The Ol' Pioneer

The Magazine of the Grand Canyon Historical Society

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In This Issue

Book Review 3
The Infinities of Beauty and Terror 4
Louis Schellback's Log Books, Part 3 11

President's Letter

Calling All Grand Canyon Historians!!

Planning and coordination is well under way for the next Grand Canyon History Symposium scheduled for January 2012. We recently sent out a Call for Papers asking Grand Canyon historians, researchers and writers to submit proposals to present at the symposium. If you have a Grand Canyon history topic that you have researched (or know somebody working on an interesting topic), we strongly encourage you to submit a proposal. The presenters at the last symposium were a nice mix of historians, river runners, hikers, writers, park employees and enthusiastic amateur historians - we expect to have a similar mix this year. So, please get the word out – the deadline for submitting proposals is June 15. Additional details about the symposium and how to submit a proposal can be found on the GCHS website (http://www.grandcanyonhistory.org/).

And speaking of websites… in addition to our long-standing GCHS website, the society now also had its own Facebook page! It has only been public for a few weeks and already has seen nearly 300 users. There are almost daily updates and postings regarding Grand Canyon history trivia, upcoming canyon events and online discussions on various canyon topics. Our current Facebook page administrators are Amy Horn, Helen Ranney, Karen Greig, Tom Martin and myself, but anyone can view and post (even non-GCHS members). It is a great way to keep up with GCHS and Grand Canyon events (as well as raise visibility for the society). If you are already on Facebook, simply type 'Grand Canyon Historical Society' in the search box at the top of the Facebook screen. Once you find our page, be sure to click the 'Like' button to 'Friend' us. Tell your friends!

See you online!

Erik Berg
GCHS President

NOW! Find us on Facebook.

Cover: First important poet to see the Grand Canyon, and founder of *Poetry* magazine, Harriet Monroe.

The Ol' Pioneer submission deadlines are going to be roughly the first of 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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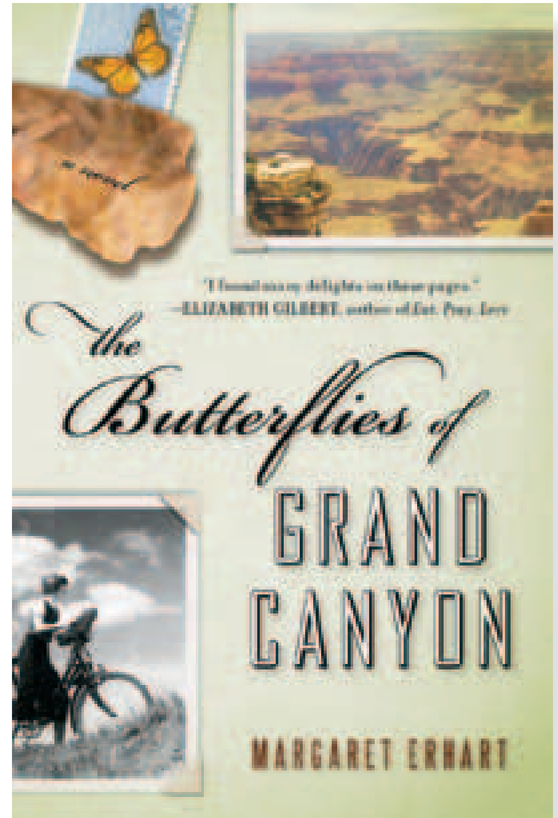
Book Review: The Butterflies of Grand Canyon by Margaret Erhart

by Nancy Greene



Those of us in the Grand Canyon Historical Society spend much of our time delving into nonfiction accounts of those early canyon pioneers. We spend time trying to connect all the myriad pieces of history from all of the events we've attended and books we've read. My advice is to give your brain a break from all that hard historic data and empirical research. Just sit back and enjoy this delightful tale of historical fiction about our favorite place.

Ms. Erhart, local author and canyon hiking guide, brings us back to the South Rim in the 1950s. This is an era some of our members may actually remember. She weaves a murder mystery into her story with the help of the famous skeleton in Emery Kolb's garage, tucked away in a boat, suspended in the ceiling. Although the principal characters are totally a creation of the author's inventive mind, other very real Grand Canyon personages amble through the pages. Lois Jotter, Elzada Clover, Louis Schellbach, H. C. Bryant, Ellsworth Kolb (in his pajamas, no less) and of course, Emery and his skeleton all play a part in this gentle murder mystery. With a familiar setting and a place we all love, we are launched into an all too familiar retelling of the fragility of the human heart and how easily it is to be led astray. Sometimes people do come to their senses, and other times they never recover. Sometimes people who have been so affected by their experiences and the Grand Canyon landscape can walk away, but remain forever altered. Margaret's literary prose is lush with images of the canyon, the monsoon season and the electric shock sensations between some of the characters. The dialogue is rich and helps to move the story along. But there are also those reflective passages, as one character or another tries to mull over a particularly vexing conundrum of life, with the canyon as a backdrop. How many of us have brought our own looming personal angst to the canyon rim—only to have that magnificent spectacle before us help to alter, shrink and sometimes totally dissipate our puny problems. The canyon is a great receptacle for human emotion, and helps to put our own lives in perspective. Prepare to enjoy this historical novel/murder mystery/romance—excellently crafted, well told and with a setting extraordinaire. When you have finished, your heart will float as lightly as the butterflies of the Grand Canyon.

These Infinities of Beauty and Terror: Poets and Writers Discover the Grand Canyon

by Don Lago

Even today, every person who comes to the Grand Canyon discovers it anew. Every visitor sees the canyon with their own personalities, perceptions, and beliefs. Many visitors come thinking they already know the canyon, having seen it in a lifetime of photographs, only to be shocked by the canyon's real scale and shapes and colors.

For the first tourists who stepped off the first Santa Fe Railway trains at the Grand Canyon in 1901, there was much more room for surprise. Photography had not yet become a ubiquitous part of the media; books, magazines, newspapers, and advertising posters still relied on illustrators. The Grand Canyon photographs that tourists had seen were black-and-white and of limited quality. The Santa Fe Railway placed its promotional trust in artists, especially Thomas Moran, yet Moran's romanticized depictions of the canyon were so misleading,

leaving out the canyon's true colors and geological strata, that many tourists were left trying to recognize the real canyon. Tourists also struggled with the refusal of the Grand Canyon and the entire Southwest to fit into the images of natural beauty inherited from Romanticism, images of green fields and blue streams, Edenic flowers and trees, distant mountains, maybe even a few broken Greek columns. In its first years, El Tovar Hotel offered guests a book in which to record their reactions to the canyon, and their comments are filled with the excitement of discovery, with puzzlement, and with conscientious efforts to grasp the meanings of the canyon.

Among the early visitors to the Grand Canyon were some of America's leading poets, novelists, and nature writers. They too were surprised by the canyon, often quite emotionally. They saw the canyon with naked minds, without the templates provided by previous authors. They had to figure out the canyon for themselves. They came from different backgrounds as people and as authors, and they saw the canyon in different ways, yet most of them saw the canyon as a realm of ultimates, of the deepest workings of nature or of God. They felt that the Grand Canyon was challenging them to rise above the usual concerns of personal life or American history. The canyon was asking them canyon-deep questions and offering them deep meanings for human life. Not all of their musings were brilliant or artistically successful, but their musings were far more sophisticated than the popular poetry of the time. The Grand Canyon did succeed at stirring some serious men and women into some serious thought and some telling imagery.

While this article is about the career poets and writer who explored the Grand Canyon in the first quarter of the 20th century, any history of Grand Canyon poetry should acknowledge John Wesley Powell and Clarence Dutton. Powell and Dutton were the first explorers of the Grand Canyon not just physically but poetically, helping to define how we should see a strange new landscape. In the age before academic hyper-specialization, Powell and Dutton absorbed much of 19th century literary culture and they applied the best of it in their writings, while the worst of it—the Romantic fancies that saw landscapes as nothing but giant's castles and fairy gardens—was edited out by their geological eyes and their life-and-death journeys over a rugged land and river. Powell and Dutton left their perceptions not just in eloquent books but upon the land itself, in the names they choose for landscape features. As the American people settled a vast continent they needed to come up with many thousands of names for landscapes and towns. In contrast with Native Americans, whose landscape names held deep familiarity and spiritual meanings, American names were often superficial, honoring the first pioneer to get there or die there, or a politician or railroad president who'd never get there. John Wesley Powell's landscape names came mainly from this pioneer tradition, honoring his crewmates, his wife, his political patrons, and expedition mishaps, and most of Powell's other names were descriptive, such as Vermilion Cliffs. Fortunately Clarence Dutton felt that the Grand Canyon held such deep grandeur that only religious names could do it justice, and he started the tradition of naming canyon features for religious shrines, such as Brahma Temple. Dutton was influenced by the long Romantic tradition of seeing in nature spiritual purposes, mythological images, and architectural shapes.

Three types of writers came to the Grand Canyon: poets, nature writers, and novelists, and each type had a distinct experience of the canyon.

The first well-known writer to visit the Grand Canyon, Charles Dudley Warner in 1891, was a novelist. Yet novelists, who deal in human dramas rather than in landscapes, were the writers least drawn to the Grand Canyon, and those who did come had the least to say about it.

The poets—including three Pulitzer Prize winners—who encountered the Grand Canyon were by far the most philosophically ambitious about it. They saw the canyon as a great puzzle about the ultimate nature of reality, demanding an answer. They often saw the Grand Canyon as a symbol of the whole cosmos. Was the cosmos a place of order, or chaos? Was the canyon evidence for God, or for ancient and massive natural forces? Did the canyon point toward immortality, or decay? If nature was the power behind the canyon, what was the reality of nature? Was it generous or malevolent? For many Grand Canyon poets, these questions weren't abstractions, but powerful personal questions that drove their lives and poetic work. These questions were especially alive in the early years of the 20th century, when science was dramatically changing the universe and challenging familiar religious frameworks. In 1901 one future Grand Canyon poet, Edgar Lee Masters, was the law partner of Clarence Darrow, who in the Scopes trial would plead the case of evolution. But for human society, hopes for evolution led not to progress or utopia but to the mad, mechanized slaughter of World War One, a deep shock to basic optimism of western culture. Three Grand Canyon poets would surrender to despair and commit suicide.

The nature writers—John Muir, John Burroughs, John C. Van Dyke, and Mary Austin—had much more confidence in nature, trusting its reality and benevolence. They were willing to see spiritual realities behind nature, but they didn't worry about it nearly as much as did the poets. They were mainly interested in figuring out how the Grand Canyon fit into nature's scheme; how time, geological forces, and erosion worked and looked; how a desert landscape could still be beautiful; and how the canyon compared with other natural wonders like Yosemite.

As different as these writers were, they shared some common reactions to the canyon, especially a strong sense of surprise and puzzlement. For one writer the surprise and puz-

zlement might be metaphysical, for another geological, for another aesthetic. Some writers reveled in the shock of something very new to them and to human culture.

But many writers felt frightened by the canyon, frightened with physical annihilation. They shrank back as if the canyon were going to swallow them, or as if they feared throwing themselves into it. John C. Van Dyke devoted much of the first chapter of his *The Grand Canyon of the Colorado* to this suicidal impulse:

> …the rock platforms down below seem to heave, the buttes sway; even the opposite Rim of the Canyon undulates slightly. The depth yawns to engulf you. Instinctively you shrink back. If it were not for the presence of companions you might cry out.
>
> Ah! the terror of it!
>
> And, worse than that, the mad attraction of it, the dread temptation that lies within it! The chasm repels and yet draws. What does it mean? Why before this most prodigious beauty of the world does one feel tempted to leap over the edge?[1]

Van Dyke claimed that "almost everyone at the Canyon for the first time knows this impulse."[2] This might be an exaggeration, but Van Dyke had a personal interest in this impulse: a dozen years previously, John C. Van Dyke's cousin, Henry Van Dyke, a popular and confidently Christian poet, had published the book *The Grand Canyon and Other Poems,* in which he confessed that the canyon had brought on a sudden fear of self-annihilation. John C. Van Dyke suggested that such fear was actually a fear of our own darkest impulses. Probably it also came from tiny human identities suddenly being invaded or overwhelmed by a vast, inhuman, lifeless, mysterious reality. This reaction is much less common in writers today, and would probably be dismissed as personal pathology. But the frequency of this reaction a century ago suggests it was a cultural phenomenon, or rather a lack of cultural preparation for meeting and perceiving a strange, powerful, new reality. Today visitors to the Grand Canyon have been trained to expect something beautiful, and nature writers have been trained to see nature not as any threat to human identity, but as an innocent victim of human threats.

Almost no writer expressed any conservationist concerns for the canyon. John Muir admitted that he'd had misgivings about the railroad reaching the rim, but when he finally rode the train there he declared: "In the presence of such stupendous scenery they are nothing. The locomotives and trains are mere beetles and caterpillars, and the noise they make is as little disturbance as the hooting of an owl in the lonely woods."[3]

In the years the Grand Canyon was being discovered, Romanticism was still a dominant cultural force, and most writers saw the canyon through its eyes. Romanticism placed a strong emphasis on nature and saw it as a realm more perfect than the human realm, and often as a spiritual realm. On its more serious side, Romanticism saw nature as a gospel written in stone and forests, or as embodied spirit. On its aesthetic level, Romanticism saw nature as the source of ultimate beauty, maybe metaphysical beauty. On its more superficial level, Romanticism saw nature as the enchanted playground of non-Christian spirits, of giants, elves, fairies, and Greek gods; mountains were their castles, forests their gardens. Such enchantments had become such a strong literary convention that few Grand Canyon authors avoided it. A few authors noted that they had read Clarence Dutton, so perhaps they were following Dutton's lead in mixing architectural and mythological images in the canyon. Or perhaps the Romantic temptation to see castles was a function of the human brain trying to find familiar patterns in a new and confusing environment.

There were two writers who objected to filling the Grand Canyon with Romantic castles, and they were the two writers who best knew southwestern landscapes. After years of living and traveling in the Mojave Desert, John C. Van Dyke published *The Desert* in 1901, and Mary Austin published *Land of Little Rain* in 1903. Van Dyke and Austin challenged Americans to see and appreciate the desert on its own terms; to stop seeing it through the eyes of the English Romantics; to stop seeing it and calling it ugly for what it lacked; to start seeing that naked rock had its own identity and beauty. Twenty years later John C. Van Dyke and Mary Austin wrote about the Grand Canyon. Austin complained: "But be careful whom you ask to point the place out to you, lest you be answered by one of the silly names cut out of a mythological dictionary and shaken in a hat before they were applied to the Grand Cañon for the benefit of that amazing number of Americans who can never see anything unless it is supposed to look like something else."[4] John C. Van Dyke felt that the Grand Canyon had been insulted: "…the parlor-car poet was abroad in the land and in consequence the mock-heroic and the absurd have been put upon the map. A series of numbers would have been less agonizing and quite as poetic."[5] Both Austin and Van Dyke said that Native American names would have been more appropriate.

Yet even as many poets saw castles in the canyon, most of them were struggling, sometimes painfully, with the transition between Romanticism and modernism, not just in literary style, but philosophically. The powerful cultural tradition that saw nature as a realm of perfection, beauty, and spirit, was being challenged by the hard-to-evade power of science, which saw a universe of vast spaces and strange forces, with large roles for chance and chaos.

The first famous writer to visit the Grand Canyon was Charles Dudley Warner, who today is best remembered as the co-author, with Mark Twain, of *The Gilded Age,* Twain's first novel, which gave the name to the post-Civil War era of expansion, opulence, greed, and corruption. Americans still had no doubt that the frontier was endless, that they

would conquer it, and that it would make them rich. A typical episode in the novel involves a company formed to straighten and dredge a river and build a canal, but the company pays out so many bribes to congressmen that it goes broke. When Warner saw the Grand Canyon he saw a realm beyond river-straightening conquest, and far beyond the New England scenery where he lived. If Mark Twain, who was part of the small portion of Americans who had roamed the desert Southwest, had told Warner how different it was from normal ideas of beauty, Warner was still shocked by the Grand Canyon. Warner's surprise and puzzlement was typical of many early canyon visitors:

> Our party were straggling up the hill: two or three had reached the edge. I looked up. The duchess threw up her arms and screamed. We were not fifteen paces behind, but we saw nothing. We took the few steps, and the whole magnificence broke upon us. No one could be prepared for it. The scene is one to strike dumb with awe, or to unstring the nerves; one might stand in silent astonishment, another would burst into tears.
>
> There are some experiences that cannot be repeated—one's first view of Rome, one's first view of Jerusalem. But these emotions are produced by association, by the sudden standing face to face with the scenes most wrought into our whole life and education by tradition and religion. This was without association, as it was without parallel. It was a shock so novel that the mind, dazed, quite failed to comprehend it…
>
> Wandering a little away from the group and out of sight, and turning suddenly to the scene from another point of view, I experienced for a moment an indescribable terror of nature, a confusion of mind, a fear to be alone in such a presence. With all this grotesqueness and majesty of form and radiance of color, creation seemed in a whirl. With our education in scenery of a totally different kind, I suppose it would need long acquaintance with this to familiarize one with it to the extent of perfect mental comprehension.[6]

Warner was familiar with the writings of Clarence Dutton, who "tried by the use of Oriental nomenclature to bring it within our comprehension." Warner too tried to tame the canyon by finding human architectural shapes in it, seeing temples, castles, pagodas, and train wrecks: "There is no end to such devices." But the canyon "was a city of no man's creation nor of any man's conception."

In the end Warner conceded that the canyon was the realm of inhuman geological forces, of "…immense antiquity, hardly anywhere else on earth so overwhelming as here. It has been here in all its lonely grandeur and transcendent beauty, exactly as it is, for what to us is an eternity, unknown, unseen by human eye."[7]

In 1902 Hamlin Garland, who had become famous for the prairie stories of *Main Traveled Roads,* traveled to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and witnessed a sunset and moonrise there. Garland was a friend of John Wesley Powell and had written a poem inspired by Powell, "The Stricken Pioneer," about the American pioneer experience. As a writer Garland was out of his depths at the Grand Canyon, lacking Powell's honest rapport with the landscape. Garland described the sound of the nighttime Colorado River as "like some imperious nocturnal animal—a dragon with a lion's throat." As the moon rose, Garland turned it into a fake melodrama: "For an instant my blood thickened with fear. Was it some ghost of the river's dark caverns?"[8]

Willa Cather knew the Southwest well, featured it in several novels, and gave good descriptions of Mesa Verde and Walnut Canyon. Yet when it came to the Grand Canyon she seemed to admit defeat. In *The Song of the Lark,* published in 1915, Cather described the notebook of someone who had attempted to describe the Grand Canyon: "The pages of that book were like a battlefield; the laboring author had fallen back from metaphor to metaphor, abandoning position after position. He would have admitted that the art of forging metals was nothing to this treacherous business of recording impressions, in which the material you were so full of vanished mysteriously under your striving hand."[9]

Zane Grey and Owen Wister, who created the genre of the western novel in the same years that tourists were first seeing the Grand Canyon, gave Americans a strong reinforcement of their tendency to see western landscapes as a mere theater of the national story, of the heroic conquest of wilderness, Indians, and wealth. Still, both writers occasionally saw that western landscapes might offer something more. In Wister's introduction to Ellsworth Kolb's 1914 book about the Kolb's Colorado River trip, Wister concluded: "This canyon seems like

an avenue conducting to the secret of the universe and the presence of the gods."[10] Then again, the fact that the Kolbs were more interested in adventure and film-making than in finding 'the gods" may point out the dangers of Romantic rhetoric.

The first important poet to see the Grand Canyon was Harriet Monroe in 1899. Actually, Monroe was less important for her own poetry, which was limited and conventional, than for founding *Poetry* magazine in Chicago in 1912. Through *Poetry* Harriet Monroe became the midwife of modern poetry, the mentor of Yeats, Eliot, Pound, Stevens, and many others who transformed poetry. Monroe and *Poetry* broke the long dominance of Victorian poetry, which consisted of well-ordered rhymes, logical arguments, moral instruction, charming images, and noble but exaggerated sentimentality. Today literary historians regard the decades between Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and 1912 as a stagnant era in American poetry, leaving little of lasting value. American poets were writing as if Whitman had never lived; they venerated New England aristocrats like Longfellow, who sought their inspirations in Europe, certainly not in the landscapes of the American west. *Poetry* magazine opened a flood of new styles, free verse, serious subject matters, and a poetry not of didacticism but of images and symbols. Harriet Monroe's circle of poets knew that she loved the Grand Canyon, and this encouraged several of them to send her poems about the canyon, poems that bore all the marks of modernist experiments in style.

It was only by accident that Harriet Monroe discovered the Grand Canyon. Monroe was raised in a prominent family in Chicago and was taught all the conventions of European culture. She won Chicago fame for writing the official Ode for Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition. In the custom of the time for affluent young Americans, she spent a year and a half in a grand tour of Europe. On returning home she came down with severe pneumonia, which refused to fade in a Chicago winter, so her parents sent her off to Phoenix, Arizona. Her "illness gave me the West—a gift of incalculable value."[11]

From her convalescent chair Monroe spent hours every day watching the desert mountains changing colors. As she recovered, Monroe took long horse rides into the desert. Like Mary Austin and John C. Van Dyke, Monroe adjusted her definitions of natural beauty:

> The desert, lying silver in the sunlight, had a weird and hoary beauty of its own, very unlike the beauty of green fields and thick forests but quite as potent. It seemed the most ancient thing on earth. It suggested immensities of time. One measured it not by years but by geological ages…At first [the saguaro cacti] seemed monstrous, foolish…as if a tombstone should flower. But gradually I felt convinced of entering another world, accepting unfamiliar laws. Here were not companionable trees and shrubs, but the afterglow of an ancient earth…Humanity had no rights in this enormous desolation; I intruded upon its profound mysterious beauty.[12]

Monroe now looked back on European culture, where she'd seen scholars "devoting their lives to the analysis of Giorgione's color and Donatello's silver line" as terribly superficial compared with the colors and lines of the Arizona desert, where "Nature is not conciliatory and charming: she is terrible and magnificent… upon whose fundamental immensity and antiquity our boasted civilization blooms like the flower of a day."[13]

It was this sense of trespassing upon a vast, ancient, inhuman nature that defined Monroe's experience of the Grand Canyon.

Monroe nearly left Arizona without seeing the canyon, but at the last minute she received a $30 check from a publisher, and this afforded her a stage coach trip to Grandview. Monroe gave us three descriptions of her Grand Canyon experience, the first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1899, and the second two in her autobiography four decades later. The contrast between the 1899 account and the autobiography measures the changes of literary style that Monroe helped instigate in the world of poetry. The 1899 account is full of Romantic rhetoric and imagery and spiritual messages:

> Prophets and poets had wandered here before they were born to tell their mighty tales—Isaiah and Aeschylus and Dante, the giants who dared the utmost. Here at last the souls of great architects must find their dreams fulfilled; must recognize the primal inspiration which, after long ages, had achieved Assyrian palaces, the temples and pyramids of Egypt, the fortresses and towered cathedrals of mediaeval Europe. For the inscrutable Prince of builders had reared these imperishable monuments…[14]

In Monroe's autobiography, such Romantic habits have largely disappeared. But Monroe insists that the main experience she described in 1899 wasn't rhetorical but powerfully real and life-changing. With her new but unsteady desert-trained eyes, Monroe was deeply shocked by the Grand Canyon's vast inhuman spaces: "I leaped to an emotion too big for me, a blinding flash of beauty and terror, a lift to the sublime."[15] She felt like an intruder in a realm where human life wasn't even allowed. In her 1899 article she wrote:

> Everywhere the proof of my unfitness abased and dazed my will…The strain of existence became too tense against these infinities of beauty and terror. My narrow ledge of rock was a prison. I fought against the desperate temptation to fling myself down into that soft abyss, and thus redeem the affront which the eager beating of my heart offered to its inviolable solitude. Death itself would not be too rash an apology for my invasion—death in those happy spaces, pillowed

> on purple immensities of air. So keen was this impulse, so slight at that moment became the fleshy tie, that I might almost have yielded but for a sudden word in my ear—the trill of an oriole from the pine close above me. The brave little song was a message personal and intimate, a miracle of sympathy or prophecy. And I cast myself on that tiny speck of life as on the heart of a friend—a friend who would save me from intolerable loneliness, from utter extinction and despair. He seemed to welcome me to the infinite…I made him the confidant of my unworthiness; asked him for the secret, since, being winged, he was at home even here. He gave me healing and solace; restored me to the gentle amenities of our little world; enabled me to retreat through the woods, as I had come, instead of taking the swift road to liberty.[16]

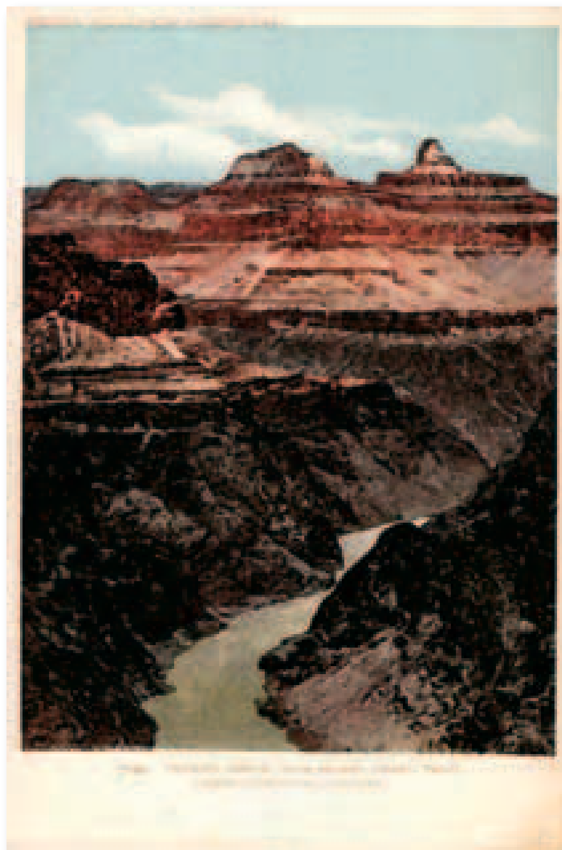
In spite of this moment of existential dread, or perhaps because of it, Monroe became devoted to the Grand Canyon. In her autobiography she wrote:

> From that first look to the latest of many visits the Canyon has been my house of dreams. I have lived there for weeks at a time, quietly and intimately, with episodes of more adventurous exploration. I have camped on the mesa halfway down and waked to a mountain lion's roar…Above all, one of my visits was during a rare season of heavy rains; and I stood, by good luck, at one of the great viewpoints while a thunderstorm trailed its grey robes up and down the vast abyss…For two hours I watched the great drama—the most sublime spectacle I ever expect to see.[17]

This sublimity didn't require any Greek gods or Alpine castles, only the reality of nature. Monroe wrote two poems about the Grand Canyon, but neither is nearly as interesting as her personal account.

In her praise of the Grand Canyon, Monroe was comparing it with the greatest landscapes of the American west, for she traveled, hiked, and camped widely. John Muir recruited Monroe to testify before the U. S. Congress on behalf of saving the Hetch Hetchy Valley, where she had hiked with the Sierra Club.

Monroe's journeys to the west and the Grand Canyon were made easier by the Chicago-based Santa Fe Railway, which built the tourist facilities on the South Rim, and which gave Monroe free railway passes. The Santa Fe Railway also became one of the financial patrons of *Poetry* magazine, and it included Monroe's 1899 article in its 1906 book *Grand Canyon of Arizona.* The railway didn't seem worried by Monroe's suggestion that the canyon could prompt suicidal impulses.



Illinois was also the home base of John Wesley Powell, whom Monroe acknowledged in her 1899 article. Two of Monroe's star poets, Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters, were Illinois boys with a keen interest in American history. Both Sandburg and Masters wrote Grand Canyon poems, and Sandburg acknowledged the Illinois connection: "…then came Powell, Hance, the Santa Fe, the boys shooting the rapids, and Fred Harvey with El Tovar."[18]

In preparing to launch *Poetry* magazine, Harriet Monroe spent months reading the works of contemporary American and British poets, and she made a list of modernist-inclined poets she would invite to submit work to *Poetry.* One of the poets on her list was George Sterling, who was one of the best-known American poets of the time. Sterling probably knew of Monroe's enthusiasm for the Grand Canyon, for one of the poems he submitted was "At the Grand Canyon," which Monroe published in the third issue of *Poetry.*

George Sterling was both a forerunner and a victim of the modernist revolution in poetry. When in 1903 he published his first book, *The Testimony of the Suns,* he was hailed as an avant-garde poet. He was shedding Victorian sentimentality for realism; he was a bohemian rebelling against conventionality; he was exploring the new realities revealed by science. Yet in style, Sterling's poetry remained stuck in the 19th century. Only three years after publishing Sterling's Grand Canyon poem, Harriet Monroe wrote a review of Sterling's body of work, dismissing him as an anachronism, full of "shameless rhetoric," "the worst excesses of the Tennysonian tradition," and "the frippery of a bygone fashion."[19] Sterling knew he was being left behind. When he saw his Grand Canyon poem and two other poems printed beside the cutting-edge poets in *Poetry*, Sterling wrote to Monroe: "When I saw them next to Yeats I regretted more than ever that they were not my best work…Well, next time I hope to do

better…"[20] Yet Sterling could never adapt to modernism, and today his poetry is forgotten.

Sterling himself is remembered as the founder and the hub of the Carmel, California, arts colony. Sterling moved to Carmel in 1905, seeing it as his own Walden Pond for simple living and natural beauty. When the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 rendered most of the city's bohemian community homeless, many writers and artists headed for Carmel. Sterling became close friends with Ambrose Bierce and Jack London, who shared his naturalistic and often dark worldview, and London turned Sterling into a character in his novel *Martin Eden.* Prophetically, London has the Sterling character commit suicide. In 1907 a friend of Sterling committed suicide in Sterling's house, and Sterling became obsessed with the idea of suicide. In 1926 Sterling was in a drunken stupor when he finally killed himself with cyanide. His friend Upton Sinclair declared that Sterling had been killed by "the nebular hypothesis."

The "nebular hypothesis" was the landscape of Sterling's *The Testimony of the Suns.* As a boy Sterling became interested in astronomy; his wealthy father had his own observatory building. As astronomers in the 1880s and 1890s revealed an ever larger, older, and stranger universe, Sterling was both enthralled and appalled. The universe was full of stars that had their own lifecycle, far beyond the scale of human lives. Stars were born out of nebulae, lived many millions of years, and then collapsed or blew up and unraveled back into nebulae. Sterling pictured the universe as a "war" of stars, stars colliding in a Darwinian jungle of stars. Amid such massive destruction, human hopes for a universe of love and immortality were pathetic vanities. And yet, out of dead-star nebulae new suns and new planets and new life would arise.

When George Sterling looked into the Grand Canyon he saw it with same eyes with which he saw the testimony of the suns. He saw massive, ancient, violent forces, amid which human lives were negligible. Sterling's poem "At the Grand Canyon" contains the traditional Romantic fancy of seeing a landscape as the home of gods, but for Sterling these gods aren't noble Greek gods or charming giants or fairies, but warring gods, geo-Darwinian gods. In his astronomical poetry Sterling often offered a bleak, nihilistic vision, only to end a poem on a softer, more upbeat note. Perhaps Sterling was trying to placate readers who weren't ready to follow him into despair. In his Grand Canyon poem too, Sterling ends by turning a bleak universe into a good excuse for human pleasures:

It seems as though a deep-hued sunset falls
Forever on these Cyclopean walls,
These battlements where Titan hosts have warred,
And hewn the world with devastating sword,
And shook with trumpets the eternal halls
Where Seraphim lay hid by bloody palls
And only Hell and Silence were adored.
Lo! the abyss wherein the wings of Death
Might beat unchallenged, and his fatal breath
Fume up in pestilence. Beneath the sky
Is no such testimony unto grief.
Here Terror walks with Beauty ere she die.
Oh! hasten to me, Love, for life is brief![21]

The same issue of *Poetry* that included George Sterling's Grand Canyon poem also introduced a 27-year-old poet, John Gould Fletcher, who would win the Pulitzer Prize for poetry a quarter of a century later. Fletcher was living in Europe, where Ezra Pound recognized his talent and sent Fletcher's poems to Harriet Monroe. Like many in a generation of expatriate writers and artists, Fletcher felt that Europe was the only place for a serious poet to be, and he came back to America only because of the outbreak of World War One.

Yet Fletcher's first inspiration as a poet came from the landscapes of the Southwest. While a literature student at Harvard, Fletcher took a train trip from his home in Arkansas to southern California, and he was enthralled by the desert. "A huge splintered mass of rocks stands on an endless plain," he wrote in his journal, "…some vast nightmare of a castle (a good idea for a poem.)"[22] Two years later, hoping to reconnect with his Southwestern muse, he joined a Harvard archaeological expedition to Colorado, where he saw how "Once the great ocean rolled over / these mesas."[23]

In Europe, Fletcher published his first poetry book, *The Book of Nature,* a standard Romantic tour of the castle-like landscapes of Europe. Yet Fletcher was stirred by the modernist revolution in the arts—Fletcher was in the audience for the legendary premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*—and he changed his style.

When Fletcher returned to America in 1915 he went through Chicago and introduced himself to Harriet Monroe, and then he headed for the Southwest, including the Grand Canyon. He wrote a series of poems he called the "Arizona Poems," and when he went back through Chicago he handed them to Monroe. Fletcher was broke, and Monroe put him up for a few days. Monroe published the "Arizona Poems" the next year and awarded Fletcher *Poetry's* annual Guarantor's Prize, worth $100. Twenty years later Fletcher found it easy to talk Monroe into devoting a whole issue of *Poetry* to southwestern authors.

Fletcher's poem "The Grand Canyon of the Colorado" begins—much like Monroe's *Atlantic Monthly* article of sixteen years before—with the experience of emerging from a pine forest and beholding an unreal canyon landscape. Twice Fletcher says that the canyon is "not of this earth." This seems a failure of geological imagination, for of course nowhere else reveals the earth more completely. Fletcher sees the canyon

as a realm of stability. The cliffs are "strong-built," "durable," "forever completed," "unscarred, unaltered/ the work stands finished," "molded and fashioned forever in durable ageless stone," and "It is finished." Again, this is a curious thing to say about the world's greatest display of erosion-in-action. Fletcher's desire to find stability in the canyon probably arose from the chronic instability of his own life. Fletcher was emotionally volatile and suffered from depression and suicidal impulses, all of which took a large toll on his relationships. At the time he wrote his Grand Canyon poem, Fletcher was broke, homeless, and horrified by the slaughter in European trenches.

The Grand Canyon's seeming eternity was so appealing to Fletcher that he imagined it as his final resting place:

One single thing I would ask for,
Burn my body here.
Kindle the pyre
Upon this jutting point;
Dry aromatic juniper,
Lean flame, blue smoke,
Ashes and dust.
The winds would drift the ash
Outwards across the canyon,
To the rose-purple rim of the desert
Beyond the red-barred towers.[24]

It was not to be. In 1950, at age sixty-four, Fletcher finally gave in to the images of self-annihilation in his poetry. He walked into an Arkansas lake and drowned himself. He wasn't cremated, but buried in a Little Rock cemetery near his parents.

A few months after launching *Poetry* magazine, Harriet Monroe met the young Sara Teasdale and invited her to visit Monroe in Chicago. Five years later Teasdale won the first Pulitzer Prize awarded for poetry. Teasdale had discovered the Southwest in 1908, when a female philosophy professor at the University of Arizona, who admired Teasdale's first book, hosted her for over two months. Teasdale would write about "those vehement stars" of Tucson, and she had strong interests in astronomy

and botany, but she seldom wrote about nature for its own sake; more often she used nature as a backdrop for her emotional life. Teasdale didn't see the Grand Canyon until 1920. Her biographer, William Drake, reports: "She stopped for a day at the Grand Canyon, where she had to rest for an afternoon because the spectacle overwhelmed her."[25] To Harriet Monroe, Teasdale wrote: "It makes me feel that immortality must Be, after all, since the ages have worked for such harmonious splendor there."[26] Teasdale found the same reassurance in the night sky, more there than in the Bible. Like John Gould Fletcher and many other poets, the disaster of World War One left Teasdale shaken and yearning for a higher stability. Teasdale didn't write a poem about the Grand Canyon, but she did use the stars as symbols of the grand if mysterious design of the cosmos: "If ever I started a religion," she wrote Monroe in 1926, "it would be star-worship."[27]

But the stability of the canyon and the stars didn't bring stability to Sara Teasdale—she too ended her own life.

[To be continued… in the next issue of The Ol' Pioneer]

(Endnotes)

1 John C. Van Dyke, *The Grand Canyon of the Colorado* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927) p 1-2.
2 Ibid. p 4.
3 John Muir, "The Grand Canyon of the Colorado" *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine,* Nov. 1902, p 107-16.
4 Mary Austin, *Land of Journey's Ending* (New York: AMS Press, 1969) p 421.
5 John C. Van Dyke, op cit., p15.
6 Charles Dudley Warner, *Our Italy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891) p 177-200.
7 Ibid.
8 Hamlin Garland, "The Grand Canyon at Night," from *The Grand Canyon of Arizona* (Chicago: The Santa Fe Railway, 1906) p 61-62.
9 Willa Cather, *The Song of the Lark* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999) p 103.
10 Ellsworth Kolb, *Through the Grand Canyon from Wyoming to Mexico* (New York: Macmillan, 1914) p ix.
11 Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World* (New York: Macmillan, 1938) p 164.
12 Ibid, p 165-166.
13 Ibid, p 166.
14 Harriet Monroe, *The Atlantic Monthly*, December 1899.
15 Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life.*
16 Harriet Monroe, *The Atlantic Monthly,* December 1899.
17 Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life*, p 168.
18 Carl Sandburg, "Many Hats," *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970) p 432.
19 Harriet Monroe, "The Poetry of George Sterling," *Poetry,* March, 1916, p 308-9.
20 Quoted in Harriet Monroe, *A Poet's Life.*
21 George Sterling, "At the Grand Canyon," *Sonnets to Craig* (New York: Viking Press, 1928).
22 Quoted in Ben F. Johnson III, *Fierce Solitude: A Life of John Gould Fletcher* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994) p 21.
23 Ibid, p 29.
24 John Gould Fletcher, "The Grand Canyon of the Colorado," *Breakers and Granite* (New York: Macmillan, 1921). p 95.
25 William Drake, *Sara Teasdale: Woman and Poet* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) p 195.
26 Ibid, p 204.
27 Ibid, p 222.

Park Naturalist Louis Schellbach's Log Books

By Traci Wyrick

The following are the last diary entries I've selected from 1943. I've also listed several more names my Grandfather referenced from that year, and added corrections and/or new information from the Winter 2010 issue of Ol PIONEER.

~

Thursday Oct. 7, 1943

On duty at Yavapai. Signed monthly report and letter to McDougall, given to typist to write on Tuesday.

At Yavapai cleaned and washed all the big windows. Only 12 persons visited the station in a.m. Some 700 troops due in late this afternoon to stay until Saturday or Sunday. Four to five special lectures are arranged for them tomorrow.

Sky full of thunderheads and a light sprinkle of rain about 1:30 p.m. (war time).

~

Friday Oct. 8, 1943

A.M. duty at Yavapai, arranging seating in preparation for 9:00 a.m. lecture to members of the armed forces. 700 arrived last night, with their trucks, jeeps and guns. It is an artillery outfit. Presented four lectures this day 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 3:30 p.m.. Total attendance 770.

Sold 55 landscapes to troops and one box of rocks. This was to be my day off, but because of the troops, the absence of Supt. H.C.B., had to carry on. Sunday is to be my day off at Yavapai.

~

Saturday Oct. 9, 1943

On duty early at Yavapai for general clean up, because of the debris left by troops in the form of cigarette butts, candy wrappers, etc. Talk inside, too cool on the parapet. Supt. Bryant returned. To movies in the evening.

~

Saturday Oct. 9, 1943

On duty early at Yavapai for general clean up, because of the debris left by troops in the form of cigarette butts, candy wrappers, etc. Talk inside, too cool on the parapet. Supt. Bryant returned. To movies in the evening.

~

Saturday Oct. 9, 1943

On duty early at Yavapai for general clean up, because of the debris left by troops in the form of cigarette butts, candy wrappers, etc. Talk inside, too cool on the parapet. Supt. Bryant returned. To movies in the evening.

~

Sunday Oct. 10, 1943

Rain during night. (11:00 p.m. MST) On duty at Yavapai. No day off this week just past. Special lecture 2:45 p.m. to State Teachers College, Flag. Group of naval cadets public speaking class, Dr. Allen.

Reg. talk 3:30 p.m. to visitors. Dinner with family at El Tovar.

~

Thursday Oct. 14 , 1943

Many of the troops hiked down into the Canyon this day. Presented a lecture to a group of troops at 9:30 a.m. On duty at Yavapai.

At noon the two princes' arrived at Yavapai with their retinue, Supt. Bryant, Asst. Supt. Davis and Chief Ranger Bill. They were Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Feisal and his brother, Prince Khalid, several attendants, they were being escorted by a member of the State Dept.

In the p.m. a tea was given them by Mrs. Bryant and Ethyl (Mrs. S.) helped and poured tea and coffee.

Numbers of troops visited Yavapai throughout the day.

~

Wednesday Oct. 27, 1943

Opened Yavapai, gave general clean up and then to Hdq. for staff meeting until 12:05 p.m.

P.M. stocked Yavapai with paper towel and History Bulletins.

At 3:30 p.m. lecture, there was a fundamentalist in the audience. When questions were asked for, he took the floor and tried to preach to the group—much to their annoyance and disgust. I did not argue, telling he was at liberty to believe anything he desired and that I was presenting geology and not religion. The group shut him up. Most annoying—

~

People mentioned in last half of 1943:

Ernie Ensor: A jack-of-all-trades who was liked by all. He helped Schellbach in washing windows and waxing floors at Yavapai Observation Station and improved the smooth operation of the Interpretive Division from the nuts and bolts standpoint.

Ed Cummings: Head Mule Skinner for Fred Harvey company. His wife, Ida, ran the soda fountain at Babbitt's. Ed was an amateur naturalist, and kept an eye out for finding new things he figured Schellbach would like to know about.

M.R. Tillotson: Regional Director. He and Schellbach were good friends, even though they didn't always agree on things.

Ethyl : Schellbach's wife.

Mrs. Cotter: wife of Post Office clerk ?

Miss Gene Cummings: hired through the GCNHA to help with the library.

Miss Helen Lawton: Workshop visitor

Col. White: a superintendant ?

Payne: a carpenter ?

Dean Daisy: helped clean exhibit cases at Yavapai, lived close to Schellbach, possibly a ranger ?

Dr. Paul Lotz: ?

John Cooke: worked at the disposal plant ?

Ed Laws: Ranger

Porquett: person associated with Phantom Ranch

Jonnie: Steno

Les Kennedy: Ranger

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Carl P. Russell: Chief Naturalist at Chicago headquarters
Roy Fancher: mechanic
Carrells, Clark? : engineer
Mrs. Spencer: ? possibly associated with a man named Spencer at the Hopi House.
Burns: Museum Chief
Sam King: Ranger
Barbara Eppler: Steno at headquarters
Inez Haring: biologist, specializing in mosses and lichens
Dowling: ?
Bert Lauzon: Ranger and son-in-law of William Wallace Bass. Bert was the father of Hubert Lauzon and grandfather of Robert and Patrick Lauzon

Corrections and/or additions:
Hugh Waesche: a geologist and professor at VA Ploytechnic Inst. In Balcksburg, VA.
Frank Kitteridge: Acting superintendant of GCNP from Jan 24, 1940 to June 30, 1941
Judd: a common Mormon name, likely from a family out of Kanab.
Spelling corrections:
Rose Collum is Collom.
Mrs. Frank Ostler is Osler.
Ranger Harthon Bill is Harlin.

Look for the beginning of 1944's diary selections in upcoming issues of *The Ol' Pioneer*.

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