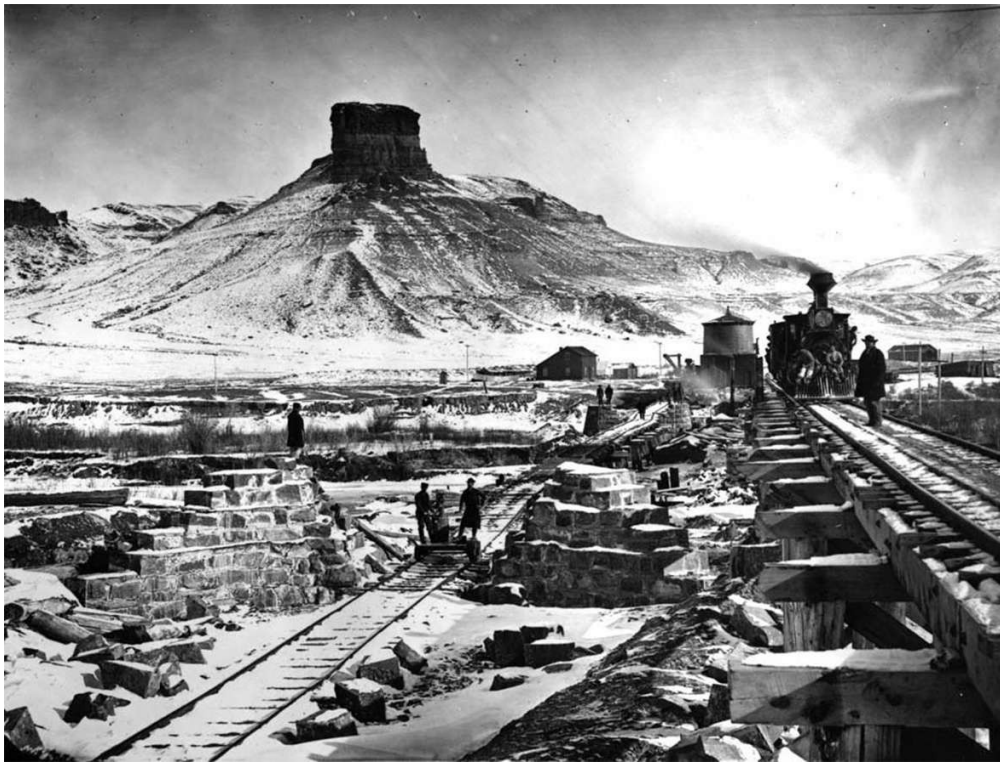


## Historical Threads

# Looking Back - 150 Years Since the Start of the John Wesley Powell Expedition

By Jay M. Jones



“May 24, 1869 — The good people of Green River City [Wyoming] turn out to see us start. We raise our little flag, push the boats from shore, and the swift current carries us down.

“Our boats are four in number. Three are built of oak; stanch and firm; doubled-ribbed, with double stem and stern posts, and further strengthened by bulkheads, dividing each into three compartments.”

Thus begins John Wesley Powell’s description of his exploration of the Green and Colorado Rivers 150 years ago. His exploring party consists of 10 men, including himself.

They take with them food rations that could

last up to ten months. They have tools with which to build cabins, repair boats, and meet other potential necessities, and a large quantity of ammunition. Since this is a scientific exploration, they have sextants, chronometers, barometers, thermometers and compasses, among other instruments.

Their boats were custom built in Chicago, and transported to Green River on the transcontinental railroad, which had the last spike driven in Utah only 9 days before Powell's departure.

As the river passes through the Uintah Mountains, the Powell expedition enters Flaming Gorge, which they named. Before their epic journey emerges from the Grand Canyon of the Colorado at the end of August, they document discoveries and adventures that continue to stir imaginations of young and old many generations later.

Much more can be said of Powell and his men, both of this expedition and later expeditions that he led to survey and study the Colorado River and its tributaries.

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