

HISTORY & PEOPLE

FIRST DRAFT

LEAVING FOOTPRINTS

High Trail was a highway for Will C. Minor, shepherd and author

“High on the east face of the towering red sandstone cliff which forms the east wall of Flume Canyon, there runs a broken, narrow, shelf-like ledge known locally as the High Trail,” shepherd Will C.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

Minor wrote more than 60 years ago. He was describing a narrow

path that lies within the lands now designated McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area.

“The ledge varies in width, 10 to 20 feet at the wider places, less than 30 inches at the narrowest. Yet this precarious shelf is a well-traveled road ... Over the High Trail, great bands of sheep, herds of white-faced cattle, packers and camp movers, with their strings of loaded pack horses, pass on their migrations between the Black Ridge country and the lowlands along the Colorado River.”

Minor tended sheep for the Beard family. But he was much more than a shepherd. He was an amateur photographer and a writer who produced two books and many magazine articles, as well as a regular column for The Daily Sentinel in the 1970s.

Minor wrote mostly about the wildlife, from bear and mule deer to mice inhabiting a shepherd's cabin — animals he viewed during his days and nights of solitude. Dogs, horses and sheep were his only domestic companions for lengthy periods of time. They also were discussed in his writings.

“He was a soft-spoken, unpretentious man, almost Aen-like,” recalled former Daily Sentinel Publisher Ken Johnson. “And he was a great observer.”

The late Sentinel Publisher Preston Walker recruited Minor to write about his backcountry observations, Johnson said. Minor's obituary in the Sentinel in 1981 said his second book reprinted many of his Sentinel columns.

In the late 1970s, Minor and Johnson teamed up to work on a planned book about the oil shale boom that was under way in the region. But Minor still valued the peace and quiet of the backcountry, and he was less than enthusiastic about a major oil shale industry developing in the Western Slope. He became disenchanted with the book project and dropped out, Johnson said. He lived in



CATHERINE ROBERTSON/Special to the Sentinel

This is the view of the High Trail as it appears today.



WILL C. MINOR

Fruita until his death.

The High Trail took up Chapter One in Minor's first book, “Footprints in the Trail,” (Sage Books, Denver, 1950). The trail is still spectacular, but it is no longer the major stock highway. It is extremely difficult to find unless you have a guide who has been there before. Earlier this month, I visited the trail, accompanied by my friend, Catherine Robertson.

Far from any main route, you follow a crooked, meandering path that's little more than a deer trail through juniper and pinyon pine. There is little to hint at what lies ahead until, suddenly, Flume Canyon opens up in front and to the right of you. Directly ahead, the High Trail clings precariously to the cliff face.

There are remnants of its

heyday as a livestock trail: pieces of an old barb-wire fence and a gate that closed the top half of the trail from the bottom, as well as a few bits of broken glass from old bottles.

But the trail is being reclaimed by nature. Large slabs of sandstone have slumped off in places, making it necessary to scramble down and around, then back up to the trail.

Minor wrote that he regularly crossed the High Trail, both with herds of sheep and strings of pack horses. He reported observing the actions of other creatures from a rocky knob high above the west side of Flume Canyon.

Minor was born in 1903 in Missouri and grew up riding horses, as one chapter in his book attests to. He moved to Colorado in 1912 and began herding sheep in the 1930s. He started writing young and recorded his first published work when he was 16, in Boy's Life magazine.

He herded in the Frying Pan country as well as in Mesa County. But he was best known for his writings about the canyons west of Grand Junction and about Pinyon Mesa. In fact, the U.S. Board of Geographic Names officially designated an arch southwest of Horsethief Canyon as Will Minor Arch in 1993.

There is a bit of Aldo Leopold in Minor's writing style — the keen observations and the obvious delight in simply watching wild animals in their natural habitat. But, unlike Leopold, Minor tended to attribute hu-

ABOUT THE BOOKS

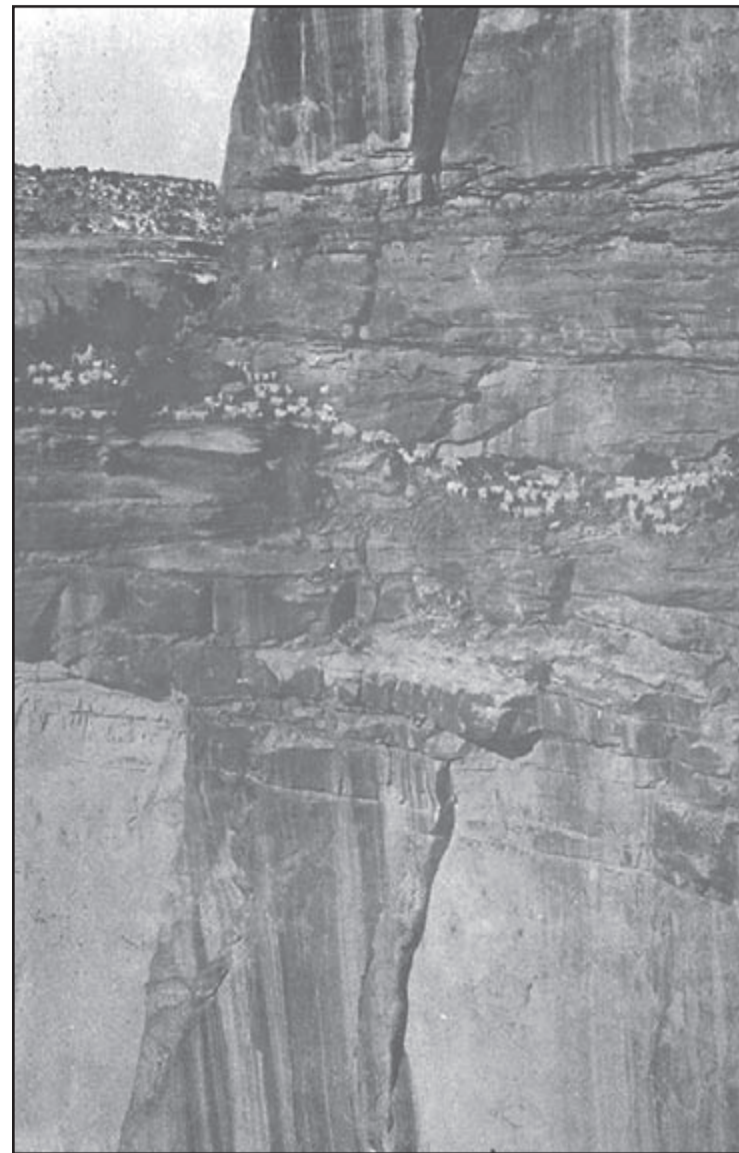
Will Minor's books, “Footprints in the Trail,” and “More Footprints in the Trail,” have long been out of print.

Copies are available through the Mesa County Libraries system. A few copies can occasionally be found for sale online through Amazon or used book outlets.

man thought processes to the actions of wild animals.

In “Footprints,” he described several instances on the High Trail when he observed confrontations between predator animals and prey — a bobcat and a deer or a fox and a squirrel. But in each instance, he said, the animals parted without an attack. He wondered if there was some special animal code of conduct for the High Trail, precluding attacks because it was too dangerous for both parties.

When we visited the trail on a warm morning earlier this month, there was a pygmy rattlesnake coiled up beside a rock just off the trail. It made



MUSEUM OF WESTERN COLORADO/Special to the Sentinel

Sheep on the High Trail, by Will Minor, from “Footprints in the Trail.”

no move as we gave it a wide berth, nor did it flinch when I tossed a small pebble to land about a foot from it.

The snake had apparently died curled up by the rock. I wondered what story the imagination of Will Minor might conjure up to explain the snake's apparently peaceful demise so close to the trail.

Will Minor chronicled backcountry wildlife and his own solitary life as a shepherd at a time when activity in the canyon west of here was far different than today. Cattle and a few sheep still graze in what is now McInnis Canyons, but they and their human herders no longer have the land al-

most exclusively to themselves. Also, large trucks and better roads have given ranchers more convenient options than trailing their livestock over the narrow, dangerous High Trail.

But for many years, Will Minor gave Daily Sentinel readers and those who bought his books a glimpse of the peculiar life of a shepherd in the rugged canyon country of Mesa County — something few of them would ever experience on their own.

Thanks to Zeb Miracle and Michael Menard of the Museum of Western Colorado for biographical information and photos of Will Minor.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ongoing: Garages of Palisade window exhibit. Palisade History Center. 311 S. Main St. Palisade. www.historicpalisade.org.

June 24-28: Cross Orchards Kids Camp, Cross Orchards Historic Site, 3073 F Road, Grand Junction. 970-261-8137. www.museumofwesternco.com.

June 29: Canyonlands by Night tour.

Museum of Western Colorado to Moab. www.museumofwesternco.com.

July 8: Dino dig. Begin at Dinosaur Journey, Fruita. 970-242-0971. www.museumofwesternco.com.

July 8-13: Cross Orchards Kids Camp, Cross Orchards Historic Site, 3073 F Road, Grand Junction. 970-261-8137. www.museumofwesternco.com.

July 10: Dino dig. Begin at Dinosaur Journey, Fruita. www.museumofwesternco.com.

July 12: Dino dig. Begin at Dinosaur Journey, Fruita. www.museumofwesternco.com.

July 15-19: Dino dig in Moab. Museum of Western Colorado. www.museumofwesternco.com.

‘Dumb and Dumber’ sequel ‘painfully funny,’ Daniels says

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Nearly 20 years after “Dumb and Dumber” was released, Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels are reuniting for “Dumb and Dumber To.”

Daniels said Carrey approached directors Peter and Bobby Farrelly two years ago about doing a sequel.

“Jim has been against all sequels, and you know, understandably so. ... But he turned 50 and that will mellow you out, and suddenly he's going, ‘Let's have some fun. ... Come on,’ and we're going, ‘Great,’ and so the Farrellys said, ‘This isn't a money grab. Let's really write a great second movie

that takes the original and then blows it up even further, and so I think they did that,” Daniels said Wednesday.

Universal Pictures, which acquired the domestic distribution rights after Warner Bros. dropped out, confirmed the sequel.

“It's taken two years to get the studios and all that stuff worked out,” Daniels said. “The easiest thing to say in Hollywood is ‘no.’ You keep your job if you say ‘no.’ If you say ‘yes’ and you're not right, you lose your job. There's a lot of ‘no.’ And we had a lot of ‘no’ for two years and finally ‘yes,’ it's comin' around, and I think it's got a chance to be I hope better

than the first one.”

Daniels said he's read the script and calls it “painfully funny.”

The original premise wasn't that deep. It followed two well-meaning but moronic friends, Lloyd Christmas (Carrey) and Harry Dunne (Daniels), as they traveled cross-country to find the owner of a briefcase filled with money.

“We're middle-aged and still that stupid. Our IQ has not gone up one point combined,” he said. “So it's a frightening thing. You're gonna see the two of us standing there trying to put thoughts together and you want to put underneath, ‘Kids don't do this at home.’ It's that stupid.”

THE DAILY SENTINEL
GRAND JUNCTION, COLORADO

The 56th Annual
CGA Competitive Junior Golf Tournament

The Western Chapter of the Colorado Golf Association has joined *The Daily Sentinel* again this year to produce the largest and finest junior golf event in the state.

July 8th
at Bookcliff Country Club, 1:00 p.m. shotgun

July 9th
at Tiara Rado, 8:00 a.m. shotgun
LUNCH SERVED

Colorado Junior Golf Association Division
Entrants must have an active GHIN number and an established USGA handicap index. The field is limited to 100 players. If the number of entries exceed 100 boys and girls, the highest handicap players will be dropped.

36-Hole Tournament
Separate flight for boys and girls
Age 14-15: 18 holes each day **ENTRY FEE \$50**
Age 16-18: 18 holes each day **ENTRY FEE \$50**

No late entries will be accepted.
Entries must be made on official entry form and mailed to the Colorado Golf Association, P.O. Box 322, Grand Junction, CO 81502.
Entries must be received before noon, July 1, 2013. NO EXCEPTIONS.
No registration by phone or at local golf courses. Make checks payable to the Colorado Golf Association.

OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM FOR THE DAILY SENTINEL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Boy _____ Girl _____ *Please print clearly*

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Age (As of 7/1/13) _____ Home Course _____
(No one under 14 or over 18)

Competitive Division: GHIN# _____

USGA Handicap _____

Parents: Check here if you can be a scorekeeper.
Make checks payable to:
Colorado Golf Association
Mail entries to:
Colorado Golf Association
P.O. Box 322, Grand Junction, CO 81502