

Who Named The Grand Canyon?

O. DOCK MARSTON
Author and Explorer

FREDERICK Samuel Dellen-
baugh, long acknowledged as
the historian of the Colorado
River, wrote in *Science Maga-
zine* of April 7, 1933:

“There seems to be some un-
certainty in the public mind as

to when the Grand Canyon was named and who named it . . . Major Powell, in 1869, . . . was the first to explore its depths and he called it the 'Grand Canon.' . . . His report, published after this, spoke of it as the Grand Canon (The English spelling 'Canyon' was adopted later)."

Mr. Dellenbaugh warmed to his theme:

The name was not recorded on any map till his topographers (of whom I was one) produced the first preliminary map of the region in the winter of 1872-73 in a tent on Southern Utah. On Powell's first [1869] trip through the Grand Canyon it was not definitely named by him. John C. Sumner . . . wrote:

"About fifteen miles below the Little Colorado the first bad rapid occurs in what I wanted to name Coronado Canyon. Major Powell told me it should bear my name if he got through and ever had the opportunity to place it on the Government map. Well, he got through all right, and forgot his vows and named it Grand Canyon."

There is no doubt whatever that the Grand Canyon was named by Major Powell not long after he came out of it on his 1869 trip.

In a letter to a friend, Dellenbaugh complained that the *Science* article had evoked some "stupid refutations." These appear to have been claims that the Spanish had bestowed the name. The Utah Historical *Quarterly*, Volume II, reproduced two old Spanish maps. One carried the designation:

GRAND RIO COLORADO

and the other:

EL RIO GRAN DE COLORADO

but these references were to the River.

In a letter to *The Sun*, published April 25, 1933, Dellenbaugh denied that either Tovar or Cardena named the Canyon. He wrote David Dexter Rust that he had given up the impossible task of keeping up with the misstatements but August 25, 1934 he wrote, "Some have asked recently who named the Grand Canyon? It was Major Powell, and I was the first to put the name on a map which I did in that tent in Kanab in January, 1873." 5

On September 29, 1934, another letter issued from his summer home at Craigs Moor, N.Y., and was published in the October 4th issue of the *Ellenville Journal*:

It was Major Powell who named the Grand Canyon; and we used the name during our topographical operations. I was one of the topographers. At the end of 1872, . . . it fell to me to draw the first map of the Grand Canyon region, . . . The name Grand Canyon which Major Powell had adopted for that great chasm was then for the first time placed on a map

*"Running a Rapid," Figure 28 in John Wesley Powell's
monumental Exploration of the Colorado River, 1869-1872,
by courtesy of the Arizona Pioneer's Historical Society Library.*

and it was I who inscribed it. So while I did not originate the name I have the honor of having written it on the first map the first time it was ever put on any map . . .

Dellenbaugh sent a copy of this letter to a friend in Salt Lake City and added:

Positively Major Powell named it and no one else and I put the name on the map I drew as stated in the letter herewith. If I don't know then nobody living does.

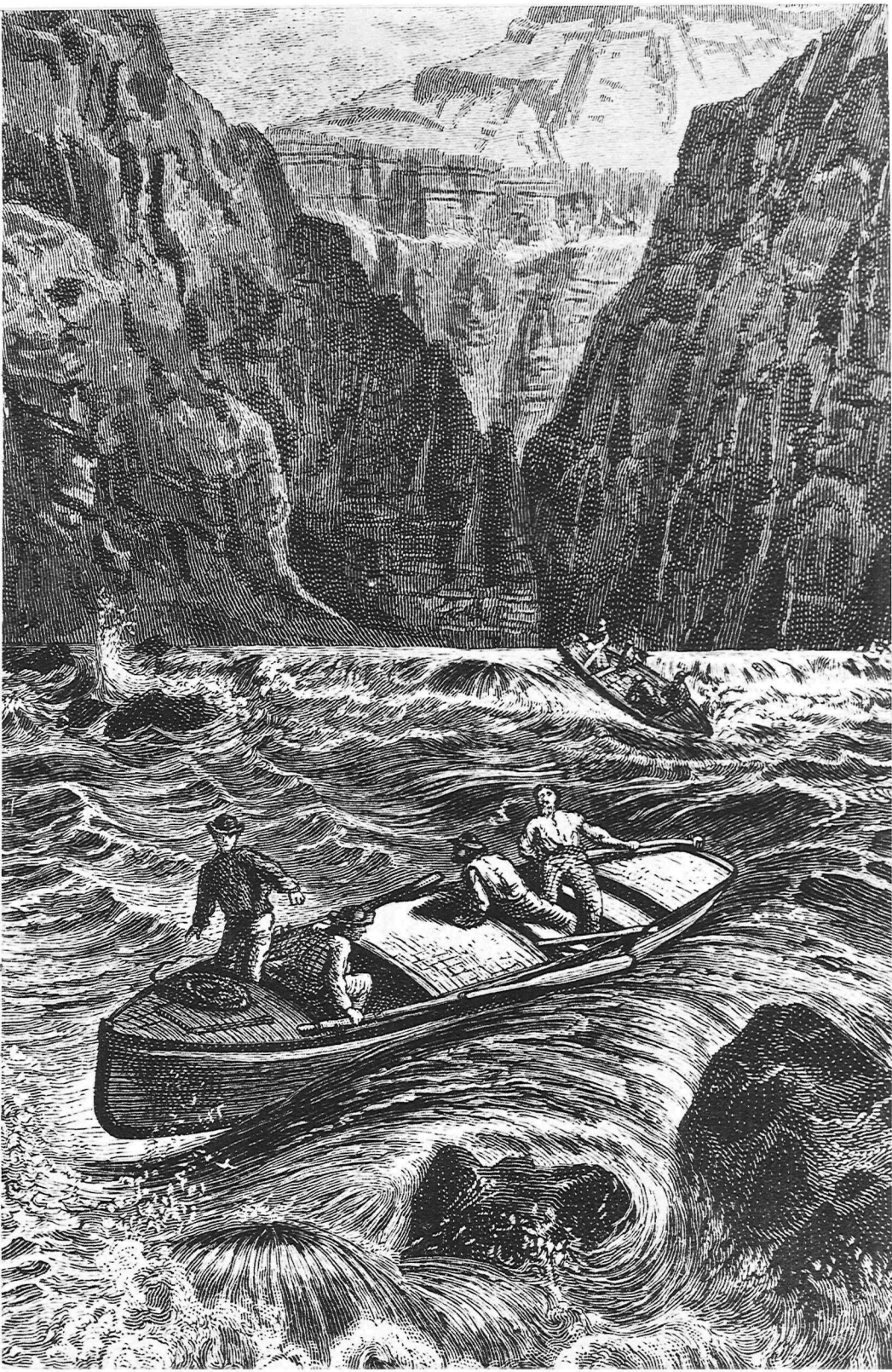
As he "wanted to get the correct thing on record," Dellenbaugh sent copies to the Library of Congress, American Geographical Society, the New York Public Library, and the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Kanab, Utah.

Will C. Barnes in *Arizona Place Names* (1935) quotes a letter by Dellenbaugh dated February 14, 1933, saying Powell called it Grand Canyon on the first trip. Barnes admits errors may creep into his document since frequently stories are told so often they become almost facts to the teller. Dellenbaugh attempted to establish facts in this manner and he was always positive and sometimes right. Byrd H. Granger's revision of Barnes is cautious and implies that Powell changed the name for BIG Canyon to GRAND Canyon after his incomplete cruise of 1872.

Major Powell's *Report* on his explorations of the Rio Colorado in 1869, printed as *Appendix D* in William A. Bell's *New Tracks in North American* (1870 edition) discussed " - - what was known as the 'Grand Canon' " and gave its length as 238 miles.

6 The Grand Canon of the Colorado received prominent mention in *The Deseret News* of September 15, 1869, which told of Powell's EXPLORATION OF THE COLORADO FINISHED. The *Chicago Tribune* of September 21, 1869, reported Powell's return and used the name Grand Canon of the Colorado. These two references give support to Dellenbaugh's facts. But the July 5, 1869, issue of the *Chicago Times* alarmed Powell's friends by relating the loss of the first crew and the heading was THE GRAND CANYON OF THE COLORADO, a use of the name with the English spelling prior to Powell's first view of the Canyon.

Major Powell's letter of May 24, 1869, sent to the *Chicago*



Tribune, explained that "This summer's work will be devoted chiefly to the study of . . . the 'Grand Canon' yet unexplored." The May 21st issue of the same paper recounted Powell's plans to procure boats "for the scientific exploration of the Grand Canon of the Colorado a sublime and mysterious chasm of vast extent." This date preceded by three days Powell's departure from Green River, Wyoming. The *Rocky Mountain Herald* of January 8, 1869, commented on a scientific gentleman, Professor Powell by name, who "was setting out with an expedition to explore the Grand Canon of the Colorado of the West."

Samuel Bowles, in *Our New West*, published in 1869, with a preface dated in March, relates that "the great mocking mystery of our geography is the Grand Canyon of the Colorado." Bowles assured his readers that the progress of Powell's 1869 crew would be awaited with great interest in "this rock-guarded career of the great river of the Interior Basin of the Continent—the Grand Canyon of the world."

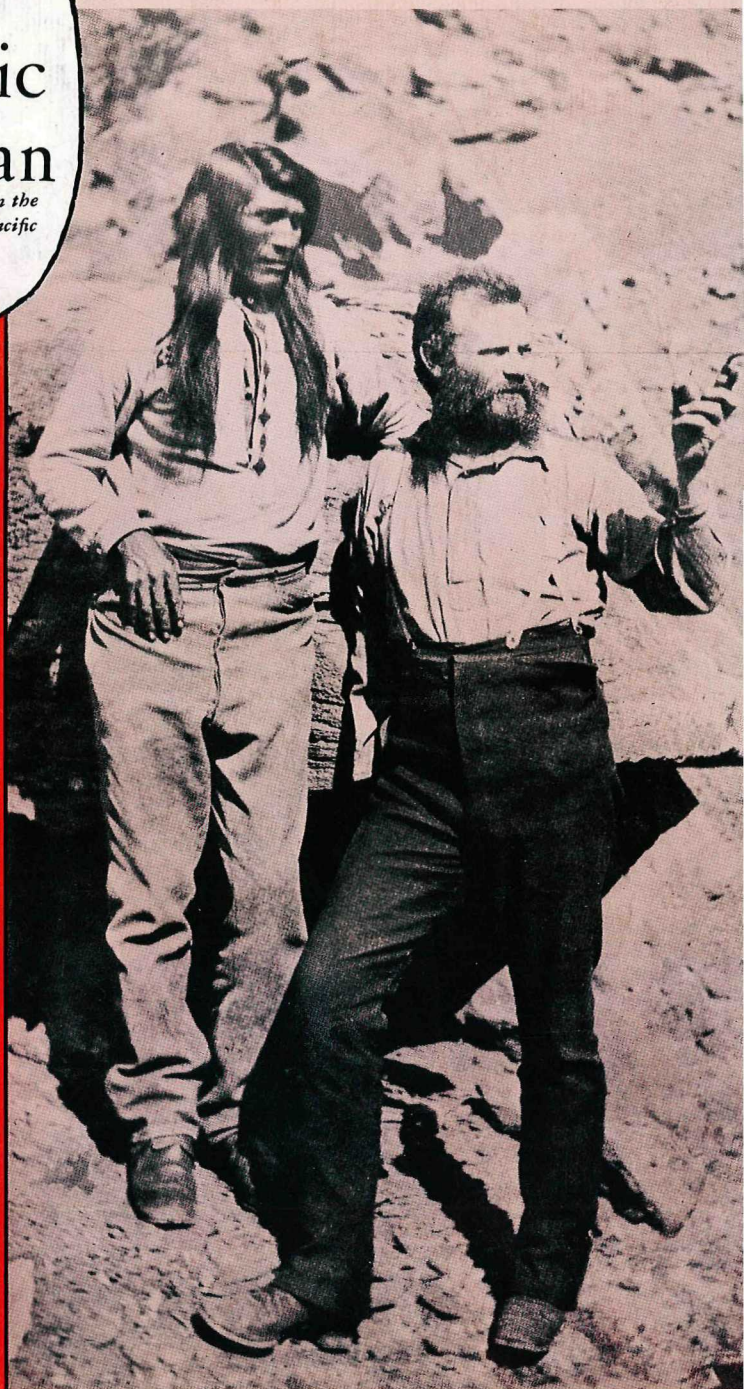
In the 1869 edition of William A. Bell's *New Tracks of North America*, General William Jackson Palmer describes the Val De Chino as extending "northward to within twenty miles of the Grand Canon of the Colorado." The preface date is May 1869. Palmer's *Report of Surveys Across the Continent in 1867-68* was dated December 1, 1868, and published in 1869. Pages 232 to 236 bear the heading "Grand Canon of the Colorado" and the text makes frequent use of the name as in "the greatest natural curiosity on the continent, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado." The map in the pocket at the back cover captions the section of the Colorado River between the Rio Virgin and the San Juan as "Grand Canon of the Colorado River," a map in use at least four years prior to Dellenbaugh. Palmer explained in a letter to Robert Brewster Stanton that the name "Grand Canon of the Colorado" was not new with any of his party but it was in general use in New Mexico and Arizona at the time of his surveys in 1867. A reference to Palmer's use of the name is quoted in Colton & Baxter's *Days in the Painted Desert*, 1932. The map on the inside cover of Lieutenant George M. Wheeler's Report of 1871-72 carried the name *Grand Canon of the Colorado*.

Thus, the *Firstiitis* disease seems to be endemic with Colorado River travelers and it appears that Dellenbaugh suffered an early and virulent infection. Contamination is widespread and the common symptom is blindness to the record.

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Tau-gu with one-armed John Wesley Powell in the vicinity of the Rio Virgin, Grand Canyon, 1873.

From original Hillers negative, Smithsonian Institution.



THE GRAND CANYON:
Quarrels, Quirks, and Quips

This mild-faced youth is FRED DELLENBAUGH as he looked in 1872 when he started scholars feuding about who named the Grand Canyon. Today the quarrel is as lively as the California-Arizona hassle over Colorado River water rights and contributor OTIS DOCK MARSTON does little to allay it. Incidentally he is a veteran Canyon explorer and the No. 1 authority on its fast waters—having done the hazardous field work for Disney's famous documentary film.

It was in the summer of 1869 that JOHN WESLEY POWELL [see cover], a one-armed veteran of Shiloh and professor of geology at Illinois Wesleyan, took ten men in four boats down the Colorado from Green River in Wyoming. SECRETARY OF INTERIOR UDALL is taking the lead in next year's centennial observances honoring the bearded professor who in 1879 went on to direct the new U.S. Bureau of Ethnology.

The Canyon is dear to all America—and no better proof exists than the humor it has generated . . . THE RANCHER: "What a helluva place to lose a sheep." THE COWBOY as he reined up at the brink: "Something, musta happened here!" PRESIDENT WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT: "Golly what a gully!"