



The Ol' Pioneer

The Magazine of the Grand Canyon Historical Society

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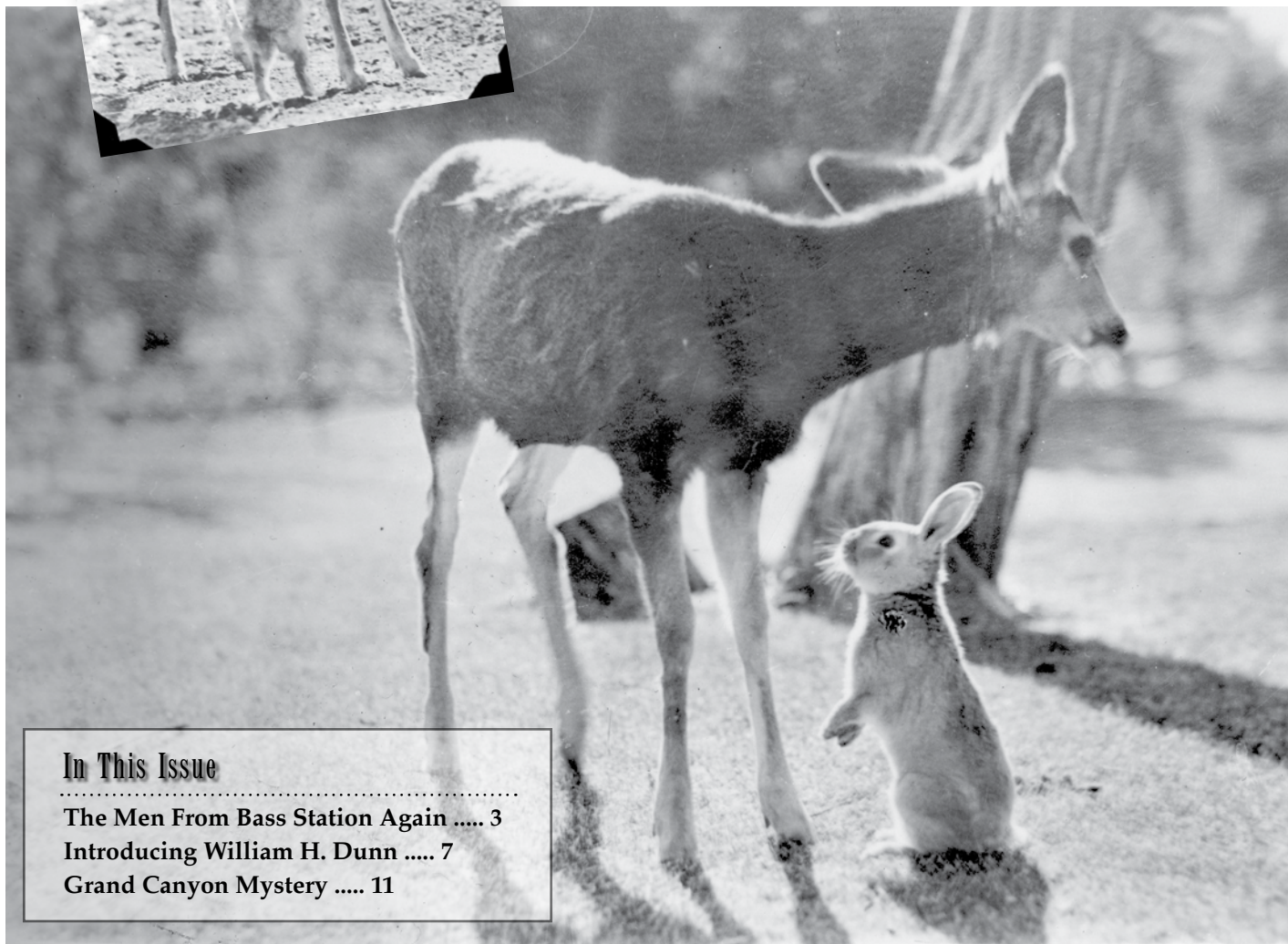


Inseparable Companions on South Rim

by Dove Menkes

Some years ago, when I was in Denver, I visited Barbara McKee. She brought out her albums and told me about some events that the pictures represented. Most intriguing, were pictures of a rabbit and a deer on the South Rim of Grand Canyon that always hung out together. They were "inseparable."

Photos by Barbara McKee ca. 1930
NAU.PH.95.38.354 Courtesy: Special Collections



In This Issue

-
- The Men From Bass Station Again 3
- Introducing William H. Dunn 7
- Grand Canyon Mystery 11

President's Letter

When I last sat to write this letter to members of our Society in late January, we were merrily planning for our upcoming Symposium in November. No sooner had *The Ol' Pioneer* gone to press that we received word on February 1st about the sudden passing of one of our Board members, Steve Landes, from complications after surgery. A shock permeated through our ranks as Steve seemed to be in the prime of life (he was only 45 years of age at his passing). Steve grew up in Flagstaff and attained his Eagle Scout with the Boy Scouts of America, earned a Doctorate in Educational Leadership at NAU, and was elected to our Board in the fall of 2014. He brought energy, ideas and perspective to the Board. You can honor Steve's memory by making a donation at the Make A Wish Foundation and read his obituary at this link: <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/azcentral/obituary.aspx?n=steven-christopher-landes&pid=177694027>.

As they say, "when it rains, it pours." We next heard that Leland "Lee" Albertson passed away on February 20th, having suffered a stroke at home four days earlier. Lee was 82 years old at the time of his death and was an institution in and of himself within the Society. He was an original 1984 member of the forerunner of the GCHS, the Grand Canyon Pioneer Society. He served on the Board continuously from 1996 to 2005, again in 2008, and served again since 2013. He was GCHS President from 2002 to 2004 and Secretary from 1997 to 2001 and again in 2005. Perhaps most importantly, Lee was instrumental in the success of our three previous Symposia and served as Chairperson for those held in 2007 and 2012. In 2008, Lee was presented with the Society's highest award, The Pioneer Award, for his many contributions in promoting the history of Grand Canyon.

Lee was born in Kearney, NE in 1934 and attained the rank of Eagle Scout with the BSA. He graduated with a Civil Engineering degree from Oklahoma A&M and he was involved in the design of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART) in California. In July 1968, he moved to the "blue skies" of Phoenix working for ADOT. This is where he met his wife of 46 years, Shirley Ann (Duncan) and together, they raised their daughter Charlotte (McCullough), now of Tulsa OK. He is also survived by two grandchildren, Everett and Clayton.

Shortly after making his move to Arizona, Lee met his second love, the Grand Canyon, where he immersed himself in the trails and numerous river trips. Although the duties of Symposium Chairperson have now shifted to others in the Society, Lee maintained an interest in the viability of the event and was involved in many aspects of the upcoming NPS Centennial Symposium this coming November. It is likely that the Board will approve a new category of award to be presented at the next Symposium, the Lee Albertson Award, to be awarded to a researcher and presenter who gives the best paper at this and all future symposia.

As one long-time Board member wrote to me after these two significant losses, "the canyon colors have faded just a bit." Indeed they have.

Wayne Ranney
GCHS President

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

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The Men From Bass Station Again or, the Keystone Kops on the Kaibab

by Earle E. Spamer

In the Winter 2015 issue of *The Old Pioneer*¹ I wrote about the snail hunters, Henry Pilsbry and James Ferriss, who traveled to Grand Canyon in 1906. In 1909, Jim returned for a more ambitious trip, with friend Lorenzo Daniels. They stayed with W. W. Bass, crossed the canyon to the Kaibab Plateau, and ventured on to the Powell Plateau and Mount Trumbull before winding up in Kanab, Utah. I had indicated that few details were known about the trip, including

their companions. There *is* more, after all!

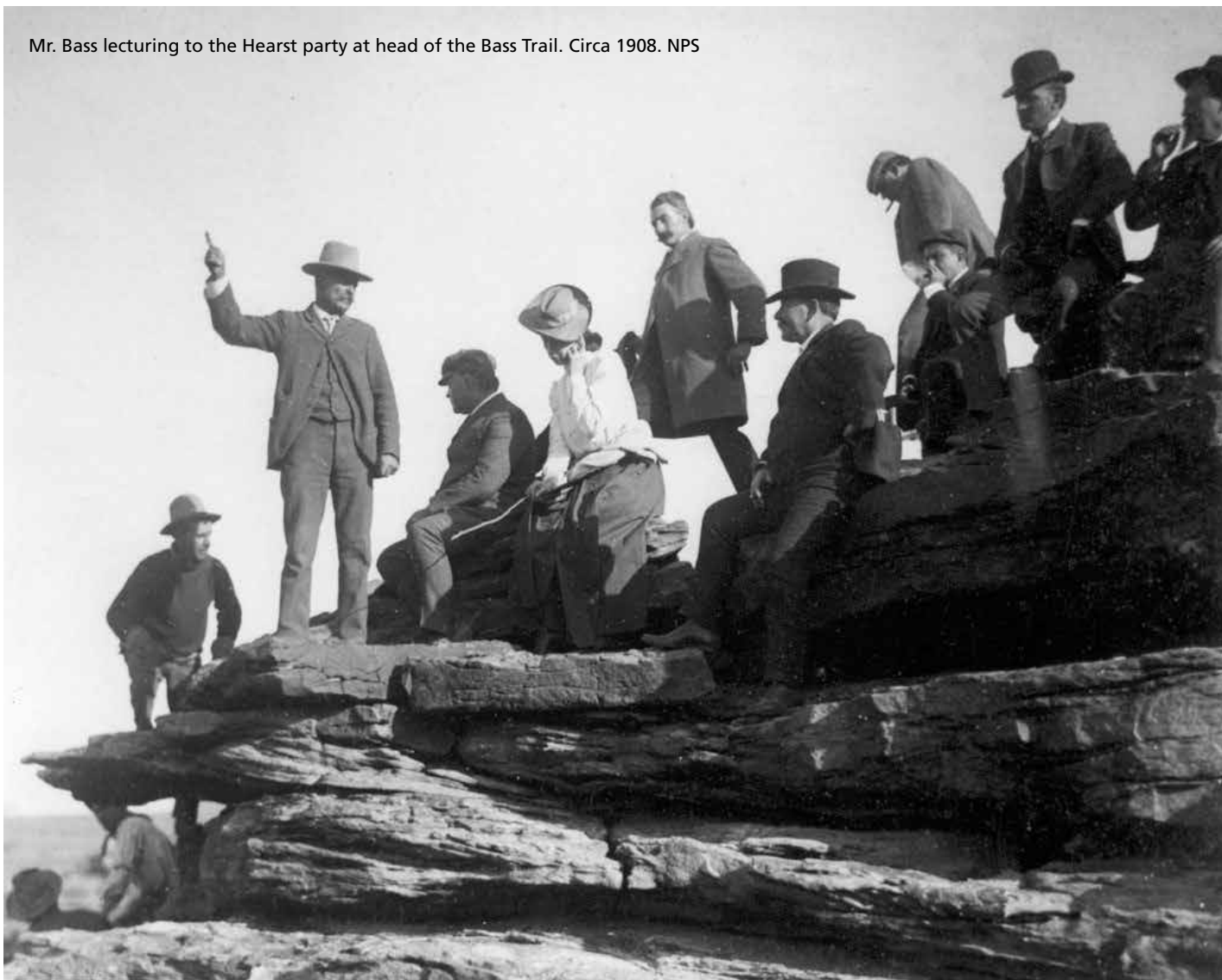
You can read all about the 1909 trip in a series of four articles published in an unlikely place—*The Bur*, a bi-monthly publication of the Alumni Association of the Chicago College of Dental Surgery. It seems that Ferriss's cousin, Chicago dental surgeon H. Nelson Orr, accompanied the two men on their two-month cross-canyon sojourn. His 34-page report, spread out through the January to July issues of 1910, is illustrated with photographs and is full of names,

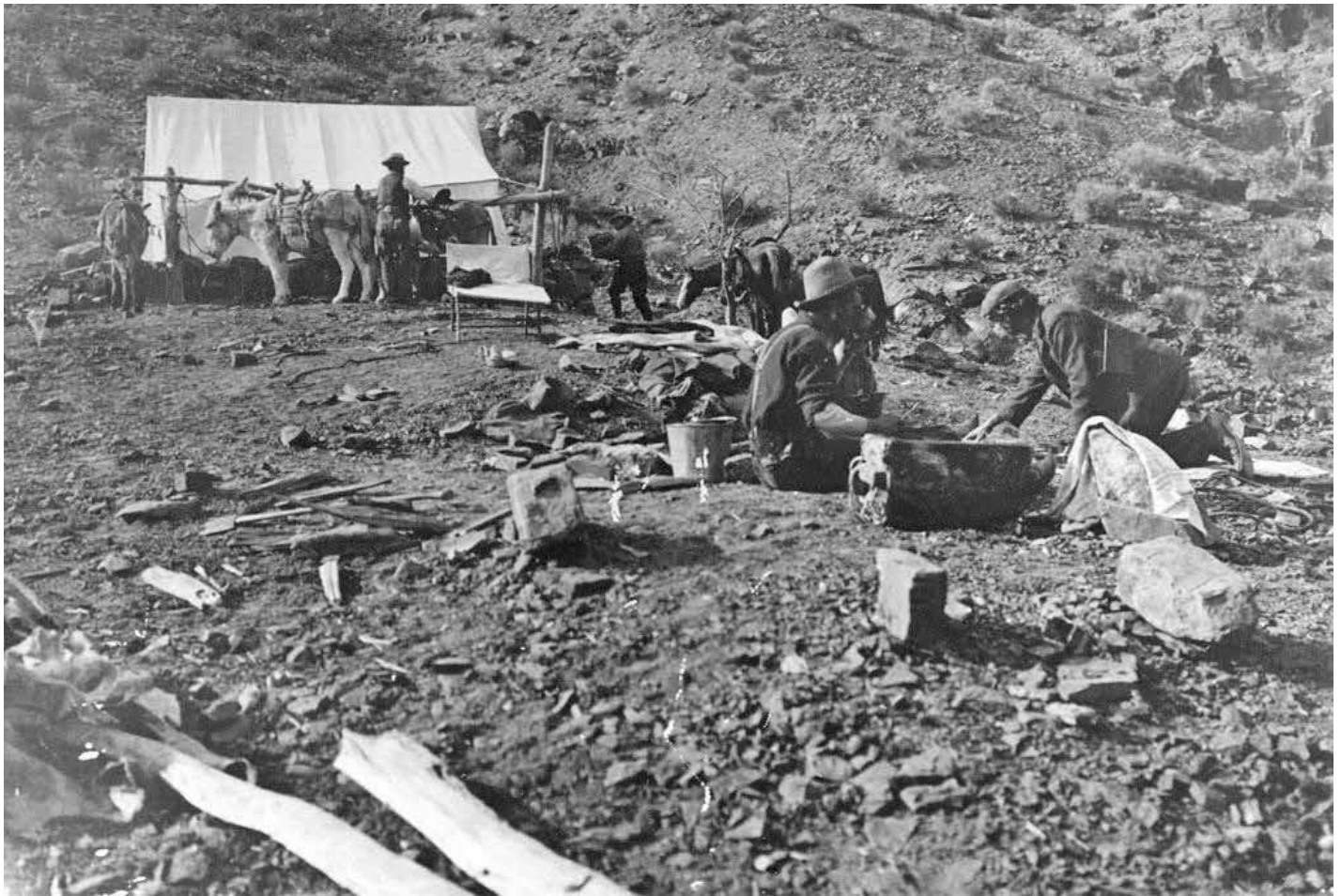
places, things going on, and things that shouldn't have gone on—a good read. The issues are accessible online through Google Books, too.

The brief trip report here gives us an idea of what it was like when Easterners were set loose on the early 20th-century Arizona Strip. There was a reason that Jim Ferriss did not write so much about the particulars. We begin at the beginning.

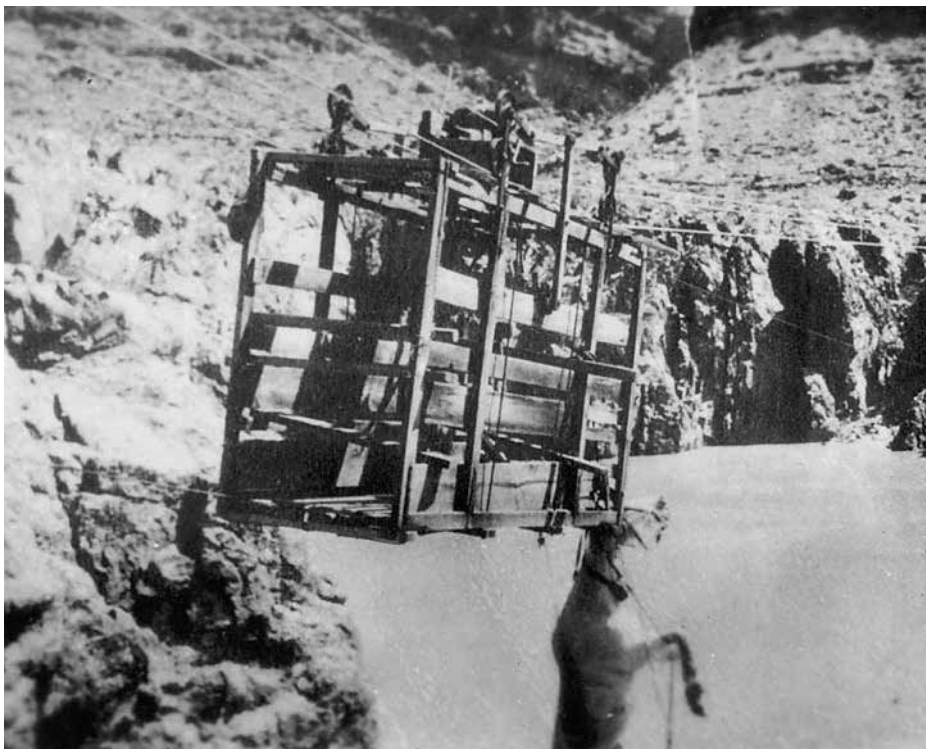
Orr: "...about four miles from Bright Angel Trail [the train stopped] and our baggage thrown down an embankment of

Mr. Bass lecturing to the Hearst party at head of the Bass Trail. Circa 1908. NPS





W.W. Bass's Shinumo tent camp with visitors. Two miles north of Colorado River on Shinumu Creek. Circa 1900. W. W. Bass. NPS.



Bass ferry cable break. Ambrose Mean's horse hanging from cable car cage. The horse lived. Circa 1917. Photo by Bert Lazon. NPS.

about 20 feet, and we were kindly allowed to drop down on top of it... All the [Grand Canyon] trail owners except [W. W.] Bass have been driven out, and the week before we arrived [the Santa Fe Railway] discharged a conductor because he would not put Bass off the train in the middle of the desert for talking to Canyon visitors, and the next day a construction crew pulled up the platform at Bass Station so that we were forced to make a high dive in order to land at all."

About Bass's new cable car over the Colorado River: "From my short experience I am led to believe that old Charon would jump his job if he had to run Bass's ferry."

At the Bass camp up Shinumo Creek, "we are met by Tom the cat and Jim the rooster with his three wives ." Recall that Ferriss had reported back



Horse drawn coach from railroad to Bass Camp, circa 1910. Bert Lauzon photo from Grand Canyon National Park's Museum Collection.

to Pilsbry in Philadelphia that the camp they had called the "Thousand Mouse Camp" in 1906 was not so mousey this time. A rewarding place for Tom, clearly, though one has to ponder whether Jim had had more than three wives. Now it is a downhill ride for our merry band, as it were.

A night at Muav Saddle is dubbed "Camp Scorpion," the innumerable residents of which made up for the lack of mice. Up on the Kaibab, our party finds beauty and bureaucracy: their Kaibab guide, Harry Jennings,⁴ is two weeks overdue with supplies; "this is a game preserve and we cannot shoot although we have a license to hunt." They get lost trying to find Two Springs; a burro finds the way back to camp for them. While asleep, Jennings's shirt tail catches fire; he does "a dance in the fire light that would put to shame the most devout fire worshippers." A passerby feels free to drink the last bit of

water they have. Making flapjacks is a distressing affair at the hands of Jim Ferriss armed with an aluminum sheet. At Mount Trumbull "we very luckily fall in with a camp of rangers after being lost practically five days on the desert." En route back to Pipe Spring, the rangers take leave of our traveling collectors and go on to St. George, Utah. "Jim thinks he knows the road and so takes the lead." (You know the outcome of this one.) Jim also "wears bandages of cheese cloth which take the place of stockings long since worn out."

Back in Fredonia, there was some leisure time for more collecting. "In the morning as the wagon had not come in Jim and I get Tom Jensen to procure some saddle horses and a pack animal and go with us up into Utah about sixteen miles to some lakes where we spend a day and night collecting shells and ferns..." *This* was the fateful collection at the

place north of Kanab that Ferriss called "The Greens," where lived the Kanab Ambersnail, the almost dam-busting snail of Vasey's Paradise that was the star of the first article about the Men From Bass Station.

On the way back to Bass's trail to return across the Grand Canyon, "Everything goes well until we leave Dry Park to make a short cut to Bee Spring, and after traveling all day we land back in Dry Park after a day's hike in a circle. Another day and we expect to be at our old camp in the saddle, but we take the lower trail through Quaking Asp[en] Canyon and find it grown up to scrub oak so tough and strong that it cuts the canvas from our pack and tears our clothing to tatters." A day more set them free, and, in the relative safety of straighter, barer lines in the Grand Canyon they get their first mail in two months on arriving at the Shinumo Creek camp. They reach



NPS cabin on the Muav Saddle. (North Bass Trail.) 26 Sept 1989. NPS

Bass Camp again on the South Rim, where no one recognizes them from their bedraggled appearance.

Finally, at journey's end, easing in to a more manicured life at El Tovar, Orr reports, "I weigh and find I have gained fifteen pounds after a three hundred mile hike."

The travelers met or tagged along with almost everyone who was anyone in those days on both sides of the canyon: their host, W. W. Bass; author George Wharton James; the "Hermit of the Shinumo," John Waltenberg; and the Jensens of Fredonia. In the canyon they met "Richard Kruger, a young artist from Los Angeles [with some connections], who is staying some weeks on the Shinumo sketching." They ran into Forest Ranger William M. "Bill" Mace and "Uncle Jim" Owens at the Coconino Smelter, or Ryan. Uncle Jim was leading a "lion hunt" with "Mr. Potter, Chief of Grazing, and

some friends." (Albert F. "Bert" Potter, originally an Arizona sheep man, was at the time the U.S. Forest Service's first Chief of Grazing, the first westerner to hold a high post in the Forest Service.) And Orr calls off the names of just about every horse and burro that went with them. "Peanuts," Jim Ferriss's mount, Orr renamed "Hellen Damnation." Orr's own saddle animal was Hellen's opposite, "one of the original 'Seven Sleepers,'" who could zone out in mid-stride.

Back in one piece, Orr's tale of travels and travails up and down the Kaibab is certainly not a sleeper. One wonders how much jawing about these frontier follies he performed for his refined patients and friends when several years later he left America to work in *gai Paris*.

NOTES

- ¹ Earle Spamer, "The Men from Bass Station vs. Glen Canyon Dam: Hunting and Rescuing Grand Canyon's Most Exclusive Animal. *The Ol' Pioneer* (Grand Canyon Historical Society), Vol. 26, no. 1 (Winter 2015), pp. 6-12.
- ² H. Nelson Orr, "A Hike Through the Grand Canyon of Arizona," *The Bur*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (January 1910), pp. 2-8; no. 2 (March), pp. 39-46; no. 3 (May), pp. 63-68; no. 4 (July), pp. 95-107.
- ³ Go to <https://books.google.com/books?id=d4o1AQAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA202>. Go down to the January 1910 issue, or search for "Grand Canyon" to pinpoint some of the pertinent pages. [Accessed March 23, 2015.]
- ⁴ "Harry Jennings, the guide, was a tenderfoot from 'Over on the Jersey Side,' but two years of piloting tourists into the Canyon in the summer and packing ore out in the winter have made him over so that now he doesn't care whether he changes his socks or not..." (Orr, January, p. 5).

Introducing William H. Dunn

by Don Lago

William H. Dunn long remained the most mysterious of Powell's crew members, with both his fate and his origin unknown. Almost the only image we had of him came from Powell's book: "Dunn was a hunter, trapper, and mule-packer in Colorado for many years. He dresses in buckskin with a dark oleaginous luster, doubtless due to the fact that he has lived on fat venison and killed many beavers since he first donned his uniform years ago. His raven hair falls down to his back, for he has a sublime contempt of shears and razors."¹ Dunn seemed to be a long-time mountain man.

In 1947 when river runners and historians were planning to place at Separation Rapid a plaque honoring Dunn and the Howland brothers, Harry Aleson sent out postcards to 1,500 people named Dunn or Howland all over the country, seeking the background stories of the three lost men, but he got nowhere.

All other sources gave only two hints about the geography of Dunn's life before the Powell expedition. An 1869 *Rocky Mountain News* article mentioned that Dunn lived in Georgetown, Colorado. In the 1950s historian Dock Marston pursued this lead, contacting a Georgetown historian he called "Mr. Georgetown," but this led nowhere, which was not surprising since Georgetown was a busy mining camp in which thousands of men came and went without leaving any traces in public records. William Hawkins, in the account he gave to William W. Bass in 1919, mentioned that Jack Sumner defended Dunn's abilities to Powell by saying: "Dunn had been wounded four times by Comanches."² This meant Dunn must have spent some time in Comanche country—the lower Great Plains, most likely Texas. I looked for Dunns in Texas, especially in jobs that might

place a man in harm's way, such as a soldier, a Texas Ranger, or a stage coach driver, and I came up with a few interesting Dunns. I heard from Texan David E. Dunn, who had once hiked up Separation Canyon to follow in the footsteps of William H. Dunn. But David Dunn was only there as treasurer of the Geological Society of America, which was celebrating its 100th anniversary in 1988 by taking a trip down the Colorado River—he was not related to William H. Dunn.

I tried searching for William H. Dunn through Civil War records, though it wasn't clear that Dunn had even served in the army. Without knowing Dunn's home state, I had to investigate every William H. Dunn in the Union army, hoping he'd used his middle initial. It turned out that an implausibly large portion of the William Dunns in the Union army had the middle initial of "H," a total of more than thirty. The culprit seemed to be President William Henry Harrison, whose death in office in 1841 attached his name to a large crop of babies in a short time. I went ahead and searched through all the records, assuming that some William H. Dunns had been killed in the war and that others were collecting pensions years later, leaving only a few possibilities. I ended up holding the record of the correct William H. Dunn, but I decided it couldn't be the right one and set it aside for years. Why? Because I trusted John Wesley Powell when he said that his Dunn had spent "many years" in the Rockies. My Dunn was only twenty years old in 1865 and still in the army in late December of that year, leaving him insufficient time to get to Colorado and become the veteran mountain man Powell met in the summer of 1867.

Then Michael Ghiglieri mentioned to me that when William Hawkins gave Robert Stanton his other account of the Powell expedition, Hawkins made a comment that had not gotten

into print: "The state of Ohio never turned out a man that had more nerve than William Dunn." There were only two Civil War records for William H. Dunns from Ohio. They included the county of origin, allowing me to zero in on local records. It turned out I had found the right William H. Dunn long before. He had indeed gone from the army to being a veteran mountain man in less than two years. On further thought, this agreed with Jack Sumner's comment to Stanton that "I had trained Dunn for two years in how to avoid a surprise" by Indians.³ The *Rocky Mountain News* even gave us a glimpse of Dunn's apprenticeship on November 12, 1867: "Wm. Dunn has gone over to spend the winter with Sumner in trapping." Perhaps to the greenhorn Professor Powell, Dunn had seemed a master of his realm. In the Wild West, Americans could achieve new identities rather quickly. Intriguingly, this William H. Dunn had ended his army career in San Antonio, Texas, in Comanche country.

William H. Dunn's great-grandfather Thomas Dunn was born in Ireland in 1744 and emigrated to America in 1772, just in time for him to serve as a soldier in the American Revolution. He settled in Fayette County in southwestern Pennsylvania, living in a stable for the first year while he started a farm. He was also a wheelwright and operated a wagon shop. He had twelve children, and on his death in 1804 he deeded his farm to his son John. Thomas's other sons sought land of their own in Ohio, the western frontier of the time. Son William Dunn stopped on the eastern edge of Ohio, in the hamlet of Lafferty in Belmont County, about fifty miles from his father's Pennsylvania home. He built a five-room cabin, with foot-thick log beams, that would be the home to five generations of Dunns and the birthplace of 110 Dunns, including his grandson William H.

Dunn. Many of those 110 would be buried in the nearby Dunn Cemetery. William (the grandfather) became a leading citizen of Belmont County, getting elected to the Pennsylvania state legislature for fifteen years and serving as a justice of the peace, county auditor, and a general in the Ohio militia. William had five sons, including Caldwell, born in 1817, who built a house a few houses down from his father's house and who, on his father's death, took over the family home and farm. Caldwell's first son was William Henry Dunn, born on May 19, 1845, which means he was only 22 when Powell met him and had just celebrated his 24th birthday when the Powell expedition launched. One Dunn family member told me that the Dunns have always aged fast and looked older than they really were.

With ancestors who had fought in the American Revolution and the War of 1812 and served as a general in the Ohio militia, it wasn't surprising that when the Civil War broke out and Belmont County organized its own unit, Company K, as part of the 15th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, a Thomas Dunn, who was the right age to be William's son Thomas, joined it. But only three weeks later, at Camp Nevin in Kentucky, Thomas died in a tragic accident. He was on guard duty at night but got confused and wandered beyond the picket line and was coming back toward it when one of the other guards, not recognizing him in the dark, called out for him to stop and identify himself. The guard repeated this three times and received no answer from Thomas, so orders required the guard to fire. According to Alexis Cope, an officer in the 15th Ohio and later its historian:

The shot struck him [Dunn] in the right breast and passed through his body. We carried him back to the sawmill, laid him on a rough bench and made him comfortable as possible. We opened his shirt and saw the ghastly wound the bullet had made and knew that it was mortal. A sergeant of the guard sat by him, moistened his lips and

held his hand, finger on pulse, while his life blood slowly ebbed away. It was a wild night. The wind howled and shrieked without and the sounds mingled with the groans of the dying man. Towards morning he died. In memory, that night remains one of the most awful in the writer's more than four years of service.⁴

If this tragedy left the Dunns disillusioned with the U.S. army, it did not stop Thomas's nephew William H. Dunn from enlisting in Company K two years and three months later, at age 19. By then the 15th Ohio had distinguished itself in some of the major battles of the western war. It fought at Shiloh, though not on the first day when John Wesley Powell lost his arm. It arrived that night and helped force back the Confederate army the next day, but with 75 men killed and wounded, five of them from Company K. The 15th fought at Stones River and Missionary Ridge and lost one-third of its strength at Chickamauga—including the guard who had accidentally killed Thomas Dunn, who was now wounded and captured and sent to Andersonville prison. With such heavy losses, the regiment needed new recruits, especially since the original soldiers had enlisted for three years, which would be up in April 1864. In February the men were asked to reenlist and three hundred of them did, and as a reward they were given thirty days furlough and sent home to Ohio, where they were treated as heroes. On their way back to the front, with their new recruits, they marched to the Ohio state capitol and presented Ohio's governor with their battle flag, tattered from Chickamauga and Missionary Ridge, and the governor presented them with a new battle flag sewn by patriotic and pretty Ohio ladies.

One of the new recruits was William H. Dunn, who on February 27, 1864 signed up to serve for three years or the rest of the war, whichever came first. He may have been encouraged to enlist in Company K because

only a few weeks previously his brother-in-law, Eber T. Fort, had been promoted to corporal (Foot was married to Dunn's sister Hannah). Dunn was paid a routine enlistment bounty of \$300, though he only got \$60 of it to start. He enlisted in the town of Flushing, about three miles from the Dunn family home. William H. Dunn was listed as a farmer, probably on the family farm. He was listed as 5' 10" tall, with hazel eyes, dark hair, and light complexion. After Dunn paraded to the state capitol, the parade turned into a hard march towards some of the bloodiest fighting of the war, in General Sherman's campaign to capture Atlanta. From the account of regimental officer and historian Alexis Cope, it sounds like Dunn got a bad start: "As we passed out of the city the rain began to pour. The prospect was not at all pleasant and was quite depressing to our new recruits."⁵ In Tennessee they boarded a train, but:

The train was made up of box cars and, as the weather was mild, many of the men preferred to ride on top rather than on the inside of the cars. Those who were compelled to ride inside were the more fortunate as it afterwards proved, for as the train was nearing Athens [Tennessee] a number of the cars left the track and some of them turned completely over. It was a frightful spectacle as seen from the rear car, and when the train was brought to a stop wounded men were scattered along the railroad on both sides of the track. About thirty were severely wounded....News of the accident was sent to Athens and as relief party came out from the village, among whom was Governor Andrew Johnson of Tenn.⁶

(Within a year, Andrew Johnson would be president).

At one of Dunn's first battles, officer-historian Alexis Cope may have described Dunn's feelings at the sight of masses of soldiers advancing to beating drums: "The men moved

with such spirit and precision as to provoke a cheer. The scene was wonderfully imposing and those who witnessed it can never forget it. The day was fine and seldom in all our experience was it possible to behold the 'pomp and panoply of glorious war' to better advantage."⁷ But other battles were brutal or bungled, enough to cure new soldiers of their illusions about war. Even one death could strike a blow, such as the death of the regimental bugler, whose upbeat personality had made him a favorite: "His arm had been amputated and although suffering from pain he was as cheerful as ever, said he would soon be back, and added, 'Adjutant, a bugler only needs one arm.' Poor fellow, he died of that terrible gangrene."⁸ The 15th slogged its way toward Atlanta, losing dozens of men at a time. In the battle for Kenesaw Mountain, the wounded included Dunn's brother-in-law Eber T. Fort.

After the capture of Atlanta most of Sherman's army headed for the sea and into South Carolina, but the 15th Ohio was among the troops sent west to head off Confederate General John Bell Hood, who was trying to slam the door behind Sherman. At the battle of Nashville the Union army routed Hood, then pursued him westward across Tennessee. The 15th was still in Tennessee when the news came that Lee had surrendered, and they hoped they would soon be able to return home. But since they were now among the westernmost units of the Union army, they got an unwelcome assignment that would keep them in the army for half a year after most other Ohio units had gone home.

In Texas, Confederate General Kirby Smith was determined to hold out, and across the South die-hard Confederates were talking about fleeing across the Mexican border and establishing a government-in-exile. Union leaders decided to send troops to Texas to subdue Smith and to block key routes into Mexico. A further worry was that a would-be Mexican monarch, Maximilian, was trying

to overthrow Mexico's republican government, with help from armed forces from France and Austria, and it seemed possible he might try to take advantage of the chaos in the United States to seize Texas, with help from exiled Confederates and maybe the French and Austrians. An American force on the Mexican border might block an invasion by Mexico, and even allow the United States to invade Mexico. But this political situation was highly sensitive; the American people were exhausted by war and didn't want to begin a new one. Union leaders decided they wouldn't even tell their troops why they were being sent to Texas. After General Smith's troops had melted away through mass desertions and Smith had surrendered, it was even more baffling why Union troops were being sent to Texas.

"When it became known," wrote Alexis Cope, "that orders sending us south had been received, a mutinous spirit developed." The men had signed up only for the duration of the war: "Many thought that the war was now practically over and that they were entitled to be at once discharged and return to their homes. Some of the more reckless, it was said, were secretly signing papers pledging themselves to disobey orders to move to Texas."⁹ Nighttime meetings were held away from camp, and the men vented their frustration. Soon their new commander, General Willich, gave a speech that mollified most of his troops, though he also had one mutiny ringleader arrested.

On June 17 the 15th Ohio boarded the *Peytona*, one of a small fleet of steamboats, in western Tennessee and headed down the Tennessee River, then down the Ohio River, then down the Mississippi. To minimize desertions, General Willich gave orders that the boats could stop only to cook meals and never stop in towns. "Many of the men," wrote Alexis Cope, "were in ugly temper because they were being taken to the far south in midsummer, and every additional regulation looking to their closer confinement to the

boats was resented. The boats were crowded and men slept on the floors of the decks."¹⁰ On the Ohio River one boat sank, losing its armaments and horses, drowning two men, leaving the remaining boats even more overcrowded. They stopped in Vicksburg to get provisions, and saw its entrenchments much as they had been during the siege two years before. At another stop, wrote Cope, "An overseer of one of the plantations was brought down to the Peytona by a crowd of men, who reported that he had very cruelly treated some of his negroes. He was very much frightened and....was put ashore and cautioned to treat his former slaves with more clemency."¹¹

Reaching New Orleans, they set up camp in the battlefield where Andrew Jackson had defeated the British half a century before. But, according to Cope:

The discomforts of the camp, placed, as it was, on the flat bottom land in the hot sun, with no shade, did not improve the temper of the men, which had been sorely tried by the long hot voyage, and there was a good deal of insubordination. Strong guards were placed about all the camps with strict orders to permit no one to go outside the lines without a pass, but many men broke guard, probably in some instances with the guards' connivance, and went into the city. The city military authorities had orders to arrest all men found there without passes.... The number of arrests of the corps became so great that June 28, General Stanley issued an order absolutely prohibiting enlisted men from going into the city.¹²

On the 4th of July the men had to watch the city's fireworks in the distance. William Dunn had plenty of time on his hands, and he used some of it to write a letter to his father on June 27, 1865. This letter, saved by the Dunn family, is the only Dunn letter we have. It shows that he was

not a good speller, and that if he was disgruntled by his assignment, he did not reveal it to his father.

June 27, 1865
Camp Near
Neworleans, Louisanna

Dear father. Its with much pleasure that I seat my self to answer your leter that came to hand yesterday. I am well at present and hoping those fue lines may reach you the same way. We left Nashvile on the 16 and got hear on the 24. The boy ar all well. We are Campt righ along the river five miles below the sity where the level of the water is two foot higher than where lay wel. General Wellich told us that would be hear about ten days or two weeks. Well I am glad to hear that Eber Foot has got his discharge but I ges that his brother is not very tired of the service yet. Wel their r. good many of the men going in the regular army the first infantry and first cavalry regular are both hear

The report is that when we move that we wil go back up the river. general Sheridan landed hear yesterday from Texas. So we wil now where we wil have to firing Soon. There is a good many steam ships coming and going out.

Now I cant think of any thing more to write this time so nothing more at presant.

Well I got one from Nancy. That wel do for her to.

Robert Humphrey has not come up. he is wagon master at brigade head quarters.

William H. Dunn

At some future time a Dunn family member wrote Dunn's life data below his signature: "Born May 19th, 1845, Died ---- ---- 1866, Twenty one years old, Killed by Indians in Grand Canyon."

Instead of heading back up the Mississippi and homeward, Dunn was soon aboard a steamship in the

Gulf of Mexico. "Most of us," wrote Cope, "were landsmen and had never seen the sea, and the prospect, as we looked out over the broad choppy waters of the gulf, was novel and inspiring."¹³ It also inspired a lot of seasickness.

When they landed they began a long, grueling march across plains without water or shade but with intense heat and mosquitoes. The men were carrying too much weight but too little water and food. Without any explanation for their hardships, the men became rebellious again. "The water in the canteens," wrote Cope, "had become heated in the evening sun, that carried in the wagons was equally hot, and many of the men became sullen and mad and began firing off their guns. Scores of men in the brigade, broke their guns and threw them by the road side. Many were exhausted by heat and thirst and began to straggle and fall out....It was proposed to replace the guns and accouterments when we reached Victoria, charging their cost to the men who had broken or thrown them away."¹⁴ It was probably on this march that Dunn earned the remarks on his muster roll and payroll for that month: "Stoppage for Ord. thrown away on march. \$2.50 charged by Co. Comdr." When Dunn was mustered out a few months later, he also owed the army \$39.20 for clothing.

On August 21 they reached San Antonio, where they would remain for three months, until the political situation in Mexico had become more stable and favorable. The men were able to relax, go fishing, gather pecans, and be tourists, especially at the Alamo. "But amid all these opportunities for enjoyment," wrote Cope, "there was an under current of discontent among the men, who felt that they had been unfairly dealt with by their government. Their discontent showed itself at times in disrespect to their officers."¹⁵

William Dunn's discontent with the army, perhaps starting with his uncle Thomas being killed by mistake, could have been a major source of his friction with Major John Wesley

Powell. Dunn felt that he had been "unfairly dealt with" by Powell too. While the other former privates on the Powell expedition may have been more inclined to submit to an officer, Dunn had spent months in a unit that had become openly rebellious, that had developed its own culture of disrespect for officers, even openly insulting General Willich to his face, which, as Cope put it, "almost broke his heart."¹⁶ Dunn's officers tolerated this behavior to an unusual degree; after the war they changed all the "deserter" designations on their rolls into honorable discharges. A few years later Dunn may have felt that leaving a poorly organized river expedition was an honorable discharge, not any act of desertion.

Finally the 15th Ohio received orders to muster out—William Dunn was mustered out on November 21. But they would take another month to get home, by marching, by railroad, by steamboat on a Mississippi River full of icebergs, and by an Illinois train so underpowered that on hills the men had to get off and push. They arrived in Columbus, Ohio, on Christmas, and were disappointed that there was no public welcome awaiting them.

Alexis Cope's 800-page regimental history never mentions that they fought Comanches, and William Dunn's military record makes no mention of his being wounded at any time (although in July 1864 he was briefly hospitalized for an unnamed sickness). If Jack Sumner was correct about Dunn being wounded by Comanches, it must have happened after the war. Did Dunn actually enjoy Texas and return there after the war? Or did he remain in Texas? There is nothing in Dunn's military records that says he went home to Ohio with his regiment. After nearly two years of wandering America's mountains and rivers and the Gulf of Mexico, of seeing eight states, of seeing French-accented cities like New Orleans and Mexican-accented cities like San Antonio, of adventure and camaraderie, Dunn may have been one of the many soldiers who could not settle back into a life of

farming in a quiet little town. Most discharged Union soldiers returned home in the late spring of 1865, good timing for going to work on the farm, but if Dunn returned to Ohio it was in the middle of winter, with little to do, so he may have felt free to wander further. Unlike most Union soldiers, Dunn had gotten a look at the West as it was becoming the Wild West, full of space and opportunity and adventure, the west of Davy Crockett and cowboys. When Dunn headed west he may have taken a job that placed him in conflict with Comanches. In any case, he had only a year and a half to turn himself into the experienced old mountain man Powell hired for his river expedition.

In 1869 the leading newspaper in Belmont County, Ohio, reprinted two letters that John Wesley Powell and Walter Powell wrote to Chicago newspapers from the expedition, but it made no mention that a county native was on the trip.

The Dunn family didn't forget William, even long after he disappeared. They retained his Civil War letter, his birth record in their family bible, and stories about him. But no one had any photos of him. His father Caldwell Dunn never gave up hoping William would return. When Caldwell drafted his will in 1881, a dozen years after William had disappeared, Caldwell remembered William: "My son William Henry, should he ever return, it is my will each of the Heirs shall pay him one hundred dollars apiece."

The Dunn family cabin, in which William and 109 other Dunns were born, stood for nearly two centuries, and sometime around 2000 it was demolished—according to one local historian. But another local historian said it had been moved and might be restored. As ever, William H. Dunn generates varying stories.

(Endnotes)

- 1 John Wesley Powell, *The Exploration of the Colorado River and its Canyons*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 120.
- 2 William Wallace Bass, "Adventures in the Canyons of the Colorado," *The Trail*, 23-24.
- 3 Quoted in Michael Ghiglieri, *First Through the Grand Canyon: The Secret Journals and Letters of the 1869 Crew Who Explored the Green and Colorado Rivers* (Flagstaff: Puma Press, Second, Revised Edition, 2010), 258-59.
- 4 Alexis Cope, *The Fifteenth Ohio Volunteers and its Campaigns*. (Columbus: Edward T. Miller Company, 1916), 45. Cope calls the victim Dunn "John," but other sources list the victim as Thomas.
- 5 *Ibid*, 417.
- 6 *Ibid*, 421-22.
- 7 *Ibid*, 444.
- 8 *Ibid*, 476.
- 9 *Ibid*, 729-30.
- 10 *Ibid*, 746.
- 11 *Ibid*, 749.
- 12 *Ibid*, 750-51.
- 13 *Ibid*, 754.
- 14 *Ibid*, 763-64.
- 15 *Ibid*, 786.
- 16 *Ibid*, 779.

Grand Canyon Mystery*

July 19, '43. Monday. Second cloudy day. Sprinkles of rain.

Good stiff hike upon first bench. Followed well defined ancient foot trail for miles — 2 or 3 hours.

This afternoon I stood quietly in the weather-wrecked remains of a fire-scarred mesal pit. Suddenly, a strange sound came, as though it might be the swish of a falling meteorite. Directly overhead, I looked. A great eagle was diving in a steep angle, his wings folded half back. He swooshed on directly toward the Colorado River. He wobbled like a plane in air pockets. A thousand feet lower, he passed out of sight over the rim of the Lower Granite Gorge. Wonder what he saw? A coyote set up a song up in a canyon in the Arizona Strip.

Not far from the ancient mesal pit, and near the trail lay something that froze me in my tracks. A skeleton! It had been there a long time in the weather. On close observation it appeared to be complete. The skull, with its empty sockets and full set of good teeth, had an eerie expression. The legs, hips, vertebrae and chest were quite intact. The flesh of the legs was well shriveled, mummified. The skin of the legs and chest was tough and leathery. The body had sustained a terrible twist. Several vertebrae were pulled out of place in the small of the back. The head and chest were facing directly backward. Animals and the weather had destroyed the vitals. But near the broken back, laying in what may have been the stomach contents, a small object focused my attention. I picked up a bullet. It had been a dum-dum or hollow-nosed bullet.

For no reason at all I turned and looked directly behind where I was squatting. Not forty feet away, in the broken rock-flat lay another skeleton. It was generally in the same state of mummified preservation as the other. But one leg was gone, pulled away



One of the most colorful and playful reptiles in all of Grand Canyon is the Collared lizard (*Crotophytus collaris*). Attaining a length of up to 14 inches (including its tail) they have the ability to withstand high ground temperatures, run on their hind legs (up to 16 mph), and consume other lizards and even small mammals. Photo courtesy of Chuck Laroux

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at the hip. Coyotes, not doubt. There were no shoes or signs of shoe leather or clothing. Where the first was dark or black haired, the second was definitely red haired. There was no bullet hole in either skull. Only one tooth was missing, a lower,, but it lay a few feet away. There were not tooth fillings, in fact, no decay, or even traces of natural wear; a sign of youth.

My attention was drawn over my shoulder. And there lay another skeleton! It was on its side, in an awkward position. It was as complete as the first, with the same leathery-drum-taut skin, where not torn away by animals of birds. But the abdomen and thorax were empty. Black hair clung to the skull skin. What? Was this some sort of a battlefield? Or an ambush, without a chance to fight back? All teeth were in place, but the third skull was definitely older.

In searching about the outside of this triangle of tragedy, no more skeletons were found. But the missing leg

was found, complete, excepting flesh and skin. Protruding from beneath was a bit of metal. It was a cartridge shell, partly crushed by teeth marks. It was an RMC 31. When was this calibre cartridge manufactured?

I hurried away so as to be in camp by nightfall.

*These notes are from the diary of Harry Aleson, veteran river runner, made while on a Colorado upriver expedition in 1943. Mr. Aleson adds the following comment: "It would require several days to hike into this uninhabited country. Unless someone has definite information on the above tragedy, it is better to let the remains return completely to the desert."

Submitted by Richard Quartaroli and republished with permission from the *Utah Historical Quarterly*.

Diary should be at the Utah State Historical Society, Harry Leroy Aleson Papers, 1918-1972, Mss B 187.



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