This passage of the Arizona Trail heads west from the historic Grandview Lookout Tower, across rolling pine-covered hills just outside the boundary of Grand Canyon National Park. This area is steeped in early Grand Canyon history.

A couple of miles north of the eastern end of this passage is Grandview Point, the Grand Canyon’s first tourism destination. “Captain” John Hance, the first white settler at the Grand Canyon, built a cabin home and ranch along the rim in this area in 1883. Hance built a trail east of Grandview Point that descended steeply to the Colorado River, where he mined asbestos. This trail was known as the Hance Trail, and was destroyed by a landslide in the 1890’s. Hance replaced it with the New Hance Trail down Red Canyon, which still exists today. Early Grand Canyon visitors would often stay at Hance’s cabin, and he began to see the Canyon’s potential as a tourist draw. As news of the scenic wonders of the Grand Canyon spread, Hance began advertising it as a destination. Hance established a stagecoach line between Flagstaff and his ranch, where tourists could stay in a “hotel” composed of tents. Hance would then lead hikers and horseback riders on treks below the rim, entertaining them with stories, tall tales, and ridiculous lies along the way. Hance became well known as a master storyteller and a colorful Grand Canyon advocate. Hance sold his cabin and tourist operation to J.W. Thurber and moved to Grand Canyon Village after the railroad arrived in 1901, living there rent-free courtesy of the Fred Harvey Company, who encouraged him to share his tales with visitors. J.W. Thurber extended his newly acquired stage line west to Bright Angel or Cameron’s Camp, along a route to the north of the Arizona Trail.

Another early Grand Canyon entrepreneur was miner Peter Berry. Peter or “Pete” Berry came to prospect the Grand Canyon around 1890, along with his partners Ralph and Niles Cameron. Berry soon found what he was looking for: a rich copper mine. Halfway between rim and river, Berry located the Last Chance Mine on Horseshoe Mesa. Berry built the Grandview Trail down from Grandview Point, and began using mules to haul ore from his mine back to the top. Soon Berry too was in the tourism business, building the large Grandview Hotel on the rim in 1897. An extension of the Grandview Trail down to the Colorado River allowed his tourists to experience the area on the backs of mules. Berry successfully operated the Last Chance Mine for over a decade before selling it to an outside mining company. Having to transport ore by mule was not economically viable, though, and the Last Chance Mine closed in the early 1900’s. The Grandview Trail remains today, and one can still see what remains of Pete Berry’s mining adventures.

Once it reaches the village of Tusayan, the Arizona Trail turns north and largely follows State Highway 64 to the outskirts of Grand Canyon Village. This modern-day tourist hub had its beginnings when the Santa Fe Railroad took possession of the old Santa Fe and Grand Canyon Railroad project in 1900. At this point, the Santa Fe Railroad began laying track toward what was known as Bright Angel Camp or Cameron’s Camp, roughly ten miles west of Grandview Point. When the tracks reached the Canyon in 1901, stagecoach
ridership to the area immediately declined, as a shorter, less expensive railroad trip became the preferred option. The Santa Fe immediately began promoting its Grand Canyon line, and worked with the Fred Harvey Company to build the luxurious El Tovar hotel on the canyon rim. The El Tovar was named for one of the explorers in Coronado’s expedition, and this first-class 100 room resort was in stark contrast to the Canyon’s earlier, far more rustic accommodations.

Around this time, Bright Angel Camp became known as Grand Canyon or Grand Canyon Village, and became the focus of tourism on the Grand Canyon’s South Rim. The Santa Fe Railroad soon desired a trail of its own to bring tourists below the South Rim, to avoid paying tolls on Ralph Cameron’s Bright Angel Trail. With the Forest Service’s approval, the Santa Fe Railroad built the Hermit Trail down to the Colorado River, a few miles west of Grand Canyon Village, and constructed an overnight camp along Hermit Creek for tourists, known as Hermit Camp. Hermit Camp was located in a natural amphitheater surrounded by soaring cliffs, and was named for Louis Boucher, a hermit who had made his home in the upper reaches of the same canyon.

A couple of miles beyond Grand Canyon Village, the Arizona Trail arrives at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, at the South Kaibab Trailhead. The view from the rim of the Grand Canyon has been inspirational to tens of millions of visitors from every country in the world.

Human use of the Grand Canyon area dates back at least 13,000 years, and evidence of indigenous people living and passing through the area is extensive. 10,000-year-old stone blades, pottery, agave roasting pits, petroglyphs, pictographs, willow twig animal figurines, defensive structures, granaries among the cliffs, pit-houses and the faint outlines of pueblos found in the Grand Canyon all show evidence of a long human history.

The Hopi have strong ties to the Grand Canyon. An unusual hot spring known as the Sipapuni is the site of Hopi emergence into this world, and ancient salt mines are sacred Hopi pilgrimage sites. The Havasu ‘Baaja, also known as the Havasupai, have called the Grand Canyon home for over 1,000 years, farming and living below the South Rim. Havasupai translates to “People of the Blue-Green Waters”, a reference to the beautiful, cascading waters of Havasu Creek in the Grand Canyon, where many Havasupai people still live. Two massive rock monoliths known as the Wigleeva guard the Havasupai here.

Famed western landscape painter Thomas Moran visited the Grand Canyon in 1872 as a part of a surveying expedition, and his epic painting “Grand Chasm of the Colorado” aroused curiosity and brought national attention to the Grand Canyon. Noted conservationist and Sierra Club founder John Muir was a frequent visitor to the Grand Canyon, and spoke of the need to protect it as a National Park. President Theodore Roosevelt visited the Grand Canyon in 1903, and was awestruck with the scenery, urging others to leave the Grand Canyon in its natural state. To protect what he believed to be a national treasure, Roosevelt established the Grand Canyon Game Preserve in 1906, which then became Grand Canyon National Monument in 1908. A few attempts had been made beginning in 1882 to create a national park, but it took the pen of President Woodrow
Wilson in 1919 to create Grand Canyon National Park. The park was doubled in size in 1975 by President Gerald Ford, to include the western portion of the Grand Canyon and the Marble Canyon area.

References


