

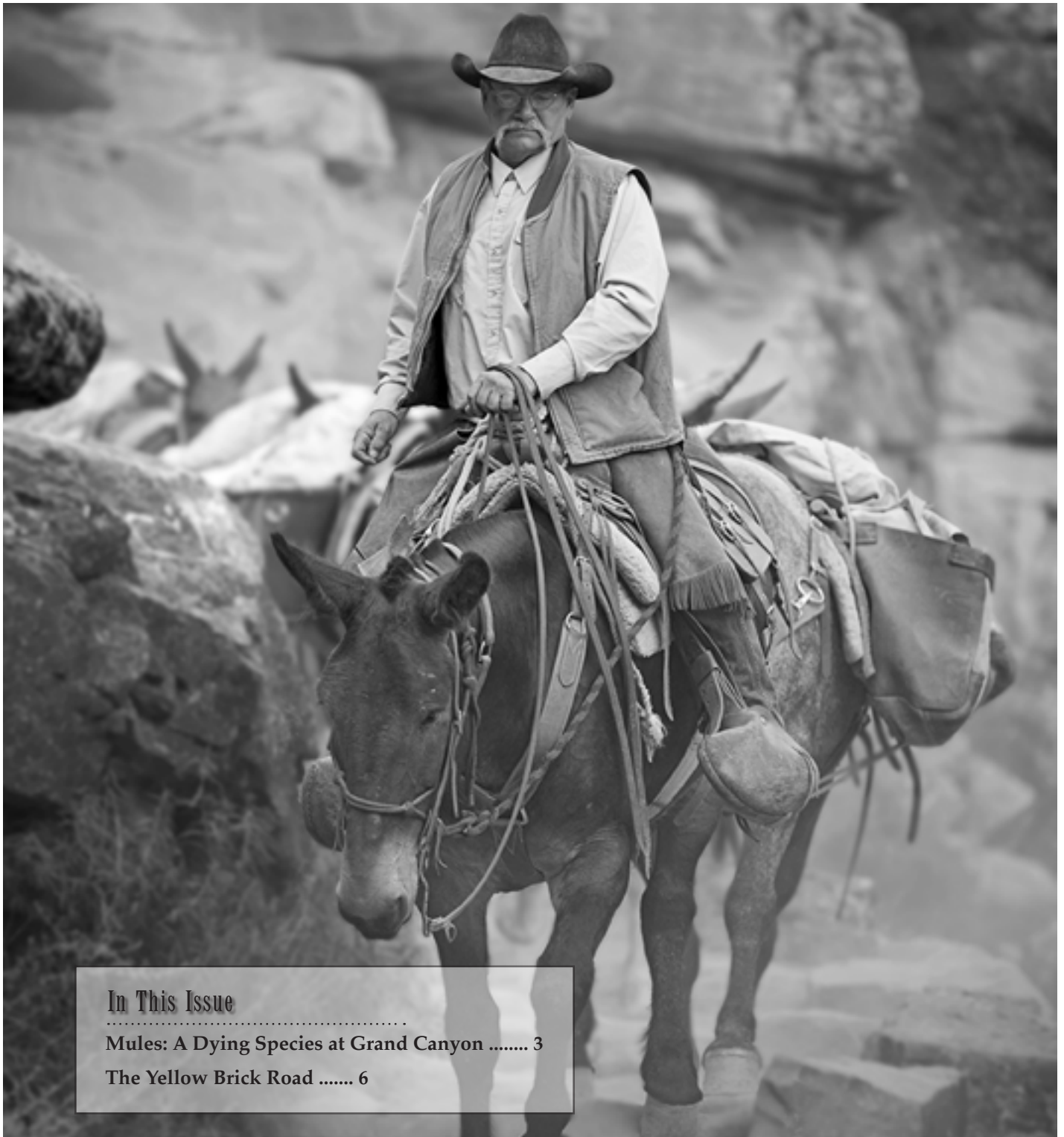
The Ol' Pioneer

The Magazine of the Grand Canyon Historical Society

Volume 21 : Number 2

www.GrandCanyonHistory.org

Spring 2010



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President's Letter

After one of the snowiest winters in recent memory, signs of spring are finally appearing in northern Arizona. It is a time when hikers and tourists alike begin to return to the canyon in droves like the swallows returning to Capistrano and the latest Phantom Ranch t-shirt designs make their appearance along with the new wildflowers along I-17. Old camping gear gets aired out, new gear gets bought and plans get made for the year's big adventures. Spring is a time of growth and renewal and new things.

Keeping in tune with the season and the times, we are going to be starting some new things with the Grand Canyon Historical Society this year. One is the board's recent decision to start posting old back issues of the *Ol' Pioneer* and bulletin on the GCHS website for access by members and researchers. It is a good way to quickly find old articles or peruse early issues and we hope that it will expand awareness and appreciation of the society's work and research. You can find an initial posting of older issues under the Publications section and more will be added later. Be aware that the online copies will be for archival purposes only... printed hard-copies of the latest *Ol' Pioneer* will continue to be mailed to members only and will not be posted online until at least a year after publication. We are also looking into ways of allowing members to join, pay their dues and share other information online... so keep an eye on the website (www.grandcanyonhistory.org).

Spring is also a time for looking forward. It is hard to believe that it has been more than three years since the last popular Grand Canyon History Symposium. There is a lot of interest in having another symposium in 2012 to coincide with the Arizona statehood centennial. The tremendous success of the last symposium was due in large part to the efforts of numerous volunteers and supporters. Planning and preparing for a third symposium will also require significant time and resources and so a call goes out for volunteers who would like to contribute to the effort. Even if you don't live near the canyon, there will likely be opportunities to help remotely. If you are interested, please contact Lee Albertson (see contact info on the GCHS website). See you in the canyon!

Erik Berg
GCHS President

Cover: A wrangler and his mule string descend through the Tapeats sandstone enroute to Phantom Ranch. Photo courtesy of : Tom Brownold.

Photographer extraordinaire Tom Brownold has a portfolio of photos about the Grand Canyon mules and wranglers. You can see some of them and order prints at www.tombrownold.com.

The *Ol' Pioneer* submission deadlines are going to be roughly January, April, July and October and we will publish either three or four issues a year, depending on content volume.

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

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Submissions to *The Bulletin* should be sent to Karen Greig, kgreig@yahoo.com

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Mules : A Dying Species at Grand Canyon

by Keith Green

The National Park Service is considering severely limiting the historically significant mule rides at Grand Canyon. An Environmental Assessment seeking to do so is out for public review and comment until the end of April. The preferred alternative calls for elimination of the day trips to Plateau Point and Roaring Springs. It would decrease the number of mule rides to Phantom Ranch from twenty to ten mules. There would still be the half-day trips to Supai tunnel. Ten mule rides would go to Uncle Jim's Point. Private stock owners could take

up to 12 animals into the canyon for day trips presumably to Plateau Point or Roaring Springs; six could do an overnight at Phantom. The rules for concessionaire pack mules and Park Service mules remain the same.

The plan actually increases the total number of mule rides on both rims, but it does this by creating mule rides that stay out of the canyon. Forty mule riders per day could ride from Yaki Point to somewhere near Shoshone Point, and forty riders per day could take a one-hour ride along the Ken Patrick Trail (North Rim).

The preferred alternative proposes an adaptive management strategy whereby managers would monitor the trails and possibly further restrict trail use according to trail conditions.

The Park Service wants to limit the number of mule rides inside the canyon mostly because of the damage they do to the trails. Mules almost always walk in a line on the same part of the trails width. This eventually causes a ditch down the middle of the trail. Rainwater or snow melt then runs down the ditch deepening it further.

I've witnessed the trail crew for decades as they have tried different methods to keep the trail ditches from happening. Awhile back they actually widened the trail and created a place for rainwater to run alongside the trail



Mule trains have been riding into the canyon since the trails were built
Photo: National Park Service.

with occasional wooden waterbars to push it across the trail into the canyon. I've seen trail crews laboriously replacing the trail foundation with various sizes of gravel or creating a cobblestone surface by setting slabs of rock on end. The latest strategy has been to make a stair-step effect whenever the trail gets steep. Nothing has lasted more than a few years. The trails are subject to significant erosion due to flooding, rockslides, and more or less continuous use. Limited funding has caused the corridor trails to fall into disrepair. The Bright Angel and Kaibab Trails have become difficult to navigate for hikers and mules. In some areas, alternative trails have been formed because the real trail is rutted or indistinguishable. Support walls and structures need repair. The Park Service claims they need \$3 million per year just to maintain these trails and they've only been getting half that. In addition deferred maintenance costs are up to \$24 million just to get the trails back to their original condition.

A question rises here as to whether mule riders would be willing to pay

more money to increase funding for trail maintenance through higher user fees. Maybe then mule riders would still be able to ride more places in the canyon.

The Park Service also mentions other reasons for restricting mule traffic. Thousands of hikers have complained about road apples (mule droppings) and pee on the trail. All those complaints have finally resulted in action. The Park Service also mentions unpleasant interactions between hikers and mule trips. Whenever hikers and mules meet, unsafe things can happen unless the

mules are given the right-of-way. Apparently this is not well understood especially by foreign hikers. Bud Rippey, who once was a mule guide, told me the story of riding up the trail when a group of Germans were striding down the trail.

"Yer gonna have to stand alongside the trail, or yer gonna get kicked," Bud said.

The hikers kept coming; so bud said it again, (you'll get kicked.)"

Up they came trying to squeeze by the mules; so Bud kicked them!

Mules have been a part of Grand Canyon for more than 130 years. Prospectors used them, John Hance used them, Francois Matthes used mules and horses to map the canyon. In 1903, Dee Woolley, Dave Rust, et al began to improve the route from the South Rim to the North Rim so that it was suitable for mules. The idea was to get tourists from the South Rim to the North Rim and beyond into Southern Utah, and this had to be done by horses or mules. David Rust led a crew to make a horse trail from the North Rim to the river. Then, with much trouble, he was able to string



Damagedone to the corridor canyon trails over the years. North Kaibab trail. Photo: National Park Service.



Rock trail section on South Kaibab. Photo: National Park Service.

a cable across the river and suspend a cable car from it. Rust did all this in order to have a way to get horses and mules across the river where the Black Bridge stands today.. Rust then built a stock trail paralleling what is now the South Kaibab from the river to the Tonto Plateau and across that to Indian Gardens for mule traffic. Ralph Cameron improved the Bright Angel Trail so that mules could use it. In other words, most, if not all, of the canyon trails were built for mule traffic.

Until the 1960s, except in the cases of a few renegades, mules were considered the only way a civilized person would travel into the canyon. Think of the "On the Trail" section of Grofe's Grand Canyon Suite. The mule day trip went all the way to the river before it was shortened to Plateau Point. In past years visitors could ride mules for three days in the canyon with stops at Hermit Camp and Phantom Ranch. Before restrictions, one could ride a mule from both the North and South Rim to the river or across the canyon. The Park Service's new plan seems like just another step toward the eventual elimination of mule traffic in the canyon.

Access into the canyon is another issue. Those who cannot hike that far will not experience the inner canyon unless they are lucky enough to get one of the ten mules to Phantom Ranch. River trips are an alternative, but that requires much more effort, and the views are only from the river if hiking is impossible.

The Environmental Assessment is available on line at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/grca>. Click on the "EA for Mules..." If you want to comment (before April 30), scroll down to "Open for Public Comment" and let them have it no matter what you think. You can also write the Superintendent at P. O. Box 129, Grand Canyon, AZ 86023



Mule train at Windy Ridge on the South Kaibab trail.

Photo: Tom Brownold / www.tombrownold.com



Mules at Phantom Ranch, waiting for their next trip.

The Yellow Brick Road

by Don Lago

At the long-abandoned homestead of John Hance, the first white settler on the rim of the Grand Canyon, I reached down and turned over a broken yellow brick.

It could have been years since anyone had touched this brick. The Hance homestead was seldom visited. Only a few Grand Canyon history buffs even tried to find it, and sometimes they failed to find it. There wasn't much to see there. There was a foundation outline, with bricks and stones scattered around it. There was a stone well that now offered water to no one. There was some rusty old hardware and tin cans. There wasn't much to see there, except for the ghost road of American history, the road that within twenty years had turned John Hance from a hermit into the public persona of one of America's most celebrated landscapes.

Imprinted into one side of the yellow brick were four letters: "ON MO." I immediately surmised where this brick had come from: the town of Fulton, Missouri (Mo), which was only a dozen miles from where I'd grown up. I had seen Fulton's abandoned brick factory quite a few times. My hometown and many small towns in Missouri still had plenty of old brick streets, brick sidewalks, brick buildings, and brick walls, whose bricks were imprinted with the name of the town or brick factory where they were made, including the Fulton imprint. Yet I was surprised to find a Fulton brick way out here, over a thousand miles from Fulton. There must have been many perfectly good brick factories that were closer, some of them much closer. By what logic or chance of history had a Fulton brick found its way here? There was a story here, a mystery, and perhaps it was the story of John Hance himself, of America itself, the story of a road, a westward tide, that had carried not just bricks and men but a whole na-

tion to its western destiny.

Fulton bricks were loaded with history, though very few people knew it. One of the few who did was the man who was president of the United States on the day I found the Fulton brick at John Hance's place. It was Fulton bricks that had inflicted upon this president a horrible accident. A pile of Fulton bricks had collapsed upon him, pushing him onto a railroad track, pushing him into the path of an oncoming train, which had run over his legs, resulting in them being amputated. Except that it turned out that the train didn't really run over his legs. His legs were amputated by a sadistic doctor who wanted to make sure that his daughter didn't marry a man who was beneath her.

If you are having trouble remembering which recent American president had his legs amputated by a sadistic doctor, it's not because you are a poor student of American history. Only movie history. I first visited the Hance homestead in 1988, when Ronald Reagan was president. If Reagan had been able to land more roles like that of Drake McHugh in *Kings Row*, he probably would have remained a Hollywood actor and never switched to politics. The movie critics agree that *Kings Row* was Reagan's best movie. Reagan thought so too. *Kings Row* was based on a 1940 bestselling novel by Henry Bellamann, a native of Fulton. The fictional town of King's Row wasn't nearly fictional enough for the residents of Fulton, who were appalled at seeing themselves depicted as sadists, murderers, swindlers, mental cases, snobs, and pompous hypocrites. To this day some Fulton residents begrudge *Kings Row*.

Reagan's Drake McHugh, after being robbed of his life savings by a runaway banker, is reduced to working in the local train yard. One winter night he is waving a signal lantern beside a moving train when the stack of bricks behind him falls. In the novel, the bricks are on a wooden wagon

that is sitting atop an earthen bank, which collapses due to a recent thaw. In the movie the bricks are sitting on the train platform and collapse for no obvious reason, and in fact the engineer yells out a warning a split second before the bricks begin to fall. We see Reagan disappear beneath the bricks, and then we see his tin coffee pot being crushed by the train wheels. When Reagan wakes up in bed he looks beneath the blanket and cries out in horror: "Where's the rest of me?" With the help of his steadfast girlfriend, played by Ann Sheridan, Reagan recovers his self-confidence and goes into business building a subdivision for the workers of the clay pits and brick factory.

In the novel and movie the brick accident is set in the year 1900, at a time when John Hance was still living at his original homestead. Later he would move to a cabin near the Bright Angel Lodge, where he would entertain tourists with his tall tales. If John Hance was writing this article, then the very bricks that knocked down Drake McHugh/Ronald Reagan would be gathered up and put onboard a train heading west. The bricks would pass cowboys and Indians and aging Wild West towns like Dodge City and head into the mountains and find their way to John Hance's homestead.

Even if the bricks at Hance's homestead had missed out on the excitement of conking and amputating a future president (and in truth, the bricks in the movie are larger than normal bricks like the ones at Hance's), they still had taken part in the unlikely adventure of migrating to the Grand Canyon and sheltering a character like John Hance.

I wandered around the homestead and found an unbroken brick inscribed with "FULTON MO." Most of the bricks here bore no name. Most of the bricks were light yellow, which meant they were firebricks, manufactured to withstand greater heat than



Captain John Hance's Cabin, Grand Canyon. Photo by Emery Kolb. NAU Cline Library, Emery Kolb collection. NAU.PH.568.11150.

were the red bricks used for most construction purposes. Perhaps these firebricks had formed John Hance's fireplace or chimney. Or perhaps once tourists began staying here, Hance had built an outdoor grill to cook for them. Or perhaps Hance was so far from the nearest hardware store that he had to take whatever he could get.

I found only one other brick that was inscribed with the name of a town: "COFFEYVILLE," a town in Kansas. Coffeyville too was baked with history, with Wild West lore. In the late 1800s Coffeyville was a cow town where cowboys brought cattle to the railroad and then lived it up and shot it out. Coffeyville was never as famous as Dodge City, but it won its spurs one day in 1892 when the Dalton gang rode into town to rob two banks and got into a gunfight with citizens, who killed most of the gang. If John Hance was telling this story, he would no doubt point to a knick on his Coffeyville brick and swear it was from a bullet that had struck a pile of bricks on the platform at the Coffeyville train station, bricks waiting to be loaded onto a train to Arizona. Hance might also claim that his brick was manufactured by the same hands that had wielded a gun and shot the Dalton gang. The time frame would be correct: The Dalton raid occurred the year before John Hance settled on the South Rim.

I decided that sometime when I went through Fulton, Missouri, I'd try to learn more about its brick history.

Both the novel and the movie of *Kings Row* begin with an image of bricks, of "the public-school building—Kings Rows special pride...It was a red brick building, luxuriantly gothic—a bewildering arrangement of gables, battlements, and towers." On the same page we see "the old brick sidewalks, uneven after many years." After learning that both the richest man in town and the poor European immigrants live in brick houses, we visit the town cemetery: "Absently, he noted the brickwork supporting the moss-covered slab... He thought the brickwork was a

good job—"A damn good job," he said aloud."

A century after this scene I walked into a downtown still full of brick buildings, brick sidewalks, and brick streets.

There are lots of Missouri towns made mostly of brick because there is lots of clay there, high quality clay for making high quality bricks, especially firebricks. There is lots of clay there because during the Pennsylvanian period, when the Appalachian Mountains were at their peak, far larger than the Rockies today, rivers full of sediment were draining off to the west and forming thick deposits. Twenty miles north of Fulton these clay deposits would give rise to a firebrick factory that would supply the bricks to build many major steel mills and later the launch pad that absorbed the fire of Apollo moon rockets. The A. P. Green brick company would also produce a family fortune and a son who became a longtime Missouri governor and U. S. senator. The town that A. P. Green built, named Mexico, still calls itself "The firebrick capital of the world."

This was a good reason why Fulton bricks might end up at the Grand Canyon: they were good bricks. But not, apparently, good enough for Fulton. I walked up Main Street to where half a block of the street had been excavated to repair underground pipes. Now workmen were laying the old bricks back atop the filed-in dirt, carefully arranging them like jigsaw pieces. The workmen were laying the bricks with their inscribed side facing down, but from the stack of bricks I could see the inscription on them: MOBERLY MO. Moberly was a town forty miles from here. I asked the workmen why Fulton, with its huge brick factory only a mile from here, didn't have Fulton bricks on its own Main Street. They only laughed. Soon afterward I visited Hannibal, Missouri, and I noticed that the old brick street in front of Mark Twain's boyhood house also consisted of Moberly bricks. So why wasn't it Moberly bricks or Mexico bricks at John Hance's homestead?

I walked back down Main Street, looking at all the brick buildings, some of them made entirely of yellow firebrick. The woodwork on the buildings was nicely maintained and painted. Like thousands of American towns, by the 1950s Fulton had decided that nineteenth-century brick and wood was old-fashioned and began covering its downtown with steel sheeting and tile. But in the 1980s Fulton decided that maybe brick wasn't really so ugly.

I went into the county history museum. They had one exhibit about Fulton bricks, including photos and several sample bricks.

The first firebrick factory in Fulton opened soon after the Civil War, but it was a modest operation, using shovels to fill a barrel with clay and using "a gentle mule," harnessed to a wooden shaft, to walk around the barrel and stir the clay. In 1885—soon after John Hance settled on the South Rim—an ambitious brick operation began, intending to market bricks outside of town, though sometimes the factory sat idle due to lack of orders. But gradually business improved and the factory expanded, and by 1902 it employed 130 men. A major breakthrough occurred when railroad companies began buying Fulton firebricks to line the fireboxes of their steam locomotives, fitting for a town named for Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steam engine. Did John Hance's bricks smoke their way west in a Santa Fe Railway locomotive and then get replaced and discarded? Perhaps the Santa Fe Railway brought a supply of Fulton firebricks to the South Rim when it arrived in 1901. Then again, the timing seems off. The railways didn't adopt Fulton bricks in a big way until 1909, and by then John Hance's Grandview tourist business was dead and he had no need to build anything.

Someone did haul some Fulton bricks to Anita, the copper mines about fifteen miles south of the South Rim. The Anita mines were opened by Buckey O'Neill in 1897. Over a century later, archaeologists examining an Anita mine shaft recorded

that it held Fulton bricks. If the Anita mines had a pile of extra bricks, John Hance could have obtained his from there.

I drove out to the abandoned Fulton brick factory. Along the way I came to a railroad crossing, with a stop sign. This was the railroad spur to the brick factory. The spur had been abandoned years ago and the tracks removed and paved over, but the old stop sign was still there, requiring everyone to stop for ghost trains, for the roar of the past. This was the sort of town Fulton was, a town that was still enthralled by the glories of the Confederacy, glories that in 1861 prompted Fulton to secede from the United States even when the rest of slave-owning Missouri refused to do so. When I'd been in the county history museum I'd overheard two local ladies looking through old photographs, saying how glorious it would be to find a photo of their ancestor wearing his Confederate uniform. It was such compositities that had made Fulton such rich raw material for Henry Bellamann, and why many locals still regarded Bellamann as a traitor.

Along the way to the brick factory I paused at the original brickworks, which had been abandoned in 1948. Today it was the city maintenance department yard, yet it still held one kiln and one smokestack. It was this brickworks that Harvey Butchart saw in operation when he moved to Fulton in 1939 to teach college.

For three years Harvey Butchart smelled the smoke of the factory that had made the bricks that somehow found their way to the rim of the Grand Canyon. Butchart was only a few years away from finding his own way to the rim of the Grand Canyon, and to John Hance's trail into the canyon, and to decades of obsession with hiking the canyon. Did Harvey Butchart ever wander over to John Hance's homestead and turn over a brick and smell that old Fulton smoke again?

The original brickworks was right next to William Woods College, where Harvey taught math. William

Woods was a women's college in the southern style, where Scarlet O'Haras came to become proper Southern ladies, where the most essential skills were horseback riding, music, and dress fashions, but not math. To this day the William Woods campus is dominated by huge horse stables and arenas, and many students walk around campus in riding pants and boots. Harvey was teaching in Fulton when *Kings Row* was published and came out as a movie, and he undoubtedly heard great outrage about it. After three years, Harvey left for a high-quality college in Yankee Iowa.

I found my way to the brick factory that had opened in 1948. Its huge metal building and water tower were rusting, its old clay quarries full of weeds. In 1962 this factory had produced 100,000 bricks every day. But the age of American steel mills, steam locomotives, and basement furnaces had ended.

On my way out of town I stopped at the other Fulton college, Westminster. It was the venerable British name of Westminster, plus the fact that Westminster College was in President Harry Truman's home state, that prompted Truman to invite Winston Churchill to Westminster's yellow-brick gymnasium to deliver his "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946. Today the campus commemorates the speech with a Christopher Wren chapel, bombed out in World War II and later shipped to Fulton and rebuilt. The basement holds a Winston Churchill museum. One exhibit is a chaotic pile of broken bricks, portraying a bombed London house. I tried to pick up a brick to see if it was actually a Fulton brick, but it was glued down. I thought of how the asbestos that John Hance mined from the Grand Canyon was reportedly shipped to London for use as fireproofing; perhaps it helped to save buildings in the war.

A display on Churchill's personal life included three bricks and a trowel. Two photos showed Churchill enjoying his hobby of bricklaying at his estate: "Churchill constructed several new buildings with his own hands... Proud of his skill as a bricklayer, he

took out an apprentice card in the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers."

As Churchill entered the yellow-brick college gymnasium, did he glance up to inspect its workmanship? If history had twisted differently, the bricks that ended up on the rim of the Grand Canyon, shielding John Hance's labors to obtain the asbestos that aided Winston Churchill's labors to save London from fire, could have ended up being admired by Churchill's glance. Or Churchill could have failed to see a brick because it was lying on the rim of the Grand Canyon, or being picked up at that very moment by Harvey Butchart, who suddenly smelled that old familiar smoke.

I didn't usually go near Coffeyville, Kansas, but now I was curious to see what stories its brick might hold. After all, Kansas was the home of Dorothy, who followed the yellow brick road to adventure. I imagined that if John Hance's Coffeyville brick could speak, then when it landed on the rim of the Grand Canyon it would have said: "Something tells me I'm not in Kansas anymore."

Downtown Coffeyville was mostly brick buildings, but most of it remained covered with 1960s steel sheeting. And most of it was abandoned. Whole rows of stores were empty, with peeling walls and old shelves covered with dirt. Coffeyville made quite a contrast with its neighboring town of Independence, Kansas, which had a vibrant downtown full of shops and cafes and people. Independence had long ago removed its steel disguise and restored its original brick architecture.

Now the only reason visitors visited downtown Coffeyville was for a brief moment of Wild West greed and violence. On October 5, 1892 the Dalton gang rode into town and tried to rob two banks at once, leading to a shoot-out in which four of the five gang members died, and four town defenders. Today the biggest annual event in town is the "Dalton Defenders Days," with a reenactment of the shoot-out, all-day musical entertain-

ment, chuckwagon feasts, crafts, games, a cake walk, and a 5k run. Unfortunately for tourism, the Dalton defenders didn't have the foresight to shoot the Dalton gang on the plaza where a large crowd could watch, but in a narrow alley, now known as "Death Alley."

I walked up Death Alley, where the outlines of four bodies were painted on the ground. The alley also held the stone jail—bricks weren't sturdy enough—that had been here in 1892. I put 50¢ into a bulky old metal tape player machine and it played a song and told me the story of the Dalton raid, to which a light went on inside the jail, showing me dummies of the four dead Daltons, a scene copied from a famous photograph.

If history had twisted differently, then the Coffeyville brick that had landed on the rim of the Grand Canyon could have ended up in Death Alley, pooling with blood and fame. Perhaps it was only a whim of chance, only a random pick or a fifteen-second difference, that sent one pallet of bricks into a local alley and the adjacent pallet onto a train heading west. John Hance's brick went on its own Wild West adventure, not untouched by a lust for wealth, but whereas the Dalton gang sought instant wealth, John Hance undertook labors so long and extravagant and unrewarding that it's hard to avoid the conclusion that he was motivated more by the wealth of his Grand Canyon experiences, which included the deep peace and beauty of living in a forest on the canyon rim, far from the hustle and gunfire of rough towns.

I checked out one of the banks the Daltons had robbed, and then visited the Dalton Defenders Museum, which held the Dalton's guns and saddles. The museum also served as the town history museum, and it included displays on Coffeyville bricks. One display case held 31 designs of local bricks, half of them bearing the name "Coffeyville," usually as part of the name of one of the five brick companies in town. Together those companies produced 765,000 bricks every day, in 1900. Some designs

were geometric, and others pictorial, such as sunflowers, stars, or an oxen yoke. It seemed Coffeyville was famous for its red paving bricks, not firebricks. The most famous Coffeyville brick said simply "DON'T SPIT ON SIDEWALK," which in the age when tuberculosis killed one in every 500 Americans, was often public law. Coffeyville's anti-spit bricks have been seen in sidewalks all over America, and from Paris to China.

John Hance's brick was made at the Coffeyville Vitrified Brick and Tile Company, started in 1894, the largest factory in town. I found an aerial photo of their massive plant in 1925, with two large shale pits, one already abandoned and filled with water. Since the edge of this photo showed the downtown, I now knew where to find the pit from which John Hance's brick had started its journey.

The pit was still there, still a lake, fringed by large chaotic piles of bricks. Ducks paddled on the lake. The factory building was still there, now serving as some sort of foundry.

The bricks along the lakeshore must have been there for many decades, soaking up water and cold and summer sun, slowly cracking open and shedding dust, dissolving back into the earth from which they had arisen. Their clay had remained underground for 200 million years, vibrating with the footsteps of dinosaurs, vibrating with the impacts of asteroids, and then one day it was peeled to the sunlight, lifted up by strange limbs, and shaped for purposes unimaginable to rocks. At least one chunk of the clay journeyed to a distant deep canyon where the rocks told tales about time and erosion and transformation and uplift, tall tales as unlikely as any tales John Hance ever told. Inspired by the canyon's talent at erosion, the brick now sat cracking open and shedding dust, dust that flowed into a drainage and over the canyon rim and down, down through layer after layer of rock, down through the Supai layer that had been laid down at the same time this clay was being laid down in the future Kansas, down into Hance

Creek, down into the Colorado River, downriver to help erode the canyon deeper. A journey stranger than Oz.

When I had first contacted the Coffeyville museum about their brick history, they'd put me in touch with a local man, Norm Roller, who was the expert on Coffeyville bricks. Norm told me that if I ever came to town he'd show me his brick collection. Now I gave Norm a call, and he gave me directions to his house a few miles out of town. After I'd seen the display of bricks in the museum, I expected that Norm would show me a similar collection, so I wasn't sure if this visit would be worthwhile.

Norm greeted me and led me to a small barn in his backyard, where he kept his bricks. I started thinking that Norm's collection must not be very important to him if he kept it stashed away in a barn, behind some rusty tractor. Norm unlocked a padlock and opened the door and turned on the lights. I was staring at thousands of bricks, row after row of tall shelves full of bricks, a whole barn packed with bricks.

Norm started pointing out the geographical arrangement of the bricks, by state and by country. Norm had bricks from all over the world. Almost all of the bricks were imprinted with their place or company of origin, or with decorative symbols like stars or animals. Some bricks held company logos, such as bricks the Santa Fe Railway had used for its station platforms. There were commemorative bricks for celebrating town centennials or sports victories. There were bricks bearing the faces of Abraham Lincoln and Daffy Duck.

At the large section of Kansas bricks, both red and yellow bricks, Norm pointed out the bricks from Buffalo, Kansas, and said they were the best bricks in America, the best clay fired very hard. The Buffalo brick factory, fifty miles from here, had closed only a few years ago. The bricks made in Coffeyville varied from top-quality to too-crumblily, made with too much sand. When the age of automobiles began, thousands of towns started paving their

dirt streets with bricks, extra-thick bricks laid two deep. But with time, and with heavier automobiles, people saw that brick streets buckled and crumbled and were harder to maintain than asphalt or concrete streets. Even in Coffeyville the brick streets got paved over. Many towns still had a Redwall strata of Coffeyville bricks hidden under a succession of asphalt strata.

Were Coffeyville bricks ever used on the streets and sidewalks of the South Rim? Perhaps John Hance found his there. Or perhaps he found them in Williams or Flagstaff, to which they'd hitched a ride on the Santa Fe Railway, which does run through Kansas, if 100 miles from Coffeyville (and through Missouri, 75 miles from Fulton). But why didn't John Hance have a brick from Bufalo, Kansas? As Norm's brick collection showed, it remained against the odds that Hance would have the bricks he did.

It seemed that Norm belonged to a subculture of devoted brick lovers and collectors; Norm used to travel to brick collectors fairs all over the country. Norm had been a building contractor in town, so he appreciated bricks for their practical uses as well as their historical and artistic interest. Norm's barn was famous in the world of brick collectors, who visited him from all over.

Yet even Norm could only guess how bricks from Coffeyville and Fulton (of course, Norm had some bricks from Fulton) had ended up at a remote cabin on the rim of the Grand Canyon.

The mysterious bricks were a good symbol of the mystery of John Hance himself, for there was plenty of mystery in how John Hance had ended up living on the rim of the Grand Canyon.

Like the Fulton brick, John Hance had migrated to the canyon from Missouri. Being from Missouri, I was curious about Hance's Missouri roots. Hance was always reticent about his past. He said only that he was born in Tennessee, and that he joined the Civil War army in Missouri, first the Con-

federate army, then the Union army. But Hance's niece later dismissed the claim that Hance had ever been a Confederate soldier, saying that the Hances were loyal Unionists.

I traced John Hance's family to a homestead near Rolla, in the Missouri Ozarks. I once tried to visit the homestead, but found that it was private pastureland, blocked by a gate. It was in a hollow rimmed by 100-foot-tall ridges, with a lush green floor. I did find a nearby cemetery that held a dozen Hance graves, though at the time I wasn't sure how they might be related to John Hance. Several related Hance families had moved from Tennessee to the Rolla area around 1850. Today there were dozens of Hance families in the area, and they held an annual Hance family reunion. But when I began contacting Hances, I couldn't find anyone who had heard of John Hance. I explained to them that John Hance was a Grand Canyon legend, an American legend, with a creek, a rapid, and a trail named for him, with rangers impersonating him, with history buffs seeking out his grave. I did find someone who offered to act as my ambassador at the next Hance family reunion, to ask for memories of John Hance. But she reported that not one Hance had ever heard of John Hance. Of course, since these were Hances I was dealing with, it was entirely possible they were all lying.

The Missouri Ozarks seemed a logical place for John Hance to have come from. It was full of tall limestone cliffs—tall by Midwestern standards, 300 feet tall. John Hance's county, Phelps County, has one of the highest numbers of caves of any county in America. The area was such an important mining area that Rolla established a mining college, still there today as the engineering and geology campus of the University of Missouri. Growing up with limestone cliffs, switchback trails, and mines, John Hance would have felt at home in the Grand Canyon.

I also found a likely reason for John Hance's reticence about his past. He had indeed joined the Confeder-

ate army and been captured, as he'd admitted. Hance also claimed he'd been converted and joined the Union army. But I found Hance's Civil War record, and it turned out that Hance had spent the last two years of the war in a prison camp, Fort Delaware, one of the most squalid of Union prison camps. It seemed that John Hance had tried to cover up his Confederate and POW years, which his pro-union relatives wouldn't want to hear. A large majority of tourists at the Grand Canyon during Hance's years were from Yankee states, and it would have stolen the romance from John Hance's Wild West persona if people knew he'd been a Confederate soldier and a prisoner in a notorious prison.

John Hance's history in the nearly two decades between the end of the Civil War and his arrival at the Grand Canyon is vague, but we see John Hance popping up here and there as a character in America's Wild West saga. Right after the war John Hance was working for Lorenzo Hickok, the brother of Wild Bill Hickok, hauling supplies to army forts on the plains. Lorenzo Hickok was a friend of John's brother, George Hance, who in some history books is the man who attached the nickname "Wild Bill" to Wild Bill Hickok. John Hance followed George's westward path to Arizona, where they settled in Camp Verde, running a store and farm. In 1881 John Hance was driving a stage coach near Flagstaff when it was robbed of \$125,000, which was never recovered, keeping treasure hunters busy for years to come. This was the era when prospecting was booming in Arizona, and John Hance seemed to feel that he was the larger-than-life man needed to take on a Grand Canyon landscape that was too big and too difficult for most men.

It was all a mystery to clay. Clay was content to sit underground for 200 million years. Supai clay was content never to wonder if it had been unearthed by rain or by the shovel of John Hance building a trail, a trail that was the farthest tentacle of a restless searching that had filled the continent with trails. Clay couldn't grasp the

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dreams of men or nations, the vision of a beckoning frontier, of land and gold and freedom and adventure and natural beauty. But clay joined into the dream and the adventure, journeying with it, mapping it out, sheltering it, cooking for it, warming it, adding to its energy, adding to the national story that required heroes like John Hance to tell tales as tall as the Rockies and the canyon cliffs.



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¹ Henry Bellamann, *King's Row* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940) p 4.

² *Ibid*, p 4.

³ *Ibid*, p 108.