

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Canyon



Phantoms of the Past

A Historic Walking Tour

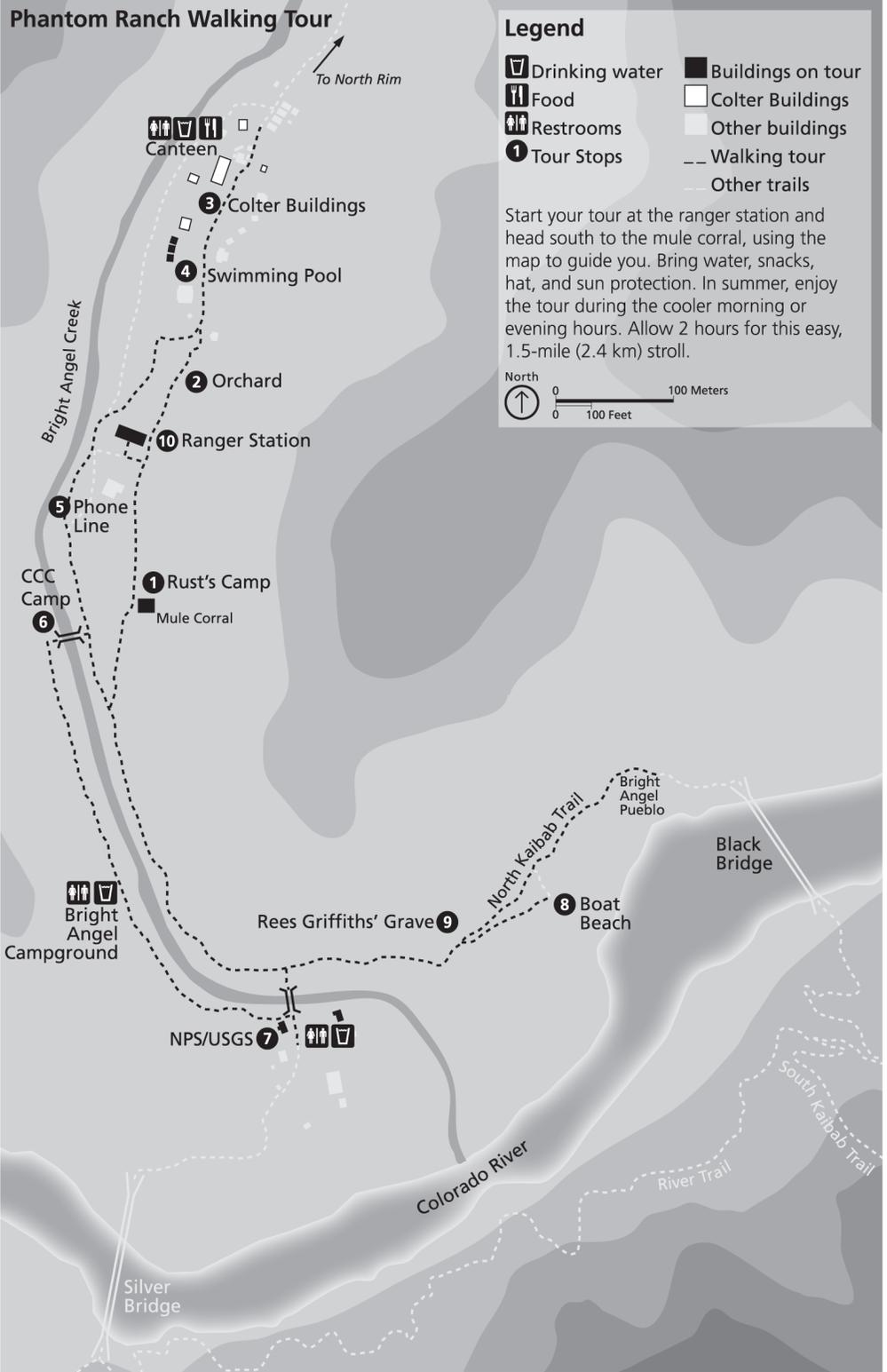


Phantom Ranch Walking Tour

Legend

-  Drinking water
-  Food
-  Restrooms
-  Tour Stops
-  Buildings on tour
-  Colter Buildings
-  Other buildings
-  Walking tour
-  Other trails

Start your tour at the ranger station and head south to the mule corral, using the map to guide you. Bring water, snacks, hat, and sun protection. In summer, enjoy the tour during the cooler morning or evening hours. Allow 2 hours for this easy, 1.5-mile (2.4 km) stroll.



Like a long-forgotten diary in a dusty cellar, Phantom Ranch tells stories of a time gone by. It is a memory of an era before cell phones, computers, and energy bars, when few people visited Grand Canyon. Shaped by entrepreneurs, presidents, architects, and work crews, Phantom Ranch sits humble and rustic. It still remains and reminds us, like musings in an old journal, of an era of changes, challenges, and achievements. On this walking tour, follow along in the diaries—and footsteps—of Phantom Ranch’s pioneers.

Stop 1: Rust’s Camp (at Mule Corral)

“An ill omen for us, a heart breaker. We had salty coffee for breakfast, but that isn’t the trouble. Just as we have finished the platform. . .we load the cage. . .and start her across. All goes lovely and jubilant until the car is nearly half way over, then buzz! Whang! Ka-splash. She sinks out of sight. . .a pall comes over me, stunning, like some friend were stricken dead. We. . .go to camp sad, sad!”

~David Rust, April 1, 1907

A few years after the Santa Fe Railroad started bringing tourists to the South Rim, David Rust on the North Rim hoped to capitalize on increased tourism as well. A tourist here in 1907 would have seen a different landscape, with no permanent structures and little vegetation. Rust and several men worked hard to build a camp at the bottom of Grand Canyon. Against many challenges, Rust persevered. He and his crew improved trails, planted trees, built an irrigation system, and constructed several tents and ramadas for overnight guests. Eventually, his modest accommodations—not so modestly known as Rust’s Camp—allowed prospectors, hunters, and a “few sturdy and adventurous tourists” to stay comfortably in the canyon.



“[N]early pulled end of finger off the other day. . .No use to say more - the tram runs o.k. and looks pretty good.”
~David Rust, September 22.
National Park Service (NPS)
photo ca. 1910.

Cover Image: Sierra Club members perform a skit at a Phantom Ranch campfire. NPS photo ca. 1948.

President Teddy Roosevelt, while on a hunting trip, enjoyed the tram so much he rode it multiple times and even cranked the winch!

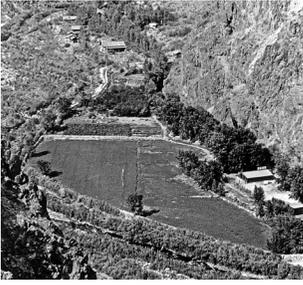
At that time no reliable way existed to cross the Colorado River. To move tourists and their mules over the river, Rust installed a cable tramway. This system—a cage suspended 60 feet (18 m) above the river on a 450-foot (137 m) long cable—relied on gravity to propel tourists halfway across the river. At a winch on the other side, a tram operator cranked the cage the rest of the way. One early tourist described riding in the cage on a windy day as “being the clapper in a bell.”

Rust’s Camp operated from 1907 to 1919, when Grand Canyon officially became a national park. Though his camp did not survive, Rust is one of the most important—and most overlooked—figures in the development of inner canyon tourism. Rust’s achievements were the first to change the face of Phantom Ranch. Unfortunately, little evidence of Rust’s Camp remains today. Portions of his improved trail do exist in the form of the North Kaibab Trail, enjoyed today by many “sturdy and adventurous tourists.”

As you meander along the trail, think about the challenges (imagine: salty coffee!) Rust and his crew faced while making changes to the area. Walk north from the corral back toward the ranger station.

Ellsworth Kolb and a young woman dine at Rust’s Camp. NPS photo ca. 1907.





Phantom Ranch orchards (top, ca. 1933) and early Ranch guests (bottom, ca. 1925). Try to match the photos with what you see today. Do you see any resemblance? NPS photos.

Stop 2: Orchard

“Our first dollar...I feel something like Lincoln felt over his first \$1.00... We are puttering around on the farm. Radishes, peas, lettuce, oats up nicely. Alfalfa put in yesterday.”

~David Rust’s diary, February 22, 1909

Pass by the ranger station on your way to the Phantom Ranch canteen. In the area between both mule corrals and spanning across the canyon floor, Rust, and later the Fred Harvey company, grew an orchard and alfalfa field for livestock. Because of the remote location, Rust’s Camp and Phantom Ranch had to be as self-sustaining as possible. Guests at meals often delighted in the fresh food: peaches, plums, apricots, and pomegranates from the orchard; chicken and eggs from a chicken house; and rabbits from a rabbit run. And you thought ice-cold lemonade was the cream of the crop! With all the hard work Rust, the Fred Harvey company, and architect Mary Colter put into this area, it started to look less like a desert and began to evolve into the hypnotic hideaway you find today.

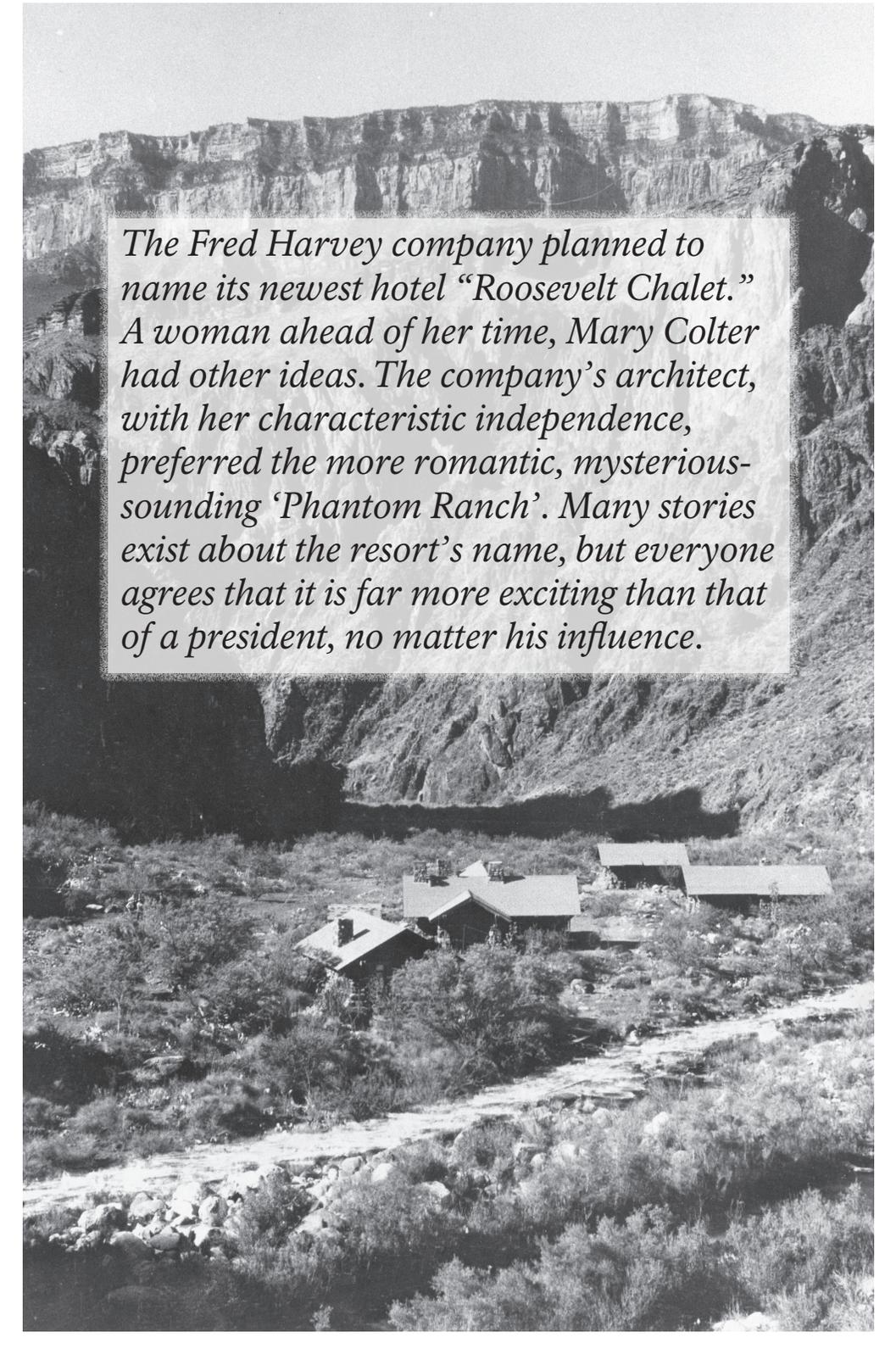
How will your dinner compare to that of early guests? Will you have steak and cake at the canteen? Or create your own feast in the campground?

Stop 3: Mary Colter Buildings

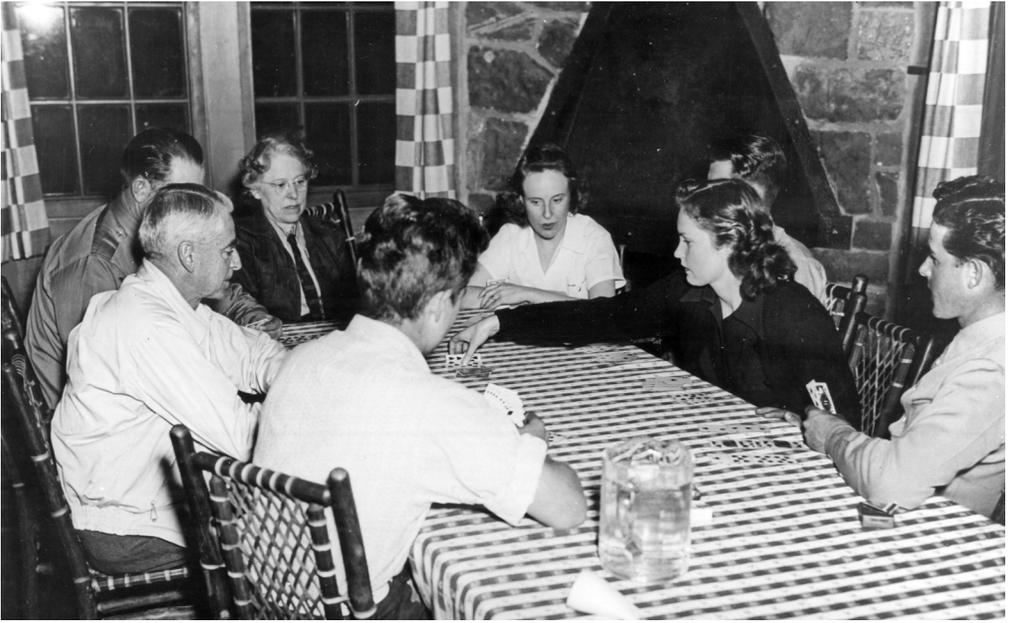
“Phantom Ranch is one of the earth’s most restful spots. Time for a swim or shower before dinner. This meal is served family style and if you prefer to stand after eight miles in the saddle, dinner will be served on a shelf.”

~Adrian Harbin, Phantom Ranch visitor, 1937

In early 1922, the Fred Harvey company and Santa Fe Railroad began to construct a new resort—Phantom Ranch—near the location of Rust’s Camp. While the name alone attracts attention, the stone cabins and canteen Colter designed provide the real appeal of the area. To achieve a rustic and homey look, she used rounded river rocks and simple wooden eaves painted a dark brown, with splashes of bright color for accents. Other than the color, little about the buildings’ outward appearance has changed since 1922.



The Fred Harvey company planned to name its newest hotel “Roosevelt Chalet.” A woman ahead of her time, Mary Colter had other ideas. The company’s architect, with her characteristic independence, preferred the more romantic, mysterious-sounding ‘Phantom Ranch’. Many stories exist about the resort’s name, but everyone agrees that it is far more exciting than that of a president, no matter his influence.



Sometimes staying weeks at a time, Phantom Ranch visitors enjoyed the fruits of the Fred Harvey company's labor: fresh food, music, stories from the mule wranglers, and billiards or bridge in the rec hall. It was a fun, exclusive vacation. NPS photo ca. 1950.

Designed to agree with nature, Colter's buildings resembled a cattle ranch in the desert. Her initial layout had five buildings, as pictured opposite. NPS photo ca. 1922.

At the canteen, you will notice the stone foundation. Look for Colter's whimsical touches here: a metate or grinding stone near the canteen entrance and a "baseball mitt" below the east windows. On the east side of the building, you will also see (and hear!) Phantom Ranch's dinner bell. The animated ringing from the original 1922 dinner bell still awakens a Pavlovian response in dinner guests, whose stomachs are as empty as a mule's saddlebags.

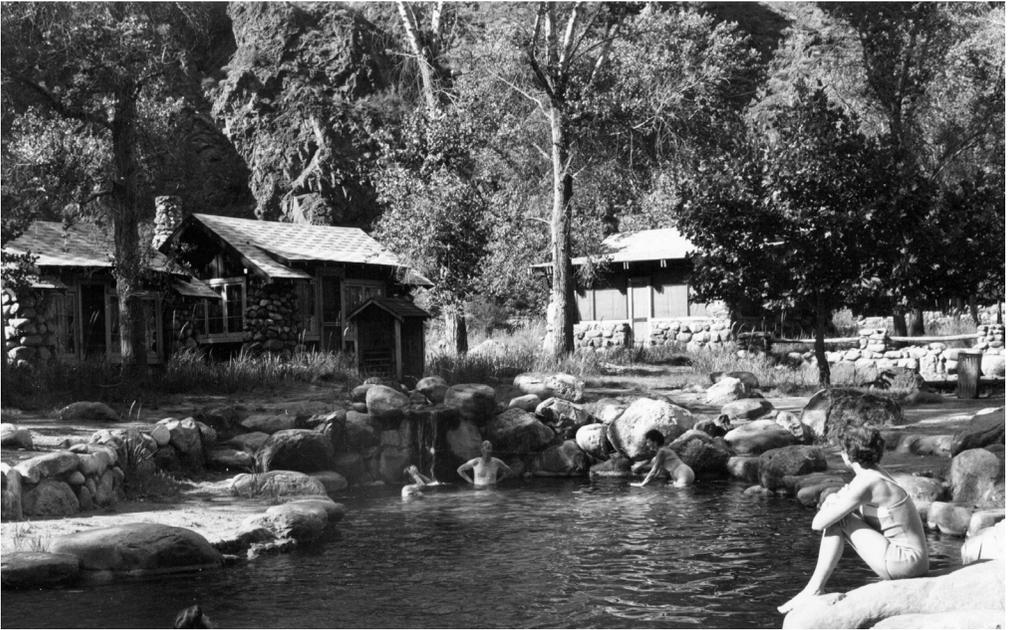
Visits to Phantom Ranch became so popular that in 1925 and in 1927, Colter designed more cabins. These 'new' cabins have less stone work than the originals. Can you distinguish the new cabins from the old?

Stop 4: Swimming Pool

"The first time I saw Phantom Ranch the swimming pool was just completed. I remember diving into the water and finding little chunks of ice floating there. The temperature down there was about 105 so you can imagine the shock I received."

~Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee Leon B. Sherrod

Look for a large weedy depression near cabins 5 and 6, seating area, and rock wall. Though overgrown now, this place tells a refreshing story of early Phantom Ranch.



A crew of 20 CCC men dove into the pool's construction and diverted creek water to fill a hand-dug hole. The pool even had a waterfall! Guests relaxing in the pool may not have known the hard work that went into it. Above photo by Dave Beal ca. 1961, NPS collection; below photo by George Grant ca. 1950, NPS collection.



Until the 1960s, the Phantom Ranch guest book read like a ‘Who’s Who’ of the time. Movie stars. Authors. Oil and steel magnates. In every way possible, the Fred Harvey company assured these Phantom Ranch visitors an extravagant, semi-private experience. In 1934, to make Phantom Ranch more relaxing, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built a swimming pool. Tourists now enjoyed yet another opulent activity. Fresh breakfast, a soak in the pool, and a martini during cocktail hour. What a life!

Like a whisper, that luxurious life slowly faded. Use of the pool increased in the 1960s, and it became a maintenance and health nightmare. In 1972, the concessioner filled the pool in and, if local legend is true, crews tossed hand-carved doors, oil-burning stoves, grills, blacksmithing materials, a piano, and a pool table into the depression. If you find yourself wishing the pool remained, you are not alone. CCC enrollee Louis Purvis wrote, “The enrollees who left some of themselves there in the pit wonder who could be so selfish and ungrateful as to deprive future visitors of the same privilege they enjoyed.”

Continue your walking tour, comparing the relaxing experience of the tourists to the hard working lifestyle of the CCC enrollees. Walk south toward the campground, stopping when you arrive at three wooden benches.

Stop 5: CCC's Telephone Line

"Has the Civilian Conservation Corps increased my weight and hardened my muscles? It has done more than that. It has . . . proved to me that Americanism is a reality, and not just a simple word."

~Diary entry of Frank Ranney, CCC, 1933

To help the economy during the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt started the CCC. This nationwide project conserved "not only our national resources but our human resources" by giving thousands of young men a chance to make a living and help their families. In addition to a monthly \$30 paycheck, the enrollees had food, clothing, and shelter. For three years, Company 818, with its crew of nearly 200 enrollees, changed the Phantom Ranch area to make it accessible for more visitors.

To get the job done on CCC projects, enrollees needed "a degree in engineering, the strength of a mule, the endurance of a camel, the surefootedness of a mountain goat, and the tenacity of a bull dog." NPS photo ca. 1935.

In both a challenging economic and natural environment, the crew produced remarkable results: the Clear Creek, Ribbon Falls, and River trails and the Phantom Ranch pool. One of the most challenging and important projects of all was the trans-canyon phone line.





After a hard day's work on the trail, CCC members returned to their camp. They said the "only thing attractive or nice about the site was the clean, pure water of Bright Angel Creek," quite the contrast from the Phantom Ranch guests relaxing with their cocktails and cards. Top photo NPS ca. 1934; bottom photo NPS ca. 1935.

Replacing old lines and installing new poles, the project joined phone lines along the North Kaibab, South Kaibab, and Bright Angel trails, ensuring the South Rim, Indian Garden, Phantom Ranch, and the North Rim could connect. Ironically, the CCC enrollees did not have permission to make calls on the phone line they created. Unless a true emergency arose only guests of Phantom Ranch could make a phone call, further segregating the workers from the guests.

For years, the CCC phone line served as the only source of communication at Phantom Ranch and along the trails. By 1982, technology had changed and Mountain Bell installed a microwave transmitter at Phantom Ranch. At that time, the National Park Service (NPS) removed a segment of the CCC phone lines between the Bright Angel Trail's River Resthouse and Phantom Ranch; though not in use as phone lines, campers in Bright Angel Campground still "call on" these old poles to hang camping gear. Do you see the metal poles across the creek? These poles, and the nearby historic marker, reminds us of the great achievements of Company 818.

Stop 6: CCC's Bright Angel Campground

Continue south from the benches to the upper campground bridge, where you can see the campground and an alleyway of cottonwood trees. By improving the area, the CCC guaranteed generations of backpackers could enjoy a vacation almost as exclusive as the guests staying at Phantom Ranch.

The crews labored to level and landscape the campground and planted dozens of trees. Even though this CCC camp held "the distinction of being the most difficult to supply of any in the CCC system," Company 818 met the challenges head-on and we still appreciate their efforts.

As you amble south through the shaded campground, and perhaps play and splash in the water of Bright Angel Creek, think about how miserable this walking tour would be without the improvements the CCC made! Walk to the lower campground bridge for the next stop.

Stop 7: NPS/USGS Homes

“This is the laboratory. I really got a thrill out of helping with the silt samples and evaporation. . .we watered the trees and ‘grass.’ ...the flour had weavils [sic] in it, and the ice-box would never work! But what fun waking [with] the sun shining in your eyes, eating pancakes for breakfast and fishing for cat-fish in Bright Angel.”

~Dorothy Cornelius, 1945, wife of USGS hydrologist

From the bridge, you see two houses. When the Fred Harvey company started to attract tourists to Phantom Ranch, the US government began housing employees in the area. Facing south, do you see the building on the left? In autumn 1922, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) initiated construction on a hydrologist’s cabin. Modeled after Mary Colter’s buildings, it had a metal roof, wooden walls, a stone foundation, and a laboratory. After collecting data from the Colorado River, the hydrologist brought samples back here to the lab to determine flood stages and silt load.

Flood! In southern California farming communities along the Colorado River, that word evoked both fright and excitement. At Phantom Ranch, Glenton Sykes and other USGS scientists helped predict floods for the farmers. NAU photo, 1922 NAU. PH.90.9.1750.

In front of you and slightly to your right sits the Rock House, Phantom Ranch’s first park ranger residence. Completed in 1926, this building also followed Colter’s guidelines to ensure it did not intrude on nature. As the





Chief Ranger Perry Brown and other park rangers often enlisted the help of CCC enrollees and Phantom Ranch staff for search and rescue efforts. Here, he has an easier day patrolling the trail. NPS photo ca. 1943.

CCC crews toiled and the Phantom Ranch guests relaxed, the rangers—much like today—maintained trails, gave presentations to guests and CCC enrollees, and responded to emergencies. As a home and office, the Rock House symbolizes the demanding profession of park rangers.

As you walk from the cabins and cross the lower campground bridge toward Boat Beach, think about how the landscape might look if the government buildings did not follow Colter's guidelines.

Employees still live and work in these buildings. Please respect their privacy.

Bonus!

Interested in Grand Canyon pre-history? Visit Bright Angel Pueblo, located past Boat Beach on the trail to the Black Bridge, to learn about ancestral Puebloan people.



CAUTION: *With its cold water and strong currents, the Colorado River poses serious life threats. Swimming is not permitted.*

Stop 8: Black Bridge/Boat Beach

"[You] finally even trusted [me] to take notes while [you] waded the stream. Crossing the Colorado cable was another story. Every time I climbed from the platform to the cable car, I knew for sure I would fall!"

~Dorothy Cornelius

From Boat Beach, you can see the Black Bridge and the USGS gauging station. When Grand Canyon became a national park in 1919, the NPS put a new wooden suspension bridge in place of Rust's tramway. In 1928, the NPS deemed this "swinging" bridge faulty and built the sturdy "Black" Bridge.

Placed at the bridge to use nearby phone lines, the USGS built two recorder towers and, similar to Rust's tram, a cable car full of scientific equipment. The towers helped the hydrologists determine the river's stage. On the hand-cranked cable car, they dangled tools and specimen jars in the water to collect data. Relying on changing technology, the USGS still visits this site and gathers data via satellites.

Perhaps only slightly better than "being a clapper in a bell" on Rust's tramway, this flimsy swinging bridge "tossed about so violently" in high winds sometimes it would flip completely over! NPS photo ca. 1920s.

After relaxing in the soft sand, continue back to the main trail. Reflect on the life of early rangers, scientists, and trail crews. Which challenging job would you prefer? Back at the Boat Beach and North Kaibab Trail junction, look for a grave.





A pioneering trail crewman, Rees Bladen Griffiths (left) worked “in the canyon he loved so well” for David Rust, the Kolb Brothers, the US Forest Service, and the NPS. Photo courtesy of Carol Judd.

Stop 9: Rees Griffiths’ Grave

“...I said a few words to the effect that it was right that this man should be laid to rest near the spot where he fell and where he had spent a great part of his life; that it was fitting and proper that we who had known him, worked with him, and loved him should perform this last duty...we left him there beside the trail he built.”

~Chief Ranger “White Mountain” Smith, 1922

Trail work in Grand Canyon is a challenging, and occasionally devastating, duty. On February 6, 1922, while constructing the “swinging” bridge, the NPS crew experienced trail-building tragedy firsthand. In preparation to build the bridge, the crew used dynamite to clear rock from the trail. A mammoth boulder fell with so much force and speed from the blast, it struck NPS Trail Foreman Rees Griffiths before he could move to safety. Though the blow did not kill him instantly, he later died from the extensive injuries it caused. The NPS buried Griffiths, “a man of



"[K]eep it for your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you, as one of the great sights which every American. . . should see." Honoring the request of Teddy Roosevelt, park ranger Pam Cox swears in the "future generation" of park rangers. NPS photo.

sterling character," near the location he died. This site, the first and last official inner canyon grave, tells a cautionary tale of the dangers in this challenging place.

From here, follow the trail back to the ranger station and immerse yourself in Phantom Ranch's natural history. Enjoy the shade and water, listen to the breeze through the leaves, and look for wildlife. Mule deer, gray fox, squirrels, and birds often congregate here.

Stop 10: Phantom Ranger Station

"We have gotten past the stage. . . when we are to be pardoned if we treat any part of our country as something to be skinned . . . for the use of the present generation. . . Whatever it is, handle it so that your children's children will get the benefit of it."

~President Teddy Roosevelt, Grand Canyon, 1903

On your walking tour, you followed in the phantom footsteps of David Rust, Teddy Roosevelt, Mary Colter, Rees Griffiths, the CCC, the USGS, and the NPS. Visitors like you continue to add to the pages of Phantom Ranch's diary those pioneers started over a century ago. And just like thumbing through diary entries, Phantom Ranch reflects a history of changes, challenges, and achievements. More than simply protecting Phantom Ranch, the NPS protects memories "for future generations." Through the efforts of people past, present, and future, we all work to preserve Phantom Ranch's unique historic character.

Ranger Station

Self-service station: stamp for your Passport To Your National Parks[®], library, maps, and more.

In an emergency, use the red phone on the porch.

Further Information

***Mary Colter: Builder Upon the Red Earth* by Virginia L. Grattan**

***Phantom Ranch* by Scott Thybony**

www.nps.gov/grca

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