

The Powell Society By Herm Hoops ~ 2006

The Powell Society was an interesting assemblage of kindred souls: geologists, doctors, lawyers and professionals from Boulder and Denver, Colorado. A collection of free spirits, they had never taken life too seriously. But one day, relaxing in the shade by the riverbank below Powell Point, Dave Gaskill suggested that the Powell Society “get serious.” He and George Simmons proposed a geological log and river guide of the entire Colorado River from Green River to Lake Meade. At that time the best map and information was from the river survey.

They selected the name “Powell Society” on their application to participate in the Bureau of Reclamation’s 1958 river trip to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of John Wesley Powell’s passing through what is now the site of Flaming Gorge Dam. The commemoration was the idea of well-known Denver attorney Jerry Hart. The trip couldn’t be conducted on the 100th Anniversary because of the dam construction at Flaming Gorge. It was probably the last transit of Flaming Gorge before the coffer dam materials, piled along the sides of the river canyon, were pushed together to close the channel.

Society members George Simmons and Dave Gaskill became aware of Gene Shoemaker’s plan to repeat Powell’s trip of 1869 and replicate all of Hiller’s photographs of the Powell trip. The U.S.G.S., Smithsonian Institution and the National Geographic Society sponsored the trip. Gene Shoemaker was a famous astro-astronomer who combined his knowledge of geology and river running. (The publication “In the Footsteps of John Wesley Powell,” was published in 1987, and began photo matching work that has continued.)

Simmons and Gaskill proposed to Gene that they join the trip and create geological river logs for six segments of the Colorado River. The Society’s proposal was accepted and Gene Shoemaker, Dave Gaskill, Phil Hayes and Felix Mutschler spent the entire summer running the Colorado River in 10-man rafts from Green River to Lake Meade. Several other members of the Powell Society joined in various segments of the trip. The Society marked the 100th Anniversary of the parting at Separation Rapid in the Grand Canyon, with commemorative, postmarked letters.

U.S.G.S. funds were originally budgeted to publish the comparison photographs as a professional paper. Ultimately the money budgeted was not available and the Powell Society, working with Johnson Press of Boulder participated in the publishing of the book “In the Footsteps of John Wesley Powell.” In the meantime, the Society published their river logs:

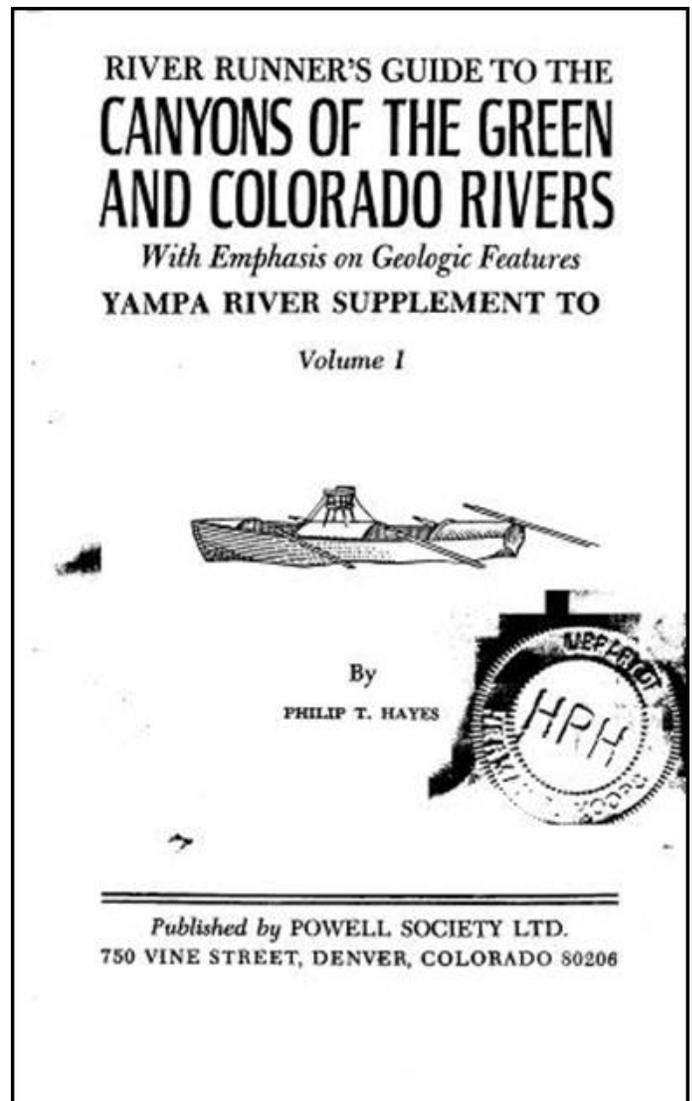
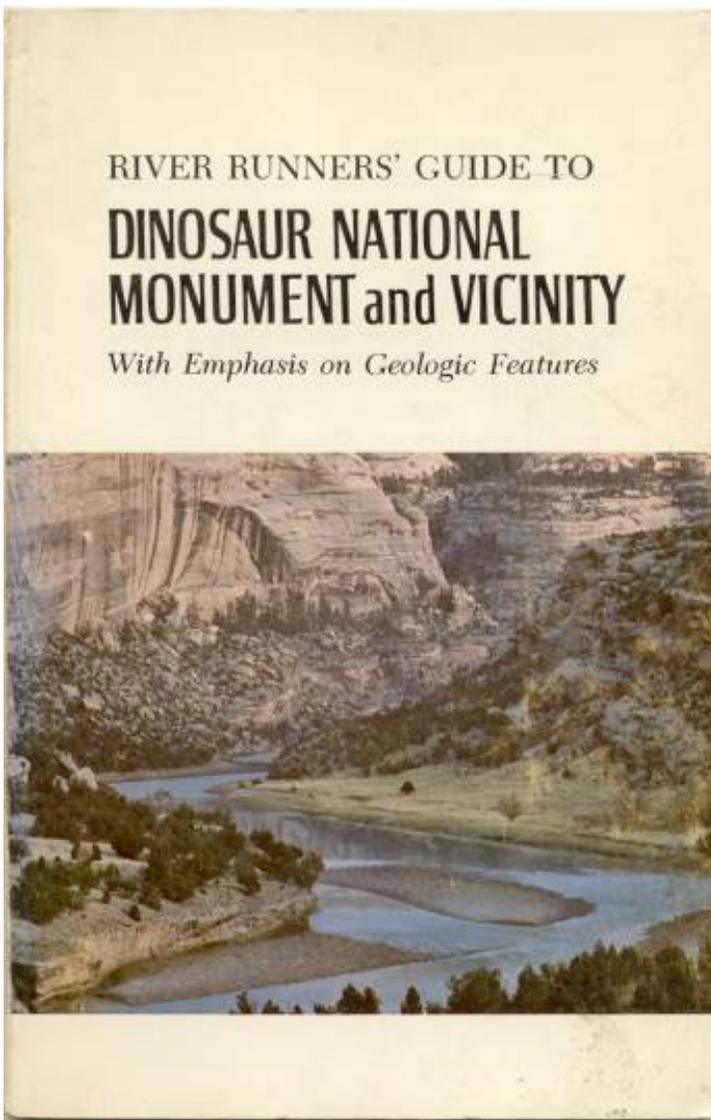
- Dinosaur National Monument and Vicinity by Hayes and Simmons - Desolation and Grey Canyons by Mutschler
- Labyrinth, Stillwater and Cataract Canyons by Mutschler
- Marble and Grand Canyon by Simmons and Gaskill
- Yampa Supplement

The Yampa supplement was eventually incorporated into the Dinosaur publication. Most of these river guides are out of print. Mackay Marine and Outdoor Supply of Murray, Utah have recently republished the Desolation and Grey Volume. Although the river maps are small, one can follow the progress down the river through detailed descriptions. The guides locate and rate all of the rapids, rating them on the 1-10 Colorado River Rating System. Thus, the ratings are open to some individual interpretation, but they provide historic insight on the old silt-laden Colorado and the present-day river.

The authors, now retired, are well-known geologists. David Gaskill lives west of Denver, Colorado. Since his retirement from the U.S.G.S. George Simmons has served as a N.P.S. volunteer in Big Bend, Cataract and the Uinta Mountains. Felix Mutschler, recently (May 9, 2000) deceased, was a Professor of Geology at Eastern Washington University. Phil Hayes lives near Grand Junction, Colorado. Non-geologists who have contributed to the work of the Powell Society include Parkman T. Brooks of Ketchum, Idaho; Bob Gaskill of Winona, KS; Dr. George Ogura of Denver, Colorado; Marvis Ogura who organized the lecture programs, and Dr. Henry W. Toll Jr., of Denver, who is still in contact with this “interesting assemblage of free spirits!”

References:

- Personal interview with Dr. Henry W. Toll Jr., Powell Society; 1982; Herm Hoops.
- Letters from Dr. Henry W. Toll Jr., Powell Society 1980; 2005. Herm Hoops
- U.S. Geological Service, Old Timers Collection #100.11-12; Gene Shoemaker Interview Powell Society River Guide Books.
- A Memorial – Felix E. Mutschler; The Confluence; Colorado Plateau River Guides; Volume 7, Number 3, Fall 2000.



RIVER RUNNERS' GUIDE TO THE CANYONS OF THE GREEN AND COLORADO RIVERS

With Emphasis on Geologic Features



Desolation and Gray Canyons

yon. It consists of partly leached gypsum and limestone with contorted bedding.

Note boulder gravel stream levees where side canyon leaves gorge and enters alluvial fan.

Mile 206.1 Note small normal faults cutting Cedar Mesa Sandstone Member of the Cutler Formation and Rico Formation on skyline of side canyon on right.

Mile 205.0 Beginning of "Mile Long Rapid." Range Canyon enters on right. The "Mile Long Rapid" actually consists of a closely spaced succession of six rapids:

- Rapid 11 (1)
- 12 (4)
- 13 (2)
- 14 (6)
- 15 (2)
- 16 (6)

Rapid 11 formed where debris from Range Canyon constricts the channel. The other rapids are caused by block talus slides from the canyon walls and, perhaps, by bedrock ridges in the channel. The contact between the upper member and Paradox Member of the Hermosa is close to river level here, and outcrops of Paradox black shale and gypsum may be observed at about mile 204.5 during low water.

Mile 204.7 On a boulder on the right bank is inscribed:

Col. Gran.⁴ Canyon
M. & Imp.¹ Co.
July 22, 1891



G. M. WRIGHT
Sep. 16 1892

The upper inscription was left by the Colorado Grand Canyon Mining and Improvement Company (also known as the Best expedition) who lost a boat here.

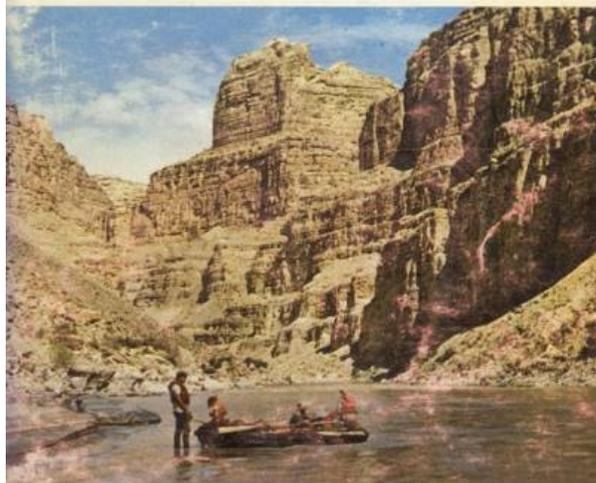
Mile 203.7 Rapid 17 (38)

Mile 203.1 Rapid 18 (3) around small boulder bar island.

Mile 202.9 Sand beach on left is a good camp site. Paradox gypsum, probably thickened by flowage, crops out below upper

RIVER RUNNERS' GUIDE TO THE CANYONS OF THE GREEN AND COLORADO RIVERS

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Labyrinth, Stillwater and Cataract Canyons

member of Hermosa behind the beach.

The cliffs on the right are cut by joints and faults striking parallel to the canyon. Most of the faults are downthrown toward the river. Cliff exposes a complete section of upper member of Hermosa overlain by Rico capped at the skyline by Cedar Mesa Sandstone Member.

View downstream shows Calf Canyon entering on right at mile 202.7. Note the large, partly dissected block talus cone in mouth of Calf Canyon.

Mile 202.8 Rapid 19 (5)—Calf Canyon. River drops 30 feet in next mile (rapids 19 through 22), and on July 24, 1869, the Powell expedition was able to make only three-fourths mile.

The 1871 Powell party passed through this stretch on September 24.

Mile 202.4 Rapid 20 (6)—The "Upper Big Drop" or "Satan's Seat" of river runners. The rapid is guarded by two large boulders, each about one quarter of the way out from shore. Huge "holes" form on the downstream side of the boulders.

Mile 202.3 River is ponded above the "Big Drop." Large backwaters on either side of a narrow central current are apparent except at extremely high water. Note driftwood strands up to 35 feet above river level, deposited during flood stage. A painted inscription beneath a ledge 75 feet above the river on the right bank reads:

E. C. K. CAT.
& L. K. CAMP 2
E. L. K. OLB
10 - 28 - 1911

Mile 202.2 Rapid 21 (8)—The "Big Drop" is the most awesome rapid in Cataract Canyon. It was called Ross Falls by Powell in 1871. The river plunges over a boulder-toothed falls in a seething, foamy mass studded with huge holes. Even the sound of the water is on a different scale; the "Big Drop" roars a bass to the tenor of the other rapids upstream. The rapid has formed between block talus cones on either bank. Comparison of photographs taken by E. O. Beaman on the 1871 Powell expedition and the rapid today shows that 10- to 20-foot boulders have been

POWELL CENTENNIAL LECTURE
THE FOOTSTEPS OF POWELL: A TRAIL GONE COLD RECOVERED

to be given by
Professor Eugene M. Shoemaker
California Institute of Technology

MAY 23, 1969
8:00 P.M.

at
PHIPPS AUDITORIUM
of the
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, CITY PARK,
DENVER

One of the great feats of early day photography of the West was that of Beaman and Hillers who accompanied the second Powell expedition through the canyons of the Colorado River. During the past summer, Eugene Shoemaker, Professor of Geology at the California Institute of Technology, and Mr. Hal Stevens, a U.S. Geological Survey Photographer, repeated the trip for the purpose of relocating the photographic stations of the earlier expedition and re-photographing them as they appear today. The side by side comparison of the photographs of a century ago and those taken last year will be the principal subject of the lecture indicated above, to be followed by official motion pictures of last fall's trip.

Professor Shoemaker is widely known for his part in establishing the Branch of Astrogeology of the U.S. Geological Survey (1969), and the Manned Space Sciences Division of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, (1963). He established the U.S. Geological Survey Observatory for geological investigation of the moon and planets at Flagstaff in 1963, and the Center of Astrogeology at Flagstaff in 1965. He is the holder of numerous important appointments in connection with astrogeology and has been the recipient of many scholastic honors for his scientific work. It is anticipated that his Powell lecture will be of interest not only to

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photographers, historians and geologists, but also river runners, and anyone generally interested in the American West

Admission to the lecture is \$1.50. Tickets may be obtained by sending a self-addressed envelope with money for the number of tickets desired to the Powell Society, Ltd, at 750 Vine Street, Denver, 80206, or tickets may be purchased at the door. No shortage of seating is anticipated, however, the capacity of the auditorium will not be oversold.

HENRY W. TOLL, JR., M.D.

333 LOGAN STREET, SUITE 220
DENVER, CO 80203

303-733-0118

March 4, 1996

Ranger Herm Hoops
Dinosaur National Monument
Jensen, UT 84035

Dear Ranger Hoops:

Charles Moore reported to me on his recent visit with you at Dinosaur. This letter concerns two aspects of that conversation.

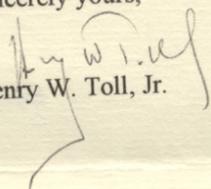
The first item would be the papers of Roger Toll which are apparently in storage at the Monument. I would be very interested to either review these papers personally or have someone inventory them. Quite a number of his papers were given by members of his family to the Western History section of the Denver Public Library. Included in the papers, there is a carbon copy of his report to Washington on the evaluation of the Dinosaur area for inclusion in the park system. I am not sure that a copy of that report exists in Washington, and I think a number of other evaluations which he made on various areas as to their possibility for national park or monument status have been lost. If there is someone I should write about this, please let me know.

The second item is the question of the reprinting of the River Runners' Guide to Dinosaur and Vicinity which has been out of print for a number of years now. Subject to confirmation, I believe I do have most of the original materials, such as photographs with geologic strata identified, and so forth, which were used in the original log. I am prejudice, but I do believe that it is still the best river log for the area. Some changes do need to be made, such as identification of the Brown's Park Wildlife Refuge and information as to application for permits. I believe that the Powell Society would be able to participate in much of the up front

cost of such a publication. If we were to underwrite a substantial portion of the cost, we would like to have some arrangement to participate in the returns from the sale of the log up to the amount of our contributions.

It was very interesting to hear about your interest and I hope we can be in touch.

Sincerely yours,


Henry W. Toll, Jr.

HWT:ssh

HENRY W. TOLL, JR., M.D.

333 Logan Street, Suite #220
Denver, CO 80203

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303-733-0118

November 2, 2005

Herm Hoops
POB 163
Jensen, UT 84035-0163

Dear Herm,

It was indeed good to hear from you after all these years. Your recent trip through Cataract sounds great and I am very envious of it. Age is catching up with me and I have not done a river since the Grand Canyon about five years ago. I would be in my nineties before getting another permit, so I made that trip my last which was a great contrast to my first transit in 1956 at 120,000 cu.ft./sec. - Two weeks of true wilderness from Badger to Temple Bar with only a few people at Bright Angel being the only humans we saw the entire trip.

You asked about the Powell Society and its authors. It is an interesting assemblage of kindred souls. The name came out of an application to the Bureau of Reclamation to observe the 90th Anniversary of Powell's passing through the site of the Flaming Gorge dam. There was to be no chance to commemorate the 100th Anniversary due to the dam construction. The commemoration was the idea of Jerry Hart, a well-known Denver attorney, although, ultimately, he could not join us for the trip. I believe it was the last transit of the Flaming Gorge before the coffer dam materials piled along the sides of the canyon were pushed together to close the channel. Ten years later, again to the day of occurrence. The Powell Society marked the 100th Anniversary of the parting at Separation Rapid.

The Society, as a collection of free spirits, has never taken life too seriously, but one day, relaxing in the shade by the river bank below Powell Point, Dave Gaskill suggested that the Powell Society "get serious." He and George Simmons proposed a geologic log of the entire river from Green River to Lake Meade. At that time, the best map information was from the river survey

maps and those maps, colorfully annotated by the few river runners of the time, were the best information available.

The Powell Society actually crystallized around the core of its various authors who were all USGS geologists. George Simmons and Dave Gaskill were aware of Gene Shoemaker's plan to repeat Powell's trip of 1868 and to repeat all of Hiller's photographs of the Powell trip. Simmons and Gaskill proposed to Gene that they combine with Gene Shoemaker and create the geologic river logs of the trip. Forces were joined accordingly with George and Dave enlisting their USGS brethren, Phil Hayes and Felix Mutschler. Accordingly, Gene Shoemaker, with Hal Stephens as the photographer spent the entire summer running from Green River to Lake Meade with various elements of the Powell Society joining for different segments of the trip. The 10-man rafts were variously provided by the USGS and Powell Society members who were their own boatmen.

USGS money had originally been budgeted to publish on the Stephen's photographs paired with their Hillers counterparts as a USGS professional paper. Ultimately the money budgeted was not available and the Powell Society, working with the Johnson Press of Boulder, participated in the publication of the book "In the Footsteps of John Wesley Powell." Along the way, the Society participated in the publication of the river logs as follows:

Dinosaur, Hayes and Simmons
Grey and Desolation, Mutschler
Canyonlands (Cataract), Mutschler
Marble & Grand Canyon, Simmons and Gaskill
Yampa Supplement

The Dinosaur log originally had a supplement for the Yampa River from Deerlodge Park to Pat's Hole. A later printing incorporated the Yampa material. There was also a reprinting of the Canyonlands (Volume II) and Grand Canyon (Volume III). All of the foregoing is now out of print. Just recently Volume IV (Desolation and Grey Canyons) was republished by MacKay Marine and Outdoor Supply Books for River Runners of Murray, Utah.

Each of the guides is the work of its listed author(s). The rapid ratings were based on the 1-10 scale. There is, therefore, some individual interpretation based on the experience of the author, but I would like to think that variations from other raters are based more on water level and the dramatic changes that high or low flows can produce. In some cases, particularly the Grand Canyon, they can provide historic insight on the differences between the old silt-laden Colorado of Powell and the present day river.

All authors are career geologists with the USGS with the exception of Felix Mutschler. Collectively they have published various professional papers too numerous to list here. The individuals are: David Gaskill, presently living in the

POWELL  SOCIETY

1869 1969

LECTURE

OCTOBER 29, 1969 — 8 P.M.

PHIPPS AUDITORIUM
DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

BY

EDWIN D. McKEE

United States Geological Survey

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Corporation For Other Than Pecuniary Profit.

ADMIT ONE

POWELL  CENTENNIAL

1869 1969

LECTURE

MAY 23, 1969 — 8 P.M.

PHIPPS AUDITORIUM — COLORADO DENVER
MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

BY

PROFESSOR EUGENE SHOEMAKER

California Institute of Technology

Co-Sponsored By The State Historical Society of Colorado
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