

Grapevine News



COLORADO RIVER HISTORICAL
SOCIETY MUSEUM

The Wheeler Expedition in Arizona: Mapping the Unknown

Brought to you by our Archivist—Pat Herzig



In the late 19th century, much of the American West was still a mystery to the U.S. government. The landscape was rugged, remote, and often dangerous. One of the most ambitious efforts to map this vast region was led by Lieutenant George Montague Wheeler, whose expeditions between 1869 and 1879 became some of the most important exploratory missions in U.S. history. Arizona played a key role in Wheeler's work, offering both challenges and critical discoveries.

Wheeler's mission was simple on paper but complex in reality: map the western territories of the United States west of the 100th meridian. This would not only help the U.S. government plan settlements, transportation routes, and military strategy but also assert control over regions still largely inhabited by Native American tribes.

Arizona was a prime target. It was one of the least explored areas at the time. Its deserts, canyons, and mountain ranges were barely charted. Wheeler's teams set out to change that. Traveling through Arizona in the 1870s was not easy. The environment was brutal. The summer heat was relentless, water was scarce, and the terrain was rough. Wheeler's men dealt with extreme weather, limited supplies, and difficult transportation over jagged rock and sandy deserts.

Another major challenge came from conflict with Native American tribes, particularly the Apache. These groups resisted U.S. expansion and were skilled in guerrilla warfare. Wheeler's team had to be cautious, often traveling with military escorts. Despite these hardships, the expedition pressed on.

One of Wheeler's most significant achievements in Arizona was the detailed mapping of remote regions like the Grand Canyon, the Colorado River basin, and vast stretches of desert and mountain terrain. Wheeler's teams produced some of the first accurate topographical maps of these areas.

They also gathered valuable scientific data. Naturalists, geologists, and other specialists joined the expedition to study Arizona's wildlife, plants, minerals, and rock formations. Their findings helped shape the growing scientific understanding of the Southwest. The Wheeler Survey was among the first to document many of Arizona's natural landmarks for a wider American

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audience. The team's reports included detailed descriptions and sketches of areas that most Americans had never seen.

The Wheeler Expedition had a lasting impact on Arizona and the West as a whole. The maps produced during these surveys became crucial resources for future settlers, miners, railroad builders, and the military. Moreover, Wheeler's work marked a transition from an unknown Arizona to a region increasingly integrated into U.S. territory and infrastructure. However, this also came at a cost to Native American communities. The mapping and increased access to Arizona accelerated the displacement of indigenous peoples and the loss of their lands.

Wheeler's expedition ended in 1879 when government surveying was consolidated under the newly formed U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). By then, his teams had mapped over 360,000 square miles of the American West, including major parts of Arizona. The Wheeler Expedition in Arizona was a turning point in the exploration of the American Southwest. It combined military strategy, science, and cartography to bring detailed knowledge of a once-mysterious land to the federal government. Today, the expedition is remembered not only for its technical achievements but also for its role in the broader story of U.S. expansion — a story marked by both progress and conflict. NOTE: The information from this article was obtained through CHAT GBT.

WORD PUZZLE

Lt. George Wheeler Expedition

E Q L O N S K A A V A I U K N
A G Z C E C M G Q V R O M F P
K N R T I E S U O R E G N A D
V C U O R F A L M E L S N F W
E O A I E N I K O H E W I V I
R N C N O G C T U T E A M S L
G A M Z Y H S L N A H Q N G D
N X I B A O C M T E W O C C L
O R J R X Z N D A W I D D E I
A F T W J F W S I S G C U N F
X E M E R T X E N U X T S T E
D E S E R T S A S I V D G U H
X N K I T E P A O X K Q K R N
P Z E X R X F J I R Y E J Y D
S L A R E N I M T K A W Q F S

AMERICAN	ARIZONA	CANYONS
CENTURY	CHARTED	DANGEROUS
DESERTS	EXPANSION	EXTREME
GEORGE	MINERALS	MOUNTAINS
ROUTES	SCIENTIFIC	TEAMS
WEATHER	WHEELER	WILDLIFE

AROUND THE HOUSE

Pioneer Family Recipes:

courtesy of the Mohave Museum of History & Arts

To Get Rid of Bed Bugs

To get rid of bed bugs apply a good, thick coat of varnish to all lurking places.

Night Time Coughing

My mother, Matida Jones Wilkins, used a cold, wet wash cloth on a child's throat for nighttime coughing, covered with a dry, warm towel.

Rachel Wilkins Lewis

March 2025 Crossword Puzzle answers:

Chief Iretaba

C S F H H V E C B P V D A P S
A Q F E Z O N C O A E Y I C K
L U S H I S M L A H F H A S I
I L D U W H I E S E S T B T R
F A A A V T C A L D P Y A L M
O Y R U I D L M R A O Z T U I
R H O C T C N A N K N X E F S
N U A V M I H U I S D D R N H
I L R O I R R A W V O Q I I E
A M I G R A T I O N R B O A S
L E G A C Y K G P C E R H P K
X L C U V G A K T S D B Q R I
S E I T L A U S A C A D T S R
X B B S S V E J A F E E B O E
D I P L O M A T C T L I E Z Y

PRESIDENTS CORNER

Happy April

Hope everyone is doing well. Many things happening at the museum. The Laughlin & Bullhead City Historic Bus Tour was a great hit. The next one coming will be on April 27th. Thank you, Mary Ragusa, Gail Sprague and Sheila Dixon, also Barbie Brandt, for doing such a good job putting these tours together.

Any people that would like to become members of the historical society, please call Ellen Brown our membership chairman or call the museum at 928-754-3399. Also, if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please call the museum or Karole Finkelstein 928 219 -2582.

Hope everyone is getting ready for Easter. We have the honey baked hams fundraiser still going on. For more information, call Susana at 928 234-4807. Pick up for the hams will be on April 17th from 3:00 to 6:30.

Also, there might be some special things going on in November and right now its a secret, so keep your eyes and ears open and read all your newsletters and you'll find out what the secret is and all the fun.

Sincerely
Karole Finkelstein
President

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Colorado River Historical Society Museum is seeking volunteers. If you enjoy history and want to learn more about the area, the society needs you. This is a chance to meet area visitors from all over the world and form friendships with a wonderful group of volunteers. Many of our volunteers are part-time residents and retirees. Hours are flexible and duties are as easy or challenging as you would like.

Examples of the types of volunteer we need:

Docent	Handyman
Gardener	Data Entry
Teachers	Marketing
Fundraising & Event Coordinators	

EVENTS CALENDAR

All events are at the museum unless otherwise stated

Guest Speaker—Beth Wexler:

May 6th 2025 - Tuesday 5:30pm-7:00pm(AZ time)

Colorado River Museum Presents

Beth Wexler – Fort Mohave Burro Rescue

May 6th 2025-Tuesday 5:30pm–7:00pm (AZ time)



Rumor is she might bring a few of her four-legged friends with her.

Beth will be giving you information about herself and why she started the Burro Rescue. She will also be talking about the challenges and rewards of working with the donkeys.



Light refreshments will be provided.
Come join us for this wonderful evening and learn about some of our culture here in the Tri-state area.



Colorado River Museum
1239 Highway 95 (in Community Park)
Bullhead City, AZ 86429
928-754-3399

GIFT SHOP NEWS

The Colorado Museum gift store is the perfect place to find unique gifts for family, friends and yourself. We offer fine art, framed photography, food items that reflect our history and culture. We have books that tell the many stories of our southwestern heritage. We have very reasonably priced items, and all items are sales tax free. Come and visit us!

FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Honey Baked Hams Fundraiser: *Order by 11:00am on April 17th 2025*



COMING UP THIS FALL

Souper Bowl Fall Festival “Fun”draising : *November 9th 2025*

Mark your calendars for the first Souper Bowl Fall Festival. We will be selling handmade ceramic soup bowls for \$25.00 each. The guests who purchase the bowls will then be able to fill up their soup bowls with an assortment of homemade soups and of course, keep the bowl .

In conjunction, we will have a soup cookoff contest. For the kids, we will be hosting the Fall Festival wherein the kids can partake of corn hole, gold panning, face painting and hair braiding, rock painting, scavenger hunt and ice cream courtesy of Culvers’s while listening to DJ music.

The planning is still in motion, so if you would like to join us, please let me know (Gale 661-303-0242 ggrassesprague@yahoo.com). We could use volunteers to make their favorite soup and to help with this event.

Historic Bus Tour : *October 26th 2025*





COLORADO RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

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Email: CRHSmuseum@outlook.com
Web: coloradoriverhistoricalsociety.org/
Hours of Operations:
Tuesday—Saturday 10:00am - 4:00pm
(last admittance 3:00pm)

Grapevine News Editor - Laurie Thompson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Mission Statement

The mission of The Colorado River Historical Society shall be to operate a museum to promote interest and knowledge concerning the history of the Lower Colorado River area, most specifically the Tri-state area.

MEMERSHIP INFORMATION

"Now is the time to renew your membership if you haven't already done so! Memberships will be canceled on March 31 if not renewed. Huge thanks to all of you who have renewed for 2025! We appreciate your continued support!"

Remember, we are staffed entirely by volunteers, so all your contribution dollars are used for the ongoing operation of the museum, the Lil' Red Schoolhouse, and the Educational Gardens. Please note, membership dues have increased to \$20 for individuals and \$30 for families

If you have questions about membership, or you're interested in becoming a member, please reach out to Ellen Brown at 928-542-1160 or see one of the docents when you visit the museum.

Membership Chair - Ellen Brown

CURATOR CORNER

After looking high and low for someone who creates dioramas the Collection's Committee found Phil Scandura who is an artist from Flagstaff.

The diorama, which is a miniature 3-D scene will be a Mohave clan from the time period around 1850.

We were sent a plan with a bid on Wednesday which will be discussed with the Board and members will make a decision after this review.

Pat Herzig
Archivist