

May 22, 2022

Grand Canyon History Tidbit

Early Rangering

As a nod to last week's **Law Enforcement Officer's Week**, a tidbit about the work of the early Park Rangers at Grand Canyon. With fewer visitors in the early years of the park, Park Rangers performed a wide variety of duties along with law enforcement and visitor assists, including staffing information desks and checking stations, resource management, as well as maintenance projects.

From a 1994 interview with **Warren Hamilton**, who was a Ranger at Grand Canyon in the 1930's:

Hamilton: Well, there were rangers and there were naturalists. I did the ranger work. At that time there was a chap by the name of George Collins who was the ranger in charge on the North Rim. I served under him doing all the general ranger operations: traffic and sometimes manning the entrance station, then fires, forest fires. Then we always had a ranger down at the lodge in the evening, just to have a uniform there, and answered questions. After dinner the naturalists put on a program. After that, the employees of the lodge would put on a little skit of some kind, half hour or so, and then after that there was a dance for the rest of the evening.

We had a little ranger office there also. There were patrols to make and while I was there, I did some forestry work locating bug trees. The Western Yellow Pine, *Pinus ponderosa*, was infected in some places by these pine beetles. The control at that time was to cut the tree down and strip the bark and burn it up to destroy the eggs to get rid of the pine beetles.



#15524: RANGER WARREN HAMILTON & MARV ADAMS, MAINTENANCE, CUTTING FIRE LINE ON NORTH RIM, CIRCA 1934.

From a 1994 interview with Al Maxey, a Park Ranger at Grand Canyon in the 1950's:

Interviewer: How would you say most of your time was spent?

Maxey: Running entrance stations mostly! We did law enforcement too. The law enforcement here then was under three jurisdictions. Coconino had a sheriff, Coconino County, Park Service, and then the railroad police. They had two railroad police here. Santa Fe Railroad.

Interviewer: They actually lived here? Stationed here?

Maxey: Lived here, stationed here, worked here. It was for the railroad property, supposedly. But if the sheriff said a guy reportedly has a gun over at Bright Angel, and he needed somebody to go with him, why, he'd either call a ranger or call one of these railroad police.

Interviewer: Did you have to do a lot of arresting of people?

Maxey: Well, not a lot, no. Just once in a while. Maybe once a month.

Interviewer: Did you have much trouble with people breaking into cars and stealing things.

Maxey: You know, I suppose there must have been some, but it wasn't a major item. I can remember more people having trouble with Buggeln hill and no chains.



#30: RANGER PERRY BROWN WORKING THE OLD SOUTH ENTRANCE CHECKING STATION, JUNE 1931.

Maxey: We did everything. If the phone line went out, why, the ranger fixed it. When I was on the North Rim, I had the section [of phone line] that came from the North Rim down through the canyon. And there's one span over there that was 1200 feet where it went off the Redwall. So, every time the phone went out over there, because that was our main communication, I hoped it wasn't that 1200-foot span off the Redwall!

Maxey: Ranger headquarters was right across from the store that burned [Ranger Ops]. Had a big fireplace in there and the rangers kept a fire going in the wintertime in there. Really kind of a cozy place to pop in and out. Until we'd see Emery Kolb coming, and Emery had a big Packard, and he was a terrible driver toward his latter years. We'd see Emery Kolb coming and you could almost tell, 'cuz one of the rangers would say, "I believe I better go over to the sign shop." See, rangers made all the signs then. Every sign in the Grand Canyon was made by the rangers in the wintertime over here in the ranger sign shop. And so, all of a sudden, the place is empty... uh oh, Emery Kolb has come for some groceries or his mail, and he'd back into somebody almost every time. He'd back up, but he didn't turn around to look and see where he was going. He'd just put it in reverse, this big old Packard would come out and when he felt something, he'd stop driving. [It meant having to] fill out another traffic accident report!



#01899: RANGER LAUZON WORKING THE INFORMATION DESK AT RANGER OPS, CIRCA 1949.

But serious law enforcement events occurred too. In a 1990 interview, **Hubert Lauzon** talked about the capture of notorious Oklahoma bank robber Matthew Kimes at Grand Canyon in June 1927, when Lauzon's father was a constable at Grand Canyon:

Interviewer: When was [your father] a constable?

Lauzon: He was elected constable... 1921 or 1922. I think he was constable for almost six years, I believe from 1922 to 1928 or 1929... At that time, the constable got thirty dollars a month. They didn't have any money for a deputy so the County sheriff would usually deputize the constable, so they'd have a deputy sheriff. But things were a lot different then, with what they had to do. Mostly what they had to do was deal with whiskey bootleggers and horse thieves, and once in a while somebody would steal a car, but there weren't that many cars.

Interviewer: [What about] the bank robber incident, [Matthew] Kimes?

Lauzon: Well, Kimes, they said that he was coming in here with the intention of robbing the payroll, or the take from the El Tovar Hotel. But Kimes and these two other people, a guy and a

woman, came through the old checking station, and they had sent pictures [of Kimes] there. There were very few cars came in there in those days. When that car drove up to the checking station, the ranger there, Leo Smith, he had been looking at the pictures of these guys, so he shoved them under the chair and then he got on the telephone and called in.

In the meantime, the County Sheriff in Flagstaff had gotten wind of it, and he happened to be there at the Canyon at the time that Kimes came in. He went up to the top of the El Tovar hill and was going to arrest Kimes. They were in John Parson's, the sheriff's, car coming down the hill and they got to struggling over the gun and Kimes jumped out of the car. They had caught the other two people in the meantime, but Kimes got out of the car and went up the hill there above the Hopi House and went over the rim. Of course, he was hemmed in there. There was no way he could get out. There was three guys there, they had a little three-man posse. But these three guys--there was Curly Ennis, an old cowboy and he was a transportation foreman; and George Cravey, an old Texas cowboy; and I can't recall who the third one was--but they got on the Rim and they had Kimes hemmed in and with a gun on him and he couldn't have gotten away.

I remember, at that time the Park Administration building was at the foot of the hill. Us kids all went up to see the outlaws. Kimes was handcuffed and the other guy was handcuffed, and the lady was there. They didn't have her handcuffed, but they had a matron there that they picked up from town to take care of her. But I could hear them talking and they had a 30/30 rifle leaning against the wall and that was 15 feet from where Kimes was sitting in the chair. I heard Kimes say, "Well, I could have got one of you guys, but you'd have got me."

It was quite an interesting deal, but there was no shots fired to my knowledge, unless there was one went through the top of the car. But my dad and another deputy from Flagstaff took Kimes and these guys, the two of them, put them on the train and took them to Flagstaff. They turned him over to the Oklahoma authorities there. Kimes was a killer, he was a bank robber, he had killed people...

In a Fall 2014 edition of the Grand Canyon Historical Society publication, the Ol' Pioneer, in a story about Kimes capture, it says that Sheriff Parsons asked Kimes about his decision to come to Grand Canyon. Kimes replied, "Why does anyone go there? It's a beauty spot. I wanted to see it."



#02734: ASSISTANT CHIEF RANGER CARL LEHNERT IN THE CHIEF RANGER'S PATROL CAR, 1955.