

Grand Canyon Historical Society, Inc.

To develop and promote appreciation, understanding and education of the earlier history of the inhabitants and important events of the Grand Canyon and surrounding area.

The Bulletin

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May 2005

History of El Tovar, Verkamps and Hopi House

A nice size group of Grand Canyon Historical Society members, friends and guests gathered at the Thunderbird Lodge for the April 16 GCHS monthly outing.



Henry Karpinski and Keith Green prepare for a full day of history
[Photo by Lee Albertson]

One-by-one the guest speakers arrived. Phyllis Kachinhongva (who grew-up at the Hopi House), Henry Karpinski (current resident historian on El Tovar), and Susie Verkamp and Jane Verkamp Pritchett (sisters who grew up living and working at the Verkamp Store). Also, individuals who spent a life time working at the Canyon's edge arrived. It was a reunion of friends and memories. It was going to be an interesting day!



El Tovar postcard, circa 1908. [Courtesy Cassidy Collection]

Chuck Whittlesey, El Tovar architect, envisioned a hunting lodge with electric lights and a telephone in every room. The timbers were brought from the Northwest. After many renovations, the last one just in time for the 100th birthday, the El Tovar is still in a class by itself. Early

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2005 Outings

May 14 - Carving Grand Canyon by Wayne Ranney.

Geologist, author, Professor of Geology at Yavapai College in Sedona and Research Associate at the Museum of Northern Arizona, Wayne Ranney will describe in words and pictures the story of what we know and don't know about how rivers carve canyons and why it happened in northern Arizona.

Wayne loves to share his appreciation of the earth and its geologic history with anyone who is curious about landscapes and how they formed. He is passionate about the landscape evolution of the Colorado Plateau and our North American deserts, foreign travel, ancient peoples and hiking in the great outdoors.

Wayne is associated with numerous educational and travel organizations such as the Museum of Northern Arizona, the Grand Canyon Field Institute, Yavapai College, the Smithsonian Institution, American Orient Express and TCS Expeditions.

If the timing is right, the new book, *Carving Grand Canyon: Evidence, Theories and Mystery*, might be available from the author, Wayne Ranney.

Time: 11:00 AM

Place: Flagstaff Public Library – 300 West Aspen St.

Following the program, if you are interested in visiting with members, we will walk or drive one block to Las Mananitas Downtown Restaurant at 103 West Birch Avenue. [Dan Cassidy, event coordinator]

June 11 - Annual Shoshone Point Picnic. Members from across the country converge at the Canyon's edge for a potluck of good food, friendly faces and lively conversation. Hot dogs, buns and condiments will be provided by the GCHS. Everyone should bring: • a dish to share (i.e. casserole or desert); • their own drinks; • individual table service; • and, if desired, some meat to barbecue. Table cloths and briquettes for the barbecue will be provided. The yellow gate will be unlocked by 11:00 AM and the fire will be ready by 12:00 Noon. [Linda Anderson, event coordinator]

June 12 - 18: Jacob Lake Barn and Ranger Station Restoration Project. See description in article on page 4. Anyone interested in volunteering their time or making a monetary donation, please email John Azar for more information at Tontowalk2003@yahoo.com.

July 16 - Annual North Rim Campout. Spend a day (and a night) in the North Kaibab Forest with fellow Canyon adventurers. [John Azar, event coordinator]

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El Tovar, Hopi House, Verkamp ...continued from page 1

pictures show an elegant hotel at the Canyon's edge surrounded by trees and shrubs, that directed all eyes to the Canyon and not the surrounding buildings. It is thought that the picture point for the hotel and surrounding area was taken from a Ford Tri-Motor.

The layout and use of rooms has changed through the years. A gentlemen's smoking room is now a store room. The original art room is now part of the gift shop. The main dining room looks as it did when the early pictures were taken. The private dining room is available for small groups. Some say not much has changed – the ring tail cats lived in the attic as they do today.

Mr. and Mrs. Buford Belgard and Mary Hoover attended the outing for the 100th year celebration of the El Tovar, Hopi House, and the Verkamp Store. Mary Hoover took a part-time job at the El Tovar in 1946 and left after 46 years of service. Buford also worked at the El Tovar for many years.

The group entered the El Tovar for a tour through the basement. In the beginning, the basement had 8 to 10-foot ceilings. With each renovation, space was needed for pipes and conduit – upgraded electrical system, water and sewage pipes when bathroom were added to each room, air conditioning, and (I assume) high-speed internet. Now, the "ceiling" has dropped to accommodate the improvements.

The comment was made, "How would the El Tovar look if Mary Colter designed the Hotel?"

The group took a lunch break with many choosing the El Tovar main dining room for the noon meal. No one reported seeing ring tail cats on the dining room rafters this day! Also, the ladies and gentleman of today did not dress in formal dining garb as was done in the early days of El Tovar dining.



Linda Thompson, Susie Verkamp, Phyllis Kachinhongva and Jane Verkamp Pritchett.

[Photo by Sandra Scott]

After lunch the group gathered at the Hopi House. This Mary Colter design is a model of a block in the Hopi village of Oraibi. Phyllis Kachinhongva told about the history of the Hopi House, and then guided the group through the rooms and floors. Some of Phyllis's relatives worked on crews that build Hopi House. Many of the ceiling beams were retired telegraph poles (Mary Colter

made maximum use of materials readily available). Tree and bush branches were used to fill in between beams. (WOW, 100 year old leaves!) Phyllis lived in a cabin behind the Verkamp store.



Hopi House postcard, circa 1900. [Courtesy Cassidy Collection]

The passage ways were narrow, the steps were steep, the doorways were 4 to 5-foot openings, and the thresholds reflected the thickness of the walls. The original second and third floor living quarters were now used for office space. Phyllis indicated that multiple passages between floors and between rooms of the Hopi House was the ideal place to play hide-and-seek.

On the outside some things have not changed. The bread ovens (each would hold 34 loafs) are still visible. However, the outside privy has been padlocked and replaced with those portable green monsters.

Next, the Verkamp sisters, Susie Verkamp and Jane Verkamp Pritchett, told of family life living and working at the Canyon's edge, and swimming and playing with Phyllis Kachinhongva, Linda Thompson and other children living at the Canyon.

The Verkamp store was a family business. John Verkamp started the Verkamp Souvenir store in a tent at the edge of the Canyon. The existing Verkamp store was started in 1905. The family lived on the second floor, which today is used for storage and as an employee break room.

The children worked at the store stocking the shelves, they were called on to show merchandise to visitors during busy times, and they removed "Made in Japan" stickers from souvenirs.

One can only visualize the children sliding down banisters, playing hide-and-seek, and running down the stairs when the call came – "help is needed in the store."

El Tovar, Hopi House, and Verkamp Store are GRAND CANYON LANDMARKS and now celebrating 100 years. As Keith Green wrote in the Apr/May/Jun edition of *The Ol'Pioneer*:

History is such a fascinating subject. So many important things have happened at the Grand Canyon. Think of how many people through the centuries have spent a great deal of their lives, if not their entire lives, adding to the Canyon while being added by the Canyon.

[Article by Lee Albertson]

Michael Harrison, Expert on Western Americana

Born: Dec. 13, 1897 – Died: April 5, 2005

Reprinted with permission from *The Sacramento Bee*, 2005.

by Steve Gibson -- Bee Staff Writer (published Thursday, April 7, 2005)



Remembered for: His passion for Western Americana and his collection of more than 20,000 volumes documenting the history of the trans-Mississippi West.

Michael Harrison, a bibliophile who amassed one of the nation's largest collections of Western Americana books and artifacts, died Tuesday at his Fair Oaks residence. He was 107. Though his formal learning ended with high school, the self-taught historian won national recognition for his scholarship.

Mr. Harrison was born in 1897 when William McKinley was president. After service in the Army during World War I, he worked as a National Park Service ranger in the Grand Canyon, as a right-of-way agent for the Bureau of Reclamation and as a staffer for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a federal career spanning four decades.

Working for those agencies gave him the opportunity to roam through much of the West, providing him "a great appreciation for Native Americans and their rich culture (and the courage of the early explorers," said Gary Kurutz, curator of special collections at the California State Library. Over the years, Mr. Harrison "assisted scores of historians, essayists and serious amateurs," Kurutz said in e-mail comments Wednesday.

"And he delighted in having scholars stay at his home/library."

The entire Harrison collection will be given to the University of California, Davis, a donation agreed upon in 1981 after his wife, Margaret, died, said Vince Lozito, executor of the estate. It includes 20,000-plus volumes, plus periodicals, government documents, original works of art and a card catalogue of more than 700,000 entries.

Administered by the UC Davis Library, the Harrison collection is accessible by appointment only, said Daryl Morrison, the library's director of special collections.

Morrison called it "a remarkable collection" of Western Americana, one of the finest ever developed by a private collector.

Even more remarkable, Morrison said, was Harrison's "meticulously created" card file that goes "far beyond the usual library cataloging," providing author, title and intricately cross-referenced subject entries.

Mr. Harrison himself called it the "Harrison Peculiar System."

"It was his own, inimitable way of indexing books, providing instant access to a treasure trove of information," Kurutz said.

The distinctive Fair Oaks residence that Mr. Harrison and his wife built in 1960, as he was retiring from his federal career, has been an adjunct UC Davis library for more than two decades.

The house was designed by the couple to serve primarily as a library, with living quarters upstairs.

It is officially known as the Michael and Margaret Harrison Western Research Center, with the main library on the first floor, complete with guest quarters where visiting scholars stayed.

Friends said tour groups of book collectors considered it a highlight to visit Mr. Harrison.

"What made (his) collection so valuable was his passion and instinct for acquiring fine books with significant scholarly content," Kurutz said. "These are not glamorous works but titles packed with solid information."

"He would put the beginner as well as the established scholar at ease," Kurutz added, often serving a lunches consisting of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches accompanied by a bowl of ice cream.

Lozito said Mr. Harrison "primarily served vanilla ice cream, but he was really a chocoholic," Lozito said. "He made his own fudge brownies and people loved them, but he never gave away the recipe. He was baking brownies until he was past 100."

Mr. Harrison's wife, Margaret, who died in 1980, was a skilled bookbinder as well as a book lover, Kurutz said, describing their partnership as a "marriage made in book heaven."

In 1997, recognizing his efforts to document the history and development of the trans-Mississippi West, UC Berkeley made him the first recipient of its Hubert Howe Bancroft Award.

Mr. Harrison, attending the award ceremony in Berkeley, conceded it was a great honor, but told the group he needed to hurry back to Fair Oaks to resume work on his collection.

For another three years, until he was 102, Mr. Harrison continued that work, normally putting in eight hours a day, seven days a week, in the library, maintaining and updating the collection, Lozito said.

A stroke sidelined Mr. Harrison in 2000, but he remained in his home/library with a caregiver.

Finally, suffering from congestive heart failure and pneumonia, he died a few minutes after 8 p.m. Tuesday, Lozito said.

"His feeling was, he didn't want a lot of eulogies or anything like that," Lozito said. "He didn't have any religious affiliation. He said he'd prefer a simple Navajo prayer read at whatever gathering we might put together."

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Correction

In the April issue of *The Bulletin*, the date of John D. Lee's execution noted in the Lonely Dell article on page 3, second paragraph, should read March 1877 (not 1878).

* * * * *

Welcome New Members

Pat Crespo – Parks AZ
Jane Verkamp Pritchett – Moscow ID

April Outing Attendees

Those who attended April's three-session program were, from: • Spain: Isabel DeToyer; • New Mexico: Susie Verkamp; • Idaho: Jane Verkamp Pritchett; • Flagstaff: Robert & Debbie Lauzon, Don Lago, Bill Bishop, Bev Loomis, and Dave, Alice & Sylvia Monet; • Parks: Pat Crespo; • Grand Canyon: Phyllis Kachinhongva, Henry Karpinski, Keith & Nancy Green, Robyn & Del Hedding, Brian & Besty Donehoo, and Leonard McNab; • Prescott: Ann Reynolds, Gus & Sandra Scott, Fred Schaffner and Diane Cassidy; • Tempe: Lee & Shirley Albertson; • Williams: Buford & Myra Belgard, Mary Hoover, Linda Thompson and Barbara & Brian Kuckuck; • and Barabara Wilson.



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Historical Restoration Project Jacob Lake Barn and Ranger Station

As part of the centennial celebration of the National Forest Service, federal funds were set aside for historical restoration projects. Forty million dollars was allocated by Congress to be used on historic buildings and trails in our national forests. In conjunction with the North Kaibab Ranger District, archaeologist Connie Reid and John Azar applied for a portion of these funds, and their request was granted. One of the requirements for the funding was that it had to be matched by a partner. In the name of the Grand Canyon Historical Society, John pledged \$500 and one week of volunteer work for the restoration of the historic Jacob Lake Barn and Ranger Station. The work will be performed the week of June 12 through June 18. Anyone interested in volunteering their time or making a monetary donation, please email John for more information at Tontowalk2003@yahoo.com.

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August 20 - Community Service Project at the Grand Canyon NPS Library. We will assist Librarian Susan Eubank with barcoding the entire book collection, which entails one group that will be physically putting barcodes on books and another group that will be entering those barcodes into the computer. We might also put labels on the books, if necessary. [Nancy Green, event coordinator]

September 17 - To Be Determined. [Mike Coltrin, event coordinator]

October 15 - Annual Board Meeting [Mike Coltrin, event coordinator]

November 19 - 100th Anniversary of the USFS by Cathie Schmidlin of the Williams office of the Kaibab Forest Service. Cathie will be discussing the USFS and how it relates to Grand Canyon history at 1:00 PM in the Cline Library Media Center, Viewing Room A, at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. [Nancy Green, event coordinator]

December - No meeting

Outings/Programs: If you have a suggestion for a future outing/program or a question about an upcoming event, contact the **2005 Outings Coordinator:** Mike Coltrin, 2041 West Brichta Drive, Tucson AZ 85745; phone: 520-624-1831; email: Coltrin1@cox.net.

The Bulletin welcomes comments, stories, or reflections and remembrances. Please send them to Diane Cassidy at 2112 Demerse Avenue, Prescott, AZ 86301; email: Pioneers@GrandCanyonHistory.org.

Grand Canyon Historical Society

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