

Visit of a French Tourist to Southern Utah in 1885

By Jay Jones



Albert Tissandier. Portrait taken from the magazine La Nature #1738, September 15 1906. It is an illustration to Albert Tissandier's obituary. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

For many years after the Euro-American settlement of Utah, the regions of Southern Utah and Northern Arizona were ignored and largely unknown to most Americans. So it was a little unusual when a noted French architect and editor spent several weeks in the area in May and June of 1885.

Albert Tissandier had many talents and interests. Albert and his brother were the first to combine electric motors and hot-air balloon flight. Some of his drawings of clouds and scenery seen on his balloon flights in France are still popular today.

Albert toured the United States, documenting his travels in a book “Six Months in the United States, 1885” along with many of his illustrations that are now part of the permanent collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts in Salt Lake City.

Albert talked with John Wesley Powell at the U. S. Geological Survey in Washington D.C. and got recommendations of places to visit and people to contact along his journey. The Grand Canyon area was highly recommended.

From Salt Lake City, Albert took a 13 hour train ride to Milford (then the southern end of the railroad from Salt Lake City). The only other traveler was Mr. Lund, probably Robert C. Lund, a businessman from St. George, for whom the town of Lund in Iron County was later named.

After spending the night in a motel in Milford, Alfred describes a dusty, bumpy, uncomfortable ride in a mail carriage from Milford to Cedar City, with cushions he described as being stuffed with either “kernals or stones.”

After a twelve hour ride, he finally arrived in Cedar City, which he described as an oasis after the long road from Milford. He mentions “pleasant avenues planted with beautiful trees, charming brick houses and garden enclosures walled off by hedges, filled with fruits and vegetables.”

He notes that Cedar City is sheltered by a large sandstone mountain. “Streams of water descend from the mountain, running from all parts and joining a small river whose joyous murmur was audible.”

Mr. Lund, the traveling companion, introduced Albert to the bishop of Cedar City (Henry Lunt at the time), who provided dinner and lodging for the night. “Their house, which was scrupulously tidy, serves as a refuge for the rare travelers who pass through Cedar City, and is also the telegraph station.”

Albert notes a list of “pious rules” which is posted in the home. Following dinner, the young daughters of his host played the organ and sang ballads, along with a neighbor farm boy “cleaned up and properly dressed.”

Mr. Lund then took Albert to visit other families in Cedar City. Albert notes, “In all their houses I noticed the same order, the same extreme tidiness, and the same comfortable furnishings. It was hard to believe I was so far removed from all civilization.”

Albert and Mr. Lund left Cedar City at 3 a.m. the next morning, with the bishop and his family all up to wish them the traditional “bon voyage.”

The next stop was Silver Reef, which Albert describes as a small city with about 400 inhabitants from diverse places. Mr. Lund arranged a tour by Mr. Allen, the director of one of the mines which was 83 meters deep and 400 meters long. This mine had reportedly produced 18 million dollars worth of silver during 6 years of operation.

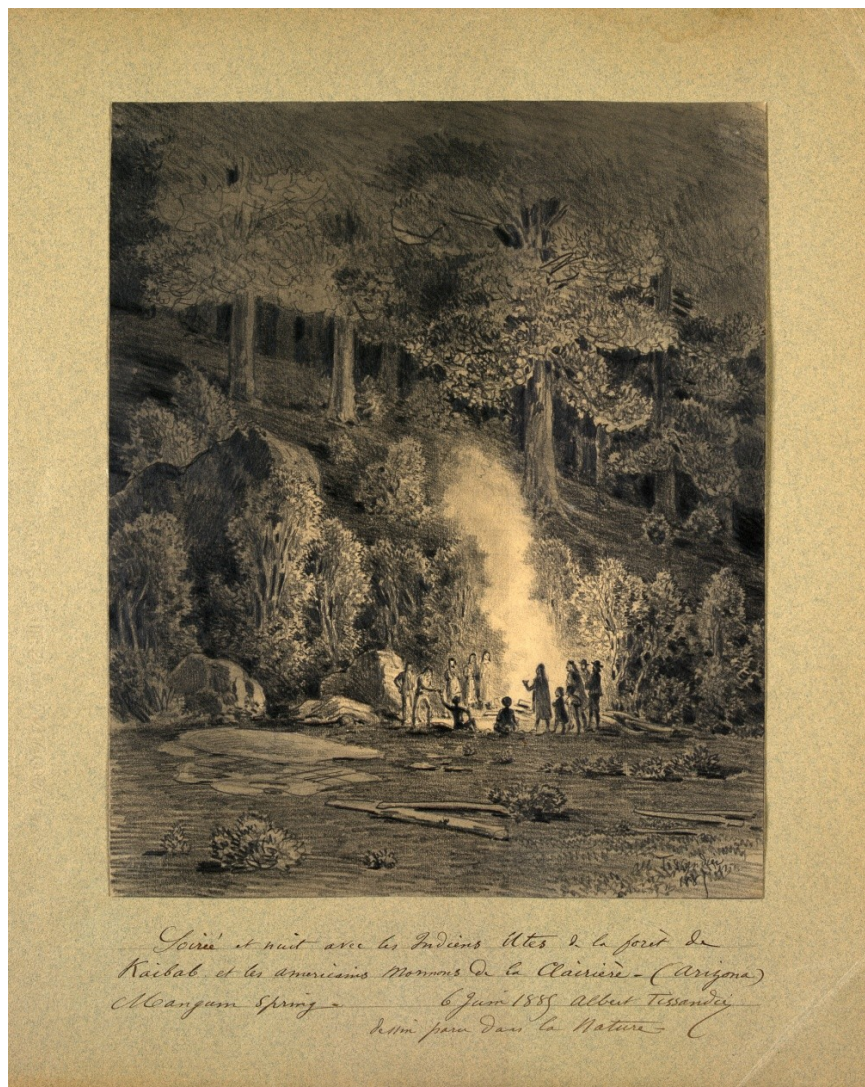
From Silver Reef, Albert took a stage to Kanab, where he met Nathan Adams, who guided him on visits to Mt. Trumbull, Toroweap, the Kaibab Plateau, and the Grand Canyon. Along the way, they stopped at Pipe Springs, a reliable source of water. On the Kaibab Plateau they visited a Native American encampment, which Albert described in detail.

The scenery made a deep impression, as he comments, “I advanced with a feeling of indefinable wonder at the grandeur of this strange landscape.”

After returning to Kanab, Albert traveled north to Panguitch and then on to Salt Lake City. He writes: “From Kanab to Panguitch the landscape is not less unbelievable than that of Arizona. It is even more curious and, perhaps, more bizarre but not as grand and overwhelming. The colors of Utah red rock and sandstone are extraordinary.”



Albert Charles Tissandier, French, House of Nathan Adam, 1885, Pencil on paper. From the Permanent Collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum.



Albert Charles Tissandier, French, Soiree with the Ute Indians, 1885, Pencil on paper. From the Permanent Collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum

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