

The book includes 13 color illustrations (including an early map of San Francisco Bay), most of which are depictions of California Indians sketched by artists Louis Choris and Mikhail Tikhonov; these (although perhaps well-known from other publications) are very nicely reproduced. For some reason, the captions on the Choris drawings give the date of their creation as 1818, when in fact Choris made the drawings in 1816 while aboard the *Ryurik*, commanded by Otto von Kotzebue.

While the first-hand accounts are very valuable, I would caution the reader about some of the broader historical pieces, since the information in these was usually gathered second-hand from local people. If you bear in mind the fact that few of the Russians spoke Spanish, you can understand how details may have been mangled in translation. One of the most intriguing journal accounts (and one that is truly available for the first time in English) is that of Nikolay Shishmaryov, who arrived in San Francisco aboard the Sloop *Blagonamerenny* in the winter of 1820–21. He made the rounds of the various missions and the Presidio at the interesting point in time at the end of Spanish rule over California. He provides many details about life at the missions, including a wonderful account of the celebration of the feast day

of the Virgin of Guadalupe (another description of this event appears in the writing of Karl Gillsen in this same volume). He also provides one of the earliest descriptions of a Russian ship's crew building brick ovens along the decaying walls of the San Francisco Presidio in which to bake fresh bread and rusks for the long sea voyages ahead. I found this fascinating because it shed light on the enigmatic account in Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* of finding an enormous Russian oven built on the shore of San Diego Bay. The Shishmaryov mention affirms that this was perhaps commonly done by the crews of Russian ships.

Any new collection of first-hand accounts is a thrilling find for students of the history of early California, and this new work by James Gibson will provide valuable new sources to mine for a better understanding of that history. While there are several important accounts written by English-speaking authors about early California (e.g., Robinson, Dana, Atherton, Phelps, etc.), they mostly cover the 1830s and later; many of these new items elucidate life in the mid-1810s and early 1820s, and so add considerably to our knowledge of this period. Gibson's excellent translations make these pieces a good read as well as a source of historical documentation.



## ***Nine Mile Canyon: The Archaeological History of an American Treasure***

Jerry D. Spangler  
Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013,  
208 pages, 116 color photos, 52 black and white  
illustrations, 4 maps, \$34.95 (paper).

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Nine Mile Canyon is an international treasure, well known to Utah natives, archaeologists, and rock art aficionados worldwide. Over 10,000 recorded prehistoric rock art sites run along the canyon's 45-mile stretch at the heart of the

West Tavaputs Plateau, but that is not all it has to offer. There are many dozens of enchanting and sometimes bewildering archaeological sites and structures that have led many on a mission to understand the prehistoric occupants of Nine Mile Canyon. Spangler begins not by describing Nine Mile Canyon to the reader but rather by leading the reader through the history of exploration and research in the area, as described in the journals, maps, correspondence, and reports of the people who have worked there over the last century and a half. He continues this theme as he explores the changes in archaeology as a discipline in Utah and the greater Southwest, and how many key players in this evolution have had some connection, however small, to Nine Mile Canyon. The main focus of this history is not Nine Mile Canyon itself; instead, the canyon is used as a lens for exploring a set of

historical characters, events, and far-reaching research, all influencing archaeology as we know it today.

The first chapter begins with a discussion of the origin of the name, Nine Mile Canyon. Why name an approximately 45-mile-long canyon “Nine Mile Canyon?” We may never separate the truth from the many myths behind the name, but the details presented by Spangler provide sound clues to understanding one of the many mysteries of this beguiling canyon. The first European explorers to venture into the area are also introduced in the first chapter. These include several participants in the second Powell expedition of 1871, who mention locations possibly in and around the canyon in their field journals. They also left their mark on the area in the form of camp locations, inscriptions, and the names of prominent landforms. Many of these sites have been identified, visited, and recorded by the Colorado Plateau Archaeological Alliance (CPAA), spearheaded by the author.

In Chapter 2, Spangler traces the first archaeological interest in Utah and Nine Mile Canyon, from Spanish friars in 1776 to Mormon settlers in 1847. The evidence is scant, but Spangler has a talent for tracking down obscure references in historical accounts. Many of the examples mentioned here amounted to no more than glorified looting and reflect the lack of scientific rigor in the field of archaeology at this time. Many institutions were sending out expeditions with the intention of collecting artifacts to display in museums and to draw crowds to various exhibitions, such as the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, and the Chicago World’s Fair. Most of the first “archaeologists” in Utah were not trained in archaeology at all. Key players include Frederick Dellenbaugh, a journalist on the 1871 and 1872 Powell expeditions; Edward Palmer, a botanist and medical doctor; and geologists Don Maguire and Henry Montgomery. In his journals, Dellenbaugh noted the impact of settlers on Utah’s antiquities as they carelessly destroyed mounds and burials. Nine Mile Canyon was not mentioned, but the canyon was well known by 1892 when archaeologists first ventured there, and it was likely explored and looted for artifacts before then. Spangler explains how archaeology at this time was not a recognized discipline in its own right. After the 1892 World’s Fair sparked interest in Nine Mile Canyon, public and professional attention died down for several decades.

The Colorado Plateau Archaeological Alliance (CPAA) has spent a great deal of time relocating and rerecording the archaeological sites first encountered by the Claflin Emerson Expeditions in 1928 and 1931. Chapter 3 details the participants in these expeditions and their influence as the Fremont archaeological complex was first being defined. Interest in Nine Mile Canyon was renewed as researchers, some trained in archaeological methods, were beginning to find significance not only in the artifacts but in scientific, theory-driven questions. Julian Steward, newly hired by the University of Utah, and several Harvard archaeologists, including Noel Morss, John Otis Brew, Henry Roberts, and Alfred Kidder, were all embarking on archaeological expeditions in Utah, intent on answering questions about the prehistoric peoples of the area and their relationships with ancestral pueblos. Noel Morss’s 1931 publication is often cited as the earliest definition of the Fremont archaeological complex and the first to use the term “Fremont” to classify the characteristic archaeological remains left by the prehistoric occupants of most of Utah north of the Colorado River. Spangler points out that credit for this should be given to several researchers who were working at this time to identify Fremont traits, and Morss was merely the first to publish, using personal funds. Spangler and CPAA have been able to document the remarkable changes through time that have occurred by using the recordings and photographs of Morss and the Claflin Emerson expeditions and comparing them with the archaeological remains of today.

The rock art recorded in Nine Mile Canyon is by far the most astounding archaeological piece of this puzzling place. Chapter 4 delves into the rock art studies conducted by Frank Beckwith, Albert Reagan, and Alfred Gaumer. These researchers are referred to as “para-archaeologists” or “pseudo-archaeologists;” i.e., they were individuals who were working at the same time as those affiliated with universities. Despite not having received formal training, these enthusiastic amateurs professed to follow strict archaeological methods. While the explorers discussed in the previous chapter spent little time studying rock art, the para-archaeologists devoted the majority of their time to describing and interpreting (sometimes wildly) the rock art in Nine Mile. Spangler summarizes their contributions and credibility.

Chapters 5 and 6 tackle the more rigorous, scientific archaeological history of the canyon. Along the same

theme, Spangler follows changes in archaeology as a scientific discipline, and relates them to the work done in Nine Mile. John Gillin was hired to replace Julian Steward at the University of Utah and was immediately assigned the task of helping the Utah Parks Board implement the newly created state archaeological protection law. Gillin later set out to excavate in Nine Mile Canyon, and he published (1938) the first monograph on the area, *Archaeological Investigations in Nine Mile Canyon, Utah*. Prior to that time, there was no comprehensive, detailed examination of the archaeology of northeastern Utah. Gillin was one of the first to use the new dating technique of dendrochronology, and he succeeded in expanding and refining the chronology of Fremont occupation.

The 1950s brought a more systematic approach to the survey and recording of sites in Nine Mile Canyon. The Utah Statewide Archaeological Survey was initiated by Jesse Jennings in 1949 as part of an effort to train graduate students and gather data from areas that had previously been largely ignored. Jennings was seeking a “big picture” view of the archaeology of the state. The Survey produced several publications, including Gunnerson’s (1957) survey of the Fremont area, a study that included Nine Mile Canyon.

Several additional, important, systematic surveys and rock art studies were later conducted; these are summarized in Chapter 6. They include work carried out by Polly Schaafsma, Kenneth Castleton, and Ray Matheny. Volunteer crews and students from Brigham Young University, working in the 1980s and 1990s, collected a wealth of information, recording hundreds of sites and systematically documenting thousands of rock art panels. This was when the archaeology of Nine Mile Canyon was truly explored and documented in a way that allowed archaeologists to begin to understand human behavior and adaptation in a systematic way.

So what does it all mean? What have we learned from over a century of study in Nine Mile Canyon? The final chapter seeks to bring it all together, but essentially we have learned that much like the other surrounding rough and isolated canyons of the Tavaputs Plateau, there are more questions than answers when it comes to the archaeology of Nine Mile Canyon, and there is certainly more research to be done. Spangler outlines his own “Tavaputs Adaptation,” and summarizes the characteristics of the Fremont in Nine Mile Canyon

and how they differ from the classic Fremont definition, including the scarcity of pottery and the possibility that no pottery was actually made there. Spangler walks the reader through current research in Nine Mile Canyon, including the work of Jody Patterson, whose research suggests that small groups of farmers in Nine Mile may have spread their fields out over large distances to minimize risk, much like the Tarahumara of northern Mexico. This pattern is also suggested, both by Spangler and in the unpublished work of Renee Barlow, as being visible in nearby Range Creek Canyon. Given the large number of archaeological sites in Range Creek Canyon, which are clustered close together along the valley floor and date to a very short time period, I find it difficult to imagine farmers being able to spread their fields out and leave them unattended for any great length of time. The defensive nature of the high elevation towers and remote granary sites in Nine Mile Canyon, Range Creek Canyon, and Desolation Canyon suggest that people at this time were not getting along. In such a rough environment, competition for resources, including water and arable land, would have been considerable. Such differences in interpretation explain why this is such a fascinating area in which to study human behavior, adaptation, and persistence in extreme environments. Much work still needs to be done.

As an archaeologist working in nearby Range Creek Canyon, I hoped that reading about the archaeological history of Nine Mile Canyon would inform my own research. Spangler’s amazing attention to details in the journals and accounts of visitors to the canyon in the 1930s provided me with essential connections to my own work on irrigation in Range Creek Canyon. Archaeologists in the arid west recognize that precipitation alone was not dependable enough for Fremont farmers trying to produce a surplus of maize. Crop irrigation, although initially costly, would have been one way to offset the variability in available precipitation and minimize the risks from flooding when trying to capture runoff, and would have allowed for more control in getting water to plants during crucial stages of development. Unfortunately, there is little remaining archaeological evidence of Fremont-age irrigation ditches, which could have been buried, destroyed, or reused during historic occupations. Evidence for the existence of these prehistoric features in the early accounts of settlers and archaeologists is rare

but extremely valuable for reconstructing subsistence strategies both on the Tavaputs Plateau and elsewhere. Although it is not heavy on archaeological details, theories, or interpretations, Spangler's archaeological history of Nine Mile Canyon is an interesting story for the general public and an excellent resource for archaeologists working in the area, who—like me—might find their own hidden gems in the details.

## REFERENCES

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