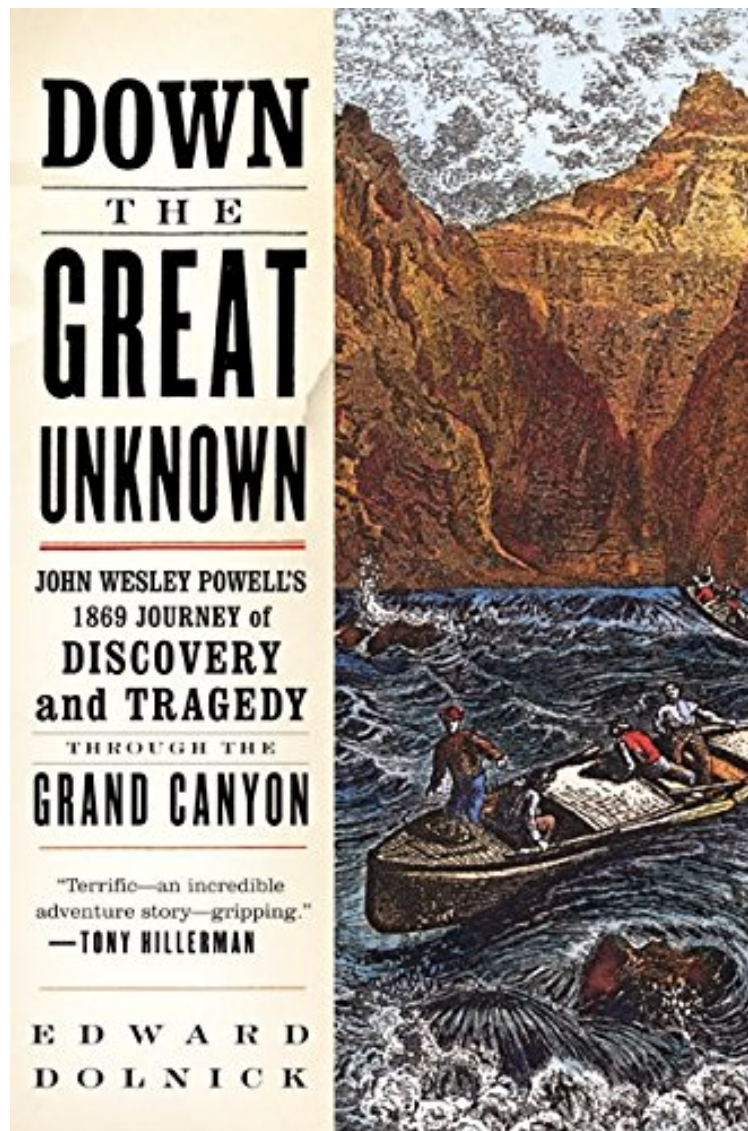


(Download) Down the Great Unknown: John Wesley Powell's 1869 Journey of Discovery and Tragedy Through the Grand Canyon

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Edward Dolnick

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#60134 in Books Edward Dolnick 2002-09-17 2002-09-17 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .90 x 5.311, .73 #File Name: 0060955864400 pages Down the Great Unknown: John Wesley Powell's 1869 Journey of Discovery and Tragedy Through the Grand Canyon 1st Edition Edward Dolnick | File size: 45.Mb

Edward Dolnick : Down the Great Unknown: John Wesley Powell's 1869 Journey of Discovery and Tragedy Through the Grand Canyon before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Down the Great Unknown: John Wesley Powell's 1869 Journey of Discovery and Tragedy Through the Grand Canyon:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A trip worth taking
By E. Clinton
This is an excellent book that tells the story of John Wesley Powell's 1869 river trip through the Grand Canyon. It relies on primary source documents, such as diaries and notes taken by the adventurers. The author also interviewed modern adventurers who have taken boat trips through the dangerous rapids of the Colorado River. Because the author took the time to really learn about and understand the river, the book is highly informative. I learned a great deal about the Colorado River, the canyons, the rocks, and the difficulties faced by Powell and his colleagues. Powell was also a skilled climber even though he had lost an arm at the battle of Shiloh in the Civil War. In sum, this is a great history book that does a wonderful job of helping the reader visualize and understand the challenges that Powell and his men faced.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. These Guys Were Tough !!
By G. W. Meador
This book is about more than a Civil War hero, or the group of totally inexperienced men invited along on his quest. This book is about courage, survival and camaraderie, it's about fear, the unknown and what a group of men did to map, just barely, the wild and raging Colorado River and the "Grand Canyon" it ran through. This is a great adventure story, a story of discovery and tragedy. I found it hard to put down. I would recommend it to anyone interested in history, adventure or the great So. West. These guys were tough...
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well done
By Peter Boody
There is only so much primary material on which to base this story and the author has done a fine job spinning it into a dramatic tale. It may be a little repetitive at times: after all, how many ways can the perilous passage through one rapids after another be described? But I enjoyed going along for the ride without having to suffer the awful perils of the trip.

Drawing on rarely examined diaries and journals, *Down the Great Unknown* is the first book to tell the full, dramatic story of the Powell expedition. On May 24, 1869 a one-armed Civil War veteran, John Wesley Powell and a ragtag band of nine mountain men embarked on the last great quest in the American West. The Grand Canyon, not explored before, was as mysterious as Atlantis and as perilous. The ten men set out from Green River Station, Wyoming Territory down the Colorado in four wooden rowboats. Ninety-nine days later, six half-starved wretches came ashore near Callville, Arizona. Lewis and Clark opened the West in 1803, six decades later Powell and his scruffy band aimed to resolve the West's last mystery. A brilliant narrative, a thrilling journey, a cast of memorable heroes—all these mark *Down the Great Unknown*, the true story of the last epic adventure on American soil.

.com Edward Dolnick's *Down the Great Unknown* depicts the "last epic journey on American soil," John Wesley Powell's exploration of the Grand Canyon and the fulminating, carnivorous Colorado River. The book, a model of precision, clarity, and serene passion, outshines, arguably, its bestselling brother-volume, Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage*. On May 24, 1869, Powell, an ambitious, autocratic, one-armed Civil War veteran and amateur scientist, and a casually recruited crew of nine--without a lick of white water experience--embarked from an obscure railroad stop in the Wyoming Territory to travel through a region "scarcely better known than Atlantis." Ninety-nine days, 1,000 miles and nearly 500 rapids later, six of the men came ashore in Arizona--the first humans to run the waters of the Grand Canyon. Dolnick tells this story of courage, naiveté, hardship, and petty squabbling simply and authoritatively using entries from the men's journals, deft overviews (we always know where we are), and short science, history, and psychology lessons, as well as the prodigious knowledge of present-day river runners and his own first-hand observations. His prose carries the day: Powell looks like a "stick of beef jerky adorned with whiskers," the boats are "walnut shells," which in rapids are little better than "ladybugs caught in a hose's blast" or "drunks trying to negotiate a revolving door," while the river is a "taunting bully," a "colossal mugger," a "sumo wrestler smothering a kitten," and a notable rock formation looks like what might happen if "Edward Gorey had designed the Bat Cave." *Down the Great Unknown* brushes against perfection. This is history written as it should be--and too rarely is: enthusiastic, rigorous, painterly, gloriously free of both pedantry and hyperbole. --H. O'Billovitch
From Publishers Weekly
owell led his band of stalwart trappers and ex-soldiers down the Green River in Wyoming Territory, heading for the last bit of terra incognita in the U.S.: the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon. The expedition had plenty of supplies, but the wrong type of boats for shooting rapids. Moreover, their inexperience with rapids cost them one of the boats and many provisions. There was little game to supplement their rapidly dwindling food supply. And being the first to chart the river, they didn't know what lay beyond each twist. These handicaps, along with deadly river rocks, soaring canyon walls and one-armed Powell's impressive feat of scaling them to measure their height, make for a remarkable journey. Unfortunately, Dolnick does the story a disservice in overwriting the expedition's slower moments. He frequently overexplains, and he never meets a simile he doesn't like. Every description, no matter how effective, is carried too far, suggesting Dolnick doesn't trust his story or his readers: "rapids... do not murmur. They rumble. They roar. They crash. The sound evokes a thunderstorm just overhead, a jet skimming the ground, a runaway train.... The message is worse than the sound itself the roar of a rapid is a proclamation of danger as clear as a giant's bellowed curse in a fairy tale." After passages like that, readers may want to jump ship, or like Powell's band, they can struggle through and emerge battered but illuminated. Photos and illus. (Oct. 2)
Forecast: Will a 15-city NPR campaign, six-city author tour and big-time advertising help the story trump the writing? Yes. The adventure is that

good. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* On May 24, 1869, John Wesley Powell and a band of nine volunteer frontiersmen embarked from Green River Station, Wyoming Territory, in four wooden boats. The one-armed Union veteran and geology professor set out to explore the uncharted Green and Colorado rivers and pass through the mysterious Grand Canyon, reaching his destination at the mouth of the Virgin River in Arizona in late August. To research this journey, former *Boston Globe* science writer Dolnick relied on Powell's river and postexpedition diaries and his crew's journals. These accounts reveal the friction between the overbearing Powell and his independent mountain men, which resulted in defections and the mysterious disappearance of three crew members. Dolnick's study offers excellent descriptions of the riverine obstacles, the inadequacy of the boats employed, the back-breaking tasks of lining and portaging, the constant threat of death from starvation and hostiles, and the wildly speculative press accounts. The author's liberal use of corroborative testimony from contemporary whitewater professionals may, however, prove distracting. Dolnick's concluding chapter shows how Powell's eventual campaign of self-promotion both secured for him a place in history and effectively eclipsed (by design) the amazing contributions of his men. Recommended for Western collections and all libraries. [For a fictional account of Powell's sojourn, see John Vernon's *The Last Canyon*, p. 144. Ed.] John Carver Edwards, Univ. of Georgia Libs., Athen.- John Carver Edwards, Univ. of Georgia Libs., Athens Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.