

O' PIONEER



O' Pioneer is the Newsletter of the Grand Canyon Pioneers Society

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An Outing To Top All Outings

Those who missed the Grand Canyon Pioneers trip to Young,



The shoot-out at Perkins store. Photo by Sibyl Suran.

missed one of the best field trips we have ever had. Even the weather cooperated and kept the temperature in the pleasant mid-nineties so we couldn't complain about that.

We left the highway 260 and began a steady decline downward toward one of the most beautiful valleys in Arizona. Even with the dry summer it was green and lush. Our trip back in time began at the Antler Cafe where Steve and Chris Verkamp, Mary Ellen Hamilton, Marie Maiorana, Eldon and Maxine Roth, Sally Liebig, Santiago Griego, Sibyl and Bill Suran met for a bite to eat and to lay out plans for our tour.

Looking over the list of goings on we agreed to visit first the old Perkins Store, the oldest building in Young. The stone building origi-

nally had one 15 foot square room with gun ports in the walls for protection against the Apaches who made regular raids into the valley. Outside we were treated to a real honest to goodness shootout as reenacted by a group dressed in the costume portraying the scene from history that took place here on September 22, 1887. Sheriff Mulvane ordered Charlie Blevins and John Graham to throw up their hands and surrender. When they failed to comply he and his posse shot them both before our eyes and they lay dead in the road in front of us.

Our next stop was at the cemetery where Pat Murdock, the historian of Young led us to five graves of the Grahams and Al Rose, a Graham sympathizer, all of whom met an untimely end in what is known as the Pleasant Valley War. Pat told us the story of how it happened and why, a story too involved and complicated to go into here. He has done considerable research on his subject and told the tale from a new point of view bringing politics and money into it as one of the chief causes of the fight and the outcome at the end.

We traveled in caravan next to the old Tewksbury place. And if you have read the books by Earle Forrest or Don Dederer you will recall the incident of the hogs devouring the bodies of the victims of the gun battle that occurred here.

This ended the historic part of our tour, but not all the entertain-

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ment the citizens of Young provided for the celebration of Pleasant Valley Days: a roping contest and horse show, a book sale at the local library where author Leland J. Hanchett, Jr. signed copies of his *Arizona's Graham-Tewksbury Feud* just published, a big sale at



Marie M., Maxine & Eldon Roth check out the program in front of the Perkins Store at Young.

Photo by Sibyl Suran

the Thrift Shop and an arts and craft show at the local school. There was also a tour of a new excavation of a pueblo Indian site right in Young. The day was topped off with a steak fry served by the women of the town and a dance at the Community Center.

By this time yours truly had had enough, and retired to one of the four

clean comfortable rooms at the Antler Motel, while a few of the others closed the saloon down the street.



Mary Ellen Hamilton, Eldon Roth, center, and others at the Tewksbury cabin.

Photo by Sibyl Suran

Trips To Phantom Ranch

by "Ole Harry Cole"

At long last my past catches up with me. Many many times I have bragged about having been to Phantom Ranch some twenty-five to thirty times; of course not stating the mode of transportation. Well now it must be told.

In 1966 I went to work for the Arizona Public Service Company on a four man crew, a foreman, two linemen and me, I was the truck driver. Along with other towns around the area we also maintained and built new lines at the Grand Canyon and during the next five years we made several trips to Phantom Ranch. Not by walking down the trail, or even the good way of riding the mules, so I hang my head in shame and admit the mode of transportation was by helicopter. The trip into the canyon would take about seven minutes with the return trip taking about fifteen minutes. Oh, it was not always a piece of cake. One time we went in after a flood had gone down Bright Angel Creek Canyon and tore out our underground cable in several places. The

only equipment we had down there for digging trenches were shovels, and after several days of this, those idiot sticks and me got tired of each other.

Then there was the time while we were in the bottom and the wind came up so bad the pilot called down and told us that he couldn't come after us. Well, this only left the long walk out, but no, the Harvey Company's people at the Ranch fed us all that great food they feed the tourist, and bedded us down for the night in the tourist cabins; tough duty.

There was also the time that we had to go down with enough equipment and material to do a job. One piece of equipment we took was a fiberglass stick eight-feet long and about two and a half inches in diameter called a shotgun. Well, the foreman informed us that he would take charge of the shotgun, and the rest of us could take the other equipment. Everything went great after the landing with the foreman picking up the shotgun holding it level to the ground, when the pilot

yelled "When shall I pick you up?" When the foreman turned to answer him he accidentally held the shotgun straight up and right into the propeller which cut it in half. There was nothing to do but shut the engine down for inspection of damages. After so long a time the pilot stated he thought it would be O.K., however he needed more weight to try the helicopter out and to feel sure it was all right. Along with that we needed another shotgun, so guess who got to be the extra weight to see if the helicopter would fly or crash. Well you guessed it. "Ole Harry" lived to tell the story.

The second five years I spent with APS was in the engineering department as estimator writing up all jobs at the Canyon, and the last six years was as Customer Serviceman, still returning to Phantom for on the job customer contact. Many other trips were made, but the best ones were when I could take my fishing pole and try my luck in the Bright Angel Creek.

Amelia Earhart And Grand Canyon

by Ron Warren

The movie, "Amelia Earhart — The Last Flight," which aired on cable TV in early June [1941], reminded me that the famous aviatrix had a connection to the Grand Canyon that Pioneer Society members might be interested in.

One of the characters in the movie was Paul Mantz, Earhart's "aviation advisor". He wasn't a very sympathetic character in the movie or, for that matter, in real life either. Mantz didn't think too highly of Amelia's flying ability, so insisted that she have the very best of equipment and aircraft maintenance, perhaps to offset what he thought were her shortcomings as a pilot. For Earhart's record-setting solo flight between Hawaii and California in 1935, Mantz hired Ernie Tissot to prepare the engine on her Lockheed Vega. Tissot just happened to be Grand Canyon Airlines' chief of maintenance.

Ernie and his airline boss, G.E. "Roxy" Ruckstell, had well-deserved reputations as two of the country's premiere airplane engine mechanics. Meticulous to a fault, Ernie assembled each airplane engine with the precision of a fine-tuned automobile racing engine. The perfection came sort of naturally. Roxy had been an "Indy car" race driver before getting into the airplane business. And, Ernie did much of his "VIP" machine shop work in the plant of the Offenhauser Engine Company in Los Angeles. If you know about Indianapolis racing car history, you'll know about Offenhauser engines. Ernie's engines were the

best that money could buy. Truthfully, only rich Hollywood-types and the very important people of aviation, like Earhart, could afford them.

In September, 1935, Amelia stopped overnight at Grand Canyon in her bright red Lockheed Vega to visit with Roxy and Ernie for a few days. While Ernie "tweaked" the Vega's engine in the hanger, Earhart "kicked back" on the office porch, talking airplanes with Irv. Kravitz, the company's chief pilot. Nonplused by her fame, Kravitz said Amelia was "just one of the guys".



Amelia Earhart about to depart from Grand Canyon Red Butte Airport.

Photo from Ron Warren's collection.

In the afternoon, a couple came in for a Canyon tour, and Kravitz asked if they would mind if he "broke in" a new "company" pilot on their tour. They didn't, so he said he'd be right back with the "new hire". When Earhart walked up with Kravitz a few minutes later, the man remarked "it's a woman pilot!" Earhart flashed her well-known smile and replied "yes" as she turned and headed

toward airline's Travel Air 6000 tour plane.

The man may not have recognized the "new pilot", but his wife certainly did. "That's Amelia Earhart", Kravitz heard the woman whisper to her husband.

"Nah, you're wrong," her husband chided. "What would she be doing here working for this company? She's famous . . ."

With Kravitz pointing the way and narrating the tour, Earhart piloted the plane around the Canyon. After a perfect landing back at the Canyon airfield, the man confided to Irv Kravitz that "the

woman pilot did ok, but she might need a little more practice on her landings." Smiling at the chauvinism, Kravitz nodded understandingly while trying to keep from laughing.

Whether the woman doubted herself, or merely accepted her husband's answer as more probable, is unknown, but the

identity of the "new hire" pilot was not inquired into again. After chatting with Kravitz and Earhart for a few minutes, the couple got back in their car and drove away, never realizing who their pilot had been.

Irv Kravitz may have been guilty of a bit of understatement about Amelia "being one of the boys", but it's clear that the visit was low

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profile. No one outside the airport employees ever knew Earhart was there and the visit was a welcome break from the incessant crowd of news people who followed her every move.

In the summer of 1936, the "new hire" returned for another visit, this time accompanied by her husband, George Putnam. Unlike his famous wife, Putnam had no qualms about media attention. For that matter, neither did Roxy. Though the second Grand Canyon visit also remained private while it happened, Putnam and Roxy made good use of the visit by America's "first lady of the air". Within weeks of the visit, travel sections of the country's major newspapers were touting Roxy's exciting new airline service between Grand Canyon and Las Vegas, a service "endorsed" by Earhart. George Putnam's promotional genius was at work for the airline and his wife. . . . Amelia

needed to stay in the public eye to secure financial backers for her round-the-world flight.

The Putnam-Earhart publicity for Grand Canyon Air Lines produced enough business for the company to keep Ernie Tissot hard at work through the winter of 1936-1937, so much so that he didn't have time to prepare the engines for Earhart's Lockheed Electra for her globe-circling flight. It is unknown who Paul Mantz hired for the work, but it's clear that Ernie's engine work would not have made any difference in the outcome. If you watched the TV movie, or read Doris Rich's excellent book on Earhart's life you know that Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, disappeared in the Pacific Ocean on July 2, 1937, after running out of gas.

Ernie Tissot stayed in aviation for his entire life. Perhaps the highest compliment an aviation mechanic can be paid is to be able to say that the pilots always trusted

his work. That can well be said of Ernie Tissot. Not once during his tenure as chief of maintenance for Grand Canyon Air Lines did a company airplane ever have an engine problem of any kind.

In 1938, Roxy bought NC-965Y, the Lockheed Vega which Earhart had used on her Hawaii to California flight and which Ernie had worked on at the Canyon airfield. The airplane was used as a test vehicle for a small, light-weight auxiliary power engine which Roxy and Ernie engineered and which became standard equipment on B-29s during the Second World War. Mostly though, the Vega was Roxy's personal "run-around" until being sold to Paul Mantz in 1942.

Amelia Earhart was not the only famous aviatrix to have an association with Grand Canyon Air Lines, but those stories can wait for another issue.

Dear Bill:

This is just a note to let you know that I appreciated getting your birthday card. It was unexpected, but surely nice to hear from you.

My thoughts are with the GCPS in their field trips and picnics, but I am begging off. It is a bit of a chore to drive from here, and I am feeling my age. Sorry.

Harvey Butchart

Sun City Az

Editor: We will miss seeing you around but maybe we can arrange a program in Phoenix or thereabouts soon. Keep in touch.

Mr. dearest Editor:

Never would a Kansas Harvey Girl (The New Generation), turn down an opportunity to share her

Letters To The Editor

home as a bed and breakfast for a weekend with the Grand Canyon Pioneers Society friends, if they choose to have one of their monthly meetings in Topeka Kansas. . . I am sure we can pile into my van and do the sights, and of course FOOD. Now we are talking!!! We have authentic Mexican (not quite as good as Arizona) but the best we can do here in Topeka as well as Chinese, Italian and just plain American. But, I think you will find the most charming cook, efficient waitress, and the best food right here at the Thowe home and the hospitality, oh my, good conversation by a crackling fire (if the season is right) will warm your heart and soul.

Take care,
Brenda Thowe

Topeka, Kansas.

Editor: This is in rebuttle to the ad in the June issue. Gee!!! you are tempting us.

Dear Pioneers:

. . . I just want to thank you for sending me the Pioneer's Newsletter, particularly because it described the trip to Willow Springs. I have known some of those people for a long, long time, and they are dear friends of mine.

I didn't get up to the [75th] celebration [at Grand Canyon]. It was impossible, because of my age. I don't get around as much as I used to, I don't like it that way, but that's the way it is. Keep me on the mailing list.

Barry Goldwater
Scottsdale, AZ

PIONEER FOOTPRINTS

Memories of Life At Grand Canyon In The 1920s and 30s by Betty Kent Meyer

Back in the 20s about 200 permanent employees worked at the canyon, and not many people came to the park in cars. The road from Williams was dirt with dust about a foot deep. The trains brought in most of the tourists who were mostly accommodated at the El Tovar.

When the trains arrived at 7 A.M. Harvey served breakfast at the El Tovar, and at 9:30 provided a bus trip to Hermit's Rest, with stops at all the points of interest for the guests. After coffee or punch and cookies there, the bus returned to El Tovar for lunch. In the afternoon everyone was hustled off on the twenty-five mile drive to

Desert View. The Harvey Company used open air, *White* buses for these trips. If you have never ridden a dirt road with trees still growing in the middle and a wild kid at the wheel trying to make time to get his people back to the hotel by 5:30 for the Indian dances at the Hopi House, you have missed a thrilling ride.

The Grand Canyon Post Office

When you think about the post office you never realize that it could possibly have much history, especially at a place like the Grand Canyon. But, sometimes the places can fool you.

The story begins in 1884 when Captain John Hance wandered to the Canyon Rim and decided to make his home there. He built a cabin and improved an old Indian and animal trail into the gorge and began prospecting. It didn't take him long to discover the best place to find gold was in the pockets of tourists, and in 1886 he pitched a few tents around his cabin and called it a hotel. He and Lyman Tolfree, a business entrepreneur joined forces and with a little advertising in Flagstaff they soon had visitors taking the long hard stage coach ride from Flagstaff to see the wonders of Grand Canyon. With tourists you naturally needed a post office. On August 13, 1894, John Hance became the first Postmaster at Grand Canyon at the

postoffice called Tolfree located in his cabin. The postal service there closed February 2, 1897.

Hance again had a post office at his cabin that opened May 16, 1897 that he called Tourist. This one was rather short lived and closed April 12, 1899. At that time the post office moved to the vicinity of the Bright Angel Trail where J. Wilbur Thurber built a rustic cabin at the head of the trail and opened the facility there. Thurber was a road grading contractor and his interests along that line prompted him to sell the Bright Angel to Martin Buggeln, a former railroader, Deputy Sheriff of Coconino County and hotel owner in Williams. In March 14, 1902, Buggeln opened the post office at the Bright Angel Hotel and served as postmaster until June 11, 1907.

According to Ethel Metzger another post office operated at the Grandview Hotel between No-

vember 27, 1903, and November 30, 1908.

Martin Buggeln and Fred Harvey Company had a rather heated dispute in the spring of 1907 and Harvey more or less confiscated his business. The post office may have been moved to the Verkamp's Store after Buggeln left, but there seems to be no definite proof of this. It is known that John G. Verkamp served as postmaster for a few months after the Harvey Company took over the Bright Angel. John declined the job as permanent postmaster and Louisa Ferrall took over until 1916. The job then went to her husband, Lannes L. Ferrall and the service moved into the Cameron Hotel where it remained until the 1930s with J. Arthur Metzger in charge. During the interval between Ferrall and Metzger, Charles Donohoe and James Kintner held the job. Art Metzger was postmaster from 1928 until he retired in 1968.

Bits & Pieces

The Grand Canyon Pioneers Society was highly honored recently with an honorary membership in the Grand Canyon Chamber Of Commerce. We certainly appreciated this surprise, and we express our sincere thanks to Jane Gillespie, president, and the board of Directors of the organization.

Happy Birthday **Dr. Agnes Allen**. We all wish you many more.

The following article was adapted from a piece written by Art Metzger and submitted by John Turnbull. Another similar story by Jeanne Schick arrived almost at the same time. We have taken the liberty of combining the information of both stories and give credit to all three.

Laura And Elmer Nelson of Grand Canyon

by Art Metzger, John Turnbull, Jeanne Schick

Elmer Nelson brought his bride, Laura Schick, to Grand Canyon in 1913, where they set up housekeeping in a box car near the old railway depot. When the Santa Fe built the present station the old one became Elmer's office. Some will remember it as the small building near the former power house, now the Fred Harvey Commissary.

Grand Canyon at this time was a National Monument, and aside from the hotels there were few permanent buildings and the employees lived mostly in tent houses. The Nelsons were fortunate to have the box car in which to live, and Laura took advantage of the opportunity to display her skill as an interior decorator making their first home attractive and inviting. She hated to leave it when they moved into a more modern and spacious home on Avenue "A". They occupied this home for about 40 years until Elmer retired from his job as Santa Fe's chief civil engineer in 1952, and moved to Salt Lake City to live near their son Roy and his family.

When the village grew enough to afford to hire a minister, Rev. Porray, it was Laura's early day experience living in that box-car that made her so earnestly desire that he have a comfortable home. Housing then was as scarce as it is today, and the only thing available

for him and his family at the time was an unused CCC officer's quarters that had undergone some shabby remodeling. Some will remember Laura's indignation concerning the kitchen stove the preacher's wife, Betty used, and her determination to replace it with a better one, even if she had to buy it herself.

The Nelsons were very active in the church, Laura being one of the founders of the Guild and its first treasurer. She was a tireless worker, and was never satisfied with half-way measures.

Laura and Elmer worked as a team in all their endeavors and were actively interested in educational affairs. Laura helped to found the local chapter of the Parent Teachers Association at Grand Canyon in 1915. She established classes in English and Americanization for the large number of Spanish speaking people in the Canyon area, which were well attended. In appreciation of this and other outstanding services the organization presented her with a Life Membership.

Jeanne Schick tells the story that in those days children often went away to attend high school and college. When they did it was necessary for them to attend a boarding school, or have their mothers go with them and set up

housekeeping in the same town. When Jeanne went away to Pasadena, California, to attend school they leased their home on Avenue "A" at Grand Canyon and lived near Laura and her children in California. The two families spent the school year in California, but returned to the Canyon for the summer holidays.

Early in 1925, Laura joined the American Legion Auxiliary as a charter member. When the Legion Post held their annual Labor Day Rodeos at the Community Field, both she and Elmer played a prominent part in all the activities. It seems they were both on hand for any function the Legion had. The Auxiliary fostered and sponsored the Community Library, and both Elmer and Laura, while not actively engaged in the actual conduct of it, contributed to its growth and support.

Elmer, being the chief Engineer for Santa Fe, led the group of men to Hermit's camp the night they set fire to the wooden structures there.

The Nelsons are now buried at the Pioneers Cemetery at Grand Canyon within the enclosure that Peggy James called "God's Half Acre." Truly it can be said of the Nelsons, who were a team in all things undertaken, "Well done thou good and faithful servants."

1994 Grand Canyon Pioneers Meetings

August 13 - Postal Cancellation Ceremony and visit to site of Grandview and Hance Hotels. Dedication of plaques on Ed Cummings chairs at Watchtower.

September 10 - Winslow with lunch at Falcon Restaurant. Visit

to Old Trails Museum and La Posado conducted by Janice Griffith.

October 15 - Annual meeting. At Verkamp's Store Grand Canyon

November 19 - Tour of Grand Canyon Museum archives at Grand Canyon with curator Carolyn Richard.

December - No meeting due to holidays.

Notes On The Grandview Hotel

The following excerpt from Burton Holmes' Travelogues Volume 6 gives an interesting report on the Grandview Hotel in 1895. The book is from the library of Mary Ellen Hamilton.

I cannot say enough praise of our kind host and of the comforts offered by his log hotel. Here, even in the colder seasons, a long sojourn would be a not uncomfortable experience. There is a cheeriness about the interior, and an aspect of solidity and warmth in the stout log walls and a white-aproned, white-capped European personage, quite worthy of the title "Chef," presiding over the cuisine. For one of those wandering Continental culinary artists had drifted to this distant end of the earth in the course of his restless world pilgrimage, and while he lingered near the canyon, all visitors of the Grand View Hotel enjoyed the luxury of Continental cooking—a



The Grandview Hotel 1895. Burton Holmes Photo.

luxury that here appears to be ridiculously out of place.

Our host is a collector of canyon curiosities; the office is an incipient museum. His greatest treasure is a jar or *olla*, discovered in a cave in the canyon wall—a cave so inaccessible that it proved almost impossible to bring forth the *olla* in safety.

Unlike Mr. Hance, Berry is a man of few words, but those few words are always to the point. There is nothing of romance on the soul of Peter Berry, when he meets a bear it is not the bear that does the shooting, and when he catches a salmon, Peter Berry eats the fish. . . but he has sawed wood and heaved rocks and

built the Grand View Trail and made it possible for travelers to reach the river where there is no chance of anticlimax, for this trail winds down into the depths of the black archean inner canyon where we may see the river. . .

Editor: No evidence of the Grandview Hotel remains. Even the identification of the former location is questionable. Only a few pine trees still standing give a hint of this bit of Grand Canyon history. And what history this site can tell. That we will delve into later.



Pete Berry's large olla at Grandview. Burton

What We Hear From Around And About

Gene Wendt sent us a set of pictures taken at Shoshone. They make a nice addition to the GCPS scrapbook. He and Marvyl stopped by for a chat on their way back to, as he says, "Hug a cactus" in Tucson.

Linda Wade spent her break from school in Tucson back home in Flagstaff. The thing she misses most is the nice cool weather. Linda is studying to be an interpreter for the deaf. She says the sign language is a completely different language even with its own grammar.

Summer weather makes you feel a little lazy, but I hope not enough to make you want to miss the Pioneer meetings. The August trip to the Hance Cabin and Grandview Hotel sites and September meeting to Winslow to visit the Old Trails Museum will be interesting.

A number of Pioneers dropped by the house over the 4th. Sibyl made a batch of cookies from a new recipe and served them. As most of our members know, she usually bakes some darn delicious

by Bill Suran
cookies, but these were a total flop. Most of our visitors graciously ate ONE and politely turned down seconds. One expressed her opinion nicely (and I won't mention any names). She said, "I love the pretty pink color and the rubbery texture." Sibyl offered to give her the rest of the batch, but she refused. "Now I can't even give them away" Sibyl commented.

Got a card from Fred and Jeanne Schick who are in Wash-

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ington D.C. to see if they can straighten out the Government. Actually the entire family (kids and grandkids) are there to see the sights and later attend a family reunion in Ohio.

Harry and Ethel Cole have also been wandering some this sum-

mer. They visited Colorado and other points in the west.

Carol and Ron Werhan are grandparents again. Another boy. That's two this summer. Congratulations.

Had a surprise telephone call from **Brenda Thowe** the other day to say she liked the new name of

the Newsletter. Just so happened she got to chat with Marie Maiorana, Sibyl and me all on the same nickel. It is wonderful to talk occasionally with our members who are so far away. Maybe it is one of the perks of being editor of O' Pioneers.

SPECIAL NOTICE

The Saturday August 13 outing of The Grand Canyon Pioneers has been changed from the original plan in order to participate in a special commemoration ceremony for the 100th anniversary of the Grand Canyon Post office.

Instead of meeting at Rowe Well, we will meet at Moqui Lodge in Tusayan at 10:00 AM. Due to the parking problem at the Canyon it is suggested we consolidate into as few cars as possible and travel from there to the Grand Canyon Post office. The special cancellation celebration will begin at 11:00 AM. The Postal History Foundation has printed special envelopes commemorating Tolfree, the first post office at Hance Cabin. They can be purchased for \$1.50 each, canceled and mailed at Grand Canyon. These special envelopes will be a collectors item and will be quite valuable in the future.

From the post office we will continue east to the Buggeln Picnic site for a picnic lunch (Bring your own food and drink), then visit the Grandview Hotel, Hance Cabin sites and the Watchtower as originally scheduled.

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