



**The Grand Canyon: An Article Giving the Credit
of First Traversing the Grand Canyon of the
Colorado to James White, a Colorado Gold
Prospector, Who It ... Under the Direction of Maj.
J. W. Powell**

Thomas F. Dawson

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Excerpt from *The Grand Canyon: An Article Giving the Credit of First Traversing the Grand Canyon of the Colorado to James White, a Colorado Gold Prospector, Who It Is Claimed Made the Voyage Two Years Previous to the Expedition Under the Direction of Maj. J. W. Powell in 1869*

The erection by the National Government of a monument to the memory of Maj. John W. Powell, as "the first explorer" of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, has had the effect of raising a question among pioneers of the West as to whether the honor conferred upon Maj. Powell in connection with the early navigation of the Canyon should not be shared with another. Mr. Powell's friends claim for him the distinction of being not only the first to "explore" the canyon but also that of being the first to pass through it under any circumstances. This claim is challenged in behalf of one James White, a mining prospector, who, they contend, went through the canyon two years previous to the time of the Powell expedition. Powell made his voyage in 1869; White claims to have made his in 1867.

So persistent has been the contention that White was the first to traverse the Canyon that the writer set himself the task of investigating the subject, which he has done as thoroughly as possible consistent with other duties, with the result that he has succeeded at least in convincing himself that White's claim is not unfounded. The undertaking has not been easy; for, while much literature has grown up around Maj. Powell's expedition, comparatively little has been written about White, and that little of the distant past, and now to be found only in publications long since out of print. It is believed that enough of this material has been revived to make a case for White; but if not, it is hoped that at least it may aid the future investigator in arriving at a just conclusion.

In entering into the merits of the controversy it will be well for the reader to bear in mind that the Colorado River is formed in southeastern Utah, by the union of the Grand and the Green Rivers, the former rising in northern Colorado and the latter in the adjoining State of Wyoming, and that the stream thus created flows in a general southwestern course into the Gulf of California.

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