

Gallery of Geology - Cretaceous hoodoo, San Juan Basin

Spencer G. Lucas and Robert M. Sullivan

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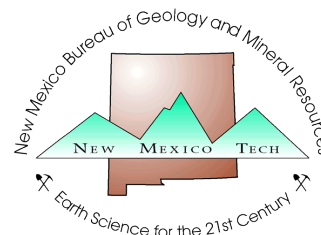
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New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources
New Mexico Institute of Mining & Technology
801 Leroy Place
Socorro, NM 87801-4796

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Cretaceous hoodoo, San Juan Basin



One of the greatest dinosaur hunters of all time, Charles H. Sternberg (1850–1943) collected Late Cretaceous dinosaur fossils in the San Juan Basin, New Mexico, during the summer and fall of 1921 (Hunt et al., 1992). Hired by the University of Uppsala in Sweden, Sternberg discovered a skull and skeleton of the horned dinosaur *Pentaceratops*, a skull of the tube-headed duck-billed dinosaur *Parasaurolophus*, a crocodile skull, and many other dinosaur bones and fossil turtles. Swedish paleontologist Carl Wiman (1867–1944) described these fossils (Wiman, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933), and they continue to be an important part of the Late Cretaceous vertebrate fossil record known from the San Juan Basin.

In September 1921 Sternberg worked in the Upper Cretaceous badlands in what he called “Meyer’s Creek” (= Ah-shi-sle-pah Wash on current maps: Hunt et al., 1992). Wesley Bradfield, a photographer from the American School of Research (now School of American Research) in Santa Fe joined him and took photographs of the work. Sternberg (1932, fig. 53) published one of these photographs, with the caption “my two Indian assistants, Ned Shou-ver and Dan Padilla standing at fossil trunk of Palmetto, Meyers Creek” (see photograph on left). We located this exact place, which is in the NE¼ SE¼ sec. 7 T22N R10W, Pueblo Bonito NW, USGS 7.5-min quadrangle topographic map, and duplicated Bradfield’s photograph (see photograph on right, by Robert M. Sullivan). The



“palmetto” is actually a hoodoo developed in sandstone of the Hunter Wash Member of the Kirtland Formation, and the photograph is ample testimony to the small amount of local erosion during the 82 yrs between 1921 and 2003.

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—Spencer G. Lucas and Robert M. Sullivan