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Journeys in the Canyon Lands of Utah and Arizona, 1914-1916

George C. Fraser

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George Corning Fraser, who lived in the days before automobile travel became a way of life, was an easterner who loved to vacation on horseback in the American Southwest. No mere tourist, he sought out the most remote and forbidding landscapes he could find: the seldom-visited country north of the Grand Canyon, the vast slickrock expanses of the Navajo Reservation, and sites such as Zion Canyon and Capitol Reef before they became national parks. An amateur geologist, Fraser stood at the same panoramic viewpoints used by Major John Wesley Powell to make the first maps of the Plateau Province. As he penned his own memorable observations of the region's landforms, he also wrote of campouts at stunning Grand Canyon vistas or meals shared with forest rangers and cowhands, recorded sympathetic accounts of local residents, and told of hazards he encountered on rocky trails and primitive wagon tracks. Frederick H. Swanson has edited Fraser's voluminous journals into a single volume covering three trips: Zion Canyon, the Toroweap, and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon in 1914; the High Plateaus of Utah, including Capitol Reef, the Henry Mountains, the Aquarius Plateau, the Kolob Plateau, and Pine Valley Mountain in 1915; and across the Kaibab Plateau, Lees Ferry, and the northern Navajo Reservation in 1916. The last includes an account of a mishap-filled trip by automobile and mail truck from Bluff, Utah, to the rail line at Thompson. As Fraser wades the bone-chilling waters of the Zion Narrows, crosses the Grand Canyon in midsummer heat, and rides through the trackless forest of the Aquarius Plateau, he conveys impressions of the land that will fascinate any reader who wonders what the canyon country was like before it became a popular tourist destination—and one that will inform historians interested in early accounts of the region. Accompanied by a selection of photographs taken by Fraser and his fellow travelers, *Journeys in the Canyon Lands* brings to life the Southwest's breathtaking backcountry on the brink of discovery.

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