

That same year he became professor of geology and curator at the Museum of Illinois. Shortly thereafter, Major Powell conceived the idea of leading an expedition down the unexplored Colorado River thru the Grand Canyon.

Until 1869 the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River were unexplored areas of the United States. Previous attempts had been made to explore the mysteries of this uncharted region, but it remained a blank chapter in the knowledge of western America.

In 1869 Powell made his first descent into the Grand Canyon from the Union Pacific Railway in Wyoming. Powell would end up leading two expeditions through the Canyon on the unbridled, foaming and dangerous Colorado river.

His first expedition was of a private nature in which the U.S. government played little part. This initial trip brought him congressional aid for the next expedition two years later. By the time he had led the second expedition, a definitive, detailed map had been made with geologic sections, data, and photographs.

The second trip was made up of nine men in three boats. As "Commodore" of the little fleet, Major Powell occupied a wooden armchair fastened by straps to the deck of one of the boats. On the left side of his chair was placed his life preserver. This was done of course because of the loss of

his right arm.

Each man had certain tasks assigned to them, from water sounding to climbing the walls of the canyon.

Besides traversing the incredibly dangerous, roaring, and churning river, the explorers were forced to portage their boats and equipment around dangerous falls and perilous rapids.

Two years were taken up with exploring the entire length of the Grand Canyon. Powell always displayed the highest quality of leadership. His biographers wrote of him that he was a man of prompt decision, genial, kind, never despondent, resourceful, masterful and determined to overcome every obstacle.

These are the same qualities that his old teacher, George Crookham, saw in him as they explored the valleys and hills surrounding Jackson, Ohio when Powell was a boy.

John Wesley Powell went on to help establish what is now the United States Geological Survey. From 1881 to 1894 he was the director of that institution, and also brought about the organization of the Bureau of Ethnology. Powell was the director of this Bureau until his death.

The major died at his home in Haven, Maine on September 23, 1900 and his body interred at Arlington Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Compliments of: The Jackson Historical Society;  
The City of Jackson Tourism Board and the  
Jackson Genealogical Society.

**John Wesley Powell**  
**One of America's Greatest**  
**Explorer's**  
**Was Reared in Jackson, Ohio**

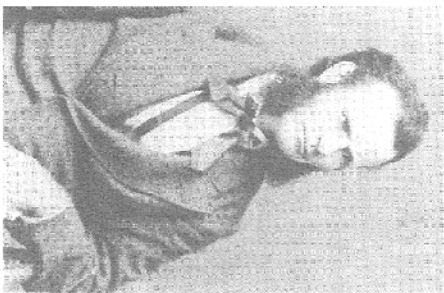
At a location called Sentinel Point, commanding a most impressive view of one of the natural wonders of the world, The Grand Canyon and the Colorado River, stands a monument to the man who is second only to Lewis and Clark as the most famous explorer in American history. Written on this monument are the words:

*Erected by the Congress  
of the United States to  
Major John Wesley Powell  
first explorer of the Grand  
Canyon, who descended  
the Colorado River with  
his party in row boats,  
traversing the gorge be-  
neath this point August  
17, 1869 and again  
September 1, 1872.*

This monument is of particular interest to the people of Jackson, Ohio, for it was here in Jackson that John Wesley Powell spent his early years, educated by a local legend who instilled in him a profound interest and desire in the study of nature and geology.

John Wesley Powell was born in Mount Morris, New York on March 24, 1834. He was the son of Rev. Joseph and Mary Powell. In 1838 the family

moved westward settling in Jackson, Ohio. For the next eight years 'Wes' experienced many interesting events that would shape and inspire him for the rest of his life.



*A Young 'Wes' Powell*

On September 24, 1838 the Powells purchased a home which was located on the hill at the north end of Main Street between Portsmouth and Locust Streets. Mr. Powell was a Wesleyan minister. A native of Wales, he delivered his sermons in Welsh to the large contingent of Welsh living in the area. Besides holding services in Jackson he also preached in Winchester and McKendree in Gallia County.

It was evident early on that young Wes was an intelligent boy and he looked forward to starting school. However, once in school he found out he was very unpopular with his fellow students because his father was a

devout abolitionist. In Jackson, at that time, many were pro-slavery.

Mr. Powell had made the acquaintance of a local man, a former salt boiler and teacher, "Big" George Crookham. Crookham had come to the area when all that was here was a saltmaking camp. He was self-educated and Crookham saw great potential in this young pupil. Frequently he and Wes took long walks. Crookham lead him to many of the areas where rock strata and other geologic formations were present. He explained their origins and the geology of the area. Wes learned quickly. One of the favorite areas for exploring was the Salt Lick Creek gorge downstream from Jackson. Crookham's home and school was located about a mile north of the area. It was here that Wes Powell found his passion for observing and studying rock formations and other geologic curiosities. This would prove invaluable when he would later explore the Grand Canyon and still later as he pursued other geologic investigations.

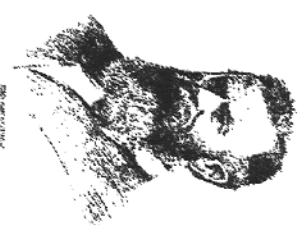
During this time unrest occurred caused by confrontations with local people on the issue of slavery. The four main supporters of the abolitionist movement here were Powell, Professor W.W. Mather, Samuel Montgomery, and George L. Crookham. Bitterly condemned on one occasion when holding an abolition meeting on the court house steps, they were pelted

with eggs and forced to take refuge in a nearby residence. It was this incident that convinced Rev. Powell to take his family and move elsewhere.

Not a great deal is known about the Powell family after leaving Jackson. However, it is known that he received further education at Illinois and Weston Colleges. He also studied about natural history and geology at Oberlin.

He was twenty-seven years old when the Civil War began. He promptly enlisted for service as a private in the Twentieth Illinois Volunteers. He saw action in many engagements. At the Battle of Shiloh he was wounded and lost his lower right arm. The result of this amputation caused him much suffering for the rest of his life.

In 1865 he returned to civilian life. At the time of his discharge he was elevated to the rank of Major. Although he was later promoted to Colonel he was always known to his friends as Major.



*John Wesley Powell*