

28

only Louis J. F. Jaeger, William J. Ankrin and the major, owners of the ferry. Johnson returned to San Francisco, but within a year he was drawn back to the river.<sup>5</sup>

Fort Yuma quickly became known as the hell hole of the West, for its blistering hot summers, its desolate loneliness, its abominable quarters and its starvation rations. Jokes seemed to offer the only respite against the heat, and the soldiers accosted newcomers with the tale of a comrade who died and went to hell but came back the next day for his blankets. Jacals, made of upright mesquite sticks dabbed with mud and a thatching of arrowwood, provided the soldiers' only shelter from the wind, dust and sun. The officers did little better, stretching their tents among the few crumbling walls of the old mission La Purísima Concepción, which stood on the mesa, a lonely reminder of an ill-fated Spanish attempt to settle the river in 1780. More livable adobe quarters were finally begun in 1855.<sup>6</sup>

The greatest difficulty facing the garrison in those early years was the chronically short supply of rations. The struggle to alleviate this problem led to commencement of steam navigation on the Colorado, but it was a slow and faltering process fraught with frustration. The first attempt to supply the fort was by wagon and pack mule across the mountains and desert from San Diego, a distance of more than two hundred miles. Freight costs of \$500 a ton, however, made this route much too expensive, so the quartermaster looked to the sea as an alternative. The latest map of the lower Colorado was one surveyed by British naval Lt. R. W. H. Hardy in 1826 while searching for

pearling grounds in the Gulf of California. Hardy placed the junction of the Gila, where the fort was located, only twenty-five miles above the mouth of the Colorado within easy reach of small seagoing craft. Thus the quartermaster dispatched Lt. George Horatio Derby, the witty "Squibob" of later literary fame, to the mouth of the river with a cargo of 10,000 rations in the little schooner *Invincible*, commanded by Captain Alfred H. Wilcox.<sup>7</sup>

Derby sailed into the mouth of the river on Christmas Eve of 1850 and soon worked the vessel up to the point Hardy had shown as the junction of the Gila. But instead of finding the fort, he discovered that the lieutenant had mistaken a slough for the main channel of the Colorado and the Colorado itself for the Gila. Captain Wilcox refused to take the *Invincible* any farther up the river in search of the fort, so after firing guns in the hope the soldiers might hear them, they sent Cocopahs to carry word to the fort, which proved to be 120 miles farther upriver. On learning of their arrival Major Heintzelman sent wagons down the Sonora side to bring up the much-needed supplies.<sup>8</sup>

In the meantime the *Invincible* was being badly buffeted by the shifting currents and the daily tidal bore—a six-foot wall of water that came in with a roar that could be heard for miles and a force that could capsize or ground a small vessel. Only at the mouth of the Ganges River in India was there a tidal bore said to be as treacherous as this. After going aground a couple of times and losing both anchors, Wilcox decided that he could not risk waiting for the wagons. As a result they left the rations piled on the Sonora bank and set sail.<sup>9</sup>

In anticipation of their arrival Heintzelman reoccupied Fort Yuma that same month and sent a detachment of troops down the river to meet them. Johnson quickly assembled his two flatboats—each 18 by 50 feet with 3-foot draft capable of holding 30 tons. As before, this attempt was plagued with difficulty. The soldiers were attacked and turned back by hostile Yumas, and no sooner was the first flatboat loaded than it swamped and sank, cargo and all a total loss. Johnson and his crew labored valiantly, working the remaining flatboat up the river against the perverse currents of the Colorado, but the troops at the fort consumed the rations faster than he could deliver them. Once again the wagons were sent down to assist. Even then it took four months to get the last of the supplies up the river.<sup>12</sup>

When all else had clearly failed Derby's call for a steamboat was finally heeded. In June 1852 the quartermaster let a new supply contract for the fort—this time to Captain James Turnbull, "an energetic, smooth talking, little fellow" from Benicia, California. Turnbull purchased a small steam tug, had it broken down into sections and shipped with his first cargo of supplies from San Francisco on the schooner *Capacity*, under Captain Driscoll. Anchoring the schooner near the head of tidewater early in September, Turnbull began reassembling the tug. The work went slower than expected, taking over two months, while the garrison waited anxiously for much-needed provisions.<sup>13</sup>

In mid-November 1852 the first Colorado steamboat was finally launched on the muddy waters. Turnbull proudly christened her the *Uncle Sam*, but her appearance reflected poorly on

the name. Her little double-pointed hull was only 65 feet long with a 16-foot beam, and 3.5 feet deep—scarcely larger than Johnson's flatboat; her deck, devoid of cabin or wheelhouse, sported only a makeshift 20-horsepower locomotive engine, modestly draped in canvas to shield it from the silty spray of her two side paddles as they churned against the swift currents.<sup>14</sup>

With a crew of two, Captain Turnbull and engineer Phillips, and a few curious passengers, Captain Driscoll, two Cocopah chiefs and a Yuma, the little steamer started bravely up the river on 18 November, her deck heaped with some thirty-five tons of freight. Her progress was frustratingly slow as Turnbull guided her cautiously through the uncertain channels and shifting bars. Even under a full head of steam her engine was barely a match for the river and several hours each day were spent tied up at the bank while all hands foraged for wood to fire her boiler. Trouble with the boiler further delayed them two and a half days. As if all this were not trial enough, they were also frightfully shaken up by an earthquake. Though the *Uncle Sam* came through relatively unaffected, the quake left the *Capacity* high and dry at the estuary and at the fort it sent the frightened troops scampering onto the parade ground to the great amusement of the quake-weary Yumas.<sup>15</sup>

The soldiers, now much more concerned with aftershocks of the quake, had nearly given up looking for the steamboat when she finally nosed into the landing at Fort Yuma early in December. A crowd of soldiers and Indians, however, quickly gathered around her. "She is almost as great a curiosity," one noted, "as

the steamer *Fulton* had on the Hudson River." Fledgling that she was, she had achieved her goal and the press on the coast soon spread the word that "the practicability of navigating the Colorado by steam is established beyond doubt." Indeed a new era had opened on the river, but the problem of supplying the fort was not yet solved.<sup>16</sup>

Before heading back down for another load of supplies, Captain Turnbull treated the off-duty officers to a short excursion on up the Colorado and Gila above the fort. As one of the excursionists later remarked, "The trip was rather pleasant than otherwise, more on account of its novelty than anything else, I surmise, for we got pretty well sprinkled during the voyage." Had it been summer rather than winter this might have been appreciated.<sup>17</sup>

On her first trip upriver the *Uncle Sam* had taken fifteen days to make the 120 miles from the schooner to the fort, but eventually she was making a round trip in twelve days. Even at this rate, however, the *Capacity* was not unloaded until mid-April—having been moored on the river for eight months. By January it had already become obvious to Turnbull that the poor little steamer was sadly underpowered. Leaving Captain Driscoll to finish the unloading, Turnbull headed overland to San Francisco to get a more powerful engine. He returned to the river in mid-May aboard the schooner *General Patterson* with a new engine and another cargo of provisions for the fort. But sad news awaited him.<sup>18</sup>

After unloading the *Capacity*, the *Uncle Sam* had been tied up at the old ferry crossing six miles below the fort to be over-

hauled and made ready for the new machinery. There, shortly before Turnbull's return, someone forgot to put a bilge plug in tight and she filled with water and sank. Several men from the fort went down to help raise her. They worked tirelessly for two days before she broke her moorings and disappeared in the swift muddy current. The first steamboat on the Colorado thus went to an early grave.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the loss Turnbull, vowing he had "not yet given up," headed back to San Francisco once again—this time to get a new hull. Once again the army had to send the wagons down to the rescue. By the time Turnbull had reached San Francisco, however, he had had second thoughts about throwing any more money into the Colorado steamboat business. Thus he quickly and quietly vanished from the scene, leaving his creditors no recourse but to fire broadsides at him through the press, advertising him as "a mean, contracted hypocrite, not worthy of any gentleman's confidence." Turnbull was his own best advertisement, however, and he soon became "wellknown around Mazatlan where he ran a little stern-wheel boat for years, and better known for his attempt to build canals, etc. down there on pure jawbone—without any money at all!"<sup>20</sup>

His faults aside, Turnbull had shown that a river steamer offered the only practical solution to the problem of supplying Fort Yuma. Even George Johnson was convinced. That fall Johnson sailed for the river on the brig *General Viel* with a new supply contract in his pocket, and in the hold, the sections of a new steamer he had purchased in partnership with Ben Hartshorne and Captain Alfred H. Wilcox. This new boat was a side-wheeler

## 12 Steamboats on the Colorado River

like the *Uncle Sam*, but she was much larger and more powerful than her predecessor. She had a 50-horsepower engine, measured 104 feet from stem to stern, and 17 feet at the beam—27 feet including her paddle guards—and carried 50 tons on only 30 inches of water. Johnson thoughtfully named her the *General Jesup* in honor of the U.S. quartermaster general whose business made her possible. She was reassembled in the estuary and reached Fort Yuma with her first cargo on 18 January 1854.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike the *Uncle Sam*, the *General Jesup* was an immediate financial success, clearly demonstrating the economic feasibility of steam navigation on the Colorado. She made round trips from the estuary to the fort in only four to five days with 50-ton cargoes paying \$75 a ton, to gross nearly \$4,000 a trip, or \$20,000 a month, during the busiest season. Johnson, in fact, pushed her for all she was worth. In August 1854, straining to make time against the current, her boiler exploded, killing the engineer Jackson and seriously scalding two others. New machinery was sent down from San Francisco, and she was running again by December. Johnson's new engineer, David Neahr, kept a much closer eye on the boiler and lived to a ripe old age.<sup>22</sup>

The faster times made by the *General Jesup* were due not only to her more powerful engine but also to the establishment of woodyards which eliminated the time-consuming quests for firewood. Aside from scattered Cocopah rancherias, the woodyards were the only settlements on the river below the ferry. They were roughly spaced about a day's voyage—some thirty miles—apart so the steamer could be loaded with wood while she was

tied up for the night. The ever-changing channel of the Colorado made navigation at night too hazardous. The first yard above the mouth of the river was ominously known as Port Famine; above that was the Gridiron, then Ogden's Landing, run by one of Johnson's old ferry partners, and finally old John Pedrick's, just above the boundary line—the first landing in the United States. Though most of the yards were on Mexican soil, the owners were all Yankees. They hired Cocopahs to cut and haul the wood to the river and were said to make as much as \$5,000 a year from the business.<sup>23</sup>

At the mouth of the river there was one other settlement—if it could be called such—known as Robinson's Landing. It was on the mud flats on the Baja California side. Here atop stilts, since it was awash at high tide, stood a solitary shed, pretentiously dubbed the Colorado Hotel. Though gulls and pelicans were its only regular customers, it became an indispensable landmark for seagoing vessels rendezvousing with the steamer. It was built by David C. Robinson, who had first come to the river as mate on the *Invincible* in 1850 and returned to the river with Wilcox and Johnson in 1853. "Old Rob," as he was affectionately known, served as mate and later captain on the river steamers. He kept the "hotel" as a base for his intermittent search for a cache of gold, said to have been lost by Count Raousett de Boulbon's ill-fated Sonoran filibustering expedition when their boat sank on Hardy's Colorado. Freight was rarely landed here, however, since Johnson transferred his cargoes directly from seagoing vessels in mid-stream to avoid paying Mexican customs duty.<sup>24</sup>

a second trip. They started from Wheeler's ranch on 27 April 1893. The river was much higher by then and the *Major Powell* made the round trip to the first cataract and back in fourteen days, of which only four days were actually spent running the river. Johnson enthusiastically wrote up the adventure as an illustrated feature for the Sunday papers, spicing it with a narrow escape in an embryo rapid just above the first cataract. Edwards at the same time unblushingly claimed that it was he who had first "proven" the navigability of the canyon country, and he implied that Wheeler had not even taken the boat below his ranch. This canyon country candidate for an Ives-Johnson dispute never reached fulmination, however, for Wheeler never bothered responding to Edwards's claims—if in fact he ever heard of them. Despite his claims Edwards concluded that the little *Major Powell* was not really of "proper construction" for regular service, and with no one rushing forward to put up money for a new boat he abandoned the scheme, apparently content to bask in his self-proclaimed glory.<sup>8</sup>

In 1894 four men brought the *Major Powell* fifteen miles upriver to Halverson's ranch in Little Valley. There they scrapped her, taking out the engines and boiler and leaving the hull to be swept away with the next flood. The *Major Powell* had made only three trips in three years and logged only 630 miles on the waters of the Green and Colorado rivers, but she had won her place as the pioneer steamboat in the canyon country, and though she was a commercial failure, her very failure challenged others to try again.<sup>9</sup>

After the demise of the *Major Powell*, J. N. Corbin, who had worked with the Colorado promoters of the boat, came to the canyon country to start a newspaper, the *Grand Valley Times*, at Moab. With a small flood of editorials Corbin kept alive the idea of steam navigation in the canyons, extolling the manifold benefits that a steamer would surely bring to farmer, merchant and tourist. His persistence was finally rewarded in 1901.<sup>10</sup>

In the fall of that year the second canyon steamer, the *Undine*, was launched at Green River, Utah. A flat-bottomed stern-wheeler, she was much better suited to the river and looked like a scaled-down model of the time-tested boats on the lower river. Unfortunately, however, she was scaled down in power, too, and with a captain who was no match to the hazards of the river she would come to a tragic end.

The captain and owner of the *Undine* was Frank H. Summeril of Denver. He had her built at Rock Island, Illinois, and shipped by rail to Green River. She was a coal burner with a 20-horsepower engine, was 60 feet long, with a 10-foot beam, drew only 12 inches light and could carry 15 tons on 20 inches of water. Summeril was much more ambitious than the *Major Powell's* promoters. He, too, expected the tourist trade from Green River to the cataracts to be the prime source of income, but he was also determined to try opening a shipping business on up the Colorado, or Grand, to Moab. Thus on 22 November 1901, the *Undine* set out on her maiden voyage, not just to test the Green at much lower water than the *Major Powell* had tried, but to explore the navigability of the upper Colorado. Accompanying

the *Cliff Dweller* was being dismantled, he began construction of his own steamer, the *Black Eagle*. She was somewhat smaller and lighter than the previous boats, only 40 feet long with a 6-foot beam, and drawing only 7 to 8 inches, but she was driven by a tunnel screw rather than a paddle wheel. Yokey launched the *Black Eagle* at Green River in June and later that summer he took her downriver on her maiden voyage. She might, in fact, have proven to be a better boat than her predecessors had she survived, but just above Valentine's Bottom one of her boiler tubes plugged with mud and she blew up! Luckily Yokey and his crew escaped serious injury, but they wanted nothing more to do with steamboats, nor, for that matter, did anyone else at Green River.<sup>22</sup>

Fifteen years of experimentation with steamboats on the Green and Grand rivers had clearly shown that such large boats simply were not suited to the shallow waters and swift rapids of the canyon country. At the same time, however, some success had been found with smaller gasoline launches. The first of these, the *Wilmont*, had been completed in August 1904 by Edwin T. Wolverton. She was a 27-foot long stern-wheel boat, with a 5.5-foot beam and 10-inch draft, and she was powered by a 4-horsepower gasoline engine. Her total cost was only about \$400. Wolverton built her to carry supplies to a manganese mine he was opening for the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company at Riverside, twenty-five miles below Green River. On his first trip upriver, however, he found that she was underpowered. So early the following year he put in a 7.5-horsepower engine and converted

her to a side-wheeler, which also lightened her draft to 7 inches. These changes were so successful that Wolverton decided to go into the excursion business on the side. In April 1905 he took the *Wilmont* on her first excursion up the Colorado, making the 160 miles from Riverside to Moab in just thirty-one hours running time.<sup>23</sup>

Wolverton's success prompted Milton Oppenheimer of Green River to build a similar side-wheel launch that fall. His boat, the *Paddy Ross*, was the same length as the *Wilmont*, but was a foot wider with an inch deeper draft. She was also nearly twice as powerful with a 14-horsepower gas engine. Oppenheimer converted her to a stern-wheeler two years later, and she ran on the river for nearly a decade.<sup>24</sup>

Wolverton, in the meantime, built a fleet of gasoline boats and scows. Early in 1905 he became manager of the Utah-Nevada Copper Company's mine, twenty-five miles farther downriver below Riverside, and built two ore scows for the *Wilmont* to push. To ease her task he put a 14-horsepower engine in her that winter and built a new paddle-wheeler, the *Colorado*, for her old engine. In 1906 he also built a 33-foot, 14-horsepower stern-wheeler, the *Marguerite*, for Tom G. Wimmer who had bought the Wheelers' ranch. For a time Wolverton had a thriving business with the *Wilmont* and *Colorado*, taking copper ore up to Green River, Utah, and excursion parties down to the cataracts and up to Moab. In the winter of 1907-08 the *Wilmont* was caught in ice on the river and badly damaged. Since the copper mine was failing, Wolverton replaced her with a smaller, less

powerful boat, the *Navajo*. She was 22 feet long, with a 5-foot beam, 18-inch draft, and she was driven by a screw propeller, powered by the 7.5-horsepower engine, which he took from the *Colorado*, converting the latter to a scow. Despite the *Navajo's* greater draft and propeller drive, Wolverton claimed to have run her without difficulty for over four years, until he quit the river in 1912.<sup>25</sup>

Quite a number of other gasoline launches were put on this stretch of the Green and Colorado rivers. In the spring of 1909 Henry E. Blake built a 24-foot, 14-horsepower propeller-driven boat, the *Ida B.*, which he ran successfully from Green River to Moab trying to promote a regular excursion line. Even Harry Yokey ventured back into the river business that same year with a little 6-horsepower boat which he sentimentally dubbed the *Baby Black Eagle*. Many others followed, the largest of which was the Moab Garage Company's stern-wheeler "The Big Boat" built in January 1925 to haul oil drilling equipment down the Colorado for the Mid-West Exploration Company. This was a big open-deck boat, 75 feet long, with a 16-foot beam, a draft of only 4 inches light, and a 40-horsepower automobile engine. Clarence Baldwin ran this and a couple smaller boats until drilling ceased in 1927.<sup>26</sup>



It is a curious irony that no sooner had the citizens of Green River, Utah, given up the idea of putting a steamboat on the river than the citizens of Green River, Wyoming, nearly four hundred

miles upstream picked it up. Since Major John Wesley Powell first set off down the river from the Wyoming town in 1869, only rowboats had followed for nearly forty years. But in the spring of 1908 Marius N. Larsen set about building a steamboat. Larsen ran a general store in Linwood, Utah, a small isolated farming community on Henry's Fork, some ninety miles below Green River, Wyoming, and he looked to a steamboat to cut freighting costs both on goods brought in and on produce shipped out. In partnership with several Green River and Linwood businessmen, Larsen organized the Green River Navigation Company in March for the ambitious purpose of running passenger and freight service all the way from Green River, Wyoming, to Green River, Utah. Construction of the steamer went swiftly in the hands of Larsen's brother, Holger, who had worked in the shipyards in Germany. She was a 60-foot stern-wheeler with 12-foot beam, a 60-horsepower boiler and two 20-horsepower engines.<sup>27</sup>

Christened the *Comet* by Maurius's daughter Beulah, her launching was the main event of the Fourth of July celebration in 1908. Three days later with the call of "All aboard for Linwood!" the *Comet* headed down the Green on her maiden voyage. Holger Larsen was at the wheel, Marius was honorary purser and some of her other stockholders filled in as crew. The river was high and the *Comet* made quick time going down, reaching Linwood in less than eight hours. Her future success seemed assured, but then came her return trip back upstream. Like her predecessors in the canyons below, she was almost constantly aground on one bar after another. Finally she ran out of coal and more had to be



124 *Steamboats on the Colorado River*

first dredge. To supply his camps he brought in an 18-foot, propeller-driven gasoline launch in May 1898, but she proved to be of questionable value. Her engine gave constant trouble and was unable to make headway against even a slight current, so she had to be pulled most of the way upriver. Stanton never bothered naming her, but his crew dubbed her the "white elephant."<sup>31</sup>

The first dredge site, Camp Stone, was selected on a bar four miles above Hall's Crossing, and a supply road was opened from Hanksville to the river a mile and a half below the camp. The lumber and machinery for the dredge were shipped by rail to Green River, Utah, hauled overland 100 miles to the river, and taken by barge up to the camp. The launch was unable to tow the barge even that short distance, however, so sails and poles had to suffice for power. Construction of the dredge, *Hoskaninni*, began in June 1900, and early the following year she was ready to begin work. The dredge, which cost about \$25,000, was designed by the Bucyrus Company of Milwaukee. Her hull was 105 by 36 feet, and her equipment consisted of a chain of forty-six buckets for scooping up the gravel, a rotating, double-barreled grizzly for sorting out the coarse rock and a sluice box for settling the gold dust. She was powered by five separate gasoline engines, which generated a total of 168 horsepower.<sup>32</sup>

Dredging commenced in February 1901, but breakdowns plagued the operation. After more than a month of difficulties Stanton complained that he was "worn out with worry and disappointment," but continue he must. The outlook grew even more dismal, however, when he made his first cleanup of the



Robert B. Stanton, attracted by the gold discoveries in Glen Canyon staked claim to 165 miles of the Colorado riverbed and set out to dredge it.

sluice on 13 April. He found that in two months' operation the *Hoskaninni* had recovered only \$30.15 worth of gold!—barely a tenth of one percent of what he had expected. Stanton moved the dredge to another spot but to little avail. Three weeks' work there yielded only \$36.80. He finally realized that the dredge was simply unable to recover the fine flour gold that his tests had shown the gravel contained—a realization that the owners of the *Advance* dredge, a thousand miles downstream, were coming to at almost exactly the same time. With many outstanding debts the Hoskaninni Company passed into receivership and the entire property, dredge and all, was sold in December 1901 for \$200. A watchman, who looked after the leviathan for a couple of years, got the deed as a settlement for back wages. Little was ever salvaged from it and the decaying hulk was finally covered by the rising waters of Lake Powell.<sup>33</sup>

A few gasoline boats were tried in the canyon in subsequent years. Frank Bennett, manager of the Moquie Mining Company's operation on Olympia Bar upriver from Stanton's dredge, built a 28-foot stern-wheel launch, the *Lucy B*, at Hite in 1902 to help supply his camp. She proved no more useful than Stanton's launch, however, since her two cylinder automobile engine, supposed to deliver 6 horsepower, gave only half that and could not power her back up to Hite. Bennett pulled out the engine and converted her to sail. Harry Yokey built a new power boat for Bennett at Green River in 1905. She was a 22-foot, propeller-driven launch with a 12-horsepower engine. She had power enough to stem the current, but her 16-inch propeller struck

bottom on the bars, so Bennett could not take her much farther upriver than her predecessor. When she sank at Tickaboo the following year, Bennett recovered her engine to try on one more boat, but this, too, was a failure, and he went back to sail.<sup>34</sup>



By 1910 most of the miners had left Glen Canyon to seek their fortunes elsewhere, but one diehard, Charles H. Spencer, was still determined to wrest the gold from the canyon and he had a novel, if quixotic, scheme for doing so. It was a scheme which also led to the building of the last steamboat ever put on the Colorado River. Spencer believed that the source of the placer gold was the shale and sandstone formations through which the canyon was cut, so he set out to mine the canyon walls. The easiest rock to work was the Chinle shale which outcropped at Lee's Ferry. The shale was readily broken up by water, so he set up a Rube Goldberg apparatus to hydraulic and sluice the deposit. Just as a backup operation, he also constructed a makeshift suction dredge at the same spot to try to recover the gold from the riverbed.<sup>35</sup>

Before Spencer could test either operation, however, he needed fuel for the boilers. Rather than pay the exorbitant costs of freighting 140 miles from the railroad, he decided to work a low-grade coal deposit on Warm Creek, 28 miles upriver, as a further expansion of his operation. To bring the coal downriver

he built a couple gasoline launches—the 27-foot *Violet Louise* and the smaller *Mullins*. Neither boat, however, was able to carry enough for his needs. Thus in the summer of 1911 he contracted with Schultz, Robertson and Schultz of San Francisco to build a stern-wheel steamer, costing about \$30,000. That fall she was shipped in pieces to Marysvale, Utah, and hauled by ox team more than two hundred miles to the river at the mouth of Warm Creek. There the steamer was completed in late February 1912 and christened the *Charles H. Spencer*. Measuring 92.5 feet overall, and having a 25-foot beam, she was not only the last but the largest steamer ever built in the canyons. Her size, however, was a liability. She was powered by a 100-horsepower boiler and drew 18 to 20 inches of water light.<sup>36</sup>

Early in March the *Charles H. Spencer*, loaded with just enough coal for her own boiler, headed down the canyon on her maiden voyage to Lee's Ferry. Peter Hanna, the only man in Spencer's crew with any riverboat experience, was at the wheel, but like the canyon boats before her the *Spencer* ran aground almost immediately. It was evening before she was afloat again, so Hanna tied her up for the night. When they set out the next morning, he proceeded more cautiously, turning the steamer stern to and backing her down the river. To further slow her descent he dragged a 100-foot log chain from her bow, but it caught between rocks and broke off. He had no further trouble running aground, however, and reached Lee's Ferry that afternoon.<sup>37</sup>

Charley Spencer was confident as his steamer started back upstream with a barge to bring down a load of coal. She promptly grounded on a bar, however, just above the ferry and was stuck there for three days. Moreover, when she finally reached Warm Creek, the barge got away and was lost down the river. The steamer brought down a little coal on her deck and pushed the ferryboat back up instead of the barge. With several tons of coal brought down on the ferry, Spencer at last put his scheme to a test, only to come to final disillusionment. Try as he might, he was unable to get the fine gold out of the Chinle shale and he had no better luck with the suction dredge getting it from the river bottom. Thus after two years the whole scheme collapsed and was abandoned. The *Charles H. Spencer*, having run less than one hundred fifty miles on the river, was left to rot just below the ferry. By the mid-1970s only the battered rusty boiler and some scattered timber remained of the Colorado's last steamer.<sup>38</sup>

Though Glen Canyon Dam has destroyed much of the canyon country, that one romantic vision of a paddle-wheeler churning through the depths of the canyons still refuses to die. Late in 1971 a former Colorado school teacher, Tex McClatchy, began construction of a mammoth stern-wheeler, the *Canyon King*. She was a 93- by 26-foot, double-decker run by a diesel marine engine. Launched at Moab on 30 April 1972, she began making regular excursions down the Colorado in May of that year—the final realization of that persistent dream that put the first steamboats into the canyon country.<sup>39</sup>