

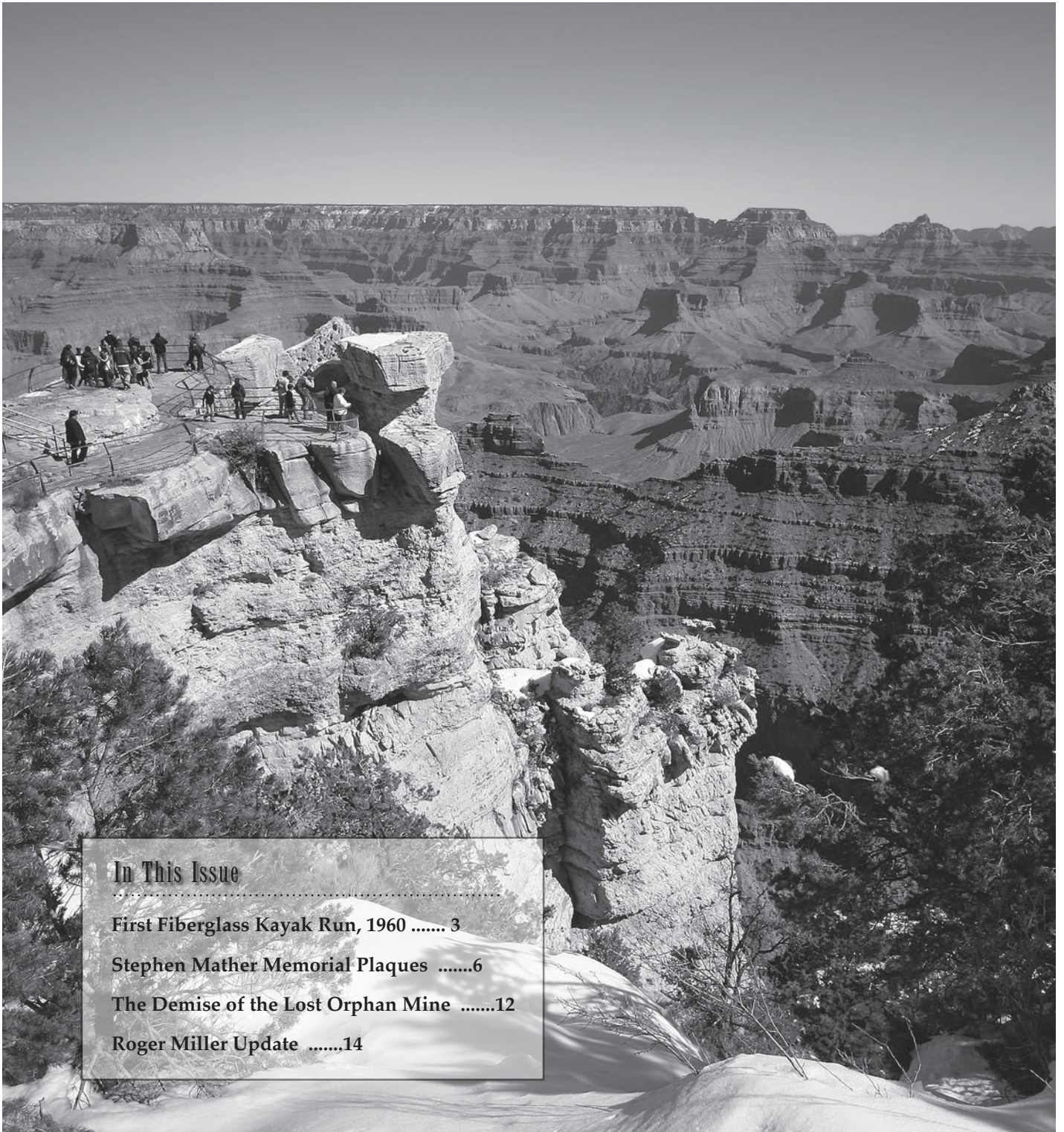
The Ol' Pioneer

The Magazine of the Grand Canyon Historical Society

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Fall 2010



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President's Letter

Next year will be a busy one for the Grand Canyon Historical Society. Under the guidance of Lee Albertson and in corporation with the Grand Canyon Association and Grand Canyon National Park, we are in the process of planning a third Grand Canyon History Symposium for January 2012 to coincide with the Arizona State Centennial. The two previous symposiums (2002 and 2007) were extremely popular and the registrations sold out long in advance. The excellent presenters covered a wide range of canyon topics from the controversial to the obscure and the published proceedings have become a valuable resource to canyon historians.

Even though the next symposium is planned for early 2012, most of the work and preparation will need to be done over the next year including soliciting and selecting papers, identifying keynote speakers and handling the multitude of logistical and organizational tasks associated with coordinating an event of this size. A number of GCHS members have stepped forth and volunteered to assist – without their help, a symposium would not have been possible. During the upcoming GCHS board meeting, we will finalize plans and committees and get things moving.

We can always use more help and those that are still interested in supporting the symposium effort should feel free to contact myself or Lee. Moreover, there are always plenty of opportunities to assist in the running of the Grand Canyon Historical Society itself and supporting its goals of promoting and sharing the history of the canyon. If you have been doing some research, consider writing an article for the *Ol' Pioneer*. If you know an interesting speaker or group activity, send in a suggestion. If you are interested in helping out with board activities, contact myself or one of the board members. The plans for the next year offer some great opportunities to promote history and grow the GCHS, but as an all-volunteer organization, we are only as strong as our members. So as this year comes to an end and we start making plans for the next, consider adding the GCHS to your New Year's resolutions.

Erik Berg
GCHS President

Cover: Mather Point, Grand Canyon National Park.

Louis Schellbach's name was misspelled in a couple instances in the previous issue of the *Ol' Pioneer*, and for that the editor takes full responsibility. Typos happen. Sorry.

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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The First Fiberglass Kayak Run Through Grand Canyon, 1960

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. YUJI OISHI,
PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE 1960 KAYAK RIVER
TRIP

by Tom Martin PT

In June of 1960, Walter Kirschbaum piloted his homemade fiberglass kayak on the Colorado River through Grand Canyon. Kirschbaum is credited as being the first paddler to kayak the entire Canyon running all the river's rapids, and the first to use a fiberglass kayak.

Kirschbaum learned to kayak in his homeland of Germany, and raced his boats before he began to enjoy exploring remote rivers more than he enjoyed racing. In 1953, Kirschbaum won the Kayak Slalom World Championship.

Obtaining a permit to paddle Grand Canyon required, as Kirschbaum put it, "rather rugged methods", including a thirty minute shouting match between Grand Canyon National Park Ranger Dan Davis and Kirschbaum's attorney friend Tyson Dines.

One of Davis's requirements for providing Kirschbaum with a Grand Canyon river runners permit was that Kirschbaum had to kayak Cataract Canyon first. After successfully running Cataract Canyon, which Kirschbaum noted required "more skill in dodging rocks than any rapid in the Grand Canyon at 40,000 second feet", Kirschbaum received a permit from Davis to run the river.

Walter and his wife Ruth built the fourteen foot long by nineteen inch wide fiberglass kayak in their attic in Denver Colorado, lowering it out the attic window once it was done.

Accompanying Kirschbaum were Dines in his Peterborough freight canoe with an 18 horsepower outboard, and Bus Hatch, running a motorized pontoon boat with oar assist. There were twelve participants in all, and the Colorado River was running about 42,000 cubic feet per second.



In order to keep up with the motor boats, Kirschbaum would head out of camp before the others, and would wait for their company at major rapids.

While making a right to left run at Hance Rapid, all went well until Kirschbaum was rolled over in the rapid's tailwaves. Sucked out of his kayak and stripped of his paddle by a powerful whirlpool, Kirschbaum swam through the "pleasantly warm" (pre-dam) river water to his kayak where he retrieved his spare paddle off the back of his boat.

With new paddle in hand, Kirschbaum rode his upside down kayak to a small beach where he bailed out his boat, then gave chase for his paddle. Once he caught up to his paddle, he pulled to shore and waited for the other two boats.

Dan Davis had asked Kirschbaum to portage Lava Falls, but Kirschbaum ran it left of the Ledge Hole, and found it an easier run than "many another rapid in the Grand". What troubled him most was eating his way through all of his food by day three.

Kirschbaum went on to run other

sections of the Colorado River, including the first kayak runs of Gore Canyon, Cross Mountain of the Yampa, and the Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

Kirschbaum's kayak had no foot or thigh braces, and no seat, as he believed that to use more than what he considered the minimum of equipment was a sacrilegious insult to the natural purity of the canyons he so loved.

Walter Kirschbaum tragically died in New Mexico in 1972.

.....

This summer I was fortunate enough to make contact with one of the participants of the 1960 river trip who filmed the expedition, eighty-nine year old Dr. Yuji Oishi. What follows is from a series of interviews I had with Dr. Oishi.

How did you come to the United States?

I came to Denver to get away from a real busy medical practice in Tokyo, Japan, and I wanted to ski, so I ap-

plied for a St Luke's Medical Center opening in Denver, Colorado. I was allowed to come in and live in Hospital as in-house medical staff in the summer of 1955, and I was allowed to practice medicine for 4 years. That ended in 1959, and I liked it in Denver so well that I didn't want to leave. If I wanted to practice medicine, I would have to go back to Tokyo. To practice Medicine in Colorado, I would have to go again to the last two years of Medical School. I would have had to go over basic science again, and English was not my mother language, so I abandoned medicine and began a new career as a photographer.

How did you hear about the Kirschbaum river trip?

Dr. Hugh McMillan urged me to go on the river boat trip to be the photographer. Dr. McMillan was a surgeon at St. Luke's and had a private practice.

I had a Bolex with a big zooming lens that shot 100ft rolls of 16mm film, but I had no case to carry it in. I wanted a 70\$-80\$ watertight bag to carry my camera, but the trip participants said that was too expensive, so one of the trip participants had an old Kodak with a 50 ft reel, with an interchangeable lens, so I bought ten or less 50 foot magazines of Ektachrome. The Kodak is a spring wound camera, I must have had a couple of Exacta German camera's, maybe 100mm semi telephoto lens, with a bunch of Ektachrome film to make slides, and during those 7-8 days I shot about 1000 slide film frames and close to 1000 feet of film movie, and I had no knowledge of what a river trip is or anything.

What do you recall about the river trip?

There were 10 or 11 local people who were willing to go. One was an architect, Dudley Smith, one guy was a hardware store owner, there was Dr. McMillan, and Tyson "Ty" Dines who had invited Walter Kirschbaum, and Ty's friend who was willingly assisting with the entire operation. Ty and his friend drove Ty's old Chevy or GMC van, Dr. McMillan had a Pon-

tiac station wagon, and a trailer with folded up rubber boat with all kinds of wooden material to be tied up to the rubber boat, with mounts for a small outboard motor, with oars.

There was a young man named Davis, I forget his first name, and he and I drove the station wagon. We left Denver prior to the actual departure of the river trip heading on US 40 or US 6 toward Grand Junction, and we shopped at Grand Junction for food, then headed to the starting point at Lee's Ferry.

We drove to Marble Canyon Lodge and then up the river to Lee's Ferry, and we unloaded the trailer. Ty Dines friend and the Davis boy took a day or two to pump up the rubber boat manually while Ty and I drove to Temple Bar. Another river boat trip just prior to us had arrived with a bunch of ladies, and among them was Ty Dines wife. Ty and his wife stayed at the Temple Bar lodge and I camped at the camp site all by myself, stayed overnight, and the next morning a Cessna plane picked us up and took Mr. and Mrs. Dines and me on a site-seeing trip and eventually to Marble Canyon.

Soon a De Havilland landed at Marble Canyon airstrip with the rest of our party, and we all got on some sort of transport to Lee's Ferry. I met Kirschbaum there at the Lodge, and he came in a little European automobile, it only looked like it had two cylinders, with a kayak on the roof, and I rode with him to Lee's Ferry, and we were finally ready to leave.

There was the wooden canoe on top of the van that Ty Dines unloaded. There was a large black pontoon with a painted red frame, with wooden boards, with all kinds of foodstuff and things loaded mostly on the rubber pontoon. The wooden canoe held 4 people, and Kirschbaum with his Kayak, and we started off. I was urged to bring a musical instrument, and I had a 120 button piano accordion, so I brought it in a suitcase and wrapped it in a tarp.

Right before the first rapid, we went to shore, and I got off and we went along the shore and got up fair-

ly high and they left me there with my tripod and camera and I waited for them to come down and I filmed those three boats on most every major rapid. After they passed and landed at the next mooring spot, I went down to them and joined them and then I got back on the boat.

In the film, there are pictures of your group swimming in clear water. Where were you swimming?

We went up the Little Colorado to swim, and we went up to Havasu Falls. In Havasu Falls there was blue colored water. We climbed up to the cliff and jumped in.

What else do you recall about the 1960 river trip?

We just took off in three separate vessels, and I forgot to mention there was a fare young lady from Germany by the name of Rosie. She was a guest of Walter, she came on board to our big rubber boat, and on the way we got acquainted better, and I believe we drank beer a lot. I do not drink allot myself, even now, my intake is maybe a little can or bottle and I split that with my wife.

Rosie didn't speak English, and I had studied some German in school, but I was not good in speaking German. We would sit side by side and try to communicate but not to successfully. We would all go along side by side for the easy parts, and right before starting for the rapids, we'd moor the boats, hike to a point where I would set up my camera, and they would all go back to the boats, and I would wait to film them, I'd pan the camera and follow traveling of the three boats one after the other, and then they would come and get me and I would go to the boat, again and again.

The day would end early and we would find a nice sandy beach, and prepare for camping. We would spread our sleeping bags, and have a campfire, a nice dinner, and we would wash our individual dishes in the river and use the river sand as detergent, it was not that complicated. I played music for them, and one of the gentlemen took his own Rum.

I don't remember how we managed our drinking water. I had a little soda, but not much. The daytime temperature was 120°, and we needed lots of fluid, but I don't recall how we managed that. There was firewood laying around all the time, and we did make fires, to cook on, and after dark we put on a cardigan in the evening as it would get cool.

In the daytime we are almost naked, we wore some deck type shoes and there were no flip flops. I got very sun burned. We all purchased white brimmed straw hats and we wore them out by the end of the trip. We did not protect our skin with shirts.

We saw a group of two rubber pontoons that took off right before we took off at Lee's Ferry, and we caught up with them at Lava Falls. [Georgie Elephant Rig and her triple Ten Man tcm] We caught up with this trip at Lava and I shot a photo of one of their boats folded when they ran the rapid.

Two ladies on that trip were injured in Lava and we camped that night near them. Dr. McMillan and I went in the evening to their camp and helped one lady with a sprained ankle. We made an appropriate splint, and we did not mingle. It took a lot of beach for us all to camp. We took time on each rapid, and enjoyed the trip.

In some of the camps, we found some funny quicksand type by the river and we acted like we were fighting, they buried their feet until they were a half boots length in the sand and we had good fun with that.

At the Little Colorado we went upstream into the real blue water. The entire river was muddy, but the Little Colorado was blue and with white sand. We moored our boat and we didn't see the other party after that evening. I don't know how far upstream we went, but we moored the boat and there were huge rocks nearby, and with clear water we swum around the boat. I didn't go into the water too often, and as I was from the Japanese Navy, I was teased a lot. We spent lots of time in Havasu River, as there was a pool of water under a high ledge, and some of us dove in from the ledge.

On the last part of the river trip Bus started up a little motor and Ty Dines motored too, and Kirschbaum loaded his kayak on the boat and we motored out on a peaceful lake with no oar handling. The oars were used in the rapids, and we floated with the river. It was only at Lake Mead that we used an outboard motor at the tail end of the boat. In Lake Mead we saw some interesting country and we did a little site seeing in Lake Mead before we arrived at Temple Bar. We folded up the boats and loaded them up on a trailer, with all the oars, and containers. We had loaves and loaves of bread to eat, and we had no coolers and no ice.

What do you remember about Walter Kirschbaum?

Walter was a real nice gentle guy, and I really enjoyed his company. He was not included in the budget of our trip, and he sat down by the river all by himself to eat. With a knife he cut some hard German bread, the round loaf was about the size of a small child's head. He would carve a quarter inch thick slice of bread, he had some cheese, and he ate by himself. Then, when he ran out of food, he was a guest of our river household after that. I also remember some people spread out a large sized map describing all the rapids and they contemplated future river rapids, but I was not too familiar with that.

Walter had an old battered up Jeep station wagon, green and white, and he parked it in my backyard for a couple of three months, and he went to Germany. When he came back, he came back with his wife Ruth and two young boys, and they came to visit with us, and we served them some steak, and Ruth and Walter cut the meet up and separated the fat and meet, and fed the fat to the boys. That really impressed me.

In Colorado, each automobile needed an inspection sticker, and his car needed a lot of work. The boys had picked up some dirt from the yard and stuck it in the fuel tank. We unloaded the fuel tank and we needed some epoxy glue to fix the fuel tank, and I

had a good friend who ran a garage, a Japanese man, the landlord of my old apartment, and I sent Walter to my friends garage. Walter took the jeep to my friend, mentioned my name, and my friend took care of Walters jeep and gave him a sticker. I heard later that Walter took to drinking.

After the trip, we communicated with the participants a number of times, I took the movie to show them, and they really enjoyed my movies, and someone said we need to make duplicates so I had three copies made, and I have one copy. The trip was in the early part of June, 1960.

I named my movie "12 Who Dared" after the 1960 Disney movie "Ten Who Dared". At Temple Bar, we lined up and someone took a film of us all, and the Davis boy gave me a hug. It's in the film. There is no way I can trace the 1000 color slides.

I was capable of processing Kodak Ektachrome myself, and I processed all of my slide film myself, and mounted them myself, and I showed the slides whenever I showed the movie, but the color slides had no original and I surrendered all the slides to the people on the trip.

The movies would have been Kodachrome and I eventually processed my own film, but in 1960 I was not quite ready to process the film, but I spliced the films together myself, and the splicing held while I showed the movies. That complete movie was intact until we decided to make copies and I took them to a professional movie service place called Western Cine, and they made duplicate copies of the movies, three copies, and I surrendered the original and two copies. I have hung on to one copy with me. If I can find it in my downtown office, I'll send it to you.

Note: It would later turn out to be the original 16 mm film, and Dr. Oishi has arranged to donate this film to Grand Canyon National Park Special Collections.

“There will never come an end to the good that he has done.”

The Stephen Mather Memorial Plaques

by Don Lago

It had always seemed obvious to me that Grand Canyon’s Mather Point should have a sign explaining who it was named for. People who are camping in the Mather Campground and attending ranger programs in the Mather Amphitheater and enjoying the view from Mather Point would begin to wonder who this Mather person was. To make it clear that Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, was appreciated at Grand Canyon, the NPS had installed not just a normal wayside sign, but a large, artistic, bronze plaque paying tribute to him.

Since I had always associated the Mather plaque with Mather Point, I was puzzled when I first noticed the exact same plaque in another national park. It seemed incongruous, almost as if another park bore a sign explaining the view from Hopi Point. Had this other park made a copy of Grand Canyon’s sign? I asked a ranger about their plaque, but he didn’t know anything about it. Over the years I noticed the Mather plaque in other parks, but no one seemed to know how it had gotten there. The rock strata beneath Mather Point remember 1.7 billion years of events, but park rangers come and go more quickly, and even the National Park Service, which is officially dedicated to remembering history, holds many memories only on papers buried in archives, if at all.

Eventually I contacted the national headquarters of the National Park Service and asked about the history of the Mather plaques. In response to my inquiry, NPS historians queried one another, but no one knew much about it. Fortunately the folks at the NPS Mather Training Center in Harpers Ferry had remained more curious about their namesake, and they supplied me with a 1997 research paper by David Nathanson that provided a

good start.

The last line on the Mather plaque, “There will never come an end to the good that he has done,” was spoken by Michigan Congressman Louis Cramton on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in January, 1929. Cramton served on the House Public Lands Committee, and was one of Congress’s strongest supporters of Stephen Mather and the National Park Service. Cramton spoke on the occasion of Mather’s resignation as director of the NPS, but since Mather had suffered a stroke and the prognosis was poor, Cramton’s remarks had the ring of a eulogy. A year later, on January 22, 1930, Mather suffered another stroke and died.

Soon after Mather’s first stroke and resignation, his friends and supporters started a private organization, the Stephen T. Mather Appreciation, to plan some sort of memorial to him. The executive committee was full of prominent names, including Gilbert Grosvenor of the National Geographic Society, General John J. Pershing, and Congressman Cramton. They came up with forty-two ideas for memorials, and had a lively debate about them. There was strong opposition to the idea of a plaque, including opposition from Mather’s friends inside the National Park Service, including Horace Albright, who had succeeded Mather as director. Mather had always disliked the idea of plaques, statues, and other human monuments inside the national parks. National parks were supposed to be about the grandeur of nature, not about the transient heroism of politicians, generals, or explorers. When admirers of John Muir had come to Mather and proposed that a small plaque honoring Muir be placed in Yosemite, Mather had refused, even though John Muir was Mather’s hero.

Stephen Mather shared John Muir’s vision of nature as not just

beautiful and ancient, but sacred, a refuge for the human spirit. A California native, Mather made trips to the Sierras, climbed mountains, and joined the Sierra Club when it was only a dozen years old. Mather met and had a long talk with John Muir, who filled Mather with indignation at the despoiling of the Sierras. Yet the national parks and America’s conservation movement now required something more than just vision and indignation. They required someone with the political and managerial skills to build an agency, inside the U. S. government, that could defend and expand the national parks against powerful economic and political forces. It required someone with the rare combination of Stephen Mather’s personality and experience. In 1893 the young Mather, working as a newspaper writer, was hired by the Pacific Coast Borax Company to come up with an advertising slogan for its borax soap and detergent. Mather came up with the slogan and image of the “20-Mule Team” brand. The president of the borax company disliked Mather’s idea, but Mather prevailed, and the borax company made a fortune. The 20-Mule Team, invoking the romance of the Wild West, became one of the enduring advertising symbols of the 20th century. Later Mather started his own borax mining company and made his own fortune, but Mather also observed the greed and machinations of mining companies and other private interests.

In 1914 Mather wrote a long letter to the Secretary of the Interior complaining about how private companies were threatening the national parks, and about how poorly the national parks were being managed. The Secretary of the Interior replied that if Mather didn’t like the way the parks were being run, he could come to Washington and run them himself, as director of a new National

Park Service. Mather put his skills as a salesman and manager to work building a loyal constituency for the national parks, building the National Park Service, and expanding and improving the park system. Mather built a coalition that spanned bird watchers, artists, politicians, and railroad corporations. He set high standards for the national parks, enduring standards that have made America's national parks the model for the world. Even when railroad corporations had become crucial allies for bringing the public to the national parks and for fighting off powerful mining corporations, Mather ordered the Union Pacific Railroad to decentralize its plans for its lodges at Zion, Bryce, and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon so that human architecture wouldn't compete too much against the scenery. And yes, even when lovers of John Muir wanted to place a tribute to Muir in Yosemite, Mather disliked the idea of national parks looking like every courthouse square in America. In the end, Mather was persuaded to allow John Muir into Yosemite.

In the end, the Stephen T. Mather Appreciation decided on a bronze plaque. Horace Albright reluctantly went along: "I did not want to stand in the way of the activity of the Mather Appreciation group."¹

Hoping for something special, the Mather Appreciation selected sculptor Bryant Baker to create the plaque. On April 22, 1930, three months after Mather's death, Baker had received enormous national publicity with the dedication of his Pioneer Woman statue in Ponca City, Oklahoma. Forty thousand people attended the Pioneer Woman statue dedication ceremony and heard Will Rogers praise the statue and the American pioneer spirit it represented. Baker's design for the Pioneer Woman statue was selected in a national contest in which 750,000 people had voted among twelve contending models for the statue. Over six months the models had toured from museum to museum, from coast to coast, and stirred up great public interest and newspaper publicity. The statue and the contest were the idea of

E. W. Marland, an Oklahoma oil tycoon who would also serve as Oklahoma's governor and congressman. Marland was a great admirer of the American pioneers and felt that pioneer women hadn't been sufficiently honored for their role in building America. In 1926 Marland invited twelve

prominent sculptors to a dinner party, promised them \$10,000 just for creating a model for a Pioneer Woman statue, and \$100,000 if they won the public contest. Many of the sculptors were more famous than Baker, such as Alexander Stirling Calder, who had done the statue of George Washington at Washington Square Arch in New York City, and whose son Alexander would become famous for his mobiles. Baker's model was the big winner, beating the #2 choice by two to one.

Bryant Baker had an unlikely beginning for a sculptor of American heroes. Baker was born in London in 1881, the son and grandson of professional sculptors. Baker learned his skills helping his father build the Victoria and Albert Museum. While still an art student Baker won several medals and won royal favor, leading to his sculpting royal subjects. When the Great War broke out, Baker tried to enlist in the British army, only to be rejected as unfit. Baker immigrated to the United States and enlisted in the American army, but he served in the Medical Corps, sculpting artificial limbs and faces for severely wounded soldiers.

Baker soon became enthralled by American history, and over the next 50 years he would sculpt many American presidents, generals, explorers, and other heroes like Thomas Edison. Of 100 statues in the Capitol build-



One of the many Stephen Mather plaques.

ing's Statuary Hall, three were done by Baker. For the Pioneer Woman statue Baker created a strong woman striding heroically forward, her gaze on the western horizon, holding a Bible in one hand and her son's hand in her other hand. Baker thought of her as an American Joan of Arc. The statue is 27 feet high and weighs 12,000 pounds. It was cast by the Gorham Company of Providence, Rhode Island; Gorham was famous for its fine silver, used in the White House from Lincoln to Bush, but it also operated a bronze foundry. The Pioneer Woman statue remains Baker's most famous work. When Baker died in 1970, the Marland Estate purchased the sculptures and plaster casts in Baker's New York studio and moved them to a studio on the grounds of the Marland mansion in Ponca City, and it also acquired Baker's papers.

Baker had communicated with Stephen Mather in 1925, though the purpose isn't clear. All we have is a two-sentence letter in which Mather replied to Baker, saying "I am glad you thought of me but I am going back West for another two months and will have to wait until October when I will see how matters stand."² Was Baker working on a sculpture with a national park inspiration?

For the Stephen Mather plaque, Baker drew upon arts-and-crafts style of imagery and lettering. He shows Mather in profile, gazing off

toward the left horizon, which on a map would be west, a bit reminiscent of the Pioneer Woman. In the background are sharp, Sierra-like peaks, and a forest. At the bottom is a pine branch, and above that is the inscription: "He laid the foundation of the National Park Service, defining and establishing the policies under which its areas shall be developed and conserved unimpaired for future generations. There will never come an end to the good that he has done." John Hays Hammond, the chairman of the Mather Appreciation, appreciated Baker's design, telling Baker it was "very excellent."³ The Mather Appreciation paid Baker \$1,000 for his work. The plaque was forged by the Gorham Company. The plaque is 30 inches by 35 inches, and since it is solid bronze, it must be heavy, though the exact weight isn't recorded. The plaque is signed "Bryant Baker, 1930."

The Mather Appreciation was hoping to place plaques in all 56 of the national parks and monuments of the time, but at first they cast only 25 plaques for the National Park Service, and three more for state parks. For unknown reasons, Mount Rainier National Park received two copies of the plaque. Two later generations of plaques would be cast in the 1950s and 1980s, adding about 30 more plaques, though this wasn't enough to keep up with the proliferation of new parks and monuments. Today 59 sites are known to have Mather plaques, but this count may not be complete.

Stephen Mather's 65th birthday would have been July 4, 1932, so on and around that date a dozen national parks and monuments held dedication ceremonies for their plaque. Some of these ceremonies were major events, with VIPs, music, live radio broadcasts, and lots of speeches. The next day the *New York Times* took note of the occasion with an editorial titled "The Mather Memorials." After two paragraphs praising Mather's devotion, vision, and results, the *Times* noted that he "would have been 65 on the Fourth of July if he had not worn himself out in devotion to the cause of developing the national park system

for the American people."

Gilbert Grosvenor traveled to Sequoia National Park to head up their dedication ceremony. Sequoia, like most parks, followed the suggestion of the Mather Appreciation and installed its plaque on a large, elegant boulder. Most parks placed their plaque-boulder in a prominent location.

At Yellowstone the featured speaker was nationally prominent novelist Struthers Burt, who had helped lead the fight to get Grand Teton established as a national park. The Yellowstone dedication ceremony was held outside the new Madison Museum. For decades the Madison Museum would serve as the NPS's foremost shrine to the idea of national parks. According to Yellowstone legend (now deflated) it was at Madison Junction in 1870 that early explorers sat around a campfire and resolved that Yellowstone should be protected by the creation of a national park. According to Yellowstone historian Lee H. Whittlesey, the placement of the Mather plaque at the Madison Museum was a large symbolic step in turning the museum into a shrine:

...having built the Madison Museum as a shrine in 1929, and with the museum not yet open to the public, the NPS decided at the time of the death of its founder Stephen Mather in 1930 to elevate the "shrine" idea one step further. One can almost picture their thinking. Madison was already a shrine to both the establishment of the first national park and the national park idea, so why should it not also be a shrine to the agency that managed them? ...the idea that the Madison Museum could also be a monument to the NPS as well as to Mather fit right into the shrine concept...The NPS's ceremony to dedicate this "Mather memorial tablet" involved speakers and around seven hundred members of the public, and it is clear from the many words expended at the ceremony and from the guests who attended it that the Service considered the new tablet a very important monument.⁴

At Crater Lake National Park the ceremony included remarks by the park naturalist, a song accompanied by a violin, an invocation from a pastor, more songs, a speech by a judge, then a speech by Superintendent Elbert Solinsky, who said of the plaque:

May its presence remind all who come and read its message of the prophetic judgment and works of a good man and of a life well spent. May his life and the record he left be an incentive to our citizenship to carry on the great work which he inaugurated. We of Crater Lake National Park will keep and treasure this plaque not only as a monument to a great American citizen, but also as a challenge and inspiration to us for all times to come.

At Yosemite the ceremony included music from the Curry Company orchestra and a string quintet, and then Superintendent C. G. Thomson spoke, saying that it was Yosemite that had inspired Stephen Mather's love of nature and his Park Service career, and that Yosemite had served as the model Mather had applied to parks across the nation, the example of how to build facilities and staff, how to protect resources and welcome visitors, how to solve problems.

Glacier National Park delayed its dedication ceremony for a year, until the completion of the Going-to-the-Sun Highway, which was one of Mather's initiatives and one of the greatest engineering feats in any national park. Both the highway and the Mather plaque were dedicated in a July 15, 1933 ceremony that had an audience of over 4,000 people, including 1,500 members of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The next year President Franklin Roosevelt visited Glacier National Park and publicly acknowledged Mather's importance.

Also in 1933 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt attended a plaque dedication ceremony, along with Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and Mrs. Mather, at Palisades Interstate Park on the Hudson River. The longtime superintendent of Palisades Interstate Park, William Welch, had been a key

Mather ally. When Mather wanted to create national parks in the Appalachian Mountains, he had placed Welch in charge of studying the possibilities, and Welch had recommended the areas that became Great Smoky Mountain and Shenandoah national parks. In May of 1933 Palisades Interstate Park hosted the National Conference on State Parks, and the highlight was the dedication of the Stephen Mather plaque. A motorcade wound its way up the still-under-construction George W. Perkins Memorial Highway to Bear Mountain, where Mrs. Roosevelt spoke and unveiled the plaque.

The ceremony at Palisades Interstate Park was also attended by NPS director Horace Albright. For the July 4, 1932 mass dedication of Mather plaques, Albright needed to choose among a dozen national parks, and he chose to go to the Grand Canyon.

The Grand Canyon held special significance for Stephen Mather. When Mather became director of the National Park Service in 1916, Yellowstone had been a national park for 44 years, and Yosemite for 26 years. The Grand Canyon was still not a national park, and to Mather this was a scandal. For decades the American people had recognized the Grand Canyon's grandeur. In 1901 the Santa Fe Railway had turned the canyon into a major tourist destination. Yet Arizona politicians had opposed making the Grand Canyon a national park, had opposed the very idea of public lands. The Wild West was meant for resource exploitation, for mining, logging, and ranching. President Teddy Roosevelt had to settle for making the Grand Canyon a national monument in 1908. It was one of Mather's proudest accomplishments that he succeeded in getting Grand Canyon designated a national park. Yet even then, the Grand Canyon became a major battleground between the NPS and private interests. It didn't help that Ralph Cameron, who had fought for years to maintain control of the Bright Angel Trail and his other holdings inside the park, had become Arizona's U.S. senator. When Ken Burns made

his PBS series on the national parks, he liked to feature battles between heroes and villains, and Burns presented Mather as the NPS's greatest hero and Ralph Cameron as Mather's greatest enemy. Horace Albright was deeply involved in Mather's struggles to create and consolidate Grand Canyon National Park.

On July 5, 1932, the *Arizona Republic* reported on Horace Albright's day at the Grand Canyon, in an article captioned "Park Director is Paid Honor":

Governor George W. P. Hunt represented the state of Arizona and Horace A. Albright, present park service director, the federal government. Director Albright read a telegram from John Hays Hammond, Washington DC engineer and head of the Mather Memorial Association, in which the courage and vision of Mather in bringing about the creation of the park service was praised.

The only thing wrong with this article was that, in reality, Horace Albright wasn't really there. Neither, it seems, was any reporter from the *Arizona Republic*. It seems that the newspaper just wrote an article based on a press release about what was supposed to happen.

Albright was not far away. Albright had arrived at Petrified Forest National Monument on July 2, along with Miner Tillotson, the superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park. They had just come from Canyon de Chelly. On July 3, Albright and Tillotson took part in the dedication of the new Rio Puerco Bridge, a 480-foot steel span that eliminated the problem of high waters cutting off Rt. 66 traffic from being able to reach the southern end of Petrified Forest National Monument. The Holbrook Chamber of Commerce roasted a steer for the occasion and fed over 700 people. From a reviewing stand at the bridge, Governor Hunt declared: "I have done considerable scrapping in the past with various government agencies, but I want to state, here and now, that it doesn't go as far as the National Park Service is concerned. Our relations are, and will continue to be, the

most cordial."⁵ Horace Albright then declared that the bridge was "for the everlasting benefit and enjoyment of the people."⁶ A motorcade of 147 cars, led by Governor Hunt and Director Albright, then crossed the bridge.

At 9 a.m. the next morning, the officials assembled to dedicate the Mather plaque. "This plaque," according to the park's monthly report, "had been set in a massive boulder about 200 yards from the Museum. A winding trail had been located past it with a short branch leading to the plaque. This trail is called the STEPHEN T. MATHER MEMORIAL TRAIL. Superintendent Tillotson and Superintendent Pinkley [of Petrified Forest] made very fine talks. Director Albright made an exceptionally fine address in which he sketched the life of Mr. Mather and told his listeners many things not commonly known of the former Director and the establishment of the National Park Service. We in the Petrified Forest feel highly honored in having this plaque dedicated by the Director."⁷

Yet instead of heading for the Grand Canyon, which seems to have been the original plan, Albright and Tillotson then headed for Oraibi at Hopi, where they spent the night with Lorenzo Hubbell, who ran a trading post there. "After dinner a trip was made up on the Mesa, at sunset, an experience not soon to be forgotten. Later on at the foot of the mesa, a group of Hopi children put on several Indian dances with great earnestness."⁸ The next morning, Albright and Tillotson set off for Rainbow Bridge.

There is no explanation as to why Albright did not proceed to the Grand Canyon, why Tillotson failed to attend his own park's ceremony. The press release issued by Grand Canyon National Park after the dedication ceremony referred to "the enforced absence" of Albright and Tillotson. Tillotson sent a telegram to Acting Superintendent James V. Lloyd saying: "Regret exceedingly my inability to be present at dedication of plaque." Albright sent Lloyd a telegram saying: "Regret cannot be present at ceremonies tomorrow but will par-

ticipate in similar dedicatory exercises here.”⁹ The fact that these telegrams were sent on July 3 suggests that the absence of Albright and Tillotson wasn’t due to any last-minute illness, car breakdown, or monsoon flood. Perhaps Albright had been planning to skip the Petrified Forest plaque ceremony for Grand Canyon’s ceremony, only to realize that with all the political VIPs who had come for the bridge dedication, it might seem like a snub for him to disappear. Perhaps Albright had received a last-minute, politically valuable invitation to meet with Hopi leaders or with the influential Lorenzo Hubbell. Perhaps, as often happens with tourists, a schedule planned on a map at home turned out to be unrealistically ambitious once travelers were facing the long distances and summer heat of the Southwest. Or perhaps Albright simply wanted to visit the Hopis.

At least Governor Hunt made it to the dedication ceremony on the South Rim. The Mather plaque was installed on a stone pedestal in front of the rock wall just to the east of the Yavapai Observation Station. Acting Superintendent Lloyd presided over the ceremony, which was attended by about 100 people. Chaplain D. E. Fuller offered a prayer. Lloyd expressed regret for the absence of Albright and Tillotson, and at some point he read from their telegrams. Albright’s telegram told of how Stephen Mather had helped establish Grand Canyon as a park, and helped build the Kaibab Trail, the North Rim facilities, and the highways to both rims: “He was Grand Canyon’s stalwart, courageous friend.” Tillotson said: “I am particularly appreciative of Mr. Mather’s interest in Grand Canyon National Park.” Then Lloyd read the telegram from Mather Appreciation chairman John Hays Hammond, which seems to have been read at all of the plaque dedication ceremonies. Hammond noted that General John J. Pershing, who usually refused to serve on committees, had gladly served on the Mather Appreciation national committee out of his high regard for Mather’s vision and achievements. Hammond concluded:

“This plaque will reveal the noble profile of one who had the vision and whose courage and perseverance brought the achievement.” Then the plaque was unveiled by ranger-naturalist Eddie McKee and Chief Ranger James Brooks. Three-year-old Sonny Lehnert, the grandson of Emery Kolb, placed a wreath of ponderosa pine and fir at the base of the plaque. Governor Hunt spoke about the conservation vision of Teddy Roosevelt and Stephen Mather. The ceremonies concluded with the wives of several rangers singing verses from “America.”

Years later the Mather plaque was removed from its original pedestal and placed upon a large boulder, which was what had been done from the start in most other parks. This boulder sat along the sidewalk further east of the Yavapai Observation Station. The original pedestal was removed. In 1953 the NPS built a new highway from the park entrance station to the rim, with the goal of allowing visitors to have a first experience not of the buildings and bustle of Grand Canyon Village, but of the canyon itself. The highway offered a stop at a dramatic promontory, which was named Mather Point. The Mather plaque, boulder and all, was moved from Yavapai to Mather Point. As the Mission 66 program built new facilities, Stephen Mather was honored with the Mather Campground, the Mather Amphitheater, and even the Mather Business District—the cluster of grocery store, bank, post office, and Yavapai gift shop and cafeteria. When Mather Point was redesigned in 2010, it gained the Mather Point Amphitheater (the old Mather Amphitheater was renamed the McKee Amphitheater), which is used for ranger programs. Until now there has been little ranger presence at Mather Point, so there was little opportunity to interpret the Mather plaque to visitors. Yet former South Rim District Ranger John Benjamin told me that when he was responsible for escorting VIPs around the park, he would always begin with Mather Point and the Mather plaque, using the plaque as a lesson in the value and values of the National

Park Service.

The continuing respect for Stephen Mather within the NPS, and the continuing creation of new national parks and monuments, led to a continuing demand for new Mather plaques. In 1958 a second generation of plaques was created, though this was initiated from outside the National Park Service. Chicago was planning to dedicate a Stephen Mather High School in 1959 and wanted a Mather plaque for the school. A relative of Stephen Mather contacted NPS Director Conrad Wirth about obtaining a plaque. Wirth contacted Bryant Baker, who contacted the Gorham Company, but it turned out that they no longer possessed the model of the original Mather plaque, which had probably been destroyed during World War Two when Gorham cleaned out much old material to clear space for war-related work. Baker told Wirth they could use one of the original 1932 plaques as a model, and Wirth volunteered the one in the hallway outside his office. As Wirth thought about the opportunity and queried his NPS colleagues, he decided that the NPS should cast fourteen new plaques for newer parks. Baker contacted two other foundries to obtain estimates for making new plaques, and Wirth agreed to pay Baker to supervise the process.

A third generation of plaques was cast between 1986 and 1991. This casting was initiated by Colorado National Monument, which wanted a Mather plaque to celebrate its 75th birthday in 1986. They obtained the 1932-edition Mather plaque from Wind Cave National Park and made a mold from it. In anticipation of the 75th anniversary of the National Park Service in 1991, other parks and monuments were given the chance to obtain a plaque, and many responded. This new edition is aluminum but colored to look like bronze, and on the backside it says “Colorado National Monument Edition.” Several parks and monuments held dedication ceremonies in 1991.

Two Mather plaques have experienced adventures with Mother Nature.

Zion National Park received one

of the original 1932 plaques, which was dedicated by Heber Grant, the president of the LDS Church. The plaque was placed halfway up the Riverwalk, the path that leads to the Narrows, on a boulder in a grotto known as "the Stadium". The Stadium, ringed by boulders and centered on a pool and full of wildflowers, was a popular spot for visitors and ranger programs. But the Stadium was directly beneath a hanging canyon that occasionally disgorged a waterfall, sometimes a violent waterfall. Shortly after the plaque was dedicated, according to ranger-naturalist A. M. Woodbury in Zion's *Nature Notes*, "In July 1932 another waterfall following a heavy rain poured from the hanging canyon scouring the pool completely clear again of plant and animal life, leaving a clean sandy floor under the pool..."¹⁰ The Mather plaque would survive another 20+ years of floods, but sometime in the 1950s a waterfall knocked the plaque off its boulder and buried it under so much sand that rangers couldn't find it, and they had to get a war-surplus metal detector to find it. Today people at Zion are still trying to find the Mather plaque—finding it is one of the assignments for Junior Rangers. The plaque was relocated to the wall beside the door of the new Mission 66 visitor center, which today is the Zion Human History Museum.

At Acadia National Park it wasn't flood that attacked the Mather plaque, but fire. In October, 1947, a wildfire burned 17,000 acres, 10,000 of which were inside Acadia National Park—about 20% of the park. In the nearby town of Bar Harbor the fire wiped out much of Millionaires' Row, a chain of mansions, luxury cottages, and hotels. The burned areas inside the park included Cadillac Mountain, the highest peak within 25 miles of the American east coast, atop which the Mather plaque had been installed, a site apparently chosen by Superintendent George Dorr, a longtime friend of Stephen Mather. In a 1958 letter to Bryant Baker, NPS Assistant Director Hillory Tolson said simply that the plaque had been "destroyed" by the

fire, giving no details as to whether the plaque was melted, cracked, or just ruined aesthetically. Tolson said that the national NPS had given up its one spare copy of the plaque to replace Acadia's plaque.

Quite a few plaques were moved to new locations, but for reasons less dramatic than the move at Zion. With the Mission 66 construction of a new generation of visitor centers and other facilities, many plaques were relocated to new buildings. Occasional remodeling also moved plaques. At Glacier the 1933 plaque was moved about 200 feet when a parking lot was reconfigured. At Bryce Canyon a 2001 remodeling of the 1959 visitor center moved the flagpole and the Mather plaque about 25 yards. At Mount Rainier the 1932 plaque on the Mather Memorial Parkway was moved about 300 yards.

Sometimes a relocated plaque symbolized a change of values. At Denali their 1934 plaque was originally installed at the ranger's dormitory, which seemed to say that the plaque was intended only for rangers. By 1952 the plaque had been moved to a more visible location at the Naturalist's Office, the main visitor contact station of the time. But today the Denali plaque is at the front door of the park headquarters, which again means that the public seldom sees it. At least Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site had a good rationale for hiding its plaque from the public. Bent's Old Fort is a living history site, with interpreters dressed in 1840s period costume. Because of its rural isolation, Bent's Old Fort has a better chance than most historic sites of creating the illusion that you are stepping back in time. Cars are required to park a good distance away, and people walk up a trail to the fort. In 2009 this trail was redesigned to further the feeling that you are walking back to the 1840s. Rangers felt that the Mather plaque, located on the trail, tended to burst this bubble, so the plaque was moved to the new administration building. At Pipe Spring National Monument the superintendent felt that their Mather plaque wasn't good enough, since Stephen Mather had made it his personal mission to

make Pipe Spring a national monument, even donating some of his own funds for it. Pipe Spring NM created a new wayside exhibit about Mather's role, including a Mather photo and quote, and moved the Mather plaque to be near this wayside exhibit.

Some of the 1932 plaques are still in their original location. At Acadia the replacement plaque is still atop Cadillac Mountain. The Yellowstone plaque was originally on the park's main road, but today this has become a much quieter spot. The Petrified Forest plaque is right where Horace Albright left it, although the trail is now called the Giant Logs Trail.

Great Basin National Park has done its best to keep the Mather plaque in its original location, against the best efforts of vandals. In 1994 vandals removed the plaque from Mather Point Overlook along the Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive and threw it down the slope. The next year the plaque was stolen. It remained missing for years, but then it showed up at a scrap yard in Reno. Great Basin National Park left the plaque in storage for years until it could build a "bomb-proof" setting for it.

Several other parks and monuments also placed their Mather plaque into storage for many years, but they were not forced by vandals, only by their own indifference to the plaque's meaning. In researching this article I contacted all the parks and monuments that were said to have Mather plaques, and while I received enthusiastic replies from a dozen superintendents who had always valued their plaque, I also discovered that many parks had no clue about the story behind their plaque. This even included Colorado National Monument, whose personnel had made great efforts in the 1980s to get a new generation of plaques cast.

At least the Mather plaque got some recognition in the Ken Burns PBS series "The National Parks." After relating Mather's death, Burns showed a glimpse of the Mather plaque, but then the narrator stated that the plaque had been placed in "all" of the parks and monuments of

the time, when in fact it got into less than half.

For me the saddest commentary on the forgetting of the Mather plaque came at Death Valley National Park. Stephen Mather owed his entire career to his conceiving the “20-Mule Team” brand for borax soap and detergents. In the 1920s the borax company campaigned for the creation of Death Valley National Monument, with the help of Horace Albright, who’d grown up near Death Valley, and later on the borax company donated land for the creation of a Mission 66 visitor center. In its courtyard the visitor center holds a Mather plaque, dedicated in 1991. I once attended a history talk in that courtyard, given by a history-minded ranger. Afterward I asked him about their Mather plaque, and he went over and looked at the plaque as if he had never noticed it before. He didn’t

have a clue about what the plaque was doing there.

After I had finished writing this article, with its bemoaning of how the National Park Service didn’t know its own history, a Grand Canyon ranger asked me, “Of course, you know there’s a Mather plaque on the North Rim too.” Actually, I hadn’t known this. It is in front of the North Rim administration building. I searched Grand Canyon National Park archives but could find no record that this plaque even existed. It couldn’t have been an original 1932 plaque, since Mt. Rainier was the only park to receive two copies then, so it must have been from the two later generations of plaques. I asked various rangers who had been around Grand Canyon for a long time, but no one could tell me how the North Rim Mather plaque had gotten there.

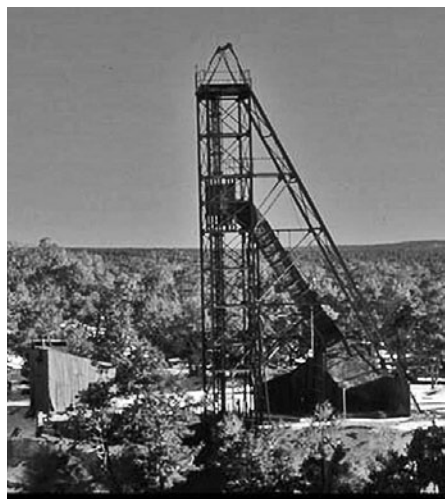
(Endnotes)

- 1 Horace Albright, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years 1913-1933* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1985) p 249.
- 2 Letter from Stephen Mather to Bryant Baker, July 27, 1925, in Bryant Baker papers at Marland Mansion, Ponca City, Oklahoma.
- 3 Letter from John Hays Hammond to Bryant Baker, May 5, 1931, in Bryant Baker papers, Marland Mansion.
- 4 Lee H. Wittlesey, “Loss of a Sacred Shrine: How the National Park Service Anguished Over Yellowstone’s Campfire Myth, 1960-1980” *George Wright Forum*, Volume 27, Issue # 1, 2010, p 99.
- 5 Quoted in NPS monthly report, July 28, 1932, by custodian Chas. J. Smith, Petrified Forest National Monument, p 2.
- 6 *Ibid*, p 2.
- 7 *Ibid*, p 2-3.
- 8 *Ibid*, p 3.
- 9 Quotes from documents in monuments file, Study Collection, Grand Canyon National Park.
- 10 A. M. Woodbury, *Nature Notes*, September 1932. Archives, Zion National Park.

The Demise of the Lost Orphan Mine

by Keith Green

Remember the big headframe, part of the Lost Orphan Uranium Mine, that could be seen on the South Rim between Maricopa and Powell Point? When the mine was operating, Christmas lights were strung on it for the holidays making it look like a giant Christmas tree on



The Orphan Mine headframe stood at the south rim for more than 50 years. Photo courtesy of National Park Service.

the edge of the canyon. Well, now the headframe is gone! The Park Service contracted to have it removed in January, 2009.

The Lost Orphan Mine was an inholding predating the creation of Grand Canyon National Park. Dan Hogan made it a mining claim in 1893. The claim included four acres of land on the edge of Grand Canyon, but the mine is actually 1,200 feet below the rim near the bottom of the Coconino Sandstone. That is where Dan first started digging a hole into the ground. This was later dubbed “the Glory Hole” and is the hole that can be seen down below the rim from Maricopa Point. The mine shaft follows a brachia pipe which has in it many minerals including copper, silver, and uranium. Hogan was mostly interested in the copper but access to the mine on his Hummingbird Trail was difficult. The trail skirted down thin ledges and ladders over the canyon’s rim.

Dan never made much of a profit from the mine probably because it was so inaccessible, but he began to notice the possibility of making mon-

ey through tourism. In 1936, Hogan opened a lodge at the mine site on the four rim acres which eventually included a swimming pool on the canyon rim!

The story of the mine shows that, over and over, people and institutions failed to realize the extent and danger of what the Lost Orphan Mine really is. In 1951, geologists discovered that those pesky rocks Hogan had been discarding for years were uranium ore. The concentration of uranium was fairly weak near the surface, but it became rich further down. He had been working for sixty years in an unventilated radioactive mine, but he lived to be 90 and died of pneumonia – not cancer or radiation poisoning. In this case, what he didn’t know didn’t kill him.

The mineral rights, and eventually the whole property were sold to Western Gold and Uranium Inc. in 1953. Originally, a cable brought buckets of ore from the Glory Hole, over several towers to the rim near where the headframe was being built. At shift changes, two men per bucket

got to ride up or down the cable 1200 ft. from the rim to the Glory Hole. Emery Kolb took that trip once and said, "Boy, I sure could have used one of those." (I suppose he was alluding to when he had to hike undeveloped film down to Indian Gardens daily.)

One and a half years later, an elevator shaft was completed from the rim down 1500 feet into the ground, and the head frame in Figure 1 was built on top. A horizontal shaft was then completed running from the bottom of that shaft north to the Glory Hole. It ran more than 1,000 ft. through Hermit and Supai formation into a slump of Coconino Sandstone where the high-grade uranium was located. This was between 320 and 550 feet down the Glory Hole. Diagonal shafts were then dug up from the horizontal shaft into the ore body. Ore was then dumped down these diagonals into waiting ore cars on a track in the horizontal shaft. Those electric railroad cars would then carry the ore to the elevator shaft. The elevator would then lift the ore up 1500 feet then 40 feet up the headframe. There the elevator dumped the ore into a contraption which funneled the ore into waiting ore trucks. The result is a huge underground room 320-550 feet down below the Glory Hole.

The Glory Hole had powerful fans blowing radioactive dust and radon gas out of the mine into the Grand Canyon. Up to 7,000 tons of uranium ore per month were extracted from the Orphan Mine and driven through Grand Canyon Village. Much of it rumbled east along Highway 64, past Desert View Watchtower, headed for Tuba City to be processed. The operation ceased in 1969. Most of the ore was used to create the nation's nuclear weapons.

The result of all this uranium mining is, not only degradation of the Grand Canyon's natural environment but, also, the introduction of radioactivity to the South Rim. The water of Horn Creek in the canyon 2,000 feet below the mine is also radioactive beyond health standards.

In the waning years of private ownership of the mine, Cotter Cor-

poration and later, a Tusayan businessman contracted caretakers to live on the mine property. One of those mine caretakers tells the story of living there and being awakened from a nap one afternoon by a number of men in hazmat suits carrying Geiger counters. They said something like, "You

shouldn't be living out here. This place is hot. Radiation levels are way above normal."

Those caretakers moved away soon afterwards.

There is a chain-link fence along the property line of the claim on the rim. In the 1990's, the Park Service measured the radiation and found that unsafe levels of radiation existed several hundred feet outside the fence. Therefore, they built a temporary fence out beyond the chain-link fence to keep visitors at a safe distance from the radiation, but the fence was flimsy and people often ignored it and unknowingly submitted themselves to unsafe levels of radiation. In 2007, as part of the project rebuilding the Hermit Road, the rim trail was rerouted away from the rim east of Maricopa Point so that it travels south of the old mine site rejoining the rim at Powell Memorial. The entire mine site on the rim is, at this writing, covered in synthetic fabric held down by sand bags to keep radioactive dust and other contaminants from blowing into the visitor use areas surrounding the mine site.

Cleaning up the Lost Orphan Mine site will be a major undertaking. Radioactive tailings and dust have apparently contaminated much of the area. The Park Service has invoked the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (the "Superfund Law") as a



Synthetic fabric is held down by sand bags to keep radioactive dust and other contaminants contained.

framework for dealing with clean-up the area. The first challenge is to discover the extent of contamination. The park will approach the property on the rim separately from the actual mine below. Although some buildings were removed in 1988 after the Park got control of the mine, the rest of the junk and cement foundations on the rim were removed between November, 2008 and June, 2009. The current procedure is called an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis. This September, a weather station and other instruments were erected on the site to measure contaminants such as radon gas. Eventually soil samples will be taken at different soil depths to determine the extent and depth of contamination.

The next phase will involve a scientific analysis of the data and an analysis of what can be done about the contamination of the property above the rim and up to 30 feet over the edge. This process resembles that for an Environmental Assessment in which alternatives are proposed and the public is invited to make comments on the final plan. The process of creating those alternatives will include considerations of such legislation as the Endangered Species Act, The National Historic Preservation Act, The National Park Service Organic Act, and others. The hope is that these decisions can be made by spring, 2012.

Roger Miller Update

by Don Lago

The clean-up will involve getting the cooperation of those companies responsible for creating the mess. Hopefully those companies will voluntarily either pay for whatever is deemed necessary or do the clean-up themselves with government supervision. The Park Service can file lawsuits, if necessary.

Cleaning up the part of the mine on and just 30 feet over the rim is the first priority. Then there is the actual mine below the rim. That will require some serious scientific investigation. I wonder if that part of the canyon can ever be made safe again. Think of the radioactive contamination interlaced throughout that part of the canyon. What about that huge room that has been carved out at the bottom of the Glory Hole? Reclaiming the head of Horn Creek Canyon will involve study of the underground water drainage systems of that canyon. What can be done to decontaminate the headwaters of Horn Creek, and what can be done to decontaminate an open uranium mine?

The goal of the National Park Service is to restore the area between Maricopa Point and Powell Memorial to its natural condition. I hope that the Lost Orphan Mine has not done irreparable damage to that part of the canyon. I look forward to the day when my wife and I can walk safely along the rim between those two points on a trail where the "rim trail" ought to be.

Already there are interpretive wayside signs on the trail when it gets close to the mine. They show that old headframe on the rim and mention the history of Dan Hogan and the Lost Orphan Mine. Who would guess those amazing engineering accomplishments that were performed there to mine uranium out of the Grand Canyon?

Reading between the lines, as these signs explain the efforts to rehabilitate the area, the folly of mining in one of the most wonderful environments on Earth becomes painfully clear.

In the Fall 2008 issue of *The Ol' Pioneer* I presented a theory that Roger Miller's famous song "King of the Road" was inspired by the summer Miller spent at the Grand Canyon in 1953, at age seventeen, where he lived in a "trailer for rent" and earned it by "pushin' broom" at Verkamp's. In October of 2009 I had a chance to explore this theory further by attending the annual Roger Miller Festival in his hometown of Erick, Oklahoma.

Erick is an old Route 66 town almost on the Texas border. In the late 1930s, when Roger Miller was growing up there, Erick was part of the Dust Bowl of broken farms and broken dreams that sent Okies into their Grapes-of-Wrath migration to California. Even without the Dust Bowl, Erick became a proof of John Wesley Powell's thesis that beyond the 100th Meridian, the family-farm model that had worked farther east was not viable. Erick sat directly upon the 100th Meridian, and its town museum was called the 100th Meridian Museum. Like most of the High Plains, the Erick area had been losing family farms and ranches and population for a century now. When the interstate bypassed Erick in 1975, it wiped out many of its old Route 66 businesses. Today the downtown holds many empty storefronts. This was the discouraging world from which Roger Miller had come, and which may have left its imprint in a "King of the Road" in which a hobo

is riding the rails and somehow keeping up his spirits. A few years ago Erick tried to keep up its spirits by turning a nice old bank building into the Roger Miller Museum. The museum held lots of memorabilia from Roger Miller's life, including his guitars, albums, motorcycle, awards, and photos.

One photo showed five guys in cowboy hats playing music on a small wooden stage, with a background wall of half-cut logs. The caption read: "Grand Canyon, Az. (circa 1953) Roger Miller (left)". This was the year Roger Miller worked at Verkamp's. Three other names were listed on the photo: Ray Mansel, Robert Salmon, and Cotton Holley. I asked the museum director, Glenda West, about

this photo, and she said it had been donated by the son of Cotton Holley, who lived in Oklahoma. But Glenda didn't know anything further about the photo.

Later on I checked into the three names on the photo. Only Ray Mansel



17-year-old Roger Miller (far left) plays his guitar at the Bright Angel Lodge in 1953.

had enjoyed a musical career that had left much of a trace. In 1955 "Ray Mansel and his Hillbilly Boys" had released a single from a Houston, Texas label called Starday, which seems to have led to better things. On March 3, 1956, *Billboard* magazine reported that Ray and his boys were appearing twice weekly in a 15-minute show on an Amarillo, Texas, TV station, and daily on an Amarillo radio station. A few weeks later *Billboard* announced that Ray and his boys had signed a 2-year contract with Allstar Records, another—better—Hous-

ton label. Between 1956 and 1959 Ray Mansel wrote and released four singles through Allstar. But *Billboard* wasn't impressed by Mansel's songs. Of "Would You Ever Believe It's True," *Billboard* said on June 16, 1956: "Mansel offers a standard piece of country fare in an acceptably twangy style...but retail chances look slim." Of "Love Starved," *Billboard* said on June 1, 1957: "Side was cut in Texas, where it will probably have its greatest appeal." Unfortunately, there is no mention of the names of Mansel's band members. We can only guess if the 1953 Grand Canyon photo shows Mansel's band, perhaps on a tour down Rt. 66. We can't rule out the possibility that Mansel spent some time working for Fred Harvey, and that this was just a collection of local talent. But I did find one reference to Cotton Holley being a professional musician, playing for "Charles Phillips and the Sugartimers" in the Texas panhandle in the late 1950s; this seems to increase the chances that this photo shows a group of traveling musicians. We don't know how they linked up with Roger Miller. Perhaps Cotton Holley had known Roger back in Oklahoma, and knew he was working at the canyon, or perhaps just chanced to run into him there. Or had Roger been traveling with this band and decided to stay at Grand Canyon?

I attended a talk by Don Cusic, who teaches music history at Belmont College in Nashville and who has written seventeen books, including biographies of several major country music stars. Now Cusic was writing a biography of Roger Miller, which surprisingly was the first full-scale biography of Miller ever written, the only other one being an oral biography, *Ain't Got No Cigarettes*, by Lyle Style. I had queried Lyle Style, and he told me he'd never heard of Roger Miller working at the Grand Canyon. Now I asked Don Cusic, and he too said that this was news to him. I explained Miller's circumstances at the canyon, and how it was a good fit for the lyrics of "King of the Road." Cusic was very intrigued. He said that

he didn't know of any other time that Roger had lived in a trailer or earned it by pushing a broom and picking up old stogies. Every week Cusic had breakfast with Jerry Kennedy, Roger's record producer, who had recorded "King of the Road," but Kennedy had never mentioned any Grand Canyon connection. Cusic took me back into the museum and introduced me to Mary Miller, Roger's wife. Cusic asked Mary about Roger working at the Grand Canyon, and she beamed up and said she knew all about it. One time in the 1980s they'd been driving across Arizona and Roger took her on a detour up to the Grand Canyon. They walked into Verkamp's, and Roger introduced her to Jack Verkamp, his boss from thirty years before. Clearly, Roger was still fond of his time working there. Mary said she recalled seeing the housing area for Verkamp's employees. But Mary didn't recall Roger ever mentioning living in a trailer or any connection between the Grand Canyon and the song "King of the Road."

Cusic told me that he wasn't surprised that I was having trouble pinning down the origins of the song. There were lots of stories about its origin, some of them told by Roger. Roger was always telling stories, sometimes tall tales, but in spite of Roger's outgoing persona, he was actually a very private person who seldom talked about his own life. This hadn't made things easy for a biographer.

The Roger Miller Museum had a folk-art carved-wooden hobo, standing on a pedestal that said "King of the Road." This statue was said to be one of the inspirations for the song. Roger had been in Chicago when he saw a sign that said "Trailer for sale or rent," and he had started writing a song about it, but he couldn't finish it. Cusic said that this was normal for Roger, who had a short attention span. Then Miller was stranded in an airport in Boise and saw this hobo statue in the airport gift shop, and it prompted him to finish the song. Framed on the museum wall was a credit card application for Western Airlines, on which Roger had written

the lyrics, slightly different from the words he later recorded.

Cusic said that the summer Roger worked at the canyon was right after he'd been kicked out of both schools in Erick, so he might have quit town and headed west. Cusic said he found my theory plausible, and said he would use it in his biography.

Cusic mentioned that somewhere along the way Miller had developed a fondness for the Southwest. He had settled in Santa Fe, and kept an Indian pot beside his bed. A pot, I thought, a lot like the ones sold at Verkamp's.

With help from Glenda West I obtained a copy of the photo of Miller at the Grand Canyon, and later I set out to find the photo's background in today's Grand Canyon architecture. I assumed that the photo showed the Bright Angel Lodge, which was the entertainment venue at the canyon in the 1950s. The log background in the photo seemed right for the Bright Angel. I supposed this stage was in the lounge, but when I took the photo into the lounge I couldn't find a good match for it. It turned out that today's lounge hadn't been constructed until 1958, five years after this photo was taken. This 1958 date was confirmed by the date Fred Kabotie had left on his murals on the lounge walls. I went into the History Room, whose longtime employee Lowell Fay is a reliable Fred Harvey history resource. Lowell agreed that the rough-cut logs in the photo, some vertical and some horizontal, had the basic Bright Angel look. But he said that the Bright Angel Lodge had been remodeled extensively several times over the last century. It happened that the Bright Angel was now being remodeled once again, and Lowell went and got a Xanterra employee who was helping to supervise the remodeling and who had spent months studying blueprints from long-ago remodels of the Bright Angel. He said that today's lounge and gift shop had once been open space that graduated into the dining area, and that later on they had been walled off. In the early 1950s the live entertainment venue was probably in today's gift shop. He

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looked at the background logs in the photo and said that these were probably long gone, but he guessed that the stage had been against what was today the east wall of the gift shop. I went into the gift shop, and found no resemblance. This Xanterra employee declined to go on record with his name, as if unsure of his conclusions.

Later I spoke with Steve Verkamp, who had grown up in the living quarters upstairs in the Verkamp's store, and who remembered Roger Miller working in the store. Steve recalled that in 1953 the entertainment venue in the Bright Angel Lodge was in today's History Room. Steve said he attended many musical events there, including the local cowboy band on Saturday nights. On Sunday mornings this room was converted into a church for the local community, which often got some odd stares from tourists, especially those who had attended the lively cowboy band there the night before. Lowell Fay had pointed out to me the remnant of a stage-like area behind today's history exhibits, but here

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too the background wall didn't match the 1953 photo.

The only way to confirm the location would have been to find historic photographs of the Bright Angel interior in the 1950s, but a search in several major photo archives came up empty. It seemed that tourists would rather photograph the Grand Can-

yon than the stage of the Bright Angel Lodge. Perhaps this stage was the first stage from which Roger Miller ever performed.