

ADVANCE EXTRACT (SLIGHTLY EDITED) FROM
Grand Canyon: Colossal Mirror (2nd edition, in preparation)

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[The 1st edition is currently available at Raven’s Perch Media, <https://ravensperch.org>]

ALL THE OTHER GRAND CANYONS

AS A WONDER OF THE WORLD (SEVENTH, EIGHTH OR OTHER), the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River in Arizona is the source of nomenclature, copied and rephrased, for hundreds of other features on all seven of Earth’s continents, in the oceans, and on celestial bodies.

All of these names have appeared in print or in widely accessible digital form through the internet. In some fashion, formally and (far more usually) informally, these places are called in some fashion “Grand Canyon”. One may argue that the focus on other nomenclatural Grand Canyons is more sensibly left only to those that have been formally named or those that have appeared in “proper” literature—published, in the conventional sense, discussionary at least, even officially sanctioned by registorial bodies. But as the lists in *Grand Canyon: Colossal Mirror* demonstrates, the Grand Canyon lies within a very broad embrace of the public imagination and infatuation, worldwide, for a long time. It is these writers (whomever they are, however widely read or not) who have seen the Grand Canyon shaped in some other place.

Virtually all of the 1,228 geographically applied names listed in *Grand Canyon: Colossal Mirror* convey some sort of branding or are literary whims of the authors who contrived the names; rarely in any sense are they geographically official. “Which Grand Canyon?” also is a question posed in various issues of *National Park Journal*, although it is meant to force the reader to decide whether to visit either the national park’s South Rim and or the Hualapai’s Grand Canyon West. There is, a bit confused, “the four sides of Grand Canyon”, too—North Rim,

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South Rim, Grand Canyon West, and Havasu Falls, though the last three all are on the south side of the canyon. There is, too, “The Other Rim: North Rim” that somehow confirms the south side’s singular reputation.

With few exceptions, principally those listed in official geographical nomenclators or in the promotional literature of chambers of commerce, the listings that appear here have in no way implied themselves—or for that matter have they been inferred by me—to be “official”, “sanctioned”, widely accepted, or for that matter even known to most people. Most of these listings are only cultural and impressionistic labels. Not including Arizona’s Grand Canyon of the Colorado River, there are 113 places thus far found that are labeled just “Grand Canyon” (though some of them *also* carry names with possessive qualifiers, but each nomenclatorial instance is scored separately here to accommodate the usages of original sources). If a possessive qualifier is added, like the “Grand Canyon of ~”, a whopping 693 more appear; or if the qualifier appears as “~’s Grand Canyon”, add another 90; and if the adjective qualifiers “-an” or “-ian” appear, add yet 30 more. Among these bury 31 more Grand Canyons that are features inside caves.

There are 47 places that carry the name “Little Grand Canyon” (and 24 more Little Grand Canyons that have possessive qualifiers like “Little Grand Canyon of ~”, and so forth); to these little features add three more that are in caves. Not to be belittled, a “miniature” or “mini” Grand Canyon appears 27 times; a “sub-miniature” one, a “micro” one, a “mini-micro Grand Canyon”, and a “Grand Canyon in miniature” are here if you hunt for them, not to miss hearing about the “piccolo Grand Canyon” (in Italy, appropriately). There are three “small Grand Canyons”—though one wonders where the “Not-So-Grand Canyon” falls on this grand scale.

All in the family, there are two “Junior Grand Canyons”, two “Baby Grand Canyons”, and five places that are “Grand Canyon’s little brother” or similar moniker; and to fill out the family there are two “sisters” and four “little sisters”, and even “the Grand Canyon’s uncle...twice removed” [*sic*]. “The Grand Canyon’s father” is two miles deep, but it is unattainable because it is in the spiritual experience of “Xorkoth”, who fights long-term opiate addiction; and *the* Grand Canyon is itself “the grandfather of all canyons”, metaphorically speaking. For

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those who wonder about a “mother”, they will have to find it, too, only among the metaphors, the “mother of all grand things, the Grand Canyon”.

The nomenclatural record-holder for geographically tagged Grand Canyons is the “Grand Canyon of the East”: 15 locales carry that nominal term, 12 in the United States, and one each in Canada, India, and the People’s Republic of China, albeit for the Asian examples “East” is to be read differently. And these do not include two U.S. locales that each are “Grand Canyon East”; one is in Kentucky, the second is given to the eastern portion of *the* Grand Canyon in Arizona. There is a “Grand Canyon West” slapped on the western end of *the* Grand Canyon, so very familiar now to millions of visitors to this tourist center on the Hualapai Indian Reservation, with its looped Skywalk that does *not* bridge the canyon. The long-overlooked western part of the canyon has also been called “Arizona’s lost canyon”.¹

Two places are “another Grand Canyon”, and 16 places are the “Other Grand Canyon”. Thrown in for good measure are “America’s Other Grand Canyon”, “Arizona’s Other Grand Canyon”, and “Mexico’s other Grand Canyon”.

Not to be one-upped, there is the “Grand Canyon—II”. And a “second Grand Canyon” is so far found in *four* different places in the world. But which is “grandest”? Arizona’s canyon is the “Grandest of all Canyons”. Fair enough; yet the Baranca del Cobre in Mexico has been dubbed the “grandest of the Grand Canyons”. Contrarily, “The Grandest Canyon” is Valles Marineris—on Mars. Yet still there is “Grand Canyon, the grandest of all the grand ones” (of course, but *it* turns out to be the claim of the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River in Colorado). Then, all alone, is the “Second Grandest Canyon”—Palo Duro Canyon in Texas, which is the “Grand Canyon of Texas”, too, and, to make a point, the “Grandest Canyon in Texas”.

Some canyons come out fighting. Seven of them claim the title of “Grander Canyon”. One even has been labeled, jealously, the “original Grand Canyon”.²

¹ Russell K. Grater, “Arizona’s lost canyon”, *Arizona Highways*, Vol. 30, no. 3 (March 1954), pp. 32-35.

² To grasp back the title of “original” Vance Boelts noted that he had taken an Elderhostel program geology trip to “Grand Canyon (must have been the original since it was capitalized).” (“Alumni News,” *Army Civilian Personnel Alumni Association Newsletter*, Lake Charles, Louisiana, (2004), p. 2.

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And then in Spain there's one that, at long as it's at it, usurps the Colorado River as well; there, Rio Gor boasts the "Grand Canyon of the Spanish Colorado".

Unrealistically, there are five "real" Grand Canyons. Even Arizona's honestly real Grand Canyon has a separate, promotionally declared "real" portion to it—which implies there is a *less-real* portion! (Somewhere.)³ There is also a part of Arizona's gulf that philosophically insists that in the midst of all that grandeur there is the "quintessential' Grand Canyon".⁴

THE Grand Canyon—Arizona's main one, that is—receives a gracious, inferential tip of the literary hat in an item about "the Other Canyon" of Arizona, Oak Creek Canyon, suggesting that the monstrous gape to the north is "another" canyon.⁵ More directly disparagingly, Arizona's big canyon is "that *other* Grand Canyon" (emphasis thus), so noted in a piece promoting Pine Creek Gorge, a place otherwise enviously and widely advertised as the "Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania".

Despite the askance looks, *THE* Grand Canyon serves as the *de facto* trademark of The Grand Canyon State (Arizona's official nickname)—and as such, the state's promotional literature implies that the canyon is the *official* Grand Canyon.⁶ (Perhaps a bit confusingly, there is, too, "The other Grand Canyon" that metaphorically labels the Havasupai world of Havasu Canyon, the flip side of the Grand Canyon bustle.⁷)

³ That supposedly "less-real" part of the canyon could be at Toroweap. The December 2017 issue of *Outside* includes a two-page advertisement (pp. [8]-[9]) placed by the Arizona Office of Tourism, which includes a photo of the view there, labeled (exactly) "[Un]Real" and "Grand Canyon National Park".

⁴ Then there are sites that attempt to strip away the canyon's very own quintessentiality. For example, the one-time home of Elvis Presley in Memphis, Tennessee, is a temptor of tourists who might fly in on from Atlanta, Georgia: "Graceland . . . is, with apologies to the Grand Canyon, perhaps the quintessential American landmark." ("Dream Weekends," *Atlanta* [October 2004], p. 83.

⁵ Seth Muller, "Call o' the Other Canyon", *Northern Arizona's Mountain Living Magazine*, (May 2010), cover, 6, 12-17.

⁶ Arizona Office of Tourism, website "Arizona—The Official Grand Canyon State", www.facebook.com/arizonatravel (accessed 19 October 2011). "The Grand Canyon State", the Official Nickname of Arizona, was formalized by the State Legislature in 2011.

⁷ Fiona McNeill, "The other Grand Canyon; Fiona McNeill finds paradise among the Havasupai", *Travel Savvy*, (May/June).

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The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River may be the literary fount of ersatz Grand Canyons, but it is *not* the first place to be named “Grand Canyon”—not even in Arizona.⁸ These nomenclatural creations comprise the extenuating powers of impression that *THE* Grand Canyon has conveyed ever since the first “other” Grand Canyon was named—in 1870, the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.⁹ As for *THE* Grand Canyon, as noted in the General Introduction to *Grand*

⁸ “Grand Canon” appeared in Andrew B. Gray’s 1855 record of a survey for the Texas Western Railroad (Southern Pacific Railroad) across the south of New Mexico Territory (which then also embraced today’s Arizona). This name was used for a defile in the Chiricahua Mountains (southeastern Arizona), although whether the name was newly applied or one locally used was not indicated. A lithograph illustrating this canyon was added to an 1856 reprinting of the survey (“Grand Canon. Mountains of Chiricahui, opposite Head Springs Valle de Sauz Cienega.”). This is the first illustration of *any* place labeled as Grand Canyon. So Arizona’s first Grand Canyon wasn’t even the one on the Colorado River! One might argue that Gray’s “Grand Canon” was only the generic description of “a grand canyon”, but his text refers to it as a specific geographic feature, with initial capital letters, even once calling it (with definite article and italics) “the *Grand Canon*”. (Gray, A. B., *Texas Western Railroad. Survey of Route, its Cost and Probable Revenue, in Connection with the Pacific Railway; Nature of the Country, Climate, Mineral and Agricultural Resources, &c.* (Cincinnati: Porter, Thrall and Chapman, 1855); “Grand Canon”, see pp. 47, 48. Reprinted and slightly revised, with illustrations added: Gray; A. B., *Southern Pacific Railroad. Survey of a Route for the Southern Pacific R R, on the 32nd Parallel, by A. B. Gray, for the Texas Western R R Company* (Cincinnati: Wrightson and Co.’s (‘Railroad Record:’) Print., 1856); “Grand Canon,” see pp. 48, 49, illustration facing p. 48.) [The information in this note first appeared in Earle E. Spamer, “Once Again, ‘Who Named the Grand Canyon?’—And Other Obscure Grand Canyon ‘First’”. *The Ol’ Pioneer* (Grand Canyon Historical Society), Vol. 24, no. 2 (Spring 2013), pp. 4-16.]

⁹ The name of the “Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone” is attributed to Henry D. Washburn during the expedition led by Washburn and Gustavus C. Doane to the Yellowstone region in 1870, when numerous Yellowstone features were given names by which they are famously known today. Pointedly, the Yellowstone’s famous canyon was just called “the Grand Canyon”; the “of the Yellowstone” suffix was appended later. Lee Whittlesley’s *Yellowstone Place Names* (Montana Historical Society, Helena, 1988), p. 119, attributes the Yellowstone’s Grand Canyon to Washburn but without any indication whether the Grand Canyon of Arizona influenced the Yellowstone name; nor apparently did the explorers make any such indication. An account of the expedition published by Washburn in the *Helena Herald* mentions “the Grand Cañon”. That newspaper record was reprinted, without noting the date, in Rossiter W. Raymond’s “Mining Statistics West of the Rocky Mountains” (*U.S. 42nd Congress, 1st Session, House Executive Document 10, 1871, p. 214*). Doane’s own report first mentions “the Grand Cañon” in his entry for August 29, 1870 (“The report of Lieutenant Gustavus C. Doane upon the so-called Yellowstone Expedition of 1870”, *U.S. 41st Congress, 3rd Session, Senate Executive Document 51, 1871, p. 9*). Nathaniel Pitt Langford’s diary of the Washburn–Doane expedition first notes “the Grand cañon” in his entry for August 26, 1870 (*Diary of the Washburn Expedition to the Yellowstone and Firehole Rivers in the year 1870, privately printed, 1905, p. 16*). Thomas Moran’s monumental canvas, *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* (1871–1872), studies for which he made during the Washburn–Doane expedition, may be the original source of the “Yellowstone” suffix. Notably, Moran did not use the (Arizona) Grand Canyon’s name for his equally large canvas, “The Chasm of the Colorado” (1873). The paintings were

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Canyon: Colossal Mirror, the first known published use of that name was in 1857, but who named it as such is still unknown.¹⁰

The compendium that comprises *Grand Canyon: Colossal Mirror* contains the names of geographical, artificial, and imaginary features named in some fashion, “Grand Canyon”. Formal and informal, current and archaic, names are listed. By far most of these names are off-the-cuff descriptive terms; few are legalized by official administrative actions. These nomenclatural expressions are taken from published literature and mass-produced sources like postcards, but a substantial number of them are from internet websites; all document broad literary and imaginative applications of the term. Whereas anyone may hereafter add to the list by simply including it in (for example) a published essay, letter to an editor, printed postcard, or website posting, the names listed here are those that appeared without any such encouragement, already in place for the finding. The list represents undirected, unreined creativity, without the temptation now to invent new “Grand Canyon” terms simply for the sake of adding to the list. Perhaps, here the list should end.

One will notice that some of the items listed are, in lower case, the “grand canyon” of some place, or similarly within quotation marks (“Grand Canyon”). This reflects the usage as presented in the source seen. While one may argue that the description is thus generic, as in “a grand canyon”, it is clear that the nomenclatural correlation is present, and probably the use of “the grand canyon of ~” was meant not so much to compromise the actual Grand Canyon but to avoid the direct use of the name while conveying some same sense of perceived, comparative grandeur.

I pause to note that of these many other Grand Canyons—real, metaphorical or other—none were compared to some other, *non*-Grand canyon, but solely to the acme of canyons. When the comparison is made, especially with the outright label of plain “Grand Canyon”, it is always with reference to “the” Grand Canyon; everyone knows what is meant.

purchased by the U.S. Government, each for \$10,000, which originally were displayed in the U.S. Capitol and later transferred to the Department of the Interior. They now hang in the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

¹⁰ Spamer, “Once Again . . .”; “Big Canyon, Great Canyon, Grand Canyon . . .”

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Some of the names in *Grand Canyon: Colossal Mirror* are nomenclatural synonyms; for example, in Oman, separately listed nomenclatural grand canyons are An Nakhur Gorge, Wadi Nakhr, and Jebel Shams, all of which seem to be one geographical locale. Yet a Grand Canyon appellation has been inscribed with each of these names. Likewise, some names might be listed here with the qualifier that a precise locale was not specified, but which actually may be one of the same features already in the list. Regardless, each use is unique, and such attributions are accorded their own entries because of the variations of nomenclature. A more concise, edited list will have to resolve these minor issues.

Still many more items in the list are the creations of writers through error or as the result of geographical unawareness or witlessness. THE Grand Canyon has been geographically misplaced—in Nevada, New Mexico, and, less surprisingly, Colorado. One of the Colorado misplacements was most memorable, when the canyon was commemorated on a U.S. postage stamp as being in the State of Colorado. The stamps had not yet been released when the error was identified, and ostensibly all several million were destroyed—and when the corrected version was released, identifying the canyon as in Arizona, alert observers pointed out that the photograph was printed reversed! (The Postal Service kept it as is.) Still, all Grand Canyon entries in the list document nomenclatural uses as found in conventionally published and digital sources both. Each example conveys critical information, explicit or inferred, of personal or organizational perceptions.

A rudimentary version of the geographical-names list that follows was first published in 1996 by pseudonymous authors Corax and Abyssus.¹¹ Some sources were originally taken from the U.S. Geological Survey's Geographic Names Information System and from gazetteers published by the Defense Mapping Agency. Since 1996, the list has been vastly expanded from other published sources, from ephemera, and most substantially from internet websites. A somewhat extensive, revised version of the 1996 list was published in 2006, which for visual effect and parody was printed in impractically small type.¹²

¹¹ Early C. Corax and C. V. Abyssus [Earle E. Spamer and Richard D. Quartaroli], "Doin' the Canyon Shuffle", *Boatman's Quarterly Review*, Vol. 9, no. 3 (Summer 1996), pp. 6-7.

¹² Earle Spamer, "Other Grand Canyons: Incarnations Around the World and On Other Worlds", *Annals of Improbable Research*, Vol. 12, no. 3 (March/ April 2006), pp. 24-25. Also see in the same issue a related article by Spamer, "Is the Grand Canyon a Fake?", pp. 18-22, regarding nomenclature in the same fashion.

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Omitted from the geographical list are 102 “artificial”—that is, human-made—Grand Canyons, and 21 that are fictional, imaginary, conceptual, or hypothetical. The omitted names appear in their own lists in *Grand Canyon: Colossal Mirror*.
