

GEOLOGY OF THE MARYSVALE QUADRANGLE, UTAH

By
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INTRODUCTION

A program of topographic and geologic mapping in the Marysvalle region was started by the U. S. Geological Survey in 1936. This program included aerial geologic mapping of four 15-mile quadrangles and part of another. The Marysvalle quadrangle is one of those four.

Approximately 50 square miles of the northwest corner of the Marysvalle and vicinity. Aerial photographs of the rest of the Marysvalle quadrangle were made in 1943 at a scale of 1:24,000 and the geology was mapped on these photographs by Max E. Willard in 1944-45.

The authors acknowledge the helpful cooperation of the people of Marysvalle and in particular the aid given by John Henry, Lafe King, Irv Mellor, and George Kennedy. The authors were assisted in the geologic mapping by P. D. Proctor, James Barnes, and V. C. Kelley.

Dutton's (1880) geologic map of Utah is the first and only comprehensive report on the general geology of the Marysvalle area. Subsequent reports by Butler and Gale (1912), Loughlin (1915), Butler and others (1929), and Callaghan (1928, 1939) deal with specific aspects of geology. The first four publications mentioned deal primarily with the general geology as related to mineral deposits with special emphasis on the features associated with the last mentioned. The last mentioned, as created by Callaghan includes an aerial geologic map of the northwest corner of the Marysvalle quadrangle and a detailed description of the geology and petrology of the volcanic rocks.

Granitic mineralization in the Marysvalle region has not been described in this report. For a treatment of the subject the reader is referred to Walker and Proctor (1957) for a summary of mineralization and to Kerr and others (1957) for a description of uranium deposits and wall-rock alteration.

The Marysvalle quadrangle, which comprises an area of about 235 square miles, is centrally located in the High Plateaus of Utah. It includes along its western edge the lower slope of the Tushar Mountains and a segment of the Sevier Valley, locally known as the Marysvalle Valley. In its eastern half the quadrangle includes approximately 100 square miles of the west-central part of the Sevier Plateau. The altitude of this surface of the Sevier Plateau ranges between 9,000 and 10,000 feet above sea level, and it is 2,000 to 3,000 feet above the Sevier Valley. The surface of the Sevier Plateau is in general gradually sloping to the east-southeast. This surface is for the most part an eroded surface with scattered aspen and spruce groves.

A major fault-line scar forms the principal western boundary of the plateau, and its slopes to the Sevier Valley are steep, commonly descending 2,000 feet to the horizontal distance of 1 mile. Several streams in the central part of the plateau have V-shaped gorges 1,000 feet deep. The Sevier, Deer, Dry Creek, and Manning Creek canyons are the most spectacular.

The western front of the Sevier Plateau is poorly defined near the southern boundary of the Marysvalle quadrangle. South of the valley of the Sevier River, the plateau appears to include the northward-sloping highland east of Plute Reservoir.

The Marysvalle Valley in the Marysvalle quadrangle is 5 to 6 miles wide and includes at the north the White Hills upland, at the south the Plute Reservoir highland, and between these the relatively low gently sloping areas of the Elbow. The north-south extent of the Marysvalle Valley is 20 miles. The Sevier River has sharp meanders and numerous oxbow lakes. The Sevier plain is a narrow, 188-mile-wide strip of Plute Reservoir at the south and by Marysvalle Canyon at the north. The winding Marysvalle Canyon, which is labeled as the Marysvalle Canyon on the Marysvalle quadrangle map, and the gorge just north of the Plute Reservoir appear to be in part a series of incised meanders.

Marysvalle, the only town in the quadrangle, had a population of 826 in 1947. It is the terminus of a branch of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad, 188 miles south of Salt Lake City. One hard-surfaced road, U. S. Highway 89, passes north-south through Marysvalle. Much of the Sevier Valley is crossed by usable dirt roads but most of the valley highlands and the plateau are accessible only on foot or horseback.

The Marysvalle quadrangle is largely underlain by Tertiary volcanic rocks. These rocks range from basalt to rhyolite with latite the dominant group. Proclastics of latite composition make up the greater volume of the material. The volcanic sequence includes three larger stratigraphic units: a Miocene(?) unit of latite pyroclastics and flows, a Pliocene(?) unit of rhyolite, rhyolite tuffs, latite, and latite tuffs, and a unit of late Pliocene or early Pleistocene basalt flows. Between each of the above units are conspicuous erosional unconformities.

Underlying most of the alluvium of the Sevier Valley and containing intercalated basalt flows are the fanglomerates of the late Pliocene or early Pleistocene Sevier River formation. The only other exposures of sedimentary rocks in the Marysvalle quadrangle are at the west end in the Gold Gulch and the valley of Tenmile Creek. In this area the Miocene(?) volcanic rocks rest on a thin conglomerate of the same age, and the latite with angular unconformity on quartzite, sandstone, shale, and limestone beds of the same age. The latite with angular unconformity on the Navajo sandstone and Arapian shale.

JURASSIC AND JURASSIC(?) SEDIMENTARY ROCKS

Sedimentary rocks crop out in a small area along the west edge of the quadrangle from Tenmile Creek northward to a point about half a mile north of Gold Gulch. The rocks in this area are continuous with those exposed on Deer Trail Mountain in the adjacent Delano Peak quadrangle. The section on Deer Trail Mountain was described by Butler and others (1929, p. 538).

Navajo sandstone.—Limited exposures of the Navajo sandstone of Jurassic-Jurassic age in the Gold Gulch dip south-southeast under the Arapian shale of Late Jurassic age. The Navajo sandstone in the Marysvalle and Delano Peak quadrangles is similar in most respects to the formation in other parts of the Southwest except that in these quadrangles it is sufficiently indurated to be termed quartzite. The rock is light brownish gray and has strongly developed eolian-texture crossbedding. At least 1,000 feet of the formation is exposed in the Delano Peak quadrangle.

Arapian shale.—The strata above the Navajo sandstone and below the quartzite of the Tertiary system have been assigned to the Arapian shale (Spicer, 1946). Two members are recognized, but they have not been mapped separately. The lower unit, the Twelve-mile Canyon member, consists of 1,900 feet of sandstone to thin-bedded gray limestone with buff-weathering shaly beds, and 1,140 feet of gray shale that weathers to a brownish color. The thickness of reddish-brown sandstone. The overlying Twist Gulch shale is a detrital deposit of sandstone, siltstone, sandstone, and shale. The maximum thickness exposed is about 1,000 feet.

Fossils from the limestone in the lower part of the formation were referred to Walker and Proctor (1957) for a summary of mineralization and to Kerr and others (1957) for a description of uranium deposits and wall-rock alteration.

TERTIARY CONGLOMERATE AND SANDSTONE

Resting unconformably on the shales and sandstones of the Arapian shale in Gold Gulch and Tenmile Creek are conglomerates and sandstones, locally not more than 50 feet thick, that is made exclusively of debris from the underlying rocks. Conglomerate fragments are 1 to 2 feet in diameter and are apparently grading into it is a water-laid tuffaceous sandstone which also contains pebbles of quartzite and the older rocks. These relations suggest that the conglomerate and sandstone accumulation is probably of late Tertiary or contemporaneous with the first of the Miocene(?) volcanism.

MIOCENE(?) IGNEOUS ROCKS

Bullion Canyon volcanics.—The latite breccias, tuffs, crystal tuffs, and flows that make up the Bullion Canyon volcanics are more extensive in the Marysvalle and adjacent quadrangles were named the Bullion Canyon volcanics by Callaghan (1939, p. 441-442). He named the sequence for the occurrence along the Bullion Canyon west of Marysvalle in the Delano Peak quadrangle.

The rocks of the Bullion Canyon volcanics form a large part of the Marysvalle quadrangle. They are exposed along the west front of the Sevier Plateau, on the intravalley highlands, and in the Tushar Mountains. These early Tertiary rocks consist of a thick series of latite breccias, tuffs, and flows, and in some places a succession of latite and quartz latite flows with thin intervening beds of volcanic breccia, and more and more quartz and breccias at the top. The total thickness of these volcanic rocks in the Marysvalle quadrangle is about 600 feet, but it probably exceeds 3,000 feet.

The latite pyroclastics and thin flows at the base of the Bullion Canyon volcanics are the bulk of the exposures in Marysvalle Canyon and in the highland east of Plute Reservoir. Most of the pyroclastics of these latite pyroclastics is also exposed along the lower slopes of the west front of the Sevier Plateau. The latite pyroclastics in the middle part of the Bullion Canyon volcanics are well exposed in the Marysvalle quadrangle, and a thickness of approximately 600 feet is also exposed above the pyroclastics near the head of the Sevier Plateau. The more calcic latite flows of the quadrangle, on the eastern part of the quadrangle, on Forsha Mountain in the southeast corner of the quadrangle, and near the head of Dry Creek. On the map these occurrences are separated from the rest of the Bullion Canyon volcanics.

The latite flows of the lower and middle parts of the Bullion Canyon volcanics are typically grayish red but at places may be grayish, reddish purple or dark reddish brown. Most of the flows contain closely spaced phenocrysts andesine and biotite set in a stony groundmass. The andesine and biotite phenocrysts are in a stony groundmass to be typical of the upper middle part of the Bullion Canyon volcanics from the White Horse mine northeast of Marysvalle are 1 to 5 mm across, the average being 3 mm. These andesine phenocrysts are in part euhedral and at places contain blebs of albite, fanglomerates of the late Pliocene or early Pleistocene Sevier River formation. The only other exposures of sedimentary rocks in the Marysvalle quadrangle are at the west end in the Gold Gulch and the valley of Tenmile Creek. In this area the Miocene(?) volcanic rocks rest on a thin conglomerate of the same age, and the latite with angular unconformity on quartzite, sandstone, shale, and limestone beds of the same age. The latite with angular unconformity on the Navajo sandstone and Arapian shale.

Horse mine and the norm for this rock are shown in column 1 of tables 1 and 2.

Table 1
Chemical Analyses (in percent)

	1	2	3
SiO ₂	60.47	64.72	56.84
Al ₂ O ₃	19.29	15.47	15.81
FeO	3.93	2.18	4.45
MgO	1.54	0.99	3.10
CaO	2.28	4.02	6.19
Na ₂ O	3.24	3.73	3.28
K ₂ O	5.11	3.32	2.30
H ₂ O	—	—	—
H ₂ O+	51	2.26	1.33
TiO ₂	—	—	—
CO ₂	—	—	—
P ₂ O ₅	—	—	—
S	—	—	—
Loss	—	—	—
Sum	99.63	100.40	100.00

- Fresh latite from White Horse alumite mine (analyst: Cyrus Feldman, U. S. Geological Survey).
- Calcic latite from north of Dry Lake west of Forsha Mountain (analyst: Charles Milton, U. S. Geological Survey).
- Roger Park basaltic breccia near the head of Dry Creek Canyon (analyst: Charles Milton, U. S. Geological Survey).

Table 2
Norms (in percent)

	1	2	3
Quartz	12.30	2.04	11.34
Orthoclase	30.0	13.4	26.4
Albite	27.25	31.44	27.77
Anorthite	11.40	15.85	21.68
Corundum	4.18	—	—
Hypsthene	10.0	6.55	13.68
Magnetite	—	—	—
Hematite	1.28	1.22	2.13
Ilmenite	1.06	1.39	4.1
Apatite	—	—	—
Subtotal	97.49	97.92	97.46
Water	1.05	2.32	1.50
S	—	—	—
BAO	—	—	—
Total	98.54	100.29	99.04

- Fresh latite from White Horse alumite mine.
- Calcic latite from north of Dry Lake west of Forsha Mountain.
- Roger Park basaltic breccia near head of Dry Creek Canyon.

The pyroclastics of the lower and middle parts of the Bullion Canyon volcanics range in size from dust to coarse fragments 40 centimeters across. In general the fragments are of porphyritic latite, or quartz latite, and are in a stony matrix, and texture to the associated flows. Rude stratification locally evident in the pyroclastics appears to be the result of changes in the size of the fragments ejected during successive eruptions. In general the attitudes of the stratification planes within a larger pyroclastic unit do not parallel the contact of that unit with the underlying and overlying units. The pyroclastics are a composite of small lenticular layers some of which are very thin, and in their central part a micrographic texture similar to that in the calcic latite from Forsha Mountain. Magnetite and ilmenite are abundant in the pyroclastics and pyroclastics near the top of the Bullion Canyon volcanics is typically medium light gray to medium gray. Most of the latite is porphyritic; phenocrysts of euhedral biotite 2 to 5 mm across are common and hornblende needles. A specimen of quartzite is intermediate in composition between the typical calcic latite and basalt.

In the Marysvalle quadrangle the Roger Park basaltic breccia is overlain by the Dry Hollow formation. From evidence mainly outside the Marysvalle quadrangle, the Roger Park basaltic breccia is a large remnant of an intrusion that has moved upward through sedimentary rocks similar in appearance to the Upper Cretaceous(?) and lower Tertiary rocks of the Sevier and Monroe quadrangles. The breccia is believed to be more closely related to the younger or Dry Hollow formation than to the Bullion Canyon volcanics, even though in Kingston Canyon south of the Marysvalle quadrangle, there is some resemblance between the latite and basalt.

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Dry Hollow formation.—Flows in the Dry Hollow formation are largely of latite composition and are locally present. The flows appear to have once covered most of the Marysvalle area, but they now exist only as erosion remnants. They occur on the Sevier Plateau in the northeast corner of the quadrangle and along the higher parts of the western edge of the plateau from Deer Spring Canyon to the south. The latite is porphyritic and contains fragments of quartzite and biotite. Locally the tuff is stained pink or reddish brown. At places it is friable and weathers to low rounded hills with gentle slopes. Elsewhere it is well lithified so that its disintegration produces a talus of angular flintlike fragments.

In the Marysvalle quadrangle the Joe Lott tuff rests on latite or basalt of the Dry Hollow formation. At places it is overlain by the Sevier River formation, elsewhere by Recent basalt. Inasmuch as the Joe Lott tuff occurs over large areas in adjacent quadrangles to the west and north, it is believed that it also once covered a much larger part of the Marysvalle quadrangle than it does at present. Locally, as for example west of Plute Reservoir, the Joe Lott tuff wedges out so that the younger Sevier River formation rests directly on latite of the Dry Hollow formation. This together with the fact that the younger Sevier River formation is overlain by the Joe Lott tuff clearly points to a period of erosion after the deposition of the tuff.

The Mount Belknap rhyolite of the Pliocene(?) volcanic rocks lies on the upper surface of this quartz monzonite.

The appearance of the quartz monzonite is markedly different from place to place, even within the same body. The mineralogy of the rock, however, is very similar throughout. The quartz monzonite ranges from almost black through medium gray to greenish gray. In the smaller bodies it is fine grained and at places even porphyritic, but typically, as at the south end of Marysvalle Canyon, it is equigranular and granitoid in appearance. The rock consists of calcic oligoclase, orthoclase, quartz, augite, and biotite; accessory magnetite, apatite, and titanite; and later tourmaline, epidote, chlorite, and sericite.

In the contact zone surrounding the intrusive quartz monzonite, the altered latite of the Bullion Canyon volcanics is commonly pink, but at places it is black or green. In the pink rock the groundmass is composed of orthoclase and quartz, and the plagioclase phenocrysts of the latite are partly replaced by orthoclase. Fragments of magnetite and some biotite have been introduced. Locally, epidote and chlorite are in sufficient amounts to give the rock a greenish cast.

PLIOCENE(?) VOLCANIC ROCKS

Roger Park basaltic breccia.—Only the thin northern edge of the Roger Park basaltic breccia, named from an area at the south margin of the adjoining Delano Peak quadrangle, is preserved in downfaulted blocks in the Marysvalle Valley west of the Sevier Valley and at points on the summit of the Sevier Plateau. Outside the Marysvalle quadrangle this formation is represented by a thin makes up most of the Sevier Plateau south of Kingston Canyon, the Awapitche Plateau, and the southern part of the Tushar Mountains, and much of the Markagunt Plateau to the south. It likewise occurs in the Delano Peak and Basin. The center, or centers, of eruption is not known.

The formation consists of flows and breccias that resemble basalt. The breccias are made of angular fragments mainly less than 6 inches in diameter though some are several feet in diameter. Thin black flows occur in many places in the formation. The fragments are not well graded into or cemented by the matrix. The matrix consists of smaller fragments and ash material which tend to weather more rapidly than the fragments but little is present in the groundmass. The red color is due to minute flecks of hematite. Minute hercynite, andesine, quartz, and crystallized streaks, and lenses contain orthoclase. The bulk of the matrix is probably a fine-grained, flow-banded and the hands are intricately conchoidal. The matrix material that is only slightly devitrified, and the lighter ones are more obviously crystalline. The darker ones are more crystalline. The Mount Belknap rhyolite is light gray, has no phenocrysts, and has thin bands of oblong porphyritic and crystallized streaks, and lenses contain orthoclase. The bulk of the matrix is probably a fine-grained, flow-banded and the hands are intricately conchoidal. The matrix material that is only slightly devitrified, and the lighter ones are more obviously crystalline. The darker ones are more obviously crystalline.

One variety of the Mount Belknap rhyolite is a fine-grained, flow-banded and the hands are intricately conchoidal. The matrix material that is only slightly devitrified, and the lighter ones are more obviously crystalline. The darker ones are more obviously crystalline.

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A maximum thickness of between 700 and 800 feet of Mount Belknap rhyolite is exposed in the Marysvalle quadrangle. It is underlain unconformably by the Miocene(?) Bullion Canyon volcanics and overlain by the Sevier River formation. No later rocks overlie the Mount Belknap rhyolite in this quadrangle, but in the Sevier Valley to the northwest it is overlain by the Joe Lott tuff.

Joe Lott tuff.—The Joe Lott tuff is a fine-grained, flow-banded and the hands are intricately conchoidal. The matrix material that is only slightly devitrified, and the lighter ones are more obviously crystalline. The darker ones are more obviously crystalline.

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A flow typical of the latite in the Dry Hollow formation that is exposed on Big Table north of Dry Creek Canyon ranges in color from reddish brown through brownish gray to light brownish gray. It contains numerous phenocrysts, whose proportions to the groundmass differ from place to place. Plagioclase phenocrysts as much as 5 mm long, hornblende needles 2 mm long, and biotite euhedra as much as 3 mm across are common. None of the sediments of the Sevier River formation are very far removed from their source, and they are typical valley-fill sediments. Hence, the differences in composition from place to place result from local differences in the source.

No fossils were collected from the Sevier River formation in the Marysvalle quadrangle, but in the Sevier quadrangle the formation contained, in addition to fresh-water gastropods, diatoms that are regarded as late Pliocene or early Pleistocene age (Callaghan, 1938, p. 101).

In composition and texture the Sevier River formation in the Marysvalle quadrangle does not differ appreciably from the Quaternary alluvium and terrace gravel of the Bullion Canyon volcanics and the Dry Hollow formation but includes also some tertiary or early Quaternary basalt which, as already noted, at places rests on the late Pliocene or early Pleistocene Sevier River formation. The outer edges of the landslide are now being buried in Recent alluvium. The landslide area is smaller than the Elbow landslide. Most of the surface of the Straight Canyon landslide is irregularly hummocky and covered by 50 to 100 feet of terrace gravel. A feature of landlides not present elsewhere in the quadrangle is well developed near the lower end of this landslide where the surface is broken by a crescent-shaped declivity 40 feet high that is convex toward the source of the landslide. This declivity marks the upper limit of a small subsidiary slide block in the main mass of landslide debris.

On the east slope of Marysvalle Peak a cirque-like amphitheater occurs as an alluvial fan between 10,000 and 10,200 feet. A large mass of landslide debris occupies the valley between two narrow ridges of such rock which extend eastward and southeast from the ends of the amphitheater. Landlides from the Elbow and Tushar faults are forming a dam below the amphitheater. This damming resulted in the basin now occupied by Barney Lake.

Drainage of Barney Lake is at present by seepage through the Elbow landslide, but a tributary of Manning Creek is eroding headward across the landlides and will eventually drain the basin. Whether the amphitheater occupied by Barney Lake and the valley below it are a true cirque and glacial trough was not established by the present evidence of glaciation on the Sevier Plateau in the Marysvalle quadrangle is not available. Gregory (1944, p. 585) reported glacial scouring on the surface of the Aquarius Plateau southeast of the Marysvalle quadrangle. This scouring at and below the altitude of the Sevier Plateau and, it therefore, seems likely that glaciers may have been present for a time in the higher parts of the Sevier Plateau.

These terrace gravels are composed of poorly sorted boulders, cobbles, pebbles, and sand made of rock fragments similar to the rocks that make up the adjacent mountains. Lenticularly interbedded gravel and sand are typical of the deposits. The terrace gravels are deposited on the basis of morphology and the discordance in attitude between their surface profiles and the surface profiles of the terrace gravels. This is best shown in the area of Pole Canyon in the southeast corner of the quadrangle where remnants of the plateau surface between canyons are capped by a relatively thick mantle of alluvium. Certainly the terrace gravels are deposited on the basis of morphology and the discordance in attitude between their surface profiles and the surface profiles of the terrace gravels. This is best shown in the area of Pole Canyon in the southeast corner of the quadrangle where remnants of the plateau surface between canyons are capped by a relatively thick mantle of alluvium. 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