ridge from which Silvestre pointed out features of the area, including the channel of White River where it joins the Green at present **Ouray**. In honor of the fine service the Indian guide gave to the expedition this spot has been named **Silvestre's Overlook**. From that point the trail led directly to the **Uinta-Duchesne confluence**. After fording the Uinta River the company pushed on along the north bank of the Duchesne to camp near the point where the Duchesne-Uinta county line intersects that stream.

On **September 18** Silvestre led the expedition up the **Duchesne Valley**, bypassing present **Myton** to the north and crossing the river five different times before arriving near the confluence of the **Duchesne and Strawberry rivers** just north of the present city of **Duchesne**. Camp was established on the west bank of the Duchesne about a mile upstream from the confluence. Not confused by modern terminology, Escalante considered the present Strawberry River to be the main stream (his Rio de San Cosme) and the present Duchesne River, flowing into it from the north, to be just a tributary.