

· THE GRAND CANYON ·

A HUMAN LOOK



AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN HISTORY
AT GRAND CANYON

Today visitors to the Grand Canyon drive past the entrance station in their automobiles, can drop their luggage off in their hotel room and dine at a gourmet restaurant overlooking the Canyon.

Four thousand years ago prehistoric Indians lived in the Canyon and clambered up steep talus slopes with spears after their dinner of bighorn sheep, spending nights under rock overhangs.

In the 1930s evidence of these early Canyon dwellers was found in caves in the Redwall Limestone. The clues they left behind of their life here are few. What workers found in those caves were figures, made of willow twigs split and wound into the shape of deer or sheep, some with miniature spears piercing the figurine. Carbon-14 dating revealed to archeologists that these figurines were around 4000 years old. The people who left them are believed to have been of the Pinto Basin-Desert Culture. Little else is known of them. Their split-twig figures may have been left as ceremonial objects assuring them luck in their hunt.

So far archeologists have found no trace of any other human habitation in the Canyon until 500 A.D. when a group of people known as the Anasazi began to move in. The Basketmakers, so named because they were expert weavers of baskets and sandals, also hunted deer, sheep and rabbits and gathered piñon nuts and agave stalks. Adapting to the Canyon's environments and relying more on agriculture, they began to settle down into "towns." This second phase, called the Pueblo, is distinguished by their pottery, granaries, and above-ground masonry dwellings. They built checkdams and other irrigation structures to catch what little rain and snowmelt they could to grow their corn, beans and squash, and carried on trade with the neighboring Hohonina. More than 2000 sites from this rich period of civilization have been recorded in the Grand Canyon and archeologists continue to find others.

About 800 years ago this region was struck by an extended period of drought, and by 1250 A.D. almost all of the Anasazi had moved to the east; their descendants, the Hopi Indians, now live east of the Park.

The Hopi Indians figured importantly in many

ways in Grand Canyon history. They were the guides for the Spanish conquistadors who first came into New Mexico territory in the 16th century. Francisco Vásques de Coronado, in search of the famed Seven Cities of Cibola, dispatched Don López de Cárdenas and his men to the Southwest. They met the Hopis who offered to take them to the great river to the west. As history tells it, the Indians led the Spaniards to the rim of the Grand Canyon, but would not show them a route down to the river. Cárdenas sent three deputies down into the gorge to get to the water. They failed and turned around, with little encouragement to offer their leader about riches and gold.

In the Grand Canyon, Arizona has a natural wonder which, so far as I know, is in kind absolutely unparalleled throughout the rest of the world. I want to ask you to do one thing in connection with it in your own interest and in the interest of the country — to keep this great wonder of nature as it now is . . . I hope you will not have a building of any kind, not a summer cottage, a hotel, or anything else to mar the beauty of the canyon. Leave it as it is. You cannot improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it. What you can do is keep it for your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you, as the one great sight which every American . . . should see.

President Theodore Roosevelt, 1903

The pueblo Indians also attracted Spanish missionaries, in search of souls rather than gold. One well-traveled priest, Father Francisco Tomás Garcés, visited the Hualapai and Havasupai land and saw the Grand Canyon on his way to the Hopi villages. He is believed to have been the first person to use the name "Rio Colorado" (Red River) for the Colorado.

The Spaniards turned their interest away from the Grand Canyon region. The only people to come into the area for many years were a handful of trappers, most of whom avoided the Canyon because of its formidable terrain. James Ohio Pattie left some vague accounts of a journey up the Colorado in the late 1820s. After replenishing his supply of beaver and elk, he left what he called "these horrid mountains."

The United States received the Grand Canyon as part of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which ended the Mexican War. Interest grew in this unknown territory, and military surveys were sent to map routes and establish strategic outposts. Lieutenant Joseph Christmas Ives, charged with testing the Colorado River's navigability, set out upstream from the river's mouth, in a steamboat. *The Explorer* made 350 miles (563 kilometers) before it crashed on a sunken rock near Black Canyon. Ives and his crew then traveled overland to Diamond Creek and down into what he called the "Big Cañon."

John Strong Newberry, who was with Ives, was the first geologist to study the Canyon. Other geologists caught the western fever, and in the infant days of the U. S. Geological Survey several teams, made up of notable geologists, G. K. Gilbert, Clarence Dutton and Clarence King, did extensive field work and laid the foundations for current geologic study.

The most famous geologist to visit the Grand Canyon was John Wesley Powell. In 1869 Powell and nine men launched at Green River, Wyoming, in four wooden boats to begin a journey down the uncharted stretch of the Colorado. Powell's energy and imagination sometimes taxed his men, but the one-armed Civil War veteran persisted, climbing up cliffs to take scientific measurements and map this rugged country. Powell returned in 1871 and made another trip down the Colorado through the Canyon and later wrote a classic account of the exploration. His theories on the formation of the Grand Canyon are still considered valid.

Many of these military and civilian surveys included artists and photographers whose work added to the store of information about the Canyon and helped introduce it to the public. Artists like Thomas

Moran and William Henry Holmes and photographers Timothy O'Sullivan and Jack Hillers accompanied the soldiers and scientists.

In the late 1800s a few adventurers came to the Canyon in search of mineral wealth — men like John Hance, William Wallace Bass and Pete Berry, who established copper and asbestos mines in the Canyon, and the prospector Louis Boucher, the “Hermit.” Mining was a tough way to make a living because of the Canyon’s size and ruggedness. The time and effort it took to transport the ore, some of it quite pure, was simply economically not worth the trouble.

Many, like Hance and Berry, built tent cabins and log houses to accommodate the increasing number of visitors coming to the Canyon. Articles in popular nineteenth century magazines extolling the Canyon’s virtues drew those who had the money and fortitude to make the trip by stagecoach from Williams or Flagstaff.

In 1901 the first train pulled into the depot at Grand Canyon Village. The focus shifted from outlying areas and development of the Village began in earnest. The El Tovar Hotel was built in 1905. At that time, the Bright Angel Camp was also open for 75 cents a day, meals not included. With these hotels, the Fred Harvey Company, then a subsidiary of the Santa Fe Railway Company, gained a strong foothold. Other independent sorts like brothers Ralph and Niles Cameron fought to maintain their numerous mining claims and control of the Bright Angel Trail. This fight went on for many years, but was eventually lost. The Kolb brothers, whose photographic studio still clings to the rim, also stayed.

All the activity and attention to the Canyon was not lost on the nation’s leaders in Washington, D.C. As early as 1893 President Benjamin Harrison established the Grand Canyon Forest Reserve. Theodore Roosevelt, who had been greatly impressed by the Canyon on his visit, proclaimed the Grand Canyon Game Reserve in 1906. Two years

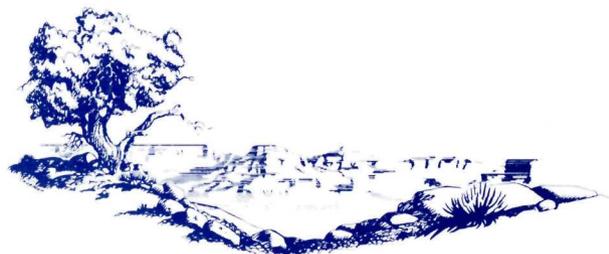
later, he established the Grand Canyon National Monument, under the fledgling U. S. Forest Service.

Arizona senators, realizing the fame the state would gain, introduced legislation to make Grand Canyon a national park. Three years after the National Park Service was created, their goal was achieved. On February 26, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson signed a bill creating Grand Canyon National Park.

With boundary adjustments over the years, the park now encompasses 1.2 million acres of land, most of it wilderness. In 1919, 44,000 people visited the park. By 1947, more than 500,000 had come. The number of visitors increased beyond anyone’s imagination, to one million in 1956, two million in 1969, and surpassing three million in 1976.

The dual purpose of the national parks, to preserve the resource and provide for the enjoyment of people, becomes more difficult as visitation increases.

After establishment of the monument, President Theodore Roosevelt advised every American to see the Grand Canyon — he also asked us to “Leave it as it is.” The Grand Canyon belongs to all of us, it also belongs to generations yet unborn. Park rangers and park visitors share responsibility for the preservation of this natural wonder.

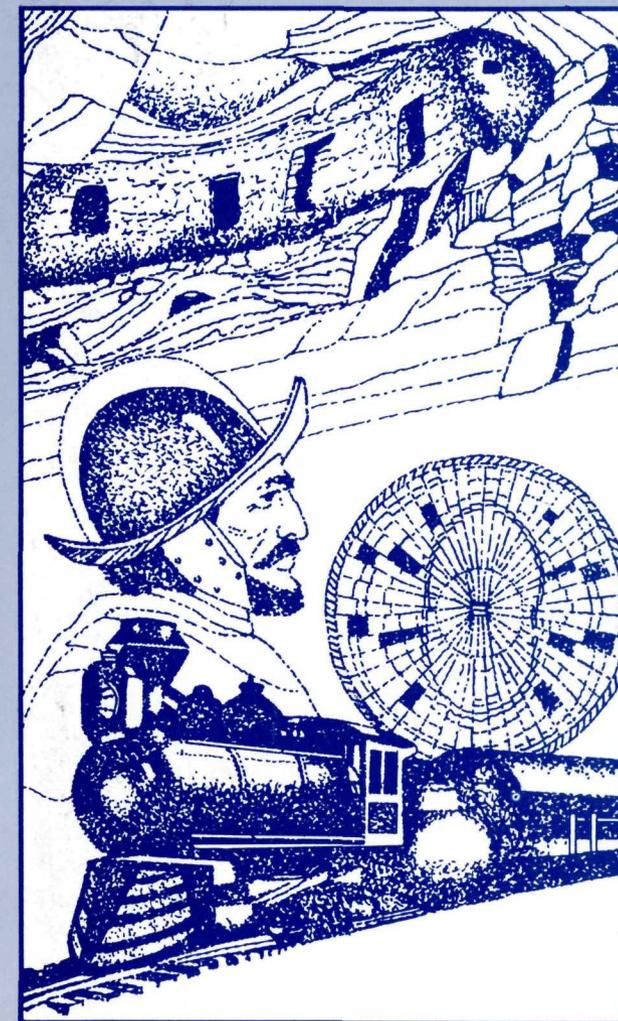


Grand Canyon Natural History Association

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