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Subject: The Devil's Kitchen

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JAN 30 1937

American Guide
Kenneth Fordyce

250 words

PIONEER

"The Devil's Kitchen"

A short distance from Van Houten, New Mexico,* a coal camp which is sixteen miles southwest of Raton and which was once called Willow, there burns a fire which has not been extinguished for many years. It is only about half a mile from Van Houten. It is a favorite picnic spot for the young people, and they call it the "Devil's Kitchen."

The fire appears to burn right on the surface of the ground, which is hard and black resembling charcoal, and covering an area about ~~the~~ ten by thirty feet. At different times it burns with greater intensity. When the fire is low and visitors wish to do a bit of cooking they can take a stick and scratch vigorously on the black surface and a fire suitable for cooking will burst through. In like manner, it is possible to take a stick and describe pictures or writing on the surface, and the fire will illuminate the outline.

It is believed that gas from within the earth is the fuel which keeps the fire burning. Some say that there was a gas well there at one time. Others tell of early pioneers whose lives were saved while being pursued by hostile Indians. The fire from a discharged musket caused the flame to leap up when the gas ignited, and the Indians believed that "great spirits" were protecting the pioneers and they fled in terror.

However this may be, the fire still burns day and night, and it seems a good idea to continue to call it by its colorful name

"The Devil's Kitchen."

* s. of Raton ten miles on U. S. 85,
and w. six miles on company road.

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Origin
Alice Bullock, Raton, and others.