



Colorado National Monument (Images of America)

Alan J. Kania

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Amid the rock spires and red-rock canyons west of Grand Junction near the Utah state line, a young man with a checkered past single-handedly built trails at a salary of \$1 a month. John Otto brought the beauty of the canyons to the attention of the local chambers of commerce and eventually the National Park Service. With the stroke of a pen, Pres. William Taft added the Colorado National Monument to the park system in 1911. Otto's eccentricities toward bureaucrats and businessmen caused him to abandon a quarter-century of trail building in the mid-1930s. His legacy was then picked up by hundreds of young men from the Civilian Conservation Corps prior to World War II. Today their combined efforts bring thousands of hikers, bicyclists, and motorists to the same trails Otto first used to introduce people to the canyon lands a century ago and the odd rock monoliths that seem to rise hundreds of feet out of the canyon floor. Scenic vistas of the Little Bookcliffs mountain range and the great Grand Mesa complete the beautiful panorama.



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