



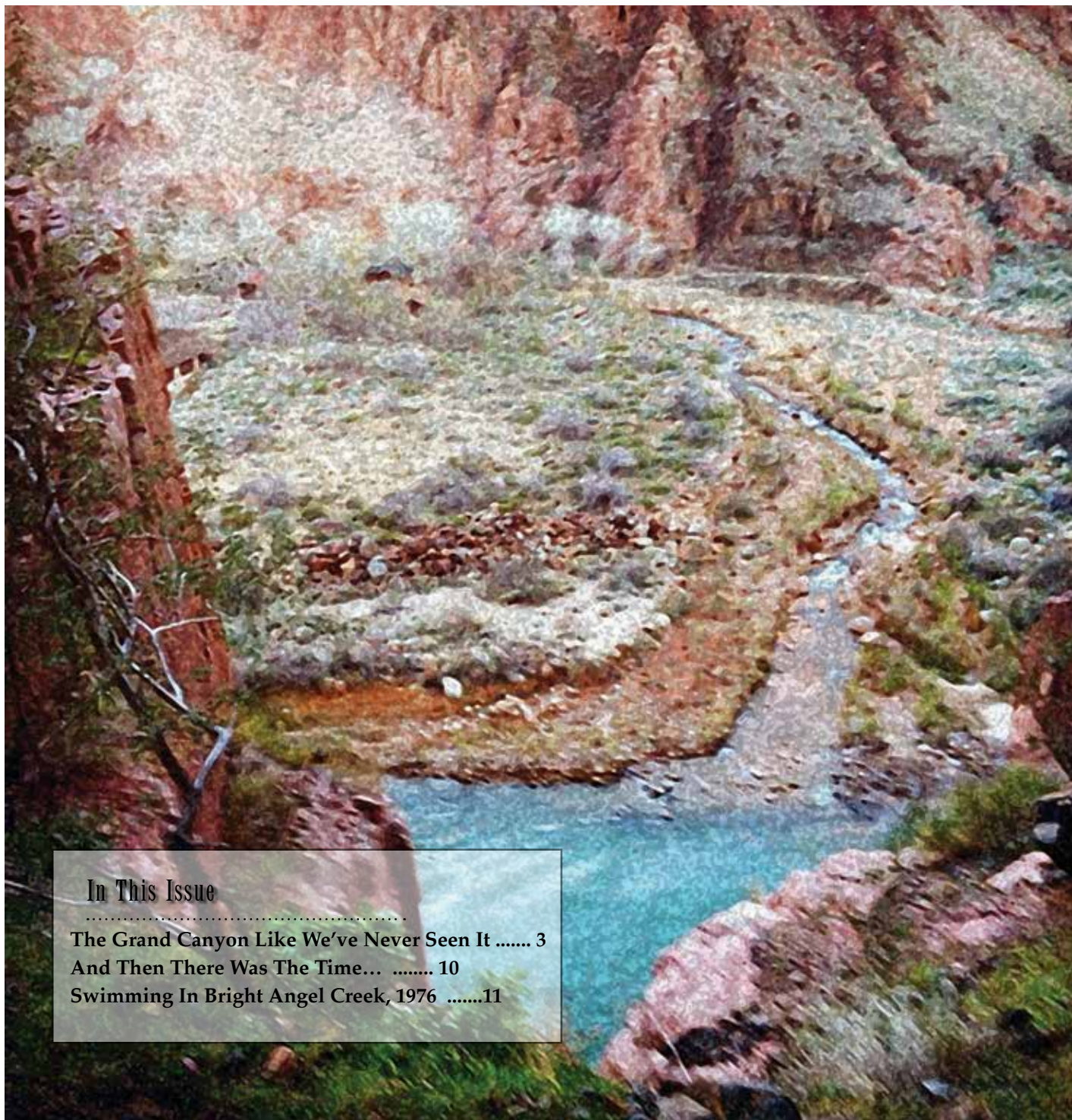
# The Ol' Pioneer

The Magazine of the Grand Canyon Historical Society

Volume 27 : Number 1

[www.GrandCanyonHistory.org](http://www.GrandCanyonHistory.org)

Winter 2016



## In This Issue

- .....
- The Grand Canyon Like We've Never Seen It ..... 3
- And Then There Was The Time... ..... 10
- Swimming In Bright Angel Creek, 1976 .....11

# President's Letter

One of the more gratifying aspects of being the President of the Grand Canyon Historical Society is that I often receive correspondence from people who may have a distant, yet unshakable connection to the canyon. It might be someone who, while cleaning out a deceased's attic, found an old black and white photograph of his or her loved one standing at the railing at Hopi Point when a dusting of snow blanketed the upper walls of the canyon. Perhaps it is someone who is writing a book on the canyon and needs clarification on the pronunciation of the word, "Yavapai." Or perhaps I receive an e-mail from a collector in Scotland who claims to own a rare and unique piece of memorabilia from a supposed helium balloon crossing of the canyon – in 1879. (Think for a moment about that particular time in the canyon's history and realize how unlikely such a crossing would be). For the most part, it is an honor for me to be the recipient of such correspondence – communications that reside in a folder on my computer and that will one day be part of our permanent collection at NAU's Cline Library.

Just this morning (January 26), a note came across my desk from Barb Carver, who explains, "Our family is planning to be at Grand Canyon in 2019 to celebrate the Park's centennial. 1919 was the year my grandfather, Ed Cummings, arrived at Grand Canyon as a ranger and then a trail guide, then married a Harvey Girl and were long time residents. I called the Grand Canyon National Park Service office recently to find out if there would be special events all year in 2019, or only at times during that year. They said plans were still in the early stages for 2019 and didn't know anything specific yet. Do you have any info about this? Thanks for all you do," signed, Barb Carver (grand daughter of Ed and Ida Cummings).

How does one even begin to say thanks to a person with such foresight, one who knows about, and understands the value of, sharing a personal history with others? Someone who also desires to make their small piece of history a part of the ever-expanding reservoir of information about the personalities, events and details of someone's life here. I am so gratified to know that such people exist and that many of these personal histories ultimately find their way "back home" to the Grand Canyon.

Of course, I responded to Barb emphatically that, YES – the Grand Canyon Historical Society and the National Park Service have February 19, 2019 firmly in their sights for a celebration that is certain to be remembered for a long, long time. But I also told her about our plans for November 4 to 6, 2016, when we will host our 4<sup>th</sup> History Symposium at the Park. I encourage our members and readers to consider submitting a proposal for this symposium. Detailed information can be found at this link: <http://www.grandcanyonhistory.org/2016-symposium.html>.

We are gearing up for 2019. But in the meantime, another celebration of the canyon's history is well under way in 2016. Come join us with your contribution.

Wayne Ranney  
GCHS President

Cover: Bright Angel Creek confluence.

## The Ol' Pioneer

The Magazine of the  
Grand Canyon Historical Society

Volume 27 : Number 1  
Winter 2016

The Historical Society was established in July 1984 as a non-profit corporation to develop and promote appreciation, understanding and education of the earlier history of the inhabitants and important events of the Grand Canyon.

*The Ol' Pioneer* is published by the GRAND CANYON HISTORICAL SOCIETY in conjunction with *The Bulletin*, an informational newsletter. Both publications are a benefit of membership. Membership in the Society is open to any person interested in the historical, educational, and charitable purposes of the Society. Membership is on an annual basis using the standard calendar; and dues of \$25 are payable on the 1st of January each year, and mailed to the GCHS Treasurer, PO Box 31405 Flagstaff, AZ 86003-1405. *The Ol' Pioneer* magazine is copyrighted by the Grand Canyon Historical Society, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form without permission of the publisher.

Editor: Mary Williams

Submit photos and stories to the editor of *The Ol' Pioneer* at: [info@marywilliamsdesign.com](mailto:info@marywilliamsdesign.com) or 4880 N. Weatherford Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86001. (928) 779-3377. Please submit written articles and photos electronically on CD or via email if possible. You may mail photos or slides for scanning if needed.

Submissions to *The Bulletin* should be sent to Karen Greig, [kgreig@yahoo.com](mailto:kgreig@yahoo.com)

### GCHS Officers

Wayne Ranney, President  
Beth Hickey, Vice President  
Amy Horn, Treasurer  
Tom Martin, Secretary  
Ellen Brennan, Outings Chair  
Karen Grieg, Membership  
Lee Albertson, Pioneer Award Chair  
Tom Martin, Oral History Chair  
Al Richmond, Hall of Fame Award/  
Research Grants / Scholarship Chair

<i>Board of Directors</i>	Steven Landes
Lee Albertson	Tom Martin
Ellen Brennan	Dave Mortenson
Kathy Faretta	Jack Pennington
Ron Brown	Arnie Richards
Beth Hickey	Frank Romaglia
Amy Horn	Wayne Ranney
Donelle Huffer	Jon Streit

# The Grand Canyon Like We've Never Seen It

by Earle Spamer

**D**r. du Noüy couldn't concentrate. Looking out his window over the Grand Canyon, something did not seem right. He had read, had heard, so much about the canyon. But *this*... "Have I come to the wrong place?" he wondered.

Over the years, the Grand Canyon has had a hard time of it. People have misplaced it, tried to steer other people away, and just plain tried to steal it away. Long before a recent proposal to thread a circusy gondola ride to a restaurant at the Little Colorado River confluence, others had also proposed hare-brained, even hair-raising, plans about doing things at Grand Canyon, if they got there in the first place.

It doesn't help much, either, when things are misrepresented. Case in point, a 2012 article that redirected tourists to Iceland. Jón Ásbergsson, manager of Promote Iceland, declared (in an English-translation edition of *Iceland Review*), "... in all national parks in the U.S. visitors pay an entrance fee. People can arrive to Grand Canyon and enjoy the view from certain viewing platform without paying but they don't enter the canyons unless they've paid an entrance fee and must have applied for admission a long time in advance."

It's just as well. People mill around looking for the canyon anyway. Grand Canyon is thought to be in Colorado a lot, surely an indictment of American geographic illiteracy. Way back in 1870, Robert Brown spoke of "the great canyon of the Colorado in Sonora." In 1874, Thomas Strange referred to the "Great Cañon of the Colorado, California." (Even if Arizona Territory hadn't been created a decade earlier, the canyon still would have been in New Mexico.) The title of a 1935 reprint of Anthony Ivins's 1928 speech at the dedication of Grand Canyon Lodge on the North Rim specified that he spoke

at "Grand Canyon, Utah." Before Arizona statehood in 1912, Utah had tried to take half of the canyon for itself, and ever since has included the Kaibab forest and the North Rim in booklets on what to do in Utah. Now Nevada plays the shell game with the canyon, not mentioning the "A" state and betting folks will think it is part of greater Las Vegas.

These are not the only such problems. In 1893, W. McK. reported that one Mr. S. H. Wallace regretted having "failed to see the Grand Canon of the Colorado River, with Flag Staff at its top and Peach Springs at its bottom and 7,000 feet stretching between them." In 1905 Elwyn Hoffman offered some words about traveling in California: "The Grand Canyon of Arizona, the cliff dwellings and the petrified forests are on the line of this railroad [the Santa Fe], and are so much a part of the sight-seeing of a California trip that they may be properly mentioned in this article, although they occur a little before crossing the California line." A century later, motorcyclist Ron Sheppard, after walking out onto Navajo Bridge in 2003, wrote that he was happy to reach the North Rim.

Even the river . . . George Edgar Corson (General Grand High Priest of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the United States of America) said in 1918 that "I visited that great rift in our continent, the Grand Canyon of Arizona and rode down to the Columbia River..." Generally speaking.

As much as the canyon can be on some people's minds a lot, it was sometimes put out of mind as being "just too much." George Caitlin referred in 1870 to a standard geological textbook by James Dwight Dana, saying that Dana "probably misrepresented [the size of the canyon] in his excellent work by some typographical error." Artists fared no better. A critic of Elliot Daingerfield's 1911 exhibition in Boston appraised

the artist's "Lifting of the Veil—Arizona Grand Cañon" in *American Art News*: "[This] is a weird piece of pyrotechnical imagination, hard and brittle in quality, and simply impossible in color. (Try again, Daingerfield)."

Others were dismissive. In a 1904 issue of *Outlook*, "Spectator" observed that the canyon "came to be a convenient receptacle for rubbish to the Chinese cook employed in the hotel upon its brink, and the Spectator has seen him slide potato-parings into that stupendous chasm without visible emotion." In 1908 Lawrence Lewis sniffed, "The Grand Cañon of the Colorado in Arizona is not traversed by a railroad; nor is it likely to be, for it leads nowhere." Lafayette Houghton Bunnell opined in 1911 that "The scenery of the Yellowstone and of the Colorado Cañon have characteristic wonders that are *sui generis* [in a class by themselves]; but those localities are not desirable for continuous occupation." Maxwell Savage predicted in 1914, "Boats have passed through the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, but the trip will never achieve popularity with summer tourists." In 1916, another writer observed a woman's "inordinate restraint [when] looking upon the Grand Cañon, turned away remarking that it was 'cute.'" Alexander Black presciently wrote in 1922, "We now take the Grand Cañon for granted. Only a multiplied and highly supplemented Grand Cañon in Mars or somewhere else could astonish us." Some 50 years later the astonishing, Grand Canyon-dwarfing Valles Marineris was discovered on Mars. It would span the United States if it were here.

Yet despite the canyon's problems with identity and credibility...

## Oh, the Ideas Folks Have Had For It

Long before the Grand Canyon started to be explored by westerners,

some enterprising people in the mid-1800s had the idea to carry on waterborne commerce between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean, either via the Gila River or over the crest of the Rockies to the Colorado. Suffice it to say, the schemes didn't float. In 1909 John Howe Peyton summarized these ideas, mentioning one "Inland Waterway" that would follow "the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, across the crest of the Rocky Mountains and down the Colorado River, through the Grand Canon and the Gulf of California to the 'South Sea.'" Imagine steamboats and barges plying the Grand Canyon.

Then make way for "trolley boats"! In 1893, *Electrical World* announced from San Bernardino, California, "It has been proposed to utilize the water power of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River to propel steamers by a trolley system 500 miles long, and for irrigating purposes."

If you're wondering how this was to be pulled off, London's *The Electrician* was more informative: "A party of capitalists . . . said to have some connection with the Santa Fé Railroad system, has been visiting the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River for the purpose of investigating the feasibility of laying an electric cable 500 miles in length along the river with which to drive small boats up through the Black Canyon and other scenic points, where the cliffs, over a mile in height, overhang the stream. Power is to be generated by water-wheels driven by the current of the river itself, or, wherever feasible, the water will be diverted into canals. A copper wire cable will be suspended over the centre of the river, which is, for the most part, about 300 ft. in width, and electric power will be conveyed to small steamers as in the case of electric railways." And they say water and electricity don't mix.

This is not to say that good old muscle power was no long in vogue. In 1895, steamboat captain John A. Mellon of Yuma concocted the idea to re-row the entire Powell expedition, then to continue it home to Yuma. The *Deseret News* quoted Mellon's

fanciful proposal, which showed that, really, he hadn't a clue. Mellon thought it would be a quick outing from Wyoming, arriving victoriously in Yuma in 13 days! Along the way, "there will be plenty of deer, mountain sheep and other game," too. The good captain really believed he had the better way, despite his admission that Powell had had "a fearful time of it."

Capt. Mellon planned to run the trip with "a dozen hardy voyagers of his own choosing." The thirteen who dared would be crowded aboard two "special boats" that would be "similar to boats that I have aboard the steamers Gila and Mojave" but with "some peculiar characteristics." They would travel "in safety" and "with remarkable swiftness." Cataract Canyon in Utah? *Pshaw*—"ordinarily very dangerous," he scoffed. After passing the San Juan River, the "hardy" voyagers would "skirt" Lincoln County, Nevada at the Virgin River, then "enter the Mammoth canon, pass the mouth of the Little Colorado and reach, if we continue our journey successfully, the dark recess of the frowning Black canyon, the Grand, including El Dorado canyon, and out into daylight again."

The Yuma sun works wonders on the brain. If you have any lingering doubt of this, listen to what H. M. Wright had to say when he was promoting activities in the Yuma and Somerton area in 1922. He said that there is "an abundance of running water direct from the silvery Colorado."

Perhaps a successful re-do of the Powell expedition would have given more credence to an entrepreneur's idea a couple of years after Capt. Mellon's feverish fantasy. The *Mining and Scientific Press* wrote in 1899 about Irwin Mahon of Denver, who was "promoting a project the purpose of which is to establish a tourist scenic route on the Colorado river from the Gulf of California to a point in eastern Utah. He thinks he has a plan of light craft that will shoot rapids under perfect control by means of electricity

and water power appliances." Maybe Capt. Mellon could have consulted on how to make it a quick trip.

The trip might have been quicker than anyone had anticipated, though. Constance Gordon - Cumming commented in her 1884 *Granite Crags* that the Colorado River in Grand Canyon "descends 16,000 feet within a very short distance, forming rushing rapids." She did point out that "it is nevertheless possible to descend it by a raft—and this has actually been done, in defiance of the most appalling dangers and hardships." Regardless, no one was buying a Colorado River trip in those days.

And so back to the land lubbers at Grand Canyon. In 1897 the Santa Fe Railway had designs on an electric railway from Williams to Grand Canyon. Waterfalls (presumably those of Havasu Creek) would power electrical generators for the railway. When that railway fizzled, two incorporations for rail lines queued up, as noticed by *Railway Age* that October. One line would be "From Flagstaff, easterly and northerly to Hance's trail on the Grand canyon, 70 miles. Filed by E. E. Elliswood, Attorney." The other was filed by "Santa Fe & Grand Canyon. From Williams or Flagstaff to the head of Bright Angel trail on the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, 80 miles. W. O. O'Neill."

### Gold In Them Hills

The railway promoted by Buckey O'Neill won the tourism lottery, and the Santa Fe Railway was on track to capture the crowd. For a short while, however, things did not look too good, so the Santa Fe in 1899 came up with the idea of using "gasoline motor-propelled omnibuses," built by the Everett-King Co. of Chicago, to run out of Flagstaff. *The Horseless Age*, *The Electrical Engineer*, and several other magazines fancied that the 18-passenger, 14-horse power machines would make the trip in six hours, half that of the horse-driven carriages. "Sixteen miles an hour is the required speed," said

*The Electrical World* (about gasoline-powered vehicles, no less).

If one believes that the tourist traffic just wasn't there to support such a scheme, consider this 1901 report in *Electricity*. It said that the canyon "was visited last season by hundreds of tourists [imagine!], and in order to handle the anticipated increase this year [there is] a scheme of establishing an automobile line from Flagstaff, Ariz., to the Grand Canyon." Imagine as well the rush of automobiles vying for space along the road to the canyon rim. It didn't matter, though. The railway from Williams had reached the canyon rim that year; it was the end of the automobile and the canyon.

A few months later *Age of Steel* spoke of tantalizing attractions to come. "A dispatch from Phoenix says that a party of hydraulic engineers has just completed a trip to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, and reports that it will be possible to install a power plant in one of several places on the lower end of the canyon capable of supplying a greater horse power than is now being utilized at Niagara. It is said that a company of Eastern capitalists proposes to install large plants as soon as government arrangements are perfected. Electric trolley line observation cars along the rim of the canyon for fifteen miles are also contemplated." Yet not everyone was enthused. J. Horace McFarland, president of the American Civic Association, asked at a White House conference in 1908, "Is the Grand Cañon of the Colorado to be really held as nature's great temple of scenic color, or must we see that temple punctuated and profaned by trolley poles?"

Why bother running power in all the way up from western Grand Canyon? *The Electrical World and Engineer* revealed in 1902: "The Grand Cañon Electric Power Company proposes to build a new power plant on Right Angle Creek [*sic*], a branch of the Colorado River. Surveys for the work are now under way. Mr. Julius Aubineau is president of the company and Mr. D. Babbitt secretary

and treasurer." The civic-minded gentlemen were going to send this Bright Angel Creek power along to Flagstaff. It should have been an obvious idea to have the rim trolley run on down to Flag on it, too.

Electric and gasoline powered contraptions are all well and good, but the motive power of steam was not ignored either. *The Horseless Age* reported on New Years Day 1902, "Three 'Toledo' steam wagonettes are reported about to be purchased to run between Flagstaff and Grand Canon, Ariz., a distance of 72 miles . . . ." One supposes that the steam engines already pulling scores of tourists up from Williams went to some other Grand Canyon.

Advertising really is the name of the game. Some of the best of it flowed from the pen of George Wharton James, the seasonal resident of William Wallace Bass's hostleries and trails. Through his popular books on travels about the Southwest he lured visitors to the canyon in spite of the competition by the Santa Fe Railway. The story has it that Bass failed because of the Santa Fe's brutish concessionary muscle. But more likely Bass was eventually run off because his best advertiser, James, had died a tragic and violent death in 1902.

Chicago's *The Standard* ("A Baptist Newspaper") offered to clarify this event: "George Wharton James, the author and scientist, is one of those individuals who has had the opportunity of reading of his own death in the newspapers. Mr. James, according to one account [dramatically repeated across the U.S. and in England], was fatally bitten in a desperate battle with a gigantic rattlesnake in a curiosity shop in Phoenix, Ariz., Feb. 11. As the author of 'In and Around the Grand Canon' is to lecture in Boston at an early date the report of his demise is premature, to say the least." (James managed to avoid the curiosity shop until 1923.) But you can't *buy* advertising like having survived a desperate battle with a rattlesnake.

William Fuson fretted about

advertising, even just after the canyon became a national park. "Everywhere advertisers destroy the scenery," he wrote. "There was even one member of [our] forward looking fraternity [of Harvard students], who, upon gazing across the Grand Canyon, exclaimed, 'Just look at that wall over there—did you ever see a better place for an ad?'" The well-known Southwestern writer, Charles F. Lummis, was way ahead of him, though. In an editorial ten years earlier he had worried of the "Human Hogs" of public greed: "Pretty soon someone will be making a dam-site of the Grand Cañon of Arizona, or painting letters half a mile high along its side advising us to take Mr. Tutti-frutti's little liver pills." One man, E. R. Drew, pulled it off—he "decorated as much of the Grand Cañon as he could reach with a bo's'n's chair"—or so said Barton Currie in a story he made up in 1909, "Painting-up a Continent."

### Building a Better Canyon

So it was a good thing that 1903 was a banner year for the canyon. President Theodore Roosevelt's great western junket took him right to the rim of the Grand Canyon, just as he was waking aboard his special train. It was to be a busy day, meeting and greeting and touring before puffing on to California that night. His own Rough Riders troop, as the *Fur Trade Review* reported, planned "an excursion to Grand Cañon, where they will greet their former leader. Desiring to give the President some appropriate token of their esteem, they have secured a large black bear, captured in Sonora, and will present it to him when they meet him at the cañon." They did meet the president, but maybe it would have been better that the canyon was in Sonora after all, as the bear seems not to have made the long trip. The press would have loved it, though.

Roosevelt's Grand Canyon stop offered up the canyon's most-often repeated quotation; the one where he charged Americans to keep the canyon "as it is," for our "children's

children." For more than a century it has helped hone our defenses against canyon improprieties. He knew this was a lawless land, prone to run rampant. William Castle had one of his characters reflect on this in a 1912 novel, *The Green Vase*: "We're going up through Phenix [sic] to stop at the Grand Cañon where, thank my stars, there ain't any municipal government nor even any city hall." Roosevelt had had in mind the development going on at the fledgling Grand Canyon village, but just a few months earlier Josiah Strong imagined quarrying the place. He gushed that the "building stones suggest color schemes in architecture the possibilities of which have never yet been realized."

And even though Roosevelt lectured the assembled citizens that they could not "improve" on the canyon, how could tourists en route not expect a few practical amenities when they got there? *The Motor-Car Journal* of London reported that F. Weber Benton and party were on motorcycles from California to St. Louis. "The travellers will descend into old Mexico, cross the scenic belt of Arizona, touching the territory of the cliff dwellers and passing through the depths of the Grand Canon of the Colorado." No word on their reaction to the amenities along the Colorado.

So while the improvers lined up, H. D. Ross Jr. wrung his hands over the canyon being *in the way* of aesthetic improvement. He bemoaned, "Where [Nature] throws open the breast of the earth to gouge the Grand Canyon she denies man the spacious lawn and the tastily arranged yard." More pragmatically, hopeful canyon miner James S. Best smacked his chops: "A fortune awaits enterprise here."

Cheap labor awaited there, too. The Santa Fe Railway's company magazine, *Santa Fe Magazine*, reported in 1915 that C. B. Kelton of the Arizona territorial legislature "proposed to utilize the labor of Arizona convicts in constructing a big dam at the lower end of the cañon, which he says would impound enough water to irrigate every foot of land in all that portion of the state."

The indefatigable J. E. Girand, who perennially floated one plan after another to dam the Colorado River, had another idea for the betterment of Grand Canyon. The *Street Railway Journal* reported that "Girand, representing the Cataract Creek Power Company, is surveying for an electric railway to start at the terminus of the steam railroad at Bright Angel, and run thence westward into Cataract [Havasu] Canyon and along the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. Ample power is to be secured from the falls of Cataract Creek, in themselves one of the most marvelous and beautiful sights of the canyon region." (Well, they were, anyway.)

Neither was Havasu power a new idea, witness this 1903 news item in *Electrical World and Engineer*: "Grand View, Ariz.—The Grand Canyon Company of this place has had estimates made on the cost of a power plant that may be established at Mooney Falls, on Cataract Creek, about forty miles from the mine. The establishment of an electrical generating plant for that place for the purpose of affording power for the operation of the mine here is contemplated."

The award for audacity, though, goes to Mrs. Harriet Strong, a widowed California rancher, civic leader, inventor, and champion of commercial water management. She testified before Congress in 1918 regarding her plan to have the government build a string of her patented dams, scaled up in size, through Grand Canyon—end to end!—to store irrigation water (see her story revived by Earle Spamer in 2015). Loss of scenic grandeur? Not at all, she said. The lakes would be good for boating and fishing; and anyway, she added, "the scenic part of it is above the granite." Imagine boating right up Havasu Bay to Mooney Station.

The North Rim? Not overlooked either! The *Deseret News* ran this headline on November 10, 1903: "R.G.W. [the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad] to extend to Swamp

Point. Surveys made from Marysvale through to the Colorado River for the road. Taps fine mining country. Eastern syndicate has obtained possession of tract of country around the district to be developed." The railroad had plans for "a big hotel and laying out [a] great park" on the rim.

There was every reason for tourists to go to the North Rim. The *Deseret News* dangled this piece of bait on December 20, 1910: "Beauties of Grand Canyon. Louis B. Boucher of Trinidad, Colo., talks of possibilities for a railroad. For combination of tours. Excursions to river gorge including trip to Yellowstone Park would be profitable for the roads." Boucher advocated constructing a rail line to Point Sublime, boasting, "My personal interest in Grand Canyon lies in the fact that I was the first man to build a trail from the cliff down its almost perpendicular side to the river bottom, 6,888 feet below."

But it was the South Rim that effectively won the tourist war, hosting the Santa Fe's elegantly rustic El Tovar and a whole pandering community offering goods and services. From the start, the Santa Fe was the beacon of travel enlightenment. The *Journal of Electricity, Power and Gas* notified its readers in 1904: "The Santa Fe Railroad Company is figuring on a plan for illuminating the rim of the Grand Canyon in the vicinity of Bright Angel tavern [El Tovar, then under construction], thus making it possible to see a portion of the dark chasm at night."

### Getting Carried Away

Yet why just look around from the ground? In 1905 came the first ideas to carry people over the chasm. "The Grand Canyon Air Line" (not what you think) was announced in *Everybody's Magazine*. The newly incorporated Grand Cañon Transportation Co. would "stretch a wire cable across the Grand Cañon, anchor it on the opposite side of the gorge, and run a car back and forth, eight thousand feet in the air." Just

like that. Just that high, too.

For those who might be a bit acrophobic for that sort of thing, German technical magazines reported in 1905 plans for a *Schwebebahn* (a cableway). The plan was to take tourists, who had ridden livestock to the Colorado River down Bright Angel Trail, on a ride up the "Utah" side to the North Rim aboard a more reasonable, wall-scaling cable car. (Why not also a tram from the "Santa Fe" side of the river? To fill that gap the "late" George Wharton James did get around to presenting a general proposal in 1912 for "an aerial railway" on the south side.)

Photographers caught on to the canyon soon enough as well, the Kolb brothers easily being the most famous of them. One lofty idea could have trumped the Kolbs' work. The *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* noted in 1909: "Late in July [Frederick Mosen] expected to visit Arizona for study among the Hopi and Navajo Indians, and after three months in their homes he planned to go to the Grand Canyon and try to photograph it by means of kites flying about 6,000 feet above the surface of the river." Even the entrepreneurial, risk-taking Kolbs hadn't thought of that one.

Around 1910, Civil War balloonist Professor T. S. C. Lowe issued a prospectus promoting the Lowe Planet Airship, a peculiar contraption that promised luxurious air travel aboard a well-appointed gondola (with outdoor observation deck) slung beneath an aerodynamic balloon with propellers. In the prospectus, William Knight imagined for the reader (and investor), "High over the Mohave Desert and the gleaming Colorado River it flies, then bending its course to the northward, follows the windings of that wonderful gorge—the Grand Canyon. Here the passengers gain birdseye views, never before vouchsafed to the eye of man, of the magnificent scenes in that profound cleft of the earth's surface, and from a vantage point undreamed of by Major Powell who first penetrated its deep mysteries."

Perhaps the pampered ladies and gentlemen would be entertained by the more hurried souls aboard Irwin Mahon's scenic river tours.

The dream of seeing the canyon from above did not soar away, though it would take more than a balloon or slinging a wire across the chasm. An ambitious survey for a sturdily serious trans-canyon cableway was led by George K. Davol in 1919, about which we know more than we used to thanks to the research done by Jim Ohlman. Davol led a group into the canyon to survey several possible routes from rim to rim. The idea was to have the conveyance "hop-scotch" its way into and out of the canyon, passing from tower to tower built atop prominences and buttes. The survey is well documented in four known photo albums, each different from the other, which were compiled presumably for the benefit of investors. Three of the albums are now in the Grand Canyon National Park Museum collections; the fourth is in the Special Collections and Archives at Northern Arizona University's Cline Library.

All this seems a bit labor-intensive, not to mention a bit impractical for those tourists who could spend "only" a few days at the canyon. In 1907 the Santa Fe looked into the idea of continuing its rail line to the canyon into the canyon. Well, not quite with the big locomotives, but as the *Deseret News* reported on August 8: "Santa Fe officials have arranged with Ohio people to build a novel railroad from the brink to the bottom of the Grand canyon of the Colorado river. The grade will be so steep it almost can be called it is said, a perpendicular railroad [a pun on funicular]. It is to be about three miles long and will cost fully \$100,000 a mile. It will be a cog railroad, with a rack rail, which will form a continuous double ladder, into which the toothed wheels of the locomotive will work." *Popular Mechanics* added, "It will probably be the steepest railroad in the world and will save passengers an all-day and dangerous trip on horseback."

If chattering down and up canyon

walls still might bring on a touch of vertigo, the *American Brewers' Review* reported in 1910 that the recently deceased Andrew W. Oppmann never realized his dream project for the canyon. He conceived of "an electric railway into the heart of the grand canon of the Colorado," but something more like a subway (who knows why?). "The plan was to tunnel from the head of the gorge down under one side and into the river bed thousands of feet below." His proposal went so far as the House Committee on Public Lands in Washington, where it seems more sober minds thought differently.

The way to Indian Garden was a crowded corridor. In 1907 the *Electric Traction Weekly* had revealed, "Report comes from the Southwest that an electric [utility] line is to invade the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. It is proposed to construct it over the Bright Angel trail as far down as the Indian Gardens, about half way, and then along that plateau to the Grand View trail [apparently to power the Grandview Mine]. A representative of the General Electric Company, it is reported, was recently over the ground looking over the project. The power is to be furnished from Babbitt's location some miles above." Apparently the representative's perspective failed to realize that this was the power plant on "Right Angle Creek," from which power lines would have come up the Bright Angel to Indian Garden.

By now one has probably gathered that there was a lot of electricity production planned for Grand Canyon, what with all the trams, trolleys and travelers' needs, not to mention eager mining and farming interests up and down the Colorado River. None if it happened, though, and Epes Randolph, who had been the president of the Southern Pacific of Mexico Railway, had his own self-serving opinion of this. Days before his death in 1921 he rather bitterly wrote to congressman Carl Hayden that the failure of proposed electricity development in the Grand Canyon was due to "politics only." It was a

perennial theme—recall the plans and outcome for the Bridge Canyon and Marble Canyon Dams (about which, enough said please).

### Hear All About It

If one thinks that the ding-y ideas mentioned here were all just things of the past, consider a 1987 proposal by “Daedalus” (a skilled craftsman in Green mythology) in *The New Scientist*, a British weekly. The idea put forward there was for a pulley-and-weight vertical rocket-launching system, slung over the rim of Grand Canyon, employing a catapult weight filled from the Colorado River.

That might have been too much commotion for the guests at the “bizarre hotel” (as the *National Parks Magazine* described it) proposed in 1961 to flow down over the South Rim on the Orphan Mine property—every radiant room with a view.

And that brings up sensitive issues about “natural quiet” at Grand Canyon. We can, in fact, document that people once *really did experience it*. Robert Herrick’s 1908 novel, *Together*, includes a character’s reminiscence of “the cañon’s eternal quiet,—the solitude of the remote gods.” In 1920, Louise Closser Hale’s novel, *An American’s London*, referred to “the vast quiet of the Grand Cañon.”

One might object that these are only the imaginations of story tellers. But it was at the canyon that professor of theology Henry Anson Buttz, “in silence and deep humility . . . discovered God as never before” (as retold by Buttz’s biographer, Charles Sitterley). William Wendell Riley wrote a poem, “Silence of the Canyon.” John Bohn called the Grand Canyon “The Imperial City of Silence.” Emerson Hough wrote fondly about the Yosemite, “Silence you find here, just as you did at the Grand Cañon.” Honoré Willis wrote of a Wall Street man who, amidst the “hideous uproar” of the New York subway, yearned to visit the Grand Canyon again: “Lord, Lord, the silence!” And Annette Thackwell Johnson wrote an entire article about

the canyon, titled just “Silence.” All this, before 1923.

Then on May 25, 1938, *The New York Times* reported that French biophysicist Pierre Lecomte du Noüy had arrived in America. He was going to “work in a house on the rim of the Grand Canyon because it was beautiful and quiet there.” Instead . . . quarries and throngs! floodlights and billboards! dams, trams, and trolley cars! Poor Dr. du Noüy. At least there was no aircraft noise.

### References

- Baltimore, J. Mayne. 1907. A “perpendicular” canyon railway. In: Western Railroad Activities [section]. *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen’s Magazine*, 43(4) (October):485-486.
- [Best, James S.] in Sorgenfrei, Robert. 1998. “A fortune awaits enterprise here”: The Best mining expedition to the Grand Canyon in 1891. *Journal of the Southwest*, 40(4)(Winter):437-462.
- Bohn, John J. 1911. The Imperial City of Silence. In: James, George Wharton, *The 1910 trip of the H.M.M.B.A. to California and the Pacific Coast*. San Francisco: Bolte and Braden Co., pp. 43, 45-46, 49, 51-52. [Hotel Men’s Mutual Benefit Association.]
- Bunnell, Lafayette Houghton. 1911. *Discovery of the Yosemite and the Indian war of 1851 that led to that event*. Los Angeles: G. W. Gerlicher, 4th ed. (“reprinted from third edition, with new map and illustrations”), 355 pp.
- Black, Alexander. 1922. *The latest thing and other things*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 303 pp.
- [Brown, Robert]. 1870. Horae sylvanae. Studies of the forests, forest trees, and forest life of north-west America. *Country Gentleman* (London), v. 4:[separately paginated appendix, in parts]. [See “Canyons”, p. 15.]
- Castle, William R., Jr. 1912. *The green vase*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 406 pp. [p. 299]
- Catlin, George. 1870. *The lifted and subsided rocks of America; with their influences on the oceanic, atmospheric, and land currents, and the distribution of races*. London: Trubner and Co. [Trübner and Co.], 228 pp.
- Corson, George Edgar. 1918. Address of the General Grand High Priest. In: *Proceedings of the Thirty-seventh Triennial Convocation of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the United States of America*; Baltimore, Maryland, A.I. 2448, A.D. 1918. Buffalo, New York: Baker, Jones, Hausauer, Inc., pp. 23-99.
- Currie, Barton Wood. 1909. Painting-up a continent (illustrations by P. E. Cesare). *Everybody’s Magazine*, 21(4) (October):534-544.
- Fuson, William. 1920. The need for bill board regulation; an argument for effective billboard legislation. *The Harvard Magazine*, (May):3.
- Gordon-Cumming, Constance F. 1884. *Granite crags*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 384 pp. [See pp. 221-225.]
- Hale, Louise Closser. 1920. *An American’s London*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 349 pp. [See p. 13.]
- Herrick, Robert. 1908. *Together*. New York: Macmillan Co., 595 pp. [See p. 229.]
- Hoffman, Elwyn. 1905. [Essay on travel to and in California.] In: California: Some Words of Truth [section]. *California State Journal of Medicine*, 3(May):161-163.
- Ivins, Anthony W. 1935. *An address delivered by President Anthony W. Ivins upon completion of the Union Pacific Lodge at Grand Canyon, Utah* [sic]. Salt Lake City: Union Pacific System, 16 pp. [Reprint.]
- James, George Wharton. 1912. [General proposal for an “aerial railway from the rim to the river in the Grand Canyon of Arizona”.] In: In the Editor’s Den [section]. *Out West*, 4(5)(November):343.
- Johnson, Annette Thackwell. 1922. Silence. *The Independent*, 109(September 2) (3824):96-98.
- Jón Ásbergsson, and Jón Kaldal. 2012. A good story to tell. (Eygló Svava Arnarsdóttir, translator.) *Iceland Review* (Street Edition, Reykjavik), 2012(5):12-13.
- Knight, William H. (no date). First aerial voyage of the great Planet Airship. In: *The latest development in aerial navigation. Lowe Planet Airship*. Los Angeles: Aerial Publishing Co., pp. 45-46.
- Lewis, Lawrence. 1908. The Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River in Colorado; the wonderful cañon, deep and narrow, through which a transcontinental railway runs. *Travel Magazine*, 13(4) (January):194-197.
- Lummis, Charles F. 1910. In the Lion’s Den [column]. *Out West*, 32(1)(January):81-87.
- McFarland, J. Horace. 1909. The value of natural scenery. *Sierra Club Bulletin*, 7(1) (January):64-69. (“Address delivered at the White House Conference on the Conservation of Natural Resources, May 14, 1908.”)
- McK., W. 1893. Between the cigars’ welcome whiffs. *The Station Agent*, 9(3) (May):18-19.
- Ohlman, Jim. 2005. The 1919 transcanyon aerial tramway survey. In: Anderson, Michael F. (compiler, ed.), *A gathering of Grand Canyon historians; ideas, arguments, and first-person accounts; proceedings of the inaugural Grand Canyon History Symposium, January 2002*. Grand Canyon Association, Monograph 13, pp. 7-14.
- Peyton, John Howe. 1909. *The American transportation problem; a study of American transportation condition*. Louisville, Kentucky: Courier-Journal Job Printing Co., 311 pp.
- Randolph, Epes. 1921. “For politics only”;



- late president of Southern Pacific of Mexico, in a letter written four days before his death to Congressman Hayden, discusses some phases of railroad economics. *Pere Marquette Magazine* (Pere Marquette Railway, Detroit), 14(3)(October):11-12.
- Riley, William Wendell. 1906. *Poems of love and home*. Los Angeles: Commercial Printing House, 156 pp. ["Silence of the Canyon", p. 89.]
- Ross, H. D., Jr. 1919. A city park on shop roofs; the result of the efforts of the residents of Warren District in the Mule Mountains of Arizona. *The House Beautiful*, 45(3)(March):131, 170.
- Savage, Maxwell. 1914. Riding the fierce red flood of the Colorado. *Outdoor World and Recreation*, new series, 50(3)(March):142-145. [Canoe trip, Needles to Yuma.]
- Sheppard, Ron. 2003. Crossing the USA. *Motorcycle Roads* (Motorcycle Touring Association, Pahrump, Nevada), 20(4)(July/August):16-18.
- Sitterly, Charles Fremont. 1922. (ed.) *Henry Anson Buttz; his book; lectures, essays, sermons, exegetical notes. Volume I*. New York and Cincinnati: The Methodist Book Concern.
- Spamer, Earle. 2015. The other "Woman of the River"—Harriet Strong, the dame who would dam Grand Canyon. *Boatman's Quarterly Review*, 28(2)(Spring):24-25.
- Strange, Thomas Lumisden. 1874. *The development of creation on the earth*. London: Trübner and Co., 109 pp.
- Strong, Josiah. 1903. Uncle Sam's talks on our country. III.—The underground wealth of the nation. *Success*, 6(March):147-148, 179.
- Willis, Honoré. 1919. Desire. In: With the Editor [section]. *The Delineator*, 95(6)(December):1.
- Wright, H. M. 1922. Somerton, Ariz.—Camp 14912. In: Camp Fire Flashes [section]. *The Modern Woodman* (Modern Woodmen of America, Rock Island, Illinois), 39(7)(July):23.
- Anonymous articles:*
- 1893 [Trolley boats.] In: Miscellaneous Notes [section]. *Electrical World*, 22(6)(August 5):108.
- 1893 [Trolley boats.] *Western Electrician* (Chicago), 13(7)(August 12):77.
- 1893 Trolley boats. *The Electrician* (London), 31(August 18)(796):411.
- 1893 [Electric launches on the Colorado River.] In: Work World Notes [section]. *Work* (London), 6(233)(September 2):103.
- 1895 Wyoming to Yuma by boat. *Deseret News*, (January 5):82-88.
- 1897 [Proposed electric railway from Santa Fe Pacific tracks to Grand Canyon.] In: Notes and News [section]. *Railway Age*, 24(7)(August 13):665.
- 1897 Santa Fe & Grand Canyon. In: New Incorporations [section]. *Railway Age*, 24(8)(August 20):685.
- 1897 Electric cars to the Grand Canyon, Colorado [sic]. *The Electrical Engineer*, 24(488)(September 9):252.
- 1897 New incorporations. *Railway Age*, 24(14)(October 1):819.
- 1899 Gasolene stages for the Santa Fe Railroad. *The Horseless Age*, 3(11)(February):8-9.
- 1899 [Note.] *The Electrical Engineer*, 27(February 23)(564):227.
- 1899 [Note.] In: Financial Items [section]. *The Independent* (New York), 51(2621)(February 23):584.
- 1899 [Santa Fe Railway transportation to Grand Canyon.] *Scientific American Supplement*, 47(1208)(February 25):19374.
- 1901 [Automobile line to Grand Canyon.] In: Under the Searchlight [section]. *Electricity*, 20(8)(February 27):119.
- 1899 To the Grand Canyon in automobiles. In: Pacific Coast Notes [subsection], News of the Week [section]. *The Electrical World*, 33(9)(March 4):287.
- 1899 [Santa Fe Railway considering "automobile carriages" for line from Flagstaff to Grand Canyon.] In: Notes and News [section]. *Railway Age*, 27(10)(March 10):166.
- 1899 [Note.] In: Personal [section]. *Mining and Scientific Press*, 78(12)(March 25):326.
- 1901 [Power production and trolley investigations at Grand Canyon.] In: Personal [section]. *Age of Steel*, 89(16)(April 20):25.
- 1902 To build steam trucks. *The Horseless Age*, 9(1)(January 1):28.
- 1902 [George Wharton James' false death notice.] In: Literary and Art Notes [section]. *The Standard* (A Baptist Newspaper) (Chicago), 49(33)(April 19):991.
- 1902 [Power plant proposed for Bright Angel Creek.] In: Electric Light and Power [section]. *Electrical World and Engineer*, 40(18)(November 1):726.
- 1902 [Grand Canyon Electric Power Company.] In: Pacific Coast News [section]. *Electrical Review*, 41(19)(November 8):650.
- 1903 [Rough Riders to meet Theodore Roosevelt at Grand Canyon.] In: Items [section]. *Fur Trade Review* (New York), 30(9)(April 1):216.
- 1903 [F. Weber Benton plan for journey by motorcycle from California to St. Louis.] In: Motor-Cycling News [section]. *The Motor-Car Journal* (London), 5(213)(April 4):88.
- 1903 Construction notes. *Street Railway Journal* (New York), 21(23)(June 6):77.
- 1903 [Electrical power for Grandview Mine.] In: Electric Light and Power [section]. *Electrical World and Engineer*, 42(5)(August 1):204.
- 1903 R.G.W. to extend to Swamp Point. Surveys made from Marysvale through to the Colorado River for the road. Taps fine mining country. Eastern syndicate has obtained possession of tract of country around the district to be developed. *Deseret News*, (November 10):5 [issue pagination].
- 1904 The Spectator. *Outlook*, 76(7)(February 13):399-400.
- 1904 [Note.] In: Illumination [section]. *Journal of Electricity, Power and Gas*, 14(6)(June):187.
- 1905 The Grand Cañon Air Line. In: With the Procession [section]. *Everybody's Magazine*, 13(4)(October):564-565.
- 1905 Eine Schwebebahn über dem Grand Canyon des Colorado. In: Kleine Mitteilungen aus allen Erdteilen [section]. *Deutsche Rundschau für Geographie und Statistik* 28(2)(November):91.
- 1905 Eine Schwebebahn über dem Grand Canon des Colorado. In: Miscellanea [section]. *Schweizerische Bauzeitung (Wochenschrift für Bau-, Verkehrs- und Maschinentechnik)* (Schwizerische Ingenieur- und Architekten-Vereins und der Gesellschaft ehemaliger Studierender des eidgenössischen Polytechnikums in Zürich), 46(21)(November 18):260.
- 1907 A novel railroad. One from brink to bottom of Grand Canyon of Colorado to be built. *Deseret News*, (August 8):1 [issue pagination].
- 1907 Railroad into canyon. *Popular Mechanics*, 9(10)(October):1102. [Cog railway.]
- 1907 Line for Grand Canyon of Colorado [sic]. *Electric Traction Weekly*, 3(44)(October 31):1111.
- 1909 [Plan to photograph Grand Canyon from kites.] In: Geographical Journal [section], Various [subsection]. *American Geographical Society, Bulletin*, 41(10):628.
- 1910 Andrew W. Oppmann. In: The Death Roll [section]. *American Brewers' Review*, 24(8)(August 1):356
- 1910 Beauties of Grand Canyon. Louis B. Boucher of Trinidad, Colo., talks of possibilities for a railroad. For combination of tours. Excursions to river gorge including trip to Yellowstone Park would be profitable for the roads. *Deseret News*, (December 20):10 [issue pagination].
- 1911 Boston [exhibitions]. *American Art News*, 9(32)(June 17):5.
- 1915 [Proposal to dam Grand Canyon.] In: Along the Trail [section]. *Santa Fe Magazine*, 9(4)(March):75-76.
- 1938 French scientist arrives. *The New York Times*, (May 25), p. 4.
- 1961 Bizarre hotel proposed for Grand Canyon rim. *National Parks Magazine*, 35(September):16.
- 1987 [Proposal by "Daedalus".] In: Ariadne [column]. *The New Scientist*, 115(August 6)(1572):96.

# “And Then There Was The Time...”

by Stephen Verkamp

I was privileged to sit on the federal bench as a judge from 1976 until 2005.

While a great part of my judicial duties dealt with the most violent of individuals imaginable and the most horrendous cases of murder, rape, and human misery, there was also a portion of my work that I found interesting and humorous.

I was a traveling circuit judge and covered all the National Parks from the Grand Canyon to Lake Powell to Lake Mead.

Lots of the cases over which I presided in the park courts involved simple misdemeanor cases. While these cases deserved and received my best efforts to be fair, many made me laugh.

Here are a few quoted from my book:

“There was a letter the court received from a particularly irate man who received a littering ticket in a National Park.

After venting his anger at the ranger in question, the Park Service policy on littering, and the criminal justice system in general, he remitted the \$50.00 fine under protest, in “monopoly money”. An arrest warrant followed.

.....

There was the occasion when a young man was brought before me for committing battery upon his wife while in a drunken rage.

I did not recognize the young man, but proceeded to give him a stern lecture on the evils of drinking and the damage it was doing to his life and that of his family. He was the last defendant on the docket for the day. Minutes later, I stepped off the bench and was walking down the hall when I ran into this individual again. He walked up to me rapidly and said, “Steve, how the heck are you doing? Man, it’s been a long time since we’ve seen each other. I remember those

good parties we used to have up at the Grand Canyon. It’s good to see you.” I realized suddenly the individual had been an old classmate of mine from the Grand Canyon High School. So much for my temperance message.

.....

There was the time the smooth-talking disc jockey from Salt Lake City received a disorderly conduct ticket at Rainbow Bridge on Lake Powell. His letter of explanation was a keeper. And I quote

“The evening skies above Lake Powell were giving off a fabulous display of color just at sundown. As we departed from having viewed the magnificent natural arch of Rainbow Bridge, our boat was apparently traveling somewhat above the wakeless speed. At this point two rangers in a boat some distance from us yelled loudly for us to slow the damn thing down and continued their rapid departure. Not having been given an opportunity to address the rangers about the alleged speed we were traveling at, I felt a response of some sort was appropriate. I turned my body away from the departing ranger boat and pushed my shorts down to my ankles. It was only a matter of a brief minute or so before I was handed a citation for disorderly conduct by the ranger as he boarded our boat.”

.....

Several days prior to court proceedings in the Lake Powell venue, I had been at the Coconino County jail in Flagstaff conducting an initial appearance of a particularly disheveled individual. At the time of the initial appearance, the young man was covered with blood and was in filthy clothing. He had a horrendous hangover and reeked of alcohol. At that time, I had gone into some counseling with the defendant concerning the fact that he was in all likelihood an alcoholic and additionally, based on his report to me of his abuse of drugs, that he was also likely a drug addict. He seemingly took my message to

heart and I released him from custody. A week or two later at Lake Powell, he appeared for his arraignment and the courtroom was packed as usual with many other defendants and their families. After conducting the preliminary matters with the same individual and setting a trial date, I inquired whether the defendant had any additional questions of the court. The defendant in a calm, loud voice for all to hear questioned me as follows:

“Judge, in light of the fact that you have concluded that I am both a drug addict and an alcoholic, I am concerned about your impartiality and fairness in the trial of this matter. Do you believe you can be fair in my case?”

This inquiry of the judge resulted in a small eruption of mirth in the courtroom that included his honor.

.....

A tremulous middle-aged man appeared before me on a citation for failure to comply with certain camping restrictions. It was obvious that this particular individual had never been arrested for anything in his life, much less been cited for any sort of offense. After much agonizing and anguish over what he was going to do and after having been repeatedly advised by me that he could plead guilty and expect a fine or have a trial, the defendant looked me in the eye and nervously stated, “well, Judge, I’m going to close my eyes, cross my fingers and plead guilty.”

.....

There was the anxious young Native American lady who had been cited for illegal bead selling at the Grand Canyon National Park.

At the arraignment she pled guilty but in mitigation argued that she “was left holding the bag” (a pillowcase as it were) while her other more criminally responsible, but fleet-footed accomplices escaped. While she was quite literal, referencing the bag in question, she missed the

irony of the situation. But the packed courtroom didn't.

.....

And there was the young fellow at the Grand Canyon who got drunk and created a disturbance and was cited for disorderly conduct. He was a custodian at the local high school.

He told me he had seen the error of his ways. He stated that in an attempt to improve his life, he was looking for role models and happened to see my picture hanging in a trophy case at the school. He advised that since the incident he had been modeling himself on my life. The fine was suspended.

.....

Finally, the following letter requesting leniency and the court's written response are best left in their original form. The ticket was for "entering a closed area of the Park."

"Dear Judge Verkamp:

I am writing in regards to a ticket we recently received while visiting the Petrified Forest/Painted Desert National Park.

I have been trying to have a child for over a year. While at the park, my temperature reached a point ideal for conception. We took advantage of this opportunity and pulled off the main road.

While parked, I noticed a park ranger observing us. I do not know how long he was there, but he indicated it was awhile. The appropriateness of his actions is highly questionable. We would have explained our situation to the officer, but he was very angry with us. We would ask the Court to consider waiving this fine. We intended no offense to the officer or the park. Should the Court decide otherwise, please advise us at the above address. We appreciate your help and attention in this matter..."

The court's reply:

"Dear Ms. X,

Your creative letter has convinced the Court the merits of your case are conceptually sound.

Consider the fine waived..."

## Swimming in Bright Angel Creek, 1976

by Keith Green

Summer afternoons are hot and dry at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, and, for most employees, there was a break in the work-day in the early afternoon. Thus, a few hours at the cool river were often planned. We would see how many people wanted to go, get some beer and ice, and walk the half mile of hot trail down to the river.

There were two places we could go. One was "Roy's Beach." That was more private, but it took a little more effort to get there. The other was "the confluence." This is where Bright Angel Creek flows into the river. Depending on how high the river was, there could be quite a deep pool where the creek was backed-up by the river. However, we could be seen from the River Trail, 500 feet up on the other side of the river or the South Kaibab Trail at Panorama Point, more than 1,000 feet up on the other side of the river. Neither trail was used very much during the hot part of the day.

One of the times when several of us went down to the confluence in early spring. It was partly cloudy but just warm enough to make a dip in the creek sound good. We hadn't been in the water for a long time. When we arrived at the confluence, the water in the creek pooled to thigh level. Even though the water was warm enough, the air temperature was a little bit cool. We took our clothes off anyway and got in the creek. We were already a little warm just from working that morning and walking the half mile down to the river.

Getting naked was not a big deal. It was not a sexual act. Clothing in that climate is uncomfortable and unnecessary. Also, the late 1970s were a time of unconventionality; so why go to all the trouble of taking off your shorts and putting on swimming suits just to have to reverse the process later, and what do you do with the wet swimming suit?

So there we were, playing in the cool creek even though it was cloudy. Then it began to happen. First sunlight hit the river and the canyon in the west. It was as though a black and white image came into living color. Slowly, the brightly colored sunlight invaded the delta where we were and finally shown bright and warm on us and the creek. I turned to see Peggy turn towards the rolling river looking into the sun. Her light hair was glowing as she, in her altogether, raised her hands above her head and slowly bowed to the Sun God before her.

The whole scene around me was timeless. It was the essence of humanity in the natural world and could have existed at anytime during the human story of this planet. How many times has the return of the sun been worshiped by those living a purely natural life in the bottom of Grand Canyon?

Just above the creek where Peggy was bowing to the Sun, there is a circle of rocks in a flattened place above the cliffs behind the rock house on Bright Angel Delta. It commands a wonderful view up Bright Angel Canyon, across the delta, and up the Inner Gorge. Could it have been a sacred place to worship the Sun and Earth? Might there have once been one or more mostly naked people there bowing to the emerging Sun?

Without any fanfare, a cowboy hat and a ranger uniform came over the creek embankment. It was Dave, the Park packer, and he was mad. His face was so red and contorted that it seemed like springs were about to pop out of his forehead. Once every week Dave brought down supplies for the Phantom Ranger, and he and his mules had traversed the cliffs over the river and confluence on the river trail 500 feet above us. His conservative, Mormon upbringing was the cause of his indignant anger.

"Put your clothes on," he screamed; "Can't you see you are

## Grand Canyon Historical Society

PO Box 31405

Flagstaff, AZ 86003

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
FLAGSTAFF, AZ  
PERMIT 333

parading naked in front of God and everybody. I could see you clearly from the River Trail up there. I'm going to write all of you a ticket if you don't put your clothes on right now." He had a ticket book in his shaking hand.

For a moment, we just stared at Dave. It was kind of like being discovered by a mad dog. To us, he clearly had a messed-up idea of morality, but he also had a ticket book in his hand. We were resigned to put our clothes back on and head back to the ranch.

About halfway back, Dennis announced, "In front of God and everybody!"

We gigled about that all the way home. We'd been caught by Dave before, and we'd be caught by him again.

### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND SAVE THE DATE!**

**History Symposium**

November 4-6, 2016

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of formation of the National Park Service by the Organic Act of 1916, GCHS will be sponsoring a mini history symposium at South Rim.

Look for details in upcoming Bulletins...



NOW! Find us on Facebook.