



## A Hike through History by Sabrina Carlson

On April 9, 2016, eight members of the Outdoor Adventure Club from Payson's Rim Country Middle School, along with their teacher Mr. Davidson, headed off to explore the beautiful and historic Hermit Trail in Grand Canyon National Park.

We arrived early and were fortunate to find parking near the mule barns and shuttle stop for Hermit's Rest. We made a brief stop at the Bright Angel Lodge to look at the historic Mary Coulter fireplace (made from rocks found in the various layers of Grand Canyon), and then hopped on the bus to the trailhead. Most of the students on the trip had never been to the Grand Canyon before and were amazed and awestruck by the variety of cultures and languages that could be observed on the bus. Little did we know that a multi-cultural experience was awaiting us!



Great view for a walk!



Water and shade! A rare desert treat!

Along our hike down the steep and rocky Hermit Trail we talked about some of the history of this route. Initially, it was route traveled by Native Americans as a primitive walkway into the canyon, but eventually became a frequent path used by Louis Boucher, the miner for whom the "hermit" moniker was given. Over time, it was surveyed and improved in the early 1900's in collaboration with the Santa Fe Railway and the Fred Harvey Company. This state of the art trail was built to serve the Hermit Camp in the heart of the canyon by the river. It was amazing to find out that the camp and trail cost \$100,000, which was an

absolute fortune in those days! During the height of the CCC in the 1930's, the trail was further improved and sections of it were constructed with rock cobbles in a style similar to the roadbeds of ancient Rome.

Not far into the canyon we immediately spotted animal tracks fossilized in the stone as we were hiking through the Coconino Sandstone layer. Some were very small, while another larger set showed interesting traces of a creature's tail dragging from behind as it walked. This set the tone for a fascinating peek into an ancient landscape.

We made our way down to Dripping Spring, our lunch destination and turn around point. What a delight to watch fresh water pouring out of the side of the canyon in this otherwise parched landscape! Mr. Davidson explained how springs tend to emerge when a softer, more permeable layer sits upon a harder impermeable one. Because of the tilt of the layers, springs on the North Rim are fairly common, but South Rim springs like this one are incredibly rare. Near the spring, we were treated to the sight of canyon redbud trees blooming.

After returning to the rim, we took some time to visit the Hermit's Rest snack and gift shop, and once again admired the architectural style of Mary Coulter – the region's first female architect.

On our way home, we decided to keep our Mary Coulter tour going by attempting to exit via the East Rim Drive to take in the sunset at the Desert View Watchtower. Everyone agreed that it was a splendid and marvelous day exploring a tiny corner of one of the natural wonders of the world.



Mr. D points out fossilized tracks to an interested student.



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