

Civilian Conservation Corps

Building the Million-dollar Road

What was the CCC?

During the Great Depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), to provide work to young, unmarried men. Recruits fought forest fires, planted trees, and built roads, trails, dams, and recreation facilities on public lands. Between 1933 and 1942, roughly three million men received work and training through the CCC.

Cream Cellar Route

Used between 1924 and 1940, the Cream Cellar Route began near here and traversed the slickrock canyons to Boulder. Three times a week, Boulder farmers shipped as many as 50 five-gallon pails of cream by postal service mule train, bound for a Bryce Valley creamery. The Boulder mail carrier stored the cream in a dugout cellar near here, to be picked up by the Escalante mail carrier. In summer, pails of cream occasionally fermented en route, blasting off their lids and coating the mail bags with sour cream.

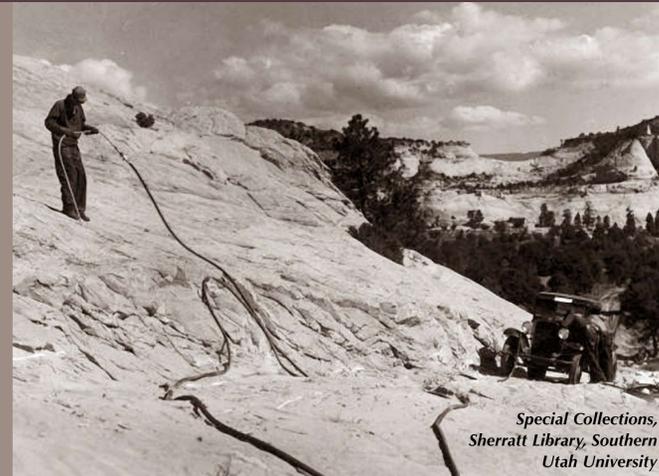
Indian ricegrass (Achnatherum hymenoides)



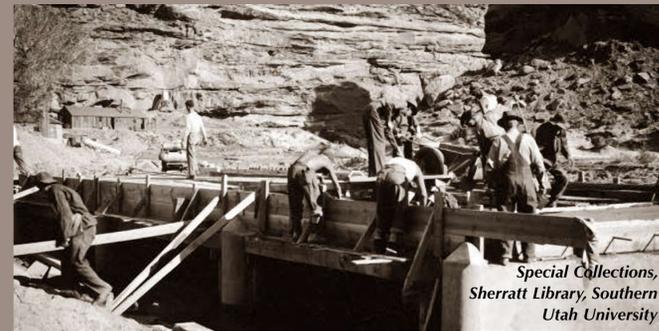
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Courtesy Jerry Roundy



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"If any project in the Escalante area stands as a monument to the work of the CCC, it should be the road to Boulder via Calf Creek."

—Jerry Roundy, Advised Them to Call the Place Escalante

Skill, Sweat, and Dynamite

Before the Highway 12 route was built, traveling through this region was slow, hard work. As late as 1940, Boulder still received its mail by mule train for part of the year. The Civilian Conservation Corps had completed the Hell's Backbone Road between Escalante and Boulder in 1933, allowing vehicle traffic in summertime. But when winter snows closed that road, the only routes between the two towns were wagon trails through the canyons before you.

In 1935, Civilian Conservation Corps crews began to build the Lower Boulder Road, now part of Highway 12. Nicknamed the "Million Dollar Road," the road took five years, backbreaking effort, ingenuity, and many tons of dynamite to complete. Crews blasted through sandstone ledges down to the Escalante River and up Calf Creek Canyon. On June 21, 1940, jubilant community members celebrated completion of the first all-season automobile road between the two communities.