SPOTLIGHTING THE WEST SLOPE

While Colorado’s West Slope scenery differs (as above, a timber flume near Palisade, c. 1914) from that on the east side of the divide, water issues are of common interest. This winter has seen no shortage of news related to West Slope water. While Colorado River Basin states have been feverishly working on drought contingency plans, abundant mountain snowfall has been causing record numbers of avalanches. Snowfall in mid-March caused an electrical outage at the Gold King Mine wastewater treatment plant, which had been installed after the 2015 spill. The Water Resources Archive can shed some historical light on these noteworthy news items, so let’s take a look. Or, if you’re ready to think about spring plans involving whitewater rafting, go on an expedition with this issue’s Historical Highlight.

–Patty Rettig, Archivist, Water Resources Archive

P.S. If you are seeking good sources of water news, sign up for Fresh Water News or BC Water News (or both).

JOIN US: AUTHOR SERIES

Learn about the history of rivers polluted by toxic mining waste in Colorado by joining the Water Resources Archive on Tuesday April 16 when we welcome to Fort Collins Jonathan Thompson, author of River of Lost Souls: The Science, Politics, and Greed Behind the Gold King Mine Disaster. He will discuss his book on the Gold King Mine, focusing on decisions over time that led to the 2015 spill that polluted the Animas River, turning it bright orange. His presentation and slideshow will take place in Colorado State University’s Lory Student Center Theatre at 7 p.m.
Thompson is appearing as part of the Libraries' highly popular Author Series. There is no charge for attendance, and seating will be first come, first served. Book sales and signing will follow the presentation. Please come, and bring a friend!

WATER PUZZLER

Though this U.S. Bureau of Reclamation engineer earned the nickname “Mr. Sediment,” he had wide-ranging expertise. He comes to mind this month because he studied avalanches in Colorado’s high country for more than a decade, including for the Vail ski resort. Before this, during World War II, he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army’s 10th Mountain Division, braving snow and cold in his service. This man served as the Bureau’s sedimentation section chief for twenty years, conducting model sedimentation studies for some of the biggest dam projects in the West. Born in 1905 and living until 2001, this man endowed a lecture series which is presented annually as part of Colorado State University’s Hydrology Days.

Who was this man?

The answer is…

PLANNING FOR DROUGHT

The seven Colorado River Basin states have invested significant time over the last several months to finalize drought contingency plans. While this is a notable achievement for the basin, drought studies and planning go back decades in Colorado. Collections in the Water Resources Archive reveal examinations of drought from different aspects, including science, sociology, and law.

The Records of the Colorado Water Resources Research Institute document flood studies, reports, and conferences, primarily focusing on the drought of the 1970s and the one that began in 2002. The Papers of
Evan Vlachos show how this sociologist approached drought issues, both locally and around the world. In the Papers of Gregory J. Hobbs, Jr., legal aspects that arise from droughts are examined. For assistance navigating or accessing any of this, please contact us.

**No one likes a drought,** including in needed funding. Please consider assisting the Water Resources Archive in its work on Colorado water history with a tax-deductible donation. Your gift will help further our mission as we work on saving the past for the future!

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**HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHT: COLORADO RIVER SCROLL MAP**

May 24 will mark **150 years** since Civil War veteran John Wesley Powell embarked with ten men in four wooden boats on an exploratory expedition down the Green and Colorado rivers into the Grand Canyon. Their intentions included creating a detailed map of these uncharted places. By no means a recreational journey, this trip nevertheless paved the way for commercial whitewater rafting to thrive less than 100 years later. Even then, good maps were still hard to come by but were in much greater demand.

In the 1950s river runner Les Jones created scroll maps, first for his own use and then for sale to others. The one pictured here and held by the Water Resources Archive is a **1962 map of the Colorado River,** marked with names of rapids along with rafting tips. **Seven inches** tall, the scroll is more than **40 feet** long, made to be easily rolled and stored on a windy, watery raft. Not many of these exist in libraries or archives across the country, so this rare item is a special treasure of the Water Resources Archive.

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**PUZZLER ANSWER:**

Whitney McNair Borland

Learn more about him in the Guide to the Papers of Whitney M. Borland. To see some of his avalanche studies, scroll to Subseries 2.4 in that document, or browse the Borland Papers that we have scanned and added to CSU’s digital repository. The photograph above of Borland measuring snow can be seen on p.29 of Test of Snowblast Snowplows.

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This electronic newsletter provides updates about the Water Resources Archive. To be added to this distribution list, please send an e-mail that includes your name and a request to subscribe.

This e-newsletter is created by Patty Rettig.

Designed by Demi Connelley