

Yogie Yokey, Green River Captain

by John Weisheit

The following are excerpts from the Marston Collection at the Huntington Library about Captain H. T. Yokey. I would like to thank Rosalyn Jirge for the discovery of this ancestral boat yogie. [Brackets indicate editorial comment.]

[From an obituary in the DAILY SENTINEL of Grand Junction, CO., dated Tuesday, October 15, 1957:]

Captain Harry T. Yokey, age 86, who had become something of a legend in the Green River area, died about 12.30 p.m. Monday [which would have been October 14th] at the V. A. Hospital in Grand Junction. Captain Yokey was the man who built the "Cliff Dweller", a deluxe two-decker pleasure boat in 1905, to run on the Green and Colorado Rivers between Green River and Moab. It was through this and his interest in boats and early-day river running that he acquired the title of Captain.

The "Cliff Dweller" was run by steam, but the coal gave out on its maiden voyage and it had to be towed back to Green River. It was later rebuilt and named the "City of Moab", but proved impractical and was taken by rail to the Great Salt Lake. It was used there for many years ferrying passengers from shore to island.

Captain Yokey was born in Atumwa, Iowa, October 4, 1869. He was involved in the border raids along the Mexican border in 1892 and then reenlisted in the Spanish-American War. He was discharged from the Army while still in the Philippines.

Captain Yokey came to Green River in 1904 to operate the Rio Grande Pumping Station. He was a bachelor and had no known relatives.

The colorful retired railroader lived in a small home about three miles from Green River. He was noted for his frequent trips into the town afoot to pick up copies of the Congressional Record at the post office and also to secure groceries and supplies.

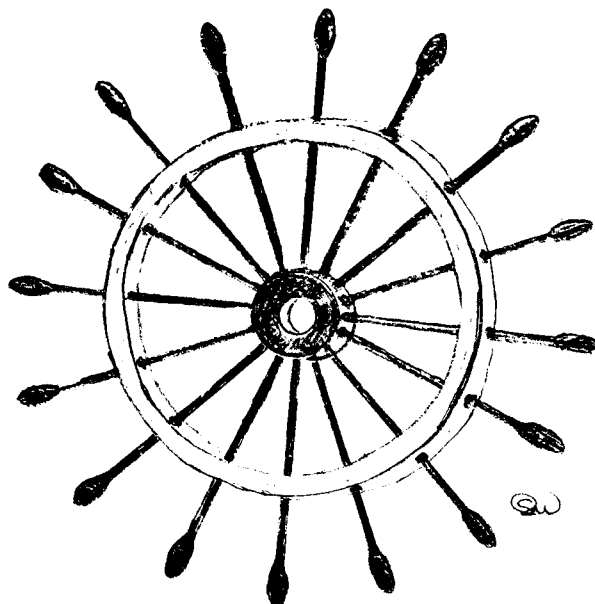
Captain Yokey was admitted to the V. A. Hospital in Grand Junction September 18. The Callahan-Edfast Mortuary of Grand Junction is handling arrangements and the body will be sent to Denver for burial in the National Cemetery.

A man named William Davis frequently corresponded with Otis Marston; helping to locate historic inscriptions. Davis made several inscriptions himself in Cataract Canyon from river trips completed by a ten-man raft back in the early 1950s. In 1952, Davis and his daughter Mildred ran Westwater Canyon; Mildred was probably the first female to ride through Westwater Canyon and at the age of fifteen. Davis wrote a letter to Cap Yokey concerning a trip in a boat referred to as the **Black Eagle**. The following letter is from Yokey, postmarked from Elgin, Utah, and dated October 4, 1952:

Friend Davis,

I have finally got around to replying to your two epistles of late date; so pull down yer vest; wipe off yer chinn; & on following begin.

Yes; we had a steamboat blow-up or blow-out some years back on lower River Green; I was builder, owner, commander, and pilot of craft (**BLACK EAGLE** - of Elgin), J. A. Ross, fireman; E. J. Cook, engineer; when I did not have time to monkey with the engine & a cap, us four & no more.



Fortunately or unfortunately; we had a water tube boiler & flood of mud for water; A couple of tubes got plugged with mud; naturally blew themselves killing the fire. Thus we had no power other than arm-strong rowboat. Plenty of wild meat and scenery for desert. Naturally no rush about getting out.

However, if it had been a flue-type boiler, we would be overdue to this day; just another mysterious disappearance on high seas of time or destiny in vast port of missing men.

However, later we were picked up by a boat bound for San Rafael. There I secured a team and wagon, thus landing my surviving men in their home ports of Elgin and Green River.

Some years back, in canyon of the Lower Green, while searching shelter from the elements under a ledge, I noted the following:
(D. JULIEN MAI 1836)

Did you meet this guy during your trip; Also did you note evidences of river cutting down through solid rock to its present location. [Questions probably asked by Davis in a previous letter.]

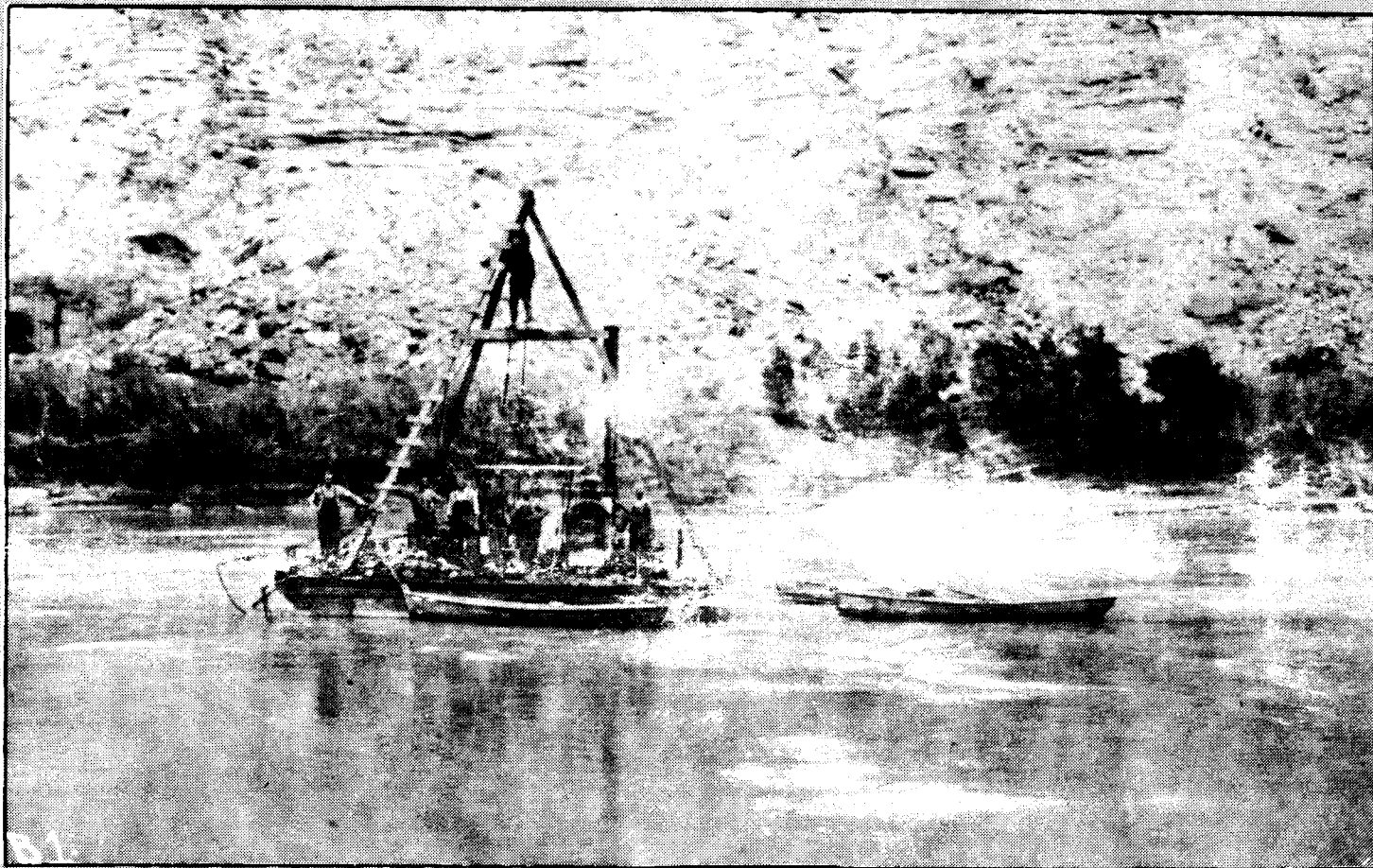
This is the biggest hunk of geological bolonga on Earth. Some years back I was employed by U.S.R.S. to transport MEN, GRUB & TOOLS down into the canyon of Lower Green to search for Bedrock for proposed power dam site in many cases. The workers discovered the bed of river was on a vast mass of slide rock (like you seen on both sides of river in Cataract Canyon & many other places along the waterway across the desert). [see front cover photo]

I have infested the Earth for over 80 years. Been awake most of the time, too. Noting what has been done & its affect on will be done. I am the man on the ground, seas and Rivers. Thus know what I am talking about.

I have seen enough to know, old Mother Earth has had other fixed axis of rotation; other than she now has & two great unbalancing factors now accumulating & have been for some millions of years. It's absolutely necessary for Earth to Delouse & ReNew itself. New continents, new Islands, Seas, Rivers, & Sea.

After a period of erratic unbalanced rotation, during which no part of Earth's surface has enough regular exposure to Sun to prevent freezing, yea Bo; be tougher than old Billy Bedammed, damn few survivors.

Signed: Yours as she looks - Captain H. T. Yokey" [sic]



51.
This photo was taken in 1914 by Eugene LaRue of the United States Reclamation Service 1/2 mile below The Confluence. This floating, steam-powered drilling rig is searching for bedrock to determine the feasibility of a dam. The crew drilled 124 feet without reaching bedrock when rising flood waters forced abandonment of the project. If built, this dam would have flooded the communities of Green River and Moab. Pictured third from left is Bert Loper. Photo courtesy of USGS Library, Denver.