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Exploring Desert Stone

Steven K. Madsen

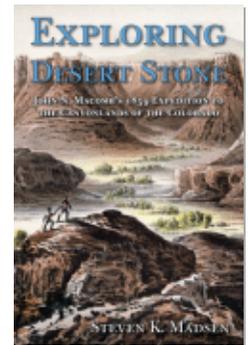
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I am very grateful to three “oil men”—Leo Pacheco, Tom Roberts, and Freddie Frausto—who more than once dug my vehicle out of the bottomless sands of Cañon Largo and towed it to firmer ground. On a hot, dusty day in August, opposite the mouth of Tapicito Creek, in northern New Mexico, Leo and Tom shared with me the history of the canyon. Leo’s grandfather, Manuel C. Pacheco, patented land in the canyon in 1934. Tom told stories of the route when it became a stage road and a cattle trail. Both of them pointed out interesting aspects of the archaeologically rich canyon, now peppered with gas and oil lines and pumping stations.

I wish to express my appreciation to my longtime friend John L. Jackson, for his professional competence and insightful suggestions that have aided me in the writing of this work.

I acknowledge the tremendous help from Dan Cassidy, owner of Five Quail Books, Prescott, Arizona. Dan graciously allowed me to copy his

original Egloffstein map for inclusion in this volume. (The originals in the National Archives and at the University of Utah are damaged and torn.) Thank you to Aaron Mahr Yañez, superintendent, and the National Trails-Intermountain Region of the National Parks service, which funded development of the map.

C. Gregory Crampton introduced me to the topic of the Macomb expedition when we launched our research on the Old Spanish Trail in the mid-1970s. From that work came the publication *In Search of the Spanish Trail: Santa Fe to Los Angeles, 1829–1848*, the first study to locate and map the historic trail.

I extend appreciation to my friend, Jicarilla Apache guide Lambert Callado, who assisted me in pinpointing where Dimmock in 1859 sketched Horse Lake, in northern New Mexico. With his help, I also located the Macomb expedition campsite immediately south of the lake's outlet, in the shadow of a cliff overhang.

A warm thank you goes to Doshia Dee Dee Bradley and her brother Will Curley, for permission to publish her photograph taken in the shadow of Ship Rock. And to Jerry Garza, resident of Tecoloté, New Mexico, for showing me the “cornerstone” of the historic village church along the Santa Fe Trail.

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The Dolores *Star* staff helped me scout out a favorable place to photograph the Dolores River Valley. Donald Martinez, employee at the Ghost Ranch Museum, helped me in my search for Dimmock's “Cachucha,” dubbed “Orphan Rock” by locals. My son Thomas helped me explore by jeep and by foot Macomb's wilderness route in the Indian Creek Canyon area, immediately east of Canyonlands National Park. We glimpsed the enormous challenges faced by the Macomb team. Alternately deep sands and rock-studded primitive roads, sheer cliffs, and a dizzying array of desert stone blocked our path. On our return trip we scouted the broken terrain from Needles Overlook, anticipating a future expedition to Canyonlands.

My deepest thanks go to my brother, Gordon C. Madsen, who offered to take me back to the Indian Creek area in his jeep. We followed a ten-mile bumpy road to the head of Rustler Canyon, where we launched a grueling hike to the place where Macomb's 1859 expedition culminated. Equipped with camel packs full of water, broad-brimmed hats,

hiking poles, good boots, and fruit and protein snacks, we trudged down the lower canyon of Indian Creek to the “perpendicular fall,” a 40- to 50-foot pour-off, which had blocked the progress of Macomb’s team. Undeterred, we found a way around the obstacle and ascended the first tier of Newberry Butte, the formation that Macomb’s explorers ultimately surmounted. Limited water, hot temperatures (at least ninety-four degrees Fahrenheit), and spent energy prompted us to return to the jeep. Near the end of the twelve-mile hike, I ran out of water and suffered from heat exhaustion and leg cramps. Each of us had consumed a gallon and a half of water and Gatorade, but that wasn’t enough. My brother gave me the rest of his water and hiked back to the jeep (some 40 minutes away). When he returned with more water and fruit and rescued me, he succumbed to heat exhaustion and a leg cramp. I waited for him to recover and together we made our way out of the desert, thankful to be safe and sound.

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Much of the early archival work for this book took place in the library of Fran and Terby Barnes of Moab, Utah. Terby kindly shared her Maccomb expedition research with me. As this book was going to press, she died following a long bout with cancer. I will greatly miss her friendship.

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