

Grand Canyon Historical Society, Inc.

To develop and promote appreciation, understanding and education of the earlier history of the inhabitants and important events of the Grand Canyon and surrounding area.

The Bulletin

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www.GrandCanyonHistory.org

October 2008

2008 Outings

October 4 - *Antelope Canyon/Powell Museum, Page, AZ.*

Time: 8:15 AM for carpool from Flagstaff,
11:00 AM if meeting group at Powell Museum.
11:10 bus to Antelope Canyon. Tour starts at
11:30 AM and lasts about 1½ hours.

Place: To carpool, meet by 8:15 AM in the Flagstaff Mall parking lot off Hwy 89 and Marketplace Way near Sears, and park by the Office Max. If not carpooling, meet at 11:00 AM at the Powell Museum, 6 N. Lake Powell Blvd (there are 2 exits for Navajo Blvd off Hwy 89, the north is closer)

<http://www.powellmuseum.org>, 928-645-9496.

Cost: \$32 <http://www.antelopecanyon.com/>

Reservations: Please contact **Richard Quartaroli** by **Sept. 27** for reservations: richard.quartaroli@nau.edu; 928-523-6501.

We will also have lunch at the Dam Bar and Grille in the Dam Plaza <http://www.damplaza.com/dambar.html> and then have a tour of Powell Museum from 2:45-4:15 PM. Tour is free, thanks to their generosity.

Saturday, November 1 – *Annual Board Meeting, 9-noon.*

East Flagstaff Library, 3000 N. 4th St, (928)774-8434.

Please check our web site for outings updates:

<http://www.grandcanyonhistory.org/>

Red Butte Airfield and the Planes of Fame Museum in Valle - August 9th Outing

On a monsoon day with a grey cloud rumbling threateningly to the east, we were treated to sunny skies as well as excellent and interesting historical information about the Red Butte Airfield. It was an exciting chapter in aviation history as well as Grand Canyon history.

Before Grand Canyon had even become a national park in 1919, barnstormers were combing the western United States. Royal Thomas and Emery Kolb - ever the first to try anything new - landed a 1917 Standard J-1 biplane near Plateau Point in 1922. A plane of the same model is now part of the Planes of Fame Air Museum in Valle, also on our excursion for the day. Kolb realized that aviation was perfectly suited to the vastness of the Grand Canyon and created a small airfield just outside the park dubbed "Kolb Airfield". Lee Albertson, winner of this year's Pioneer Award, is our local expert on that topic. But that airfield was little used and soon eclipsed by the most modern airfield in Arizona – the Grand Canyon Red Butte Airport.

Grand Canyon Red Butte Airport was started in 1927 by Scenic Airways and Parker Van Zandt. Parker later went on to a little known part of Arizona to build another small airfield called Sky Harbor in 1929. The state-of-the-art airport at Red Butte had an aerodome hangar designed by architect B. Russell Shaw, a friend of the Wright brothers. This hangar sported a ticket and waiting room for paying customers, as well as a mechanic's workshop and small kitchen. There was a lodge with a huge fireplace, which sadly burnt to the ground in the 1990's. Behind the remains of the lodge, there still exists a sizeable root cellar. There was also a duplex cabin housing the mechanics and their families.



Grand Canyon Red Butte Airport from the Air

The first tour craft of the Grand Canyon and surrounding regions was a 1927 Stinson Detroit SM-1B. It had room for one pilot and 5 passengers, all seated in wicker chairs. John Wetherill, famous trading post operator and explorer of the Four Corners region, took a flight and remarked that what took an hour in the plane would have taken him 10 days over that same rugged terrain. Hunting charters to the VT Ranch on the North Rim were allowed to bring 5 men, 5 buffalo heads and some beef back in the Stinson, which would struggle to get off the ground with all that cargo.

Another famous plane used for the scenic flights was the Ford Tri-Motor. Bill Stout, of Packard fame, developed this all-metal aircraft, which was eventually bought by Ford. Bill Stout got his beginnings by starting an airmail service using balloons. His original pilot's license was signed by "O. Wright". Henry Ford didn't like to fly, but became interested in airplanes when his last Model T rolled off the assembly lines in 1927. It was left to his son Edsel to buy the Tri-Motor. A new one at that time cost \$50,000.



1927 Stinson Detroit SM-1B at Valle Museum

We viewed the Detroit and Tri-motor on our guided tour of the Planes of Fame Air Museum in Valle.



Grand Canyon Airlines Ford Tri-motor in Valle

Charles Lindbergh completed his famous trans-Atlantic flight in May of 1927, and paid a visit to Red Butte not long after. In 1928, Red Butte was also the origin of the first search and rescue by air in the famous case of the missing Glenn and Bessie Hyde.

The Great Depression hit this isolated area hard, and the airport closed in 1930. It reopened a few years later in time for the arrival of another famous aviator, Amelia Earhart, who stopped for a few relaxing days while her plane was being worked on. Ernest Tissot, a mechanic stationed at Red Butte, worked on her Lockheed Vega right before she took off on her record-making coast to coast flight. She remembered Ernest fondly as her favorite mechanic. He also worked on her plane before she took off around the world. Also interested in this out of the way location were the Fords and the Roosevelts. It is amazing how many historical personages had a part in this tiny airfield.

Overflights of the construction of the Boulder Dam became popular and still are today. Winslow Airport would offer flights when people got off the train there, and they

would be flown to Kingman, where they could reconnect with their westbound train.

In 1938 the airport was bought by the Douglas family, of the mining empire fame. But again, world events took a toll on the airport and it closed during World War II. The Hudgins brothers operated the field when it reopened after the war.

The airport was extremely well used following the 1956 mid-air collision over the Grand Canyon of TWA and United flights. We were fortunate to have a first person account from Paul Schnur, a former resident of the South Rim. During the summer of 1956, he was a college student working at Bright Angel Lodge as a bellhop. The reporters, journalists and camera crews needed transportation to the Red Butte airfield where they clamored for flights to the crash scene. It has to be remembered that at that time, this was the biggest air disaster the world had ever witnessed. In fact, this crash led to the formation of the FAA. Paul had a 1949 Ford, so was pressed into service to shuttle all the media people back and forth from the South Rim to Red Butte. He was there when the Army sent a new piece of technology called a helicopter from Fort Huachuca, to aid in the search and rescue efforts. By that point, it was sadly obvious that no rescues were needed. The media people clamored for a ride to the crash site on this new fangled machine. The pilots told them to choose two people amongst themselves to go. After almost coming to fisticuffs, the pilot finally chose the New York Times writer and the NBC cameraman. The hubbub at Red Butte died down dramatically in the next few days as the media left to chase after the story of the collision of the SS Andrea Doria and the MS Stockholm.

In 1967, with the increase in tourist flights a newer, bigger airport was needed for this region. That is when the current airport in Tusayan was built. The Red Butte Airport closed for good. Cattle grazing took over the area, with the hangar being used as a barn. The current status of the airfield is that it has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places and purchased by the Avery family of Flagstaff. The Avery family hopes to resurrect the buildings and preserve a piece of national aviation tucked away in the forests of Northern Arizona.

Thanks to the 18 people who attended this fascinating outing. Special thanks go to Erik Berg and John Dillon for organizing and relating to us the vast amount of aviation and Grand Canyon history at Red Butte and Valle. Special thanks also to historian Giacinta Koontz for providing information from her research on the airfield's history. For those interested in learning more, Ms. Koontz (who wrote the Historic Places proposal) and Gene Tissot (son of airfield mechanic, Ernest Tissot) will soon be publishing a book on the history of Red Butte and its role at Grand Canyon.

Submitted by Nancy Green, Secretary GCHS

Elect Your Board

The Nominating Committee has submitted the following members as possible Board members:

Board Member Candidates

John Azar

John began hiking Grand Canyon in 1985 and soon thereafter became interested in its history. After corresponding with Harvey Butchart for information regarding Canyon events, Harvey suggested John join the Grand Canyon Pioneer Society (now GCHS). He did so and has been involved with the society since that time. John has served on the board and was events coordinator for one year. He has also hosted outings at Jacob Lake and Marble Canyon over the years. John also presented at both History Symposia and was on the organizing committee for both events.

Erik Berg

Erik was raised in Flagstaff and he and his family made frequent trips to the canyon. He made his first trip to Phantom Ranch at age 12 and did his first (and to date only) river trip through the canyon at age 19. He visits the canyon several times a year for hiking, photography, and relaxation. Erik graduated from the University of Arizona in 1991 and currently lives in Phoenix where he works as a software engineer for Intel Corporation. He has been an active avocational historian for the last ten years with a special interest in the role of science and technology in the Southwest. In addition to presenting at conferences and public talks, he has contributed chapters to two books and published articles in the *Journal of Arizona History*, *Journal of the Society of Commercial Archaeology*, *Canyon Views*, and *Arizona Highways*. He presented a paper on the 1937 Carnegie-Caltech Colorado River expedition at the 2007 Grand Canyon History Symposium and has a larger article on the subject due for publication in the winter issue of the *Journal of Arizona History*. Erik believes that as a board member he could share his canyon experiences and research with the group, and as a Phoenix resident and newcomer to GCHS, could bring a different perspective and contribute ideas for expanding membership and engaging people living outside of the canyon area.

Jackie Brown

Jackie has been a resident of Grand Canyon and associate editor of the Grand Canyon News for five years. Her interest in Grand Canyon history started not long after arriving, and she's written many stories about the colorful characters and compelling stories connected with the place. That so much history is available, and that there is so much current activity surrounding it is largely due to the efforts of the Historical Society and something she'd like to contribute her time and talents to. Jackie is originally from

Massachusetts, served for 10 years in the US Army as a journalist and has followed that career path ever since. She's worked for weekly and daily papers, as well as freelance writing, for more than 25 years. Jackie has also served on various boards and committees, currently as secretary of the Grand Canyon PTA. In her spare time, Jackie likes to hike, read, serve the community and spend time with friends, drink beer and debate politics.

Kirstin Heins

Kirstin has worked at Grand Canyon National Park for 8 years and currently works in the Division of Science & Resource Management as a Recreation Planner, but has spent most of her time in the park in the Backcountry Information Center. Kirstin's interest in Grand Canyon history was cultivated during her backcountry hiking experiences. Her particular interest these days is how Grand Canyon National Park historically managed the inner canyon resources and backcountry areas. She also spent five years responsible for Grand Canyon's historic cemetery and has been helping her husband, Mathieu Brown, with his Grand Canyon climbing history project. Kirstin believes that as a board member one of her greatest contributions would be to help promote the organization and its goals to other members of the Grand Canyon community.

Adair Peterson

Adair has a long history of volunteer work in a number of areas. They are: nine years on the Southwest Regional board of the Sierra Club where she worked on such issues as endangered species, trail and wilderness issues and the two proposed dams in Grand Canyon. She then turned to another passion, mountain rescue. She served close to thirty years in various positions on the board of Albuquerque Mountain Rescue. A close friend of the late George Steck, Adair has hiked the length of Grand Canyon from Lees Ferry to Lava Falls and most of the canyons on both sides of the river.

Current Board Members and Officers

ELECTED in 2007 – Term: 2008, 2009, 2010

- Lee Albertson *
- Amy Horn
- Gaylord Staveley

ELECTED in 2006 – Term: 2007, 2008, 2009

- Keith Green *
- Henry Karpinski
- Paul Schnur

ELECTED in 2005 – Term: 2006, 2007, 2008 -- Outgoing 10/2008

- Beverly Loomis
- George Billingsley
- Susan Billingsley

* Currently serving a second consecutive term. [Board members are eligible to serve two (2) consecutive terms and will not again be eligible for election until one year has

Grand Canyon Historical Society

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10-08

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Elect Your Board (cont'd)

passed from their last term of office. (By Laws, Article IV.1)]

CURRENT OFFICERS

President: Keith Green

Vice President: Henry Karpinski and Erik Berg

Treasurer: Susan Billingsley

Secretary: Nancy Green

Pioneer Award: George Billingsley, Chairperson

Outings Coordinator: Henry Karpinski and Erik Berg

Membership Committee Chair: Keith Green

**Please complete and return the inserted
ballot by October 15th**

Grand Canyon History Forum on Yahoo!

A Grand Canyon history forum was recently started on Yahoo! Groups. To join, go to:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Grand_Canyon_History

Submit Your Stories for Ol' Pioneer

The Ol' Pioneer is the Society's magazine featuring stories, photos, and letters of historical relevance to the Grand Canyon. Submit your stories, photos, etc to the editor, Mary Williams at:

Mary Williams

4880 Weatherford Rd,

Flagstaff, Az 86001

Phone: 928-779-3377

mary@marywilliamsdesign.com

Outings/Programs: If you have a suggestion for a future outing/program or a question about an upcoming event, contact the **2008 Outings Coordinator** at Outings@GrandCanyonHistory.org.

The Bulletin welcomes comments, stories, or reflections and remembrances.

Please send them to: kgreig@yahoo.com