ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Mining for Tourism: Connections Between Moab, Utah's Uranium Industry and the Creation of Canyonlands National Park: 1948-1964
AUTHOR(S):	Jackson, Jane E. ; Gulliford , Andrew
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ABSTRACT: In the 1950s, many towns across the Colorado Plateau were affected by the Cold War and subsequent uranium boom. Moab, Utah is a particularly interesting case study on the effects of mining on small communities in that it managed to survive past its boomtown phase and continue on as a tourist destination through the second half of the 20th Century. What ultimately saved the town's economy and to some extent, its "soul," was tourism stimulated by the establishment of Canyonlands National Park. This transition from a mining-based to tourism-based economy can be seen in cultural changes in the town itself. The ways in which the local population and the nation at large viewed the landscape also changed; the most sought after resources in Canyon Country changed from minerals that could be extracted to tourism that could generate revenue. These cultural and economic changes can be seen in local newspapers, personal stories, and cultural artifacts. Uranium prospectors and government-sponsored mining companies established many of the roads that are now used as access points to Canyonlands National Park. Political documents and correspondences relating to the establishment of Canyonlands also show the importance of economics in matters of wilderness preservation. This provides another link between the two industries as politicians convinced mining advocates that tourism, through preservation, could be an equally productive industry. All of this information comes together to show that the uranium boom and the establishment of Canyonlands National Park are closely connected historical events. Mineral prospecting and exploration revealed the landscape that would eventually become Canyonlands, while the park's creation and associated tourist industry replaced the uranium industry as the foundation for Moab's cultural identity.