

President's Letter

In March, I and several other members of the Grand Canyon Historical Society attended the Grand Canyon River Guide's annual Guide Training Seminar near Lees Ferry. We manned a GCHS information booth with membership forms and extra copies of the newsletter and *Ol' Pioneer* and thus picked up a few new members. We also got to listen to a wide range of interesting presentations covering everything from the latest geologic theories to beach erosion to the lives of canyon beetles. Like the Grand History Symposiums supported by the GCHS, it was a great opportunity to meet with other canyon enthusiasts to share knowledge, discoveries and stories.

It was also a reminder that no matter how many times you visit the canyon and no matter how much you learn about it, there is always more to discover. The canyon's history and prehistory are as deep as the Vishnu Schist, as winding as the river and as rich as a dessert at the El Tovar dining hall. And like the canyon, the region's history still contains many rarely-explored areas, hidden corners and lingering mysteries. While most of us can't hike the canyon every day, we can still continue to explore its vast history any time we want through books, websites and the articles of the GCHS newsletter and *Ol' Pioneer*. Regardless of if you live five minutes from the rim or five time zones away, the canyon is always at your finger tips.

No better example can be found than in this issue of the *Ol' Pioneer* where Don Lago takes us on a trip into one of the most fantastic—and till now unexplained—corners of the canyon's history. So, stop what ever you are doing... turn off the TV, put the chores off until tomorrow, sit down on the sofa and pull on your mental hiking boots. It is time to take a quick trip to the canyon and be among the first to explore the true story behind a mystery that has spawned conspiracy theories and wild speculation for over a hundred years. Stories like this—and the true history behind the stories—are one of the many reasons we love the canyon's history and why we are members of the Grand Canyon Historical Society.

Erik Berg, GCHS President

Cover: *Atlantis Rising* cover May/June 2009, Joe Mulhatten, *Arizona Gazette* article from April 5, 1909.

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“Looks Like a Mulhatton Story”

The Origins of the Grand Canyon Egyptian Cave Myth

by Don Lago

In the years since 1992 some dramatic new Grand Canyon lore has emerged, mutated rapidly, taken on elaborate forms, and won a large, loyal following. This story appears on thousands of websites. It has been presented several times on a national radio show. It is now showing up in many books. It is well on its way to becoming a standard part of the Grand Canyon landscape—at least the paranormal landscape. This story has the momentum to take a firmly-rooted place alongside Roswell, the Sedona vortexes, the Loch Ness Monster, and Atlantis.

It seems that in 1909 a Smithsonian explorer named G. E. Kinkaid, who was making a solo boat trip down the length of the Colorado River (supposedly only the second Colorado River expedition since Powell), discovered a giant cave in a cliff of the Grand Canyon. This cave was located forty-two miles upstream from El Tovar Crystal Canyon. The cave was perched 2,000 feet above the level of today’s river, but a set of steps reaching thirty yards down from the cave entrance proved that the river had been 2,000 feet higher—or the canyon 2,000 feet shallower—at the time the cave was inhabited. The cave held an elaborate system of tunnels and chambers, hundreds of rooms with straight walls, obviously cut by humans. The chambers were full of artifacts and hieroglyphs and mummies, evidently Egyptian in origin. There was also a statue that looked like Buddha. The artifacts included inscribed tablets; gold urns and cups; pottery; weapons; and sophisticated copper tools and instruments. There were granaries made out of cement. A 700-foot-long dining hall still held cooking utensils. It was estimated that these chambers were home to some 50,000 people.

One thing about this story is absolutely true: it was published on the front page of Phoenix’s *Arizona Gazette* on April 5, 1909, under the headlines: EXPLORATIONS IN GRAND CANYON/ Mysteries of Immense Rich Cavern Being Brought to Light./ JORDAN IS ENTHUSED/ Remarkable Finds Indicate Ancient People Migrated From Orient.” The article explained that Professor S. A. Jordan of the Smithsonian Institution had now arrived to begin scientific examination of the cavern. He was stringing up electric lights through the passageways. Jordan seemed pretty sure that the cavern was the work of Egyptians. The article said: “If their theories are born out by the translation of the tablets engraved with hieroglyphics, the mystery of the prehistoric peoples of North America, their ancient arts, who they were and whence they came, will be solved. Egypt and the Nile, and Arizona and the Colorado will be linked by a historical chain running back to ages which will stagger the wildest fancy of the fictionist.”

The *Gazette* story was soon forgotten, but in 1962 it was rescued from obscurity by being included in the book *Arizona Cavalcade*, one of a series of five books of newspaper articles from early Arizona history. From there it eventually came to the attention of David Hatcher Childress, who included it in his 1992 book *Lost Cities of North and Central America*, a personal exploration of the occult secrets and Old-World influences in American archaeological sites. Childress related how, upon discovering the Egyptian cave story, he got out a map of the Grand Canyon and was “shocked” to see that a whole section of formations in the canyon had Egyptian names, such as Isis Temple and the Tower of Ra. Surely this had to be the location of the Egyptian cave. When

Childress contacted the Smithsonian and Grand Canyon National Park, he discovered that they were conspiring in a diabolical cover-up of the truth. The Smithsonian tried to deny the existence of Kinkaid and Jordan, and at Grand Canyon National Park: “This entire area with the Egyptian and Hindu place names is a forbidden zone, no one is allowed into this large area.”¹

Childress’s presentation of the Egyptian cave story struck a chord—a mystic chord—with seekers into the esoteric. The ancient Egyptians were the masters of spiritual knowledge, their pyramids loaded with cosmic secrets. The Grand Canyon was nature’s deepest revelation of primordial power and time. The combination of ancient Egypt and the Grand Canyon was too rich to resist.

The internet now holds highly elaborate theories about the Grand Canyon Egyptian cave. There are contending schools of thought about the location of the cave. Some say that it must be in the Egyptian names section, and others say that it has to be forty-two miles upstream from El Tovar Crystal Canyon—wherever that is. Websites show photos of various cave entrances, such as Stanton’s Cave, well known for its ancient artifacts, a cave now locked behind jail-like bars, which the National Park Service pretends is to protect bats. Several groups have traveled to the canyon and hiked into it to locate the Egyptian cave. Theories try to relate the Egyptian cave to split-twig figurines, Hopi legends, Atlantis, Area 51, even to “The Thing,” the Arizona tourist-trap mummy (The Thing came from the Grand Canyon cave!). People spin new geological theories to explain why the Colorado River was recently 2,000 feet deeper—or maybe the canyon was 2,000 feet shallower. In a cover-story article in the May, 2009 issue of the

paranormal magazine *Atlantis Rising*, David Hatcher Childress proposed that the prehistoric settlement on the Unkar delta was actually built by the Egyptians, and that its name was a corruption of the Egyptian name “Ankh-Ra,” a reference of the Egyptian sun god Ra.

To take one example of Egyptian cave research, websites offer long calculations of how sacred geometry connects the cave with the rest of the esoteric world. The Egyptian pyramids, of course, are the ultimate masterpieces of sacred geometry, their locations and proportions and alignments embodying all the secrets of the cosmos. It thus stands to reason that there should be a sacred-geometry connection between the Great Pyramid at Giza and the Grand Canyon, and it turns out that the canyon’s Isis Temple fits perfectly into the Egyptian cosmic matrix code. The location, dimensions, and angles of Isis Temple correlate with the Great Pyramid of Giza with fantastic mathematical accuracy, to seven or eight decimal places. Isis Temple also shows amazing mathematical correlations with the Sphinx, Stonehenge, the star Sirius, and the Face on Mars. This implies that Isis Temple must be the location of the Egyptian cave. This may prove that Isis Temple was actually human-made. But when one expedition to Isis Temple climbed 800 feet up to the most promising cave entrance, they discovered that the entrance, which clearly was human-made, had been dynamited shut.

As theories have become more elaborate, so have claims of a cover-up by the Smithsonian and the National Park Service. David Hatcher Childress now claims that the Smithsonian has been destroying evidence of the Egyptians in America, even towing a barge full of artifacts into the Atlantic and dumping them overboard. Others say that the National Park Service has closed the airspace in the canyon, hiking entry to the Egyptian zone, and entry into all caves, in order to hide Egyptian artifacts. In a period of five weeks

in early 2008, listeners to “Coast to Coast,” the national paranormal radio show, heard David Hatcher Childress say that the Hopis had thrown acid into the eyes of Grand Canyon miner Seth Tanner to blind him and prevent him from finding the Egyptian cave; and heard giant-expert Steve Quayle say that the occupants of the cave were giants 12-14 feet tall, and that Quayle had met someone who swore he participated in removing the giants’ mummies from the cave and taking them to Area 51.

Does it ever occur to Egyptian-cave believers that the *Arizona Gazette* story could have been a hoax? In fact, it does. Even David Hatcher Childress, in *Lost Cities of North and Central America*, admitted that when he first saw the story in *Arizona Cavalcade* he “bet it was fabricated by the author of that book. It sounds phony.”² Then Childress looked up the original *Gazette* article, and “There it was in black and white.” This verdict is often stated on Egyptian-cave websites: if a story appears on the front page of a newspaper, it must be true.

This verdict would have come as a surprise to American newspaper readers in 1909—and even more so to newspaper editors. Journalism was not yet an honest and honorable profession. Only that year had an American college opened the world’s first school of journalism. There were no Pulitzer Prizes to reward professionalism. This was the era of yellow journalism, which recently had sparked the Spanish-American war. Newspapers were often the shameless tools of political parties, town boosters, or businessmen—including swindlers. Arizona was in the midst of a golden age of mining, and nearly every day the newspapers shouted about new mining discoveries, many of which were merely swindles designed to attract stock money from investors back east. On March 29, only a week before the Egyptian cave article appeared, the *Gazette’s* Phoenix rival, the *Arizona Republican*, ran an editorial titled “A Little Essay About Mines and Faking,” defending itself from complaints that it was

publishing articles that legitimized swindles. The *Republican* denied it, but added that, anyway, all that east-coast money was great for the Arizona economy.

The Egyptian cave story should have been big news for Arizona, eagerly repeated by other newspapers: A second Colorado River expedition! A major Smithsonian expedition to Arizona! Egyptians in Arizona!

Yet the *Gazette* story was almost totally ignored by other Arizona newspapers. Of over a dozen newspapers checked for this article, only one, the *Jerome Mining News*, reprinted the story, without comment. Only one newspaper, Flagstaff’s *Coconino Sun*, thought it was necessary to comment. In a brief front-page article on April 16, the *Coconino Sun* ran the headline: “Looks Like a Mulhatton Story.” For American newspaper readers in 1909, this said all that needed to be said.

By 1909 Joe Mulhatton (his last name gets spelled in various ways, often Mulhattan) had been famous for thirty years, famous for his hobby of tricking newspapers into publishing hoax stories. According to the Museum of Hoaxes: “During the 1870s and 1880s Joseph Mulhattan was perhaps the most famous hoaxer in America.”³ Joe was especially fond of—and famous for—inventing outlandish stories about discoveries of caves full of amazing artifacts from ancient civilizations.

In 1883, when Joe was just getting started, the *American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal* thought it prudent to issue a warning to archaeologists: “Joe Mulhattan is a character of some interest to archaeologists—his residence is in Kentucky, and his business is to invent marvelous stories or lies. He has invented seven stories about finding big caves, Masonic emblems, and other ridiculous things...Another just sent to us from Eureka Springs, Arkansas, about an iron box and a skeleton chained, in a cave, shows that he is still at work.”⁴

In 1888 Joe Mulhatton was included in the book *Prominent Men and Women of the Day*, alongside Mark Twain, Walt

Whitman, and Oscar Wilde. The book warned: "When the readers meet with a circumstantial account of hidden rivers being found here or there, of vast bodies of water deep under ground... he is exhorted to think of Mulhatten; and the ethnologist and geologist are warned against believing all they see in newspapers about newly discovered works by prehistoric man. How many persuasively written and circumstantial fabrics of lies Mr. Mulhatten has written probably only their author knows."⁵

In 1891 the *New York Times* declared: "Joe Mulhatten is known in every city in the United States and has probably caused more trouble in newspaper offices than any other man in the country. His wild stories, written in the most plausible style, have more than once caused the special correspondents of the progressive journals of the United States to hurry from coast to coast to investigate some wonderful occurrence which only existed in the imagination of the great liar."⁶

Mulhatton's first cave discovery hoax was Grand Crystal Cave beneath Glasgow Junction, Kentucky, a cave which was "wonderful beyond description, and far surpasses in grandeur" Mammoth Cave nearby. On June 22, 1878 the *Cincinnati Commercial* published Mulhatton's article about the cave's discovery, and even though the next day's Louisville *Courier-Journal* exposed the article as a hoax, the article was soon reprinted all over the country. Grand Crystal Cave was at least twenty-three miles long: "A span of horses can easily be driven through for a distance of eleven miles." There were "three rivers, wide and very deep," one of which "is navigable for fourteen miles, until the passages become too narrow to admit a boat... Several mummified remains have been discovered in one of the large rooms. They were reposing in stone coffins, rudely constructed, and from appearances, they may have been in this cave for centuries. They present every appearance of the Egyptian mummies." An entrepreneur was

planning to offer steamboat rides inside the cave.

A year later Mulhatton placed his most embellished version of the Grand Crystal Cave story in the national Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Newspaper*:

...they discovered an immense room, in dimensions about one hundred yards in width by about one hundred feet in height... The beauties of this chamber are simply indescribable. It is called the Crystal Chamber, and is well named... At a distance of about three miles, in a very picturesque spot, six mummies were found on a ledge of rocks. They were reposing in stone coffins rudely constructed, and presented every appearance of the Egyptian mummies. Three of the mummies were male and three female. [The female mummies had] a fine, intelligent, refined cast, beautiful even thousands of years after the visit of the destroying angel.⁷

On December 12, 1881, the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* published a report of a new cave discovery at Litchfield, Kentucky, which included an Egyptian pyramid and hieroglyphs: "There are evidences on all sides that the cave was the abode of a prehistoric race, and that that race was identified with the ancient Egyptian races... Joseph Mulhatten, geologist and scientist, from Louisville, Ky., has visited the cave, and secured several mummies and other specimens—but the pyramid and remaining wonders will remain untouched to be gazed upon by a wondering world."

In truth, Joe Mulhatton was a traveling salesman, usually for hardware companies. A salesman needs to tell whoppers with a straight face, and Joe's wide travels provided him with plenty of raw materials for stories, and access to many newspapers. In 1884 a national convention of traveling salesmen was so proud of Joe's storytelling talents that they nominated him for president of the United States.

Yet another Joe Mulhatton cave hoax was still remembered decades later, as shown by this 1908 story in an Arizona newspaper, the *Globe Silver Belt*:

Joe Mulhatton's story of a wonderful cave in Pike County, Kentucky, was a highly decorated piece of art. It appeared in a Louisville paper, and set people on two continents talking of the rooms full of magnificent jewels, of long halls lined with great blocks of virgin gold and of subterranean rivers rippling over beds of diamonds... Even P. T. Barnum, the wily old showman, was caught in the trap and hastened to Pike County to see if he might be able to pick up a few rare skeletons of strange cave-dwellers that the excited discoverer had overlooked.⁸

In 1883 Mulhatton got wide circulation for a story about how Birmingham, Alabama, had been built atop a thin crust of stone over a cave with a huge river flowing through it. The construction of a new building had punctured the crust, and several buildings had fallen into the cave.

According to the Museum of Hoaxes: "Mulhatten apparently concocted his hoaxes purely for the thrill of deceiving the media. He would send his stories to newspaper offices, and editors would usually accept them without question. Many editors probably realized the stories were false, but printed them anyway, knowing that they were amusing and would boost circulation."⁹

Mulhatton did lots of non-cave hoaxes too. His first big-hit hoax was his 1877 story about how George Washington's body had become petrified. For April Fool's Day in 1880 Mulhatton placed a story about a little girl who was given a batch of helium-filled balloons at a party. When she tied the balloons around her waist they lifted her into the air, but luckily an expert hunter was present and shot the balloons one by one to bring the girl to a gentle landing. In 1883

Mulhatton passed off a story about a giant meteor hitting a Texas ranch and killing lots of cattle. In 1887 his story about a Kentucky farmer who was training monkeys to pick hemp brought a strong rebuke from the *New York Times*, which feared that the "scab monkeys" would take the jobs of former slaves. Mulhatton may have had a hand in the story of David Lang, a Tennessee farmer who was walking across his field and simply vanished, in sight of many witnesses, a story that was given wide circulation by paranormal journalist Frank Edwards in the 1950s, a story still alive today.

Yet Mulhatton enjoyed his cave hoaxes the most. In 1883 he told an interviewer: "I am prouder of my Glasgow Cave story than any of the others. It showed more invention and more imagination."¹⁰ Mulhatton's cave hoaxes made such an imprint that when the *Louisville Courier-Journal* announced a legitimate cave discovery in 1887, it felt obligated to use the headline: "Not a Mulhattan Story."

In 1893 Mulhatton gave up his salesman's life for the life of a prospector—in Arizona. The details of Mulhatton's life in Arizona are sketchy, and he did leave the state periodically, partly to sell Arizona mining stocks. We do know that he spent a few months in the Arizona mental asylum in Phoenix in 1900. Mulhatton was plagued by alcoholism, which reduced him to the look of a tramp and to petty crimes. But this didn't stop him from inventing new newspaper hoaxes, and now he was using Arizona as raw material. Arizona newspapers were proud to cite him as the source of his tall tales. It was an honor that Joe Mulhatton in person walked into your small-town newspaper office and gave you a scoop.

In 1899 the *Florence Tribune* reported:

Joe Mulhatton was in Florence this week from the Ripsey country, where he has recently discovered a magnetic cactus... Its attractive powers are so great

that it draws birds and animals to it and impales them on its thorny spikes. Mr. Mulhatton approached no nearer than one hundred feet to the cactus, which is of the saguaro variety, yet at that distance it was all he could do to resist its influence to draw him to it. While in town he purchased a long rope, which he will tie around his body, and four of his friends will take hold of it and allow him to approach near enough to minutely examine the wonder without danger... After and just before a great storm the...power of the cactus is indescribable. Calves, birds, and young colts are attracted, impaled, drawn in and quickly converted by the digestive juices of the cactus...¹¹

Mulhatton's magnetic cactus became a staple of Arizona folklore, repeated today in books such as Marshall Trimble's *In Old Arizona*.

Also in 1899 the *Tombstone Prospector* reported:

Joe Mulhatton, the truthful, has made another great discovery. He writes of his latest in the *Florence Tribune* and describes experiments on Compressed Heat, saying he has invented a very simple apparatus whereby the surplus heat of an Arizona summer may be stored away for use in winter or utilized for generating power for machinery, electric plants, and other uses by compressing 382 degrees above zero into a cake of heat that has dwindled down to 281 degrees Fahrenheit below zero. The expansive power of this compressed heat is enormous, also slightly dangerous...A stock company with a capitalization of \$500,000,000 is proposed to perfect the new discovery and place it within reach of the masses, so it might become of practical benefit in the uplifting of mankind.¹²

Already by 1899 Joe Mulhatton's

tales were common currency in Arizona. In 1910, the year after the *Arizona Gazette* published the Egyptian cave story, the *Gazette* published a fond tribute to Mulhatton and his talents. In 1952 this story, and the other Arizona newspaper stories cited above, were reprinted in *The Arizona Story*, another in the series of five books of early Arizona newspaper articles, the series that also included *Arizona Cavalcade*, from where the Egyptian cave story came to the attention of David Hatcher Childress.

Among the miners who wandered into Kelvin the past week from the surrounding camps was one with a knapsack strapped on his shoulders. The sack was stuffed with food, blank location notices, mail and miscellany until it would hold no more. The bearer was short of stature, quick of speech and wore a short, black beard and genial smile. His name, Joe Mulhatton...

Joe Mulhatton was once a widely known man. He is now known of throughout the United States, especially in the east and south, but in his seclusion in the Dagger Wells country, is actually known by few.

Joe Mulhatton formerly gained his livelihood as a traveling salesman. He was a hardware drummer. That vocation gave Joe the opportunity to capitalize affability, suavity and rapidity of speech, all of which he possesses to a marked degree. He was a successful salesman, and it was while traveling over the country selling his wares, that Mulhatton acquired fame as a literary prodigy in the art of prevarication. He is a burlesquer of facts. His friends, for convenience sake, use the adjective "liar." Joe never protested then, nor does he object now to reading in cold type that he was the most artistic, beautiful and consistent liar ever turned loose on a nation...

The rules of logic nor laws of consistency were never

violated by Mulhatton, and his writings were always embellished with a literary touch that made them readable, entertaining and almost believable. He never touched on a scientific matter, but his published story was followed by a flood of letters of inquiry from college professors and other scientific men... There is nothing disproportionate or contradictory, one part to another, in any of Mulhatton's stories. Every sentence bears a consistent relation to every other sentence... As a narrator of events that never happened, Baron Münchhausen was much farther away from the people than Mulhatton. Mulhatton's writings catch the interest of the average reader much quicker than Münchhausen's...

Joe Mulhatton, the miner, is the Joe Mulhatton of other days in disguise. Garbed as a miner, living as a miner, and with miners, with attention directed to leads, lodes and ledges, dips and spurs, to the earth's formations and ascertainment of mineral values, suits Joe better than the routine of the drummer's life. He has seen the world, had his experience, and of his own volition chosen the Dagger Wells country, Arizona, as his abode. "It's a place of rest, a kind of retreat, for us who have had our troubles," remarked Mr. Mulhatton. His line of thought is now directed along psychic lines. "I am a spiritualist," he added. "Say that you saw me well and not 'broke'. I believe in spiritualism. I lay in my cabin and commune with the higher powers. Omnipotence directs me, and directs you. All believe in it who understand it." Joe Mulhatton has fifty claims and they are reported as having excellent showing. The vicissitudes of life have not dried up the fountain of milk of human kindness in Joe Mulhatton. Nothing but kindness gleams from his eyes, and the friendly handshake is extended

to all. Greed, gain and graft have left no marks on him. If only one meal in his cabin, that would be given to the hungry beggar before he would eat it himself. He has entertained with his stories and spread good cheer and sunshine by his presence, from one coast of the United States to the other.¹³

This 1910 *Gazette* article made no mention of the Egyptian cave story of the previous year.

In the weeks after running the story in 1909, the *Gazette* made no further comment on it. There was really no reason for newspapers to comment on it. Everyone understood where this type of story was coming from. These were the years when John Hance, with his tall tales, was a tourist attraction at the Grand Canyon. Tall tales were a long American tradition, especially on the frontier. Newspaper hoaxes were also a long tradition; early in the 19th Century a Boston newspaper ran a hoax story about a treasure-filled cave discovered under Boston Common. Readers didn't even bother to call such stories a hoax, for their truthfulness was beside the point. One was supposed to admire their talent of imagination.

The *Coconino Sun* did express its admiration in its April 16 story, "Looks Like a Mulhatton Story":

The reported discovery of a mammoth underground city of an ancient race in the Grand Canyon, seems to be a splendid piece of imagination sent out by some Mulhattonized individual... it would be just possible that some one at the Grand Canyon would have been informed of it if an actual discovery had been made. The man who wrote up the find certainly had to dig for the details and was wise in locating the entrance at a point on a sheer wall where no one but a person with a great imagination could reach it.

It is possible that the Egyptian cave story was hatched not by Mulhatton

himself, but by someone inspired by him. If so, the imitator was an excellent student, for the story bore all the subtle fingerprints of Mulhatton's "classic" cave discovery stories. For starters, Mulhatton's cave mummies and artifacts were usually Egyptian, but he also loved to maintain an air of mystery, stopping short of declaring for sure that they were Egyptian. In the Grand Crystal Cave story the mummies "give every appearance of the Egyptian mummies," and in the 1909 *Gazette* story the builders of the Grand Canyon cave are "possibly from Egypt." In both Kentucky and the Grand Canyon, the Egyptians left mysterious hieroglyphs. The mummies are found in large, special chambers deep inside the caves. In Grand Crystal Cave the mummies are arranged "on a ledge of rocks," and in the Grand Canyon cave there "are tiers of mummies, each one occupying a separate hewn shelf." The list of artifacts found with the mummies is similar, such as copper vessels. At Grand Crystal Cave "ladders and bridges are being constructed," and in the Grand Canyon cave, this now being the age of electricity, "wires are being strung from the entrance to all passageways." Mulhatton named his favorite cave 'Grand Crystal Cave', and at Grand Canyon we find 'El Tovar Crystal Canyon'.

Looks like a genuine Mulhatton story, perhaps the last hurrah of an aging, alcoholic man who had failed as a prospector and who sadly remembered his glory days as a celebrated writer.

The *Arizona Gazette* was a good fit for the Egyptian cave story. The *Gazette* had a flair for humor and sensationalism. On most days its editorial page included jokes and brief tall tales. On April 8 the *Gazette* announced: "Astronomers on Mars reported at a recent meeting of the society that observations of the earth showed large patches of the lake region of the United States in the western hemisphere as going dry."

The *Gazette* may have been having some extra fun with the Egyptian cave story by placing it right next to

an advertisement from a local candy store. The advertisement ran for one week, offering a Phoenix-style Easter gift that could be shipped to friends back east. The gift was orange blossoms, waxed to preserve them. In large letters the ad was headlined: "ORANGE BLOSSOMS." According to the Museum of Hoaxes entry on Joe Mulhattan: "He was also widely known by his pseudonym, 'Orange Blossom'."¹⁴

Since the Egyptian cave story appeared on April 5th, close to April Fool's Day, was it supposed to be an April Fool's joke, and if so, why didn't it actually appear on April 1st? The *Gazette* does not seem to have had an annual tradition of an April Fool's Day story. In 1909, the April 1st paper was packed with news of the closing and dedication of Laguna Dam, a major event for Arizona, and there were leftover Laguna Dam stories for the next few days. The *Gazette* didn't publish on Sundays, so there was no April 4th edition. We do know that the Egyptian cave story was planned well in advance, for on March 12th the *Gazette* published a short teaser story about Kinkaid's arrival in Yuma.

The *Gazette* also practiced tabloid-style sensationalism, in contrast with the *Arizona Republican*, whose front-page headlines were serious news stories. In the weeks around the publication of the Egyptian cave story, *Gazette* readers saw headlines about murders, suicides, crazy people, and freak accidents from around the world: VILLIAN STABS WOMAN TO DEATH. DAUGHTER IS KILLED BY FATHER. WOMAN DIES BY ELECTRIC CHAIR. DENVER SUICIDE BELIEVED INSANE. NEFARIOUS WORK OF A DOG POISONER. NITROGLYCERINE PLANT BLOWS UP, TWO KILLED. INSANE NAVAJO ON RAMPAGE. WHITE GIRL TO MARRY JAP.

The *Gazette* was the smaller Phoenix newspaper, in both circulation and number of pages, and was trying hard to boost circulation. The Egyptian cave story was published in the middle of the "Young Ladies Popular Contest," in which readers

could send in printed ballots to vote for their favorite young lady. The candidates could earn extra points by selling subscriptions.

Where did Mulhatton come up with the details of the Egyptian cave story, such as the names Kinkaid and Jordan?

In the case of "Professor S. A. Jordan, the Smithsonian Institute," there's a source that would have been obvious in 1909. One of the most famous naturalists of the era was David Starr Jordan, who had been affiliated with the Smithsonian for thirty years, the length of time that the *Arizona Gazette* listed for Kinkaid's affiliation with the Smithsonian. In 1909 David Starr Jordan was the president of Stanford University. He was a leading figure in the worlds of education and science, and even better known for his political activities as an anti-war advocate. Jordan made front-page headlines in the *Prescott Weekly Journal Miner* on May 5, 1909: "Dr. Jordan Addresses the Peace Avocation in Chicago." His views often made him controversial. In a national magazine in 1909 Jordan denounced Christian fundamentalist fervor as "simply a form of drunkenness no more worthy of respect than the drunkenness that lies in the gutter."¹⁵ In 1925 Jordan was one of the star witnesses in the Scopes trial, defending the teaching of evolution. In 1906 Jordan was offered the directorship of the Smithsonian, and he was ready to accept, but then the San Francisco earthquake wrecked the Stanford campus, and Jordan felt obligated to remain at Stanford. A decade before, Jordan was offered the directorship of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, but Jordan was only five years into his presidency at Stanford and felt that too many of his initiatives remained unfinished.

David Starr Jordan began his affiliation with the Smithsonian in the mid-1870s, when Jordan began collecting fish for the Smithsonian. Jordan was the founder of American ichthyology. He named 2,500 species, and over 25 species were named for him. He published hundreds of

scientific papers, a large portion of them in the Smithsonian's journals. He made collecting trips all over the country, including Hawaii and Alaska. Jordan's expeditions automatically made him an explorer of rivers. His adventures often made it into newspapers.

In 1898 David Starr Jordan visited the Grand Canyon in the company of Charles Lummis, and he wrote an article about it for Lummis's magazine, *Out West*. In 1906 this article was reprinted in the Santa Fe Railway's promotional book, *Grand Canyon of Arizona*. Naturally Jordan was interested in the Colorado River, and his article emphasized how the river, not earthquakes or any other force (unspoken, including God) had carved the Grand Canyon: "...the river had done all this alone."¹⁶

Another connection between David Starr Jordan and the Grand Canyon was that in 1903-4 David Rust studied at Stanford. Rust was the developer of Rust's Camp (soon to be Phantom Ranch), the trail from the North Rim, and the cable tramway over the Colorado River. While Rust was at Stanford his wife Ruth had a baby, whom they named David Jordan Rust in honor of David Starr Jordan.

The name of "Professor Jordan" had another connotation. In 1896 David Starr Jordan had perpetrated a famous scientific hoax, though in the end the joke was on him. Jordan was contemptuous of the flourishing belief in psychic powers, and with the complicity of the editor of *Popular Science Monthly* Jordan published an article in which he claimed he had invented a device that could photograph telepathic images. "The satirical nature of my story I had supposed sufficiently clear," wrote Jordan in his autobiography, "But the scientific minuteness of detail proved to be fatally complete, and a surprising number of people took the thing seriously."¹⁷ Joe Mulhatton could have told David Starr Jordan that one of the keys to a successful hoax was lots of details. In the words of Professor Keven McQueen of Eastern Kentucky University, who

is writing a biography of Mulhatton and who helped with some of the details of this article: "Mulhattan's attention to detail is so convincing and diabolically deadpan that it is easy to understand how his hoaxes fooled jaded newspaper editors and their readers."¹⁸ One reason why David Hatcher Childress accepted the *Gazette* story as true was because it "gave a highly descriptive and detailed story that went on for several pages."¹⁹

The name "Kinkaid" doesn't have such an obvious source. There were no famous American explorers or Egyptologists named Kinkaid or Kincaid. The only possibility is University of Washington zoologist Trevor Kincaid—who accompanied David Starr Jordan on one of his expeditions to Alaska.

There is a promising archaeological connection with the name Kincaid. One of the largest and most significant sites of the Mississippian culture is the Kincaid Mounds, near the Ohio River in southern Illinois. Like the most famous Mississippian site, Cahokia, the Kincaid site is a large cluster of mounds, as tall as thirty feet, arranged around a plaza, and once enclosed by a wooden palisade. Kincaid served as a trade center between Cahokia and large settlements up the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers. The Kincaid Mounds are located in the tip of southern Illinois that white settlers named "Little Egypt" for its main city of Cairo and for the Nile-like grandeur and fertility of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Little Egypt also includes towns named Thebes and Karnak, and it includes Southern Illinois University, whose mascot is the saluki, an Egyptian hunting dog, sometimes called the royal dog of Egypt, for salukis have been found mummified in the tombs of the Pharaohs. Today Southern Illinois University is excavating the Kincaid Mounds. The Kincaid Mounds were first excavated by the University of Chicago in 1934, an excavation that served as the proving ground for many new techniques that soon became standard archaeological

methodology. The Kincaid Mounds were named for James Kincaid, who settled there in 1835, and for his son Thomas Kincaid, who built his house atop the highest mound in 1875.

The problem with this Kincaid connection is that the Kincaid Mounds didn't become well-known until the 1930s excavations. In 1909 they seem to have been quite obscure, even within the world of archaeology. Only in 1916 did an archaeologist, C. B. Moore, take an interest in excavating there, and he was refused by the Kincaid family. It's not clear that the Kincaid Mounds were even known by that name in 1909. The only plausible way to connect the Kincaid Mounds with the *Gazette* story is to suppose that the story's author happened to be from southern Illinois. But then, Joe Mulhatton lived in Louisville, Kentucky, about 150 miles up the Ohio River from the Kincaid Mounds, and Joe did get around; a farmhouse perched atop a mysterious mound was the sort of thing that would have caught his fancy.

In the same year that Joe Mulhatton was a guest of the state asylum in Phoenix, the most prominent resident of Phoenix would have made a perfect model for G. E. Kinkaid, and his name even had the right ring to it—Clarence King. King-kaid. Clarence King was the epitome of the romantic naturalist-adventurer. King roamed the West, especially the Sierras, climbing mountains, crossing deserts, descending rivers, discovering the first known glacier in the United States, and writing popular books and articles about his adventures. Jealous of John Wesley Powell, King wanted to do his own expedition down the Green and Colorado rivers, but never did. King did explore a few caves, and many mines. King's adventures were all for the sake of science—he was a geologist, and the first director of the U.S. Geological Survey. Like David Starr Jordan, King was associated with a famous hoax, the Great Diamond Hoax, in which swindlers were salting Colorado ground with bogus diamonds; King was the one who exposed the hoax.

When King contracted tuberculosis he moved to Phoenix. Though King died in 1901, he remained a legend.

The *Gazette* article listed few details about Kinkaid's life, but one of them seemed meant to invoke another famous river explorer. Kinkaid was said to have been born in Lewiston, Idaho, a river town named for Meriwether Lewis.

Kinkaid was also said to be a longtime hunter and explorer. A few newspaper articles in early March of 1909 might have set people thinking about Colorado River expeditions, big-game hunters, and Smithsonian expeditions. On March 3rd the U.S. Congress appropriated money to build a memorial to John Wesley Powell on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon (it would take the form of a Central American pyramid). The next day, Teddy Roosevelt retired from the presidency and headed off on an African safari; when the public protested his killing beautiful animals, Teddy claimed that he was just gathering specimens for the Smithsonian.

The Egyptian cave article seems to bear the imprint of some of the cultural trends of the time, especially a widespread enthusiasm for ancient Egypt. Europe and America had been smitten by ancient Egypt ever since Napoleon landed in Egypt in 1798. Egyptian-style architecture flourished in America, most notably with the Washington Monument. Ancient Egypt inspired "Aida" in 1871 and plenty of lower culture, such as the mummy's curse story, a genre invented by Louisa May Alcott in 1869. The years between 1880 and World War One have been called the golden age of Egyptian archaeology, which was finally well organized and had plenty of easy discoveries to make. American newspapers were full of stories of exotic Egyptian discoveries—tombs, secret tunnels, buried statues, mysterious papyri, golden coffins. Americans flocked to museums and world's fairs to see Egyptian artifacts.

Three days before the Egyptian cave article appeared, the people of

Phoenix—another town named for Egyptian mythology—flocked to the auditorium at the Normal College in Tempe to see the opera “The Egyptian Princess,” which seems to have been inspired by “Aida”—which was playing at the Met in New York that same weekend, starring Caruso. Every year the Normal College presented a musical entertainment, sung by students, and this year Irma Schmidt starred as the Queen of Egypt, and Vera Buck as Princess Aida. It was “a fine success,” according to the *Arizona Republican*. On the same April 5th that the Gazette was publishing the Egyptian cave story, the *Republican* reported that: “Through clever arrangements of lights and paintings, the rear of the stage showed...a characteristic Egyptian scene with the pyramids in the back ground and the river Nile. The pillar and lintel were also attractively painted with typical Egyptian figures.”

Americans of that era also indulged in the idea that the ancient Egyptians had visited America. It was natural enough to wonder if the pyramids in Central America might have been inspired by the Egyptian pyramids. But Americans were also too eager to attribute ancient American structures to anyone but the Indians; Manifest Destiny was easier on the conscience if Indians were only sub-humans savages. Mississippian mounds—such as the Kincaid Mounds—were among the structures attributed to the Egyptians, the lost tribes of Israel, the Celts, the Vikings. Rock art was regularly taken for Egyptian hieroglyphs. Even in the Southwest, where Puebloans were living in plainer versions of Chaco or Mesa Verde, whites preferred to believe that the Anasazi had simply vanished. The Gazette Egyptian cave article supposed that “the present Indian tribes found in Arizona are descendants of the serfs or slaves of the people which inhabited the cave,” a people who, like white Americans, knew the proper place of Indians.

Only eight months before the *Gazette* story, Egyptians were being reported nearby. On August 1, 1908, the *Bullfrog Miner* in Rhyolite,

Nevada, just outside of Death Valley, reported that Charles Glastonbury, supposedly a former Egyptologist from Cambridge, England, and a fellow of the Royal Society, had conducted an archaeological study of Death Valley and concluded that it once held an ancient, sophisticated civilization. His main evidence was a huge masonry dam, originally twenty feet high, that must have been built, quoting Glastonbury, “for furnishing water power for some mining or manufacturing enterprise...In other parts of the valley I found hieroglyphic inscriptions on the rocks, very closely resembling the inscriptions found in the Valley of the Nile. I am led to the belief that the ancient inhabitants of Death Valley were closely related to the builders of the pyramids.”

Ancient Egypt was especially attractive for seekers into the esoteric, who projected onto Egypt all sorts of spiritual needs and schemes. They were enthralled by the idea of tombs and tunnels and chambers inside and under the Sphinx and pyramids, secret chambers that readily symbolized their belief that the world held a hidden spiritual design. American psychic Edgar Cayce, who believed that ancient Egypt was built by refugees from Atlantis, declared that the Atlanteans had stored their spiritual wisdom in a hidden Hall of Records beneath the Sphinx. H. Spencer Lewis, who drew upon Egyptian lore in founding the Rosicrucian order in 1909, declared that he had secret knowledge about chambers and tunnels beneath the Sphinx and pyramids. Today New Age literature claims that pyramid tunnels are aligned with the stars and reveal the spiritual secrets of the universe. Today it is often extraterrestrials who built the Sphinx and pyramids, and who also operate secret portals and underground bases at Mt. Shasta, Sedona, Area 51, and the moon.

The golden age of Egyptology coincided with the golden age of enthusiasm for the world underground. Americans were discovering caves full of fantastic

formations; Carlsbad Caverns was being explored and publicized in the decade before 1909. On March 17, two weeks before the Egyptian cave story, the *Arizona Republican* reprinted an article from the *New York Times*: “Great Cave in Adirondacks: Explorer Penetrates it 1,000 Feet and Thinks it Rivals Mammoth Caves.” (It didn’t). Anthropologists were popularizing the idea of the caveman, for whom caves were home. Popular novels depicted caves as places of adventure, as in *Tom Sawyer*; of lost treasure, as in *The Count of Monte Cristo*; and of fantastic hidden worlds, as in *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*. This Jules Verne novel launched a thriving genre of novels about journeys into the underworld, sometimes huge cave systems, sometimes a hollow Earth inhabited by strange civilizations. In his book *The Hollow Earth* author David Standish counted thirty-four novels published between 1880 and 1908 that involved journeys into a hollow Earth. Many were utopian novels, encountering inner-Earth societies that had lessons to teach foolish humans. This genre was mainstream enough that one novel was serialized in *Harper’s Weekly*.

Let’s take a quick look at the three hollow-Earth novels published in 1908.

The Smoky God was written by Willis George Emerson at the same time he was digging a gold mine in Death Valley, a place that seemed to legitimize fantastic ideas about the earth. Or perhaps Emerson’s novel was the fantasy of a man suffering from too much Death Valley, for his underworld is full of water, trees a thousand feet tall, wildlife, and a civilization with choirs of 25,000 voices. It’s also full of gold, which Emerson’s mine wasn’t; he was mainly mining the pockets of his investors.

Eight years after L. Frank Baum published *The Wizard of Oz*, he followed it with *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz* in 1908, in which Dorothy and her kitten Eureka (where’s Toto?) are caught in a California earthquake and fall into the earth. Dorothy lands

in the Land of the Mangaboos, with its evil sorcerer, but fortunately the Wizard of Oz, in his hot air balloon, has also been sucked into the earth and slays the sorcerer. The Mangaboos drive Dorothy and the Wizard into a cave and seal it up. Dorothy and the Wizard follow the cave to the Valley of Voe, where invisible people eat a magic fruit that keeps them invisible from bears. Dorothy and the Wizard go on to Pyramid Mountain, the Land of Gargoyles, and a cave full of dragons; then they escape to Oz.

After writing the first thirty-five Tom Swift novels, Howard Garis wrote *5,000 Miles Underground*, in which an eccentric inventor, a big-game hunter, and two orphan boys ride a flying ship into the hole at the South Pole, find a world of giant plants and animals and of people made of mud; escape many close calls; find a temple full of diamonds; and ride a waterspout back to the surface, where their diamonds make them rich.

There were those—including those who knew better—who were portraying the Grand Canyon as an exotic underworld. On March 26th the *Arizona Republican* reprinted a highly overwrought article from the *Providence Journal*, headlined: “Death Toll of Grand Canyon: Venturesome Ones Swept Away by River or Starve on Precipices.” The article consisted mainly of quotes from Frederick Dellenbaugh, a member of the second Powell expedition. Dellenbaugh supposedly said that in the Grand Canyon, “It is never fully daylight, except for a few brief minutes at midday...No one knows what immeasurable mineral wealth is hidden in the canyon’s walls and every year venturesome prospectors go into those gloomy depths seeking the treasures that they guard. These men, through some sudden rise of water, or for some other reason, infrequently lose their lives in trying to escape from the canyon. Most of them, I fancy, go mad with hunger or die in trying to scale the precipices.”

This, then, is the milieu that inspired the Egyptian cave story.

From a harmless beginning in the world of tall tales, the Egyptian cave story has been abducted into a realm where it serves as an urgent spiritual revelation.

It hasn’t helped that true believers are usually unfamiliar with the Grand Canyon and make all sorts of misconnections, and fail to recognize apparent jokes such as “El Tovar Crystal Canyon,” which was likely inspired by the Santa Fe Railway’s super-hyped advertising for its new El Tovar Hotel on the rim.

Yet the vehemence of true believers tells us that there is more than simple misunderstanding going on here. Especially remarkable is their hostility against the Smithsonian and the National Park Service, agencies that seldom make anyone’s list of governmental bad guys, not even on *The X-Files*. On the surface this hostility is said to be because the “archaeological establishment” is blindly committed to an “isolationist dogma” in which Native American cultures developed on their own, without any contact from the Old World; the establishment will even destroy all evidence to the contrary. But below the surface, true believers are hungry for the world to be a spiritual realm. The ancient Egyptians have become icons of a universe loaded with hidden spiritual connections. True believers in the esoteric have always been hostile to the secular worldview. When the Smithsonian and the National Park Service deny the reality of the Egyptian cave, they are denying the existence of the spiritual world; they become symbols of the secular worldview, and targets for longstanding hostility against it.

The Egyptian cave story has taken on such momentum that it seems likely to become a permanent part of the esoteric universe. It is rapidly mutating into more exotic forms. For example, one website chronicles the channeled wisdom of Archangel Metatron, Lord of Light. Metatron tells us that the Grand Canyon cave is not Egyptian, but was built by the people of Atlantis, and is part of a planet-wide network of tunnels the

Atlanteans built with technology from the star Sirius B, for the Atlanteans are really extraterrestrials. The Atlanteans recognized that the Grand Canyon holds many of Earth’s strongest vortexes of spiritual energy, and so they built temples there to focus this energy for healing and rejuvenation. These facilities could also transport people through time. Tragically, G. E. Kinkaid and five other Smithsonian researchers, on a later entry into the cave, encountered this highly magnetic technology and were zapped by it and died. (Joe Mulhatton died a bit less dramatically in 1913, trying to cross a flooded Gila River near Kelvin). This is why the government has sealed off the cave and covered up its existence. Canyon formations have Egyptian and Buddhist names because canyon vortexes are connected to energy nodes at Giza and Tibet. The vortex in Blacktail Canyon is a stargate to the Pleiades. The Redwall Cavern vortex is especially conducive to astral travel. Havasu is home to the Faerie Kingdom.

Looks like a Mulhatton story.

(Endnotes)

1, 2 *ibid*, p 320-21.

3 Hoaxipedia, the website of the Museum of Hoaxes.

4 *American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*, 1883, p 342.

5 Thomas W. Herringshaw, *Biographical Review of Prominent Men and Women of the Day* (Chicago: A. B. Gehman and Co., 1888).

6 *The New York Times*, November 12, 1891.

7 Frank Leslie’s *Illustrated Newspaper*, June 7, 1879.

8 Joseph Miller, editor, *The Arizona Story* (New York: Hastings House, 1952), p 320. No specific date given for articles.

9 Hoaxipedia.

10 Quoted in an unpublished biography by Keven McQueen.

11 Miller, *op cit*, p 321-22.

12 Miller, *op cit*, p 323.

13 Miller, *op cit*, p 316-319.

14 Hoaxapedia.

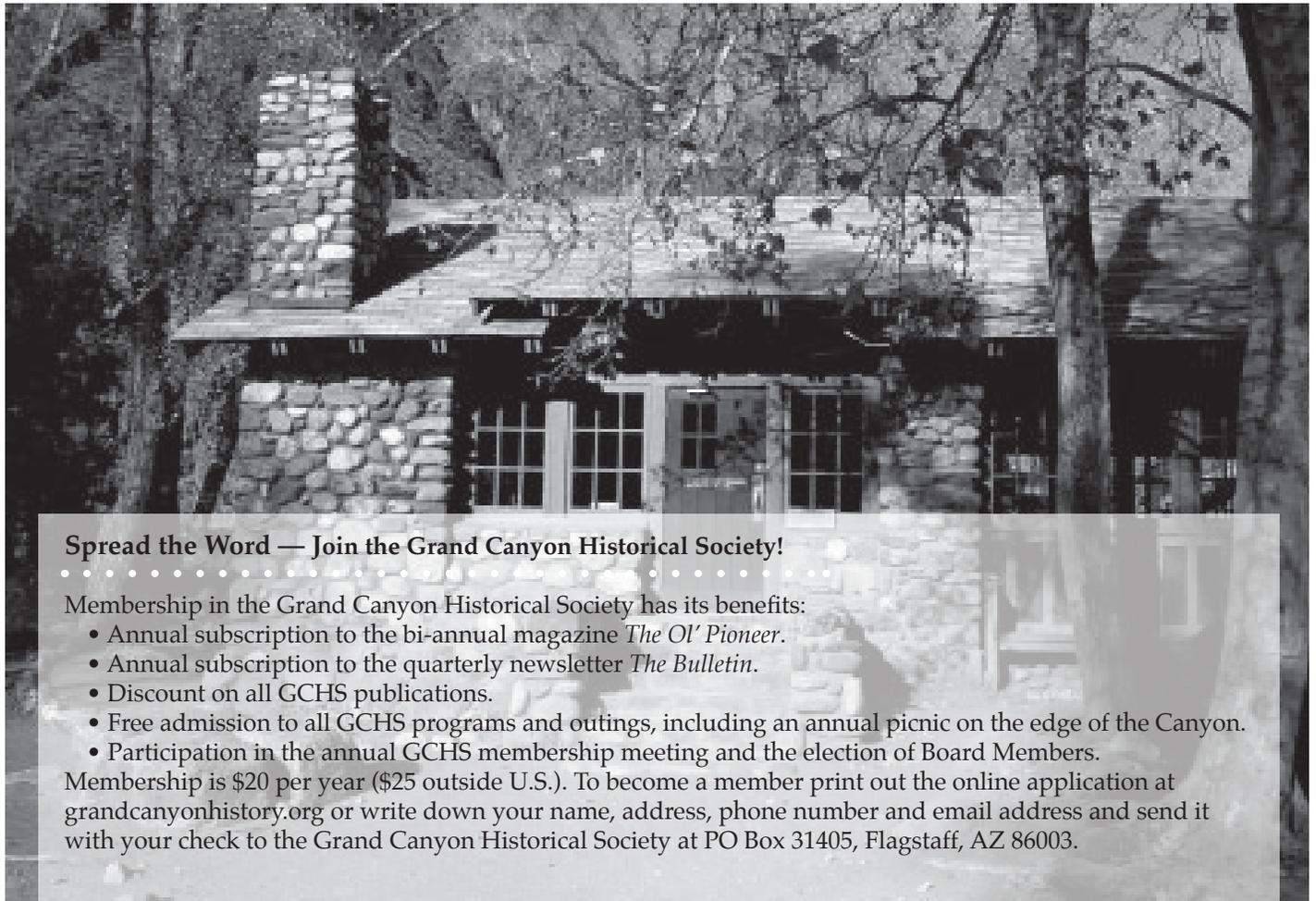
15 quoted in the article “Avatars of the Almighty” by Harold Bulle, *Cosmopolitan*, Volume 47, 1909, page 201.

16 David Starr Jordan, *The Grand Canyon of Arizona*, (Chicago: Passenger Department of the Santa Fe, 1906), p 88.

17 quoted, without further reference, in Curtis MacDougall, *Hoaxes* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), p 44-45.

18 Keven McQueen, unpublished biography.

19 Childress, *op cit*, p 322.



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