



Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #14 – Captain John Hance, a visit from the past: part 1 - Transcript
How I came to the Grand Canyon.

Patrick: One of the great things about the show, Insider's Look at Grand Canyon, this podcast show can talk about anything and everything that affects this national park. One of the things that I have noticed in the National Park Service, some of the programs have to do with something called, "Living History". Rangers will study, research, find pictures, and costumes about historical characters that can really paint us a picture of what's been going on here at this national park and all over the United States of America. Today, we have a rare opportunity. Captain John Hance first saw the Grand Canyon in 1883 and called the area home for the rest of his life. He had dozens of stories with alternate endings and was said to never tell the same to story the same way twice.

Captain Hance, how did you find your way to the Grand Canyon for the very first time?

Captain Hance- (Ranger Ron Brown): Well, you know... in those days nobody knew how to find the Grand Canyon. They knew there was a canyon here, but nobody knew for sure where it was. This was kind of the middle of nowhere.

A mule skinner is the guy that brings all the goods and supplies to the folks out here. I had me a string of mules and I was working my way across the desert down south ah here. Out in that prairie land, the pasture land, the prairie land south of us with my string of mules. Then one day, I looked off in the distance and there was a cloud of dust. I didn't know what that cloud of dust was. But then I heard a kind of rumbling. I realized the rumbling was getting louder. And...and... the dust cloud was getting bigger. And I looked at it and I realized that that was a buffalo stamped! Hundreds of buffalo running strait at me! Buffalo ah running and running! I knew that the one place you don't want be is in front of a buffalo stamped!

But, I had no place to hide. I looked out there in that prairie land. There was one little ole skinny tree. I found that skinny tree and I ran as fast as I could, and I climbed up the skinny tree and here come them ah buffalo. Runn'in and thunder'in, and runn'in and thunder'in... And they come by and they was raising that big cloud of dust. And I was hiding up in the top of that tree while they ran underneath me. Pretty soon one of them kind of bumped into my tree. It was little skinny tree, so it shook a little bit. Then another one bumped into my tree. Pretty soon the whole tree was starting to bend over. And I knew the one place you really didn't want to be, that was worse then in front of a buffalo stampede was under a buffalo stampede! So, I waited. And, so I saw, the biggest, badest, meanest, bull buffalo of all! Fellow with curly hair and great big pointy horns! When I saw him running at me, I had me an idea. I waited until he run underneath my tree and I leaped out the tree I did! I landed right on his back! I sunk my fingers into that old wooly hair and he went to running and galloping, and ah thunder'in and runn'in! He run and, he run, and he run! And he brung me all the way... to the Grand Canyon... It took two weeks!

Now, every once in awhile, somebody says to me;" Captain Hance, two weeks on the back of a bull buffalo! What did you eat?" I says; "Well, it's pretty obvious that every mule skinner has to have his trusty sheath knife. And we all know the buffalo is the tastiest part. So, I just carve me off a sliver of buffalo meat every once in awhile. Held it out in the air to dry. I ate buffalo jerky for two weeks!" We kept a runn'in and runn'in and pretty soon that poor ole, tired buffalo run and he almost made it to the Grand Canyon. He collapsed in a heap, right here, on the edge of the Grand Canyon! I steppe off and I looked around at this marvelous place and I knew that not too many other people had been here. I decided I was gonna stay. I built me a little cabin on the rim. And that's how I became the first settler at Grand Canyon. Thanks to that buffalo and that buffalo stampede.