

Inventing Ford Country

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John Ford and Tim Holt during the shooting of Stagecoach in Monument Valley. From UA/Photofest; digital colorization by Lorna Clark.

Astride his horse on Comb Ridge, perhaps Harry Goulding knew even then the potential of what he saw. Maybe he realized that first time in 1921 how this place called Monument Valley, straddling the border of northeastern Arizona and southeastern Utah in country that few had ever seen, would one day become the iconic image of the West. Perhaps he had a feeling, as he peered at the mesas and monoliths as red as rubies in the shadows of sunset, of the pivotal role he would one day play in persuading Hollywood to disseminate the image of the valley for mass consumption, the way it would come to embody not just the West but all that America thought of itself, rugged and mighty and iconoclastic.

Harry Goulding wasn't of Hollywood, which only makes his story more improbable. He was about as far from Hollywood as any man could get. Born in 1897, in the mining town of Durango, in southwestern Colorado, he knew how to scrap and scabble in no-man's-land. "There are very few men in this world like Harry," Barry Goldwater once said. Harry was hard to pin down with a single-word description. He was an adventurer and pioneer and savvy promoter, equally at home with the Navajos he came to love and actors such as John Wayne and Henry Fonda and the director John Ford. He was also one of the most unlikely contributors to American cinema there ever was.

His family had been sheep ranchers, running as many as 20,000 head on rangeland stretching from Aztec in New Mexico to Silverton in Colorado. The only time he had ever been out of cowboy boots was in the service in France in World War I, and when he got down on those “low heels,” as he called them, he felt as if he’d been stripped. He was tall and lanky, with thin shoulders that drooped a little bit and a neck that was long and sinewy in his younger days. He parted his thick hair in the middle; his belt was cinched tight. He didn’t carry a watch, maybe because he figured that the heat and wind and snow and rain would tell him what to do and when to do it. He had a young and gorgeous wife, Leone, who was as tough and independent as he was, maybe even more so—impervious to loneliness in a place that virtually demanded it.

Harry spoke in a pattern of irregular loops and rhythms that was sometimes hard to decipher. He didn’t have much education, a couple of years of high school. But as his life unfolded it was clear that he knew beauty and he knew opportunity and he knew there was a way to combine the two in Monument Valley.

Located 175 miles northeast of Flagstaff, Arizona, Monument Valley was a flat, 30,000-acre landscape punctuated by sandstone formations, some slender, some gargantuan, rising up out of nowhere to heights of a thousand feet. No natural setting in America was more haunting or eerie. It was one of those sights that took your breath away and made you speechless—what the Western writer Zane Grey once described as “a strange world of colossal shafts and buttes of rock, magnificently sculptured, standing isolated and aloof, dark, weird, lonely.”

Harry and his wife had been living in Monument Valley since the mid-1920s, right above the Utah-Arizona line. They started out in a 10-by-12-foot tent, whipped by rainstorms and sandstorms, before building a two-story stone structure—a trading post on the first floor and living quarters on the second—with the help of a trapper named Bert Davis, who stunk of coyote bait. The Gouldings carved out a life bartering goods with the Native Americans, most of them Navajos, whose ancestors had lived in Monument Valley for centuries before they were forced out by the U.S. Army and Kit Carson. They were allowed to return in 1868. Like the Navajos who had settled there, Harry and his wife also ran sheep. And then came the Depression, hitting the valley with a brutal vengeance. There was a terrible drought in 1934 and then another one in 1936. Income from the trading post diminished to virtually nothing. The Gouldings went for an entire winter during which dessert was a piece of bread rubbed against the rim of a can of Karo syrup, according to Richard E. Klinck’s book, *Land of Room Enough and Time Enough*.

Then, in 1938, Harry Goulding took the most uncertain trip of his life, to a land in some ways even more mysterious than Monument Valley and far more mercurial, a place where people spoke in smiling code, a place where what you saw was almost never what you got. Of all the towns in the United States, this was the most unlikely place to find a man like Harry. And yet what he managed to do while he was there reverberates to this day.

The way the story goes, Harry learned that United Artists was looking to film a Western on location. Harry went to work, enlisting the help of Josef Muench, a superb photographer who had first seen Monument Valley in 1935 and, during the course of some 350-odd trips there, would shoot some of the most memorable photographs of the place ever taken. At Harry's request, Muench made up an album of 8-by-10 scenes of the valley. Then Harry and his wife loaded the "bedroll, coffee pot, grub," as Harry later put it, and drove to Hollywood. They stayed with Leone Goulding's oldest brother. He was a stunt pilot, and basically told Harry he was crazy, as related in an oral history of the Gouldings called *Tall Sheep*, published in 1992, written by Samuel Moon: "There ain't a bit of use going down there. You can't get into that place."

"Well, that's all right," Harry said. "But I'm going to get in there or go to jail. I know I've got something they need.... You show me the right door to go in down there, their main door, and I'll go on from there."

So Harry went over to United Artists with his wife, who waited in the car and knitted. He made it to a receptionist, and he told her he wanted to talk to someone about a new Western that was going to be made. She looked at him as if he were crazy and told him he couldn't see anybody without an appointment. Harry said he didn't have an appointment, and she reiterated that there was no way he was going to see anyone. Harry said that was fine, then went to get his bedroll from the car, because he had no intention of leaving and figured he might as well be comfortable. At that point the receptionist called someone.

The location manager for the Western *Stagecoach*, which was about to be shot, came out all indignant and riled. He was livid at Harry Goulding for wasting his time, this dumb-ass western son of a bitch thinking he knew anything about the movie business, until he got a glimpse of the pictures that Harry had with him. Then he wanted to know where they had come from. Then the director John Ford looked at the pictures. And it wasn't long after that that Ford decided to use Monument Valley as a backdrop for *Stagecoach*.

Ford had begun directing in 1917. He had made close to a hundred films before *Stagecoach*, starting with short, two-reel silent Westerns and then moving on to such acclaimed works as *The Iron Horse* and *The Informer*. At 44 he was at the pinnacle of his profession, among the five highest-paid directors in the country. But his greatest work was still ahead of him and so was his greatest cinematic discovery. Ford would make seven films in Monument Valley over the next 25 years. The connection forged in that office on that day between Ford and Harry Goulding was the beginning of a new era in the American Western.

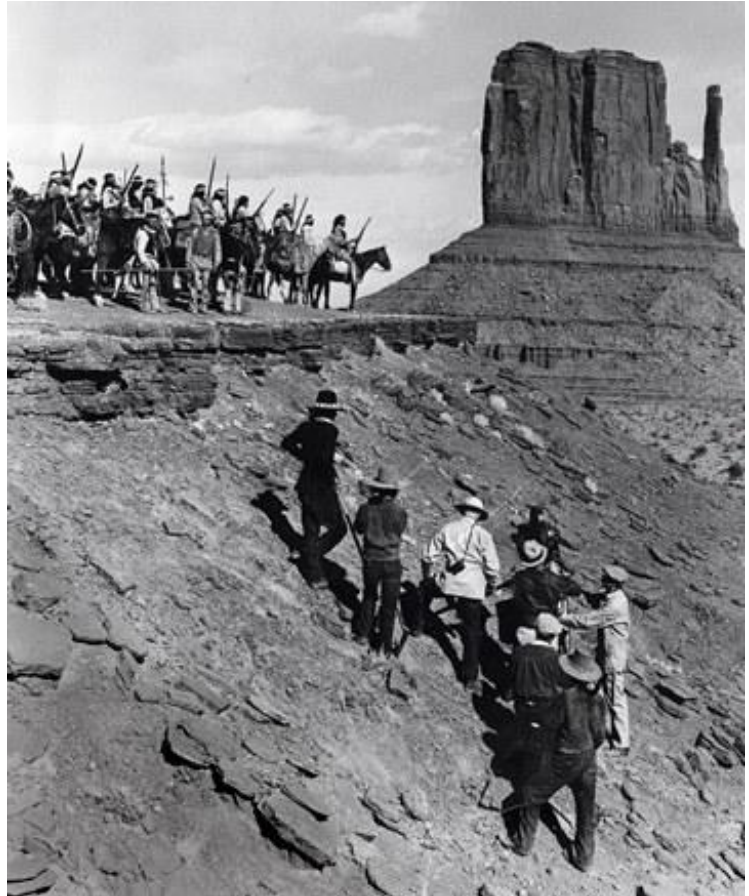
Stagecoach changed the genre from its lowbrow Saturday-matinee roots into what Ford biographer Scott Eyman called the "adult Western." In it, a group of social outcasts—including the revenge-thirsty Ringo Kid (played by John Wayne), a prostitute (Claire Trevor), and an alcoholic doctor (Thomas Mitchell)—make a treacherous journey by stagecoach through hostile Apache territory in an attempt to reach civilization and the town of Lordsburg. With its

complex characters and sweeping setting and moral murkiness, *Stagecoach* proved that the Western did not have to be some simpleminded, melodramatic mush of good guys in white and bad guys in black.

On the set of *Stagecoach*, 1938.

From UA/The Kobal Collection.

The film helped launch John Wayne into stardom after forgettable roles in so-called B Westerns. But another star was born in *Stagecoach*, one even more enduring than Wayne himself. “[*Stagecoach*] moves, and how beautifully it moves, across the plains of Arizona, skirting the sky-reaching mesas of Monument Valley,” wrote *New York Times* film critic Frank S. Nugent in his review on March 3, 1939. Never before had a Western looked so western, and, by extension, so distinctly American.



Since *Stagecoach*, dozens of films have used Monument Valley as a setting. John Ford returned over and over, and other films shot in part there include *2001: A Space*

Odyssey, *Back to the Future III*, and *Forrest Gump*. Countless television commercials have been made there. Funkier offerings, such as the Krazy Kat comic strip and the Road Runner cartoon, have used Monument Valley as a backdrop.

So maybe up on Comb Ridge in 1921, Harry Goulding truly did know it was just a matter of time before Monument Valley would assume its starring role. As Klinck wrote, “Harry believed that some day people from all over the world would be visiting Monument Valley to see its wonders. And when they came, he wanted to be there to show it to them.”

Nobody used Monument Valley like Ford did, so much so that the valley became known simply as John Ford Country. There was a little bit of irony in that perhaps, given that Ford wasn't of the West at all but a native of southern Maine from the environs of Portland. He was born John Feeney, in 1894, his father an Irish saloonkeeper and his mother a woman of rigid emotional demand. They had 11 children, 5 of whom died in infancy, leaving John the youngest. He had diphtheria as a child and, due to being quarantined, missed an entire year of school. But at Portland High School, he played football tough enough to earn him the nickname “Bull.” Subsequently he followed his brother Francis out to Hollywood, where he adopted the last name “Ford,” which his brother was using as a director and actor. John Ford himself acted for a little while (there is a story, perhaps apocryphal, that he played a Klansman in D. W. Griffith's

The Birth of a Nation). Then he began directing, eventually becoming arguably the most seminal American director, influencing a range of cinematic acolytes, including Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Orson Welles, John Milius, François Truffaut, Sergio Leone, and Akira Kurosawa. He had a style that Alfred Hitchcock described as clear and eloquent and Martin Scorsese called “the essence of classical American cinema.” Welles, before making the landmark *Citizen Kane*, watched *Stagecoach* repeatedly, and when asked to name his favorite directors, he reportedly gave the answer “John Ford, John Ford, and John Ford.”

Ford at times dismissed the idea that he or his life was anything special. Questions irritated him, like the one a journalist asked about how Ford got to Hollywood.

“By train,” Ford replied.

He used the same actors over and over, so much so that the group became known as the Ford Stock Company: Wayne, Fonda, Harry Carey Jr., John Carradine, Ward Bond, Ben Johnson, Victor McLaglen. Part of that may have been the factor of familiarity. Part of it may have been that they became adept at shooting scenes the way Ford liked, which was in one take. Ford also reveled in Monument Valley, describing it as the “most complete, beautiful, and peaceful place on earth.”

But that sense of peace and beauty did not always translate to the set. Ford became notorious for his irascibility—part manipulative, part dictator-like, since in that era actors were basically indentured to the major studios and the director was king. Ford’s reputation—he won a record four Oscars for best director and also made such films as *The Grapes of Wrath*, starring Fonda, and the Western whodunit *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, starring Wayne, Jimmy Stewart, and Lee Marvin, as well as *How Green Was My Valley*, *The Quiet Man*, and *Mister Roberts*—made many actors willing to put up with whatever he dished out.

Harry Goulding saw firsthand the Jekyll and Hyde of Ford, particularly when someone made a mistake on the set or remotely questioned his authority. Harry also noticed the therapeutic effect of an accordion player named Danny Borzage on the sets of Ford’s films, the way he acted almost as a psychiatrist to keep Ford as calm as possible. “He studied the picture before they came out here, just like one of the actors, that little guy,” said Harry in *Tall Sheep*. “Then he could pick out what was worrying Mr. John and the type of music that he should give him.” Saturday nights, after shooting was over for the day, they would push back the tables of the dining room and there would be dances with Borzage supplying the music. “When Danny played the squeeze-box, he could wheel it off!” Harry remembered. But the squeeze-box didn’t always work to soothe Ford’s soul.

His relationship with his actors, even those in the Stock Company, was a Freudian amalgam of love, loyalty, and withering laceration, often bringing out his sharpshooter’s scent for insecurity. Ford was egotistical, angry, and uncertain, and, according to Carey, nervous around women (although it is believed that in the 1930s, while married to his wife, Mary, he had a brief affair with Katharine Hepburn). He wore brown-and-white saddle shoes that he left unlaced, a tie for a belt, shirts with French cuffs that fell over his hands because he never wore cuff links, and a

black patch over his left eye, which was damaged by a cataract operation. British director Lindsay Anderson, in a book he wrote about Ford in 1981, described him as “aggressive and defensive in about equal measure ... gentle and irascible, bloody-minded and generous, courageous, uncompromising.”

When Henry Fonda suggested to Ford that he was taking too many unnecessary liberties with the film version of *Mister Roberts*, in which Fonda had starred on Broadway, the director punched him in the jaw. When Ava Gardner questioned the quality of a take in *Mogambo* (also starring Clark Gable), Ford responded by saying, “You know so fucking much about directing. You’re a lousy actress, but now you’re a director. Well, why don’t you direct something? You go sit in my chair, and I’ll go and play your scene.” He once said of Dolores del Rio that she was comparable in beauty to Greta Garbo: “Then she opens her mouth and becomes Minnie Mouse.” He referred to Maureen O’Hara as “a greedy bitch” and even told off Helen Hayes.

But perhaps no actor took more from Ford than John Wayne. Wayne’s willingness to be Ford’s whipping boy was in stark contrast to the macho man’s-man image he created for himself. Other actors understood it, for Ford had basically saved Wayne’s career by casting him in *Stagecoach* when the original studio wanted Gary Cooper, who at the time was a much bigger star. But, almost as penance, Ford called the actor a “big oaf” and a “dumb bastard,” according to Joseph McBride’s biography *Searching for John Ford*, and, for one scene, made him wash and dry his face so many times that it literally became raw. This behavior continued in other movies, this marriage of director and actor anchored by torment. “Wayne was more intimidated by [Ford] than any of us,” remembers Carey. “Ford really had his number.”

But he could express respect for actors, which is something he could never do with producers, with the exception perhaps of studio mogul Darryl Zanuck, of Twentieth Century Fox. When Ford finished a film for Zanuck, he let Zanuck edit it as he saw fit while he returned to his beloved sailboat, the *Araner*, and went on alcoholic benders. Ford also edited in his head as he shot, to further reduce the ability of producers and editors to screw with his films. He particularly hated producers who went on location and asked what he considered to be inane and meddlesome questions. He would ask them if they had an office, and when they said, “Sure, Jack, I have an office,” he would say, “Well, go sit in it.” On one occasion he introduced a producer to the cast and crew by saying, “This is your producer.... Take a good look at him, because it’s the last you’re going to see of him!” One of the reasons he liked shooting in Monument Valley so much, beyond the physical beauty, was that it was hard for film executives to get to.

But Ford knew his limits. And Harry Goulding was off limits, perhaps because Ford knew that, while he was creating the cinematic version of the West in his films, Harry was the real thing, those boots he wore not some shiny store-bought token. “[Ford] admired him for that,” says Carey. “It took awesome courage to do” what he and his wife had done in the 1920s, and Goulding was “not the kind of guy you could push around.”

Harry and Leone “Mike” Goulding in Monument Valley, 1927. Courtesy of Goulding’s Lodge.

Harry Goulding helped invent the American West as we see it and think of it today. But at that moment up on Comb Ridge he likely knew only that this place spread out before him—of sandstone and siltstone and shale, of yucca and juniper and sagebrush and cliffrose so soft that the Navajos used it to make cushions for their infants, of red hues as pale as rose petals and as dark as blood rising up the monoliths in rhythm with the rise and fall of the sun—was where he wanted to spend the rest of his life. As for the rest of his tale, a quintessential American tale set in a time when there were still such tales to tell, it would have to wait until he knew he could survive in a place that was farther from a railroad station—180 miles—than any place in the continental United States.



Harry started courting his future wife in the early 1920s. Her given name was Leone, but Harry couldn’t spell it worth a damn in the letters he wrote to her, so he just started writing “Mike” instead and that’s what stuck. She first saw him in a hotel in Aztec, New Mexico, called the American. “He had his old jumper, his Levi’s and boots, and a western hat. I just liked the looks of him” was the way she put it in *Tall Sheep*. They got married in 1923, right after she turned 18. He was 26. Two years later, they saw their opening to settle in Monument Valley.

From any perspective, it was an act of utter insanity, reflecting what Richard E. Klinck called Harry Goulding’s “desire to get away from civilization.” If that was the goal, then he picked the perfect place. Much of the valley was part of the massive Navajo Indian reservation that took up northeastern Arizona. But there was also a small section right above the Utah line that had belonged to the Paiutes. The Paiutes had been offered a somewhat more fertile section of land to the north when the government wanted to open the area for oil exploration. This northern strip of Monument Valley became available for homesteading. Harry sold the ranch he owned and settled his affairs, and he and Mike started out for the valley.

Harry took a one-and-a-half-ton Graham Brothers truck outfitted with extra-large tires and a special auxiliary transmission to wade through the red sand and loose rock. Mike followed behind in a soft-top 1922 Buick that also had outsize tires to handle the unpaved terrain. They

came with some merchandise, because Harry had been licensed to do business as a trader. The trip was difficult, particularly when Mike had to thread through Snake Canyon between Bluff and Mexican Hat in the Buick, the path a perilously narrow labyrinth filled with big boulders that had come loose from the rain.

Harry claimed 640 acres at the base of what the Indians called Big Rock Door Mesa. Later, when he bought the land outright from the state of Utah—paying just \$320 for the full square mile—Harry became, according to Klinck’s book, the first white man to own land in Monument Valley. The rock cliff, some 800 feet, offered needed protection from wind and heat. Water was accessible, and the view was arguably the best in the 48 states. There was a line of jutting mesas and buttes that ultimately became known as “Harry’s picket fence” and, on the edge of night, turned iridescent: Eagle Rock, Brigham’s Tomb, the King on His Throne, the Stagecoach, the Bear and the Rabbit, Gray Whiskers, Big Indian, Sentinel Mesa, and Castle Butte.

Harry and Mike weren’t sure at first that they had the right location, so they decided the best thing to do was to pitch tents for a while, just to get a feel, one to live in and a slightly bigger one to be used as the trading post. Harry installed wooden floors in the tents. At first they had only camp gear, but then they got some furniture—a table with benches, a bed, a big white Monarch range that served as a heater in the winter, and a phonograph on which they played songs by Harry’s favorite singer, the hillbilly crooner Jimmie Rodgers.

They were not the first white settlers to come to the area. In 1906, John Wetherill, a descendant of Pennsylvania Quakers, and his wife, Louisa, started a trading post in Oljeto, in southern Utah. Four years later they moved 30 miles south to Kayenta, in Arizona. In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt stayed with the Wetherills to view the natural wonder of the valley. Much like Harry Goulding, Wetherill just saw and did things differently from most people, and had a different sense of time and space. According to Klinck’s book, Wetherill once rode over to Gallup, in New Mexico, to see the fireworks show on Independence Day even though the journey took four days.

The Wetherills and the Gouldings came to know one another. But there was no paved road from Kayenta to where the Gouldings had settled, above the Utah line—there was little more than a cow trail. As Samuel Moon wrote in *Tall Sheep*, the location the Gouldings had chosen at the edge of Monument Valley was “a primitive, an almost empty country.”

But they never seemed lonely, nor did they doubt the wisdom of what they had done. “[Mike Goulding] was a ball of fire,” remembers Gerald LaFont, who, with his brother, Nathan, now owns Goulding’s Lodge, a tourist destination set on Harry and Mike’s original site. Over time, as Harry ran sheep to market or picked up supplies or gave tours to visitors intrepid enough to come to the valley, Mike took over the day-to-day operations of the trading post and did business with the Navajos. They bartered handmade rugs and wool and hides, or sometimes pawned a handtooled piece of turquoise and silver, in return for such staples as coffee, sugar, and flour, and, if anything was left over, a bottle of strawberry pop for the children.

In the beginning years, Mike would load the cat and the dog Brownie into the car along with some cans to fetch water at a nearby spring. Mike baked biscuits and sourdough bread and knew how to keep herself occupied while Harry was running the herd of sheep or driving out of the valley to get flour over at Black's flour mill, in Blanding, heading out at four in the morning and not returning until nightfall. She took little trips from time to time to Kayenta to pick up the mail. But it wasn't until almost a year had gone by that she made her first real trip out, down to Flagstaff with Harry. It was a kind of test, perhaps, to see how much Mike missed civilization. They bought supplies there and stayed several days, but then they were ready to go back home.

After about two years a group of Navajos came and asked Harry when he was planning to leave, since they considered the land theirs. "When my hair gets as white as that tent maybe I'll go," he said. They pondered Harry, according to the account in *Tall Sheep*. They believed that he and Mike had been fair and honest traders, and the subject of leaving was dropped. The Gouldings stayed in those tents for two and a half years. The Navajos knew Harry and Mike were staying for good when they began to build a permanent structure out of stone.

Every fall, Harry would take cattle and sheep out of Monument Valley to the railroad in Farmington, New Mexico, to be sold. The leisurely stock drive sometimes took as long as 38 days, and he would take several Navajos with him. Sometimes he took them to Durango in his truck to load up on flour and other staples. Once, when there was a fair in town, Harry took the Navajos up on a Ferris wheel. They had never been on one before, and they started their song-like chanting as they rose off the ground. The sound was so beautiful that a crowd gathered just to listen, and the operator of the Ferris wheel let them ride for free because they were the best attraction going.

Harry and Mike both learned the Navajo language, and Mike taught several Navajo women how to use a sewing machine. But then the Depression hit with its mercilessness. When F.D.R.'s Civilian Conservation Corps came in to build small dams and clear springs, the Navajo workers, usually known for their industriousness, were so malnourished that a number collapsed on the job. The markets for wool and rugs and sheep dried up. The federal policy of livestock reduction on the reservation, instituted in 1933, only added to the misery. There was a consensus that the land was being dangerously overgrazed, but, for the Navajo, material wealth was measured by how many animals one owned. And then there was the way the government went about the reduction, hiring range men who were bloodthirsty and racist and simply shot various animals on sight, surely knowing the impact it would have on the Navajos. "They finally came in with .22 rifles, and they had a heyday," Maurice Knee, Mike's brother, says in *Tall Sheep*.

Harry Goulding at his Monument Valley trading post. *By Josef Muench/courtesy of Cline Library, Northern Arizona University.*

It was then, in 1938, with times desperate and conditions bleak, that Harry Goulding took his one-in-a-million shot in Hollywood.

Not everyone agrees on whether Goulding was the first to make Ford aware of Monument Valley. Ford himself said at various times in interviews that he had known about the valley before the filming of *Stagecoach*, but he also said at one point that it in fact had been Harry Goulding who suggested to him that he make a movie there because the Navajos were in such desperate condition. Another version has Wayne alerting Ford to Monument Valley after allegedly discovering it for himself in 1929. Monument Valley was also not virginal as a commercial location. A film called *The Vanishing American*, based on a Zane Grey novel, was shot there in 1925. And the Krazy Kat comic strip, first drawn by George Herriman in 1913 and featuring Krazy Kat and Ignatz Mouse, used Monument Valley as a backdrop as well, since Herriman had spent a great deal of time in the area as a guest of the Wetherills.

But there appears to be no dispute that Goulding did go out to Hollywood. In his biography of Ford, *Print the Legend*, Scott Eyman points out that the recollections of Mike Goulding and the photographer Josef Muench are quite detailed. In a taped interview, Mike Goulding recalls waiting in the car knitting and reading while Harry went inside the studio offices. Also in a taped interview, Muench further corroborated Harry's account with an elaborate description of how Muench had made the photo portfolio for him. There is also no doubt that part of the crew working on *Stagecoach* stayed at the Gouldings' trading post in tents. (The rest stayed in Civilian Conservation Corps barracks or with the Wetherills.)

Nor is there any dispute that Harry heavily interacted with Ford during the shooting of the film, particularly when he told him about the gifts of Hosteen Tso, a Navajo medicine man. "Tso" means fat in Navajo, and Ford decided to refer to him as "Fatso." Harry insisted that Hosteen Tso could give Ford whatever weather he desired for the shooting of *Stagecoach*, and Ford decided to put him to the test. Every day at four p.m., Goulding would appear before Ford with the medicine man. Ford was a terrible alcoholic for much of his life—his various biographers describe instances in which he would wrap himself in a sheet or crawl into a sleeping bag and just start crying, or would urinate all over himself. But he confined his drinking mostly to off the set. He still kept a bottle of fine whiskey on hand when he was on location, and he would give Hosteen Tso a drink, but only one because he was a one-drink man, Harry told Ford, and would lose his effectiveness if he had more. Then Ford would dictate the weather he wanted in Monument Valley for the next day's shooting. Harry would translate the request into Navajo for Hosteen Tso, and in Harry's words, "Sure enough, the weather would be there the next day." Ford went as far as hiring Hosteen Tso for \$15 a day, and he became a permanent fixture on the payroll as the director continued to shoot in the valley. When the medicine man "seemingly conjured up the weather he requested, Ford became a believer," wrote Joseph McBride. But then there was a glitch. One day Hosteen Tso failed to give Ford the weather he wanted. When asked to explain why his wondrous abilities had broken down, Hosteen Tso, as related by McBride, had a plausible explanation: his radio was broken.

As Goulding had hoped, Ford insisted on paying the Navajos who appeared as extras in *Stagecoach* a decent working wage: five dollars a day, eight dollars if filmed on horseback. Over the years the Navajos were often asked to play members of other Indian tribes, such as Apache or Comanche, requests they took in stride. Those who had small speaking parts

gained their own slight revenge: well aware that no one in the crew had any idea what they were saying and didn't particularly care as long as it sounded "Indian," they called the local Mormons, for instance, "not big thieves like most white men, just little thieves."

The Gouldings' spread was invariably used as Ford's headquarters when he returned to the valley after *Stagecoach*. It grew over the years as it transitioned into a lodge for visitors: first, Harry and Mike let Ford stay in their quarters on the second floor of the trading post; later, a series of rudimentary cabins housed the main actors while the rest of the crew stayed in a row of tents, where a sign had been planted that read hollywood and vine. Ultimately a full-fledged motel was built in the 1950s.

Goulding was indispensable to Ford when he shot in Monument Valley, whether he was helping the director find the right location or serving as a crucial go-between with the Navajo extras. Most of the time he was effective, but on at least one occasion history and cultural barriers and Hollywood nickel-and-diming rendered him useless. In one film, the shot called for about 400 Navajos to ride on horseback and attack a wagon train. Harry suggested a practice run with at least a few of them so they would have an idea of what they would be seeing. But the shooting was already running behind schedule, so the location manager nixed it. The group swooped down with an elder named Chee in the lead. He took one look at the wagon train, ringed by white men with rifles, and simply kept on going through the cameras. So did the rest of the 400 Navajos behind him, since the stage direction was to follow him. Harry tried to get out of the way but fell, and all the horses just jumped over him. Harry later tracked Chee down near the Totem Pole monument, and Chee explained that he was going home to get his own rifle so it would be a fair fight.

Harry also plotted to get the Navajos as much work as possible, not simply as extras but in the building of various sets, such as the re-creation of the town of Tombstone in *My Darling Clementine* in the mid-1940s. The film, a depiction of the legendary saga of Marshal Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday and their violent face-off with the Clanton clan, starred Henry Fonda as Earp and Victor Mature as Holliday. During the filming, representatives of the carpenters' and electricians' unions went to visit Harry one day to express their grievance that the Navajos were taking away work. Harry spoke to them, but made sure that some Navajos who were working on the film could listen to the conversation. He knew it would rile them up, get them "on the warpath," as he related it in *Tall Sheep*. When the two union men asked for rooms, Harry refused to give them any. When they asked for someone to guide them on the road back out of the valley because they didn't know it well enough and it was raining and storming and cold, Harry's reply was equally succinct: "I wouldn't send nothing along with you.... You get out of here and get out on your own, I don't care if you fall in one of them damn washes!" And that was that.

Goulding's still wasn't easy to get to when *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* was shot several years later, in 1949. The film, in which army captain Nathan Brittles tries to stave off a confrontation with the Cheyenne several days before his retirement, starred Wayne as Brittles and Ben Johnson and Victor McLaglen as army sergeants. Those coming from Los Angeles for the filming usually went by train to Flagstaff, Arizona, leaving in the afternoon and arriving the next

morning. Just outside Flagstaff, the road turned to red dirt—paste if it had rained. There was a small caravan of station wagons, some Ford and some Chrysler, and if they got stuck or slipped off the red road altogether they had to be pulled out by a tractor.

The drive to Goulding's took hours, Harry Carey Jr. remembers, and the conditions there were spartan, particularly in the cabins, which had been built with no indoor plumbing: a floor of hard-packed dirt, cots for beds, and a kerosene heater that never threw off enough heat. There was a building where the Navajo women did laundry, and in it was a hose and a five-gallon can with holes at the bottom that served as a cold-water shower. Carey got under it and so did John Wayne, but, as far as Carey recalls, Victor McLaglen never got close during the roughly month-long period they were there. "It was cold and very primitive," Carey recalls. "And the only water was that cold water. But it was great."

Harry Goulding (left) and the original guest rooms at the Gouldings' trading post, circa 1940.
By Josef Muench/courtesy of Goulding's Lodge.

By the time *The Searchers* was made, in 1955, conditions had improved considerably. And the comfort that Ford felt with Harry and Mike Goulding and Monument Valley only seemed to enhance his filmmaking. In the American Film Institute's recent list of the 100 best films ever made, *The Searchers* ranks 12th, and many cinéastes hail it as perhaps the best Western ever. Far ahead of its time, it chronicles the quest of a mysterious and raging Confederate Civil War veteran named Ethan Edwards (played by Wayne) as he seeks savage retribution against a Native American tribe for the murders of several members of his family and the kidnapping of his niece (Natalie Wood).

By then there was hot and cold running water at Goulding's. There was also the young and beautiful 16-year-old Wood. One night during the filming, John Wayne's son Patrick walked into Wood's room, only to find her nursing a bad sunburn—with all her clothes off. Patrick, who had a small role in the film, was only 15 and by all accounts a fine and upstanding Catholic. When asked by a fellow member of the cast what he had done, he apparently said that he had done nothing, so paralyzed was he by embarrassment.

"Oh, that's too bad," the crew member replied.

In 1963, Ford made *Cheyenne Autumn* in the valley. His filmmaking technique had basically been to keep track of everything in his head rather than rely on a script supervisor. Given the myriad issues of continuity that impact every film, it was a monumental effort. But by the time he made *Cheyenne Autumn*, a film depicting the tragic journey of nearly 300 Cheyenne from an Oklahoma reservation back to their native lands, Ford was 69. He was past his prime, and the movie, much like the condition of Ford's room at Goulding's, was something of a mess. As related by Peter Bogdanovich in a piece he wrote for *Esquire*, "Clothes lay everywhere: on the floor, on tables and chairs, even on the refrigerator. There were also piles of books on every conceivable subject scattered around the room and next to his bed. On it lay a copy of *Gods, Graves and Scholars*. The little night table was covered with cigars, matches, a watch, pills, glasses, a couple of knives and pencils, loose paper, scripts, and frayed handkerchiefs."

Ford, who died in 1973 at the age of 79, never returned to the valley to work on a feature film after *Cheyenne Autumn*. It was also around this time that Harry and Mike Goulding, dubbed the king and queen of Monument Valley by one writer, decided to move on. In 1963, Harry's health started to fail, and he and Mike sold Goulding's to Knox College, in Galesburg, Illinois, and moved to Arizona. It was the end of a nearly 45-year love affair with a place that had realized all of his ambitions. Harry died in 1981. Mike ultimately did return to the valley and lived there for several years before her death, in 1992. They had both lived long enough to see the valley become a cliché—once Madison Avenue had decided it was the right icon for American ruggedness. As Richard Klinck wrote in 1995, "It's been a long time since Monument Valley was more than just a gimmick—a readily identifiable backdrop."

There is now a paved road that leads into the valley, and the Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park attracts about half a million visitors a year, many of them German and French and Japanese. Goulding's still exists. Sold by Knox College to the LaFont brothers, it capitalizes on its history and location not just with the motel but also with a grocery store, museum, gift shop, restaurant, and Jeep tours across the valley, featuring Navajo guides.

As you sit in one of the motel rooms at Goulding's, with its air-conditioned cool and carpeted floor and cable television, it is hard not to wonder if Harry and Mike were ever truly here. But then you open the sliding door that connects to a tiny balcony. You turn off the air conditioner so you can hear the silence. You feel a blast of heat from the desert floor. Then you look at "Harry's picket fence" in Monument Valley, which still creeps into the coldest man's soul no matter how many car ads they make. You only wish you had been with him when he stared out from Comb Ridge in 1921 and saw what he saw and knew. Then you remember the words that John Wayne once wrote in Harry Goulding's guest book, because no matter how different these two men were, one of the West and one the Hollywood symbol of it, they shared something immutable that in the early light of dawn or the dimming light of dusk could never be sullied.

"Harry, you and I both owe these monuments a lot."