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HIRAM C. HODGE.

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CHAPTER VI.

RIVERS OF ARIZONA : SIZE, EXTENT, ETC.

THE principal rivers of Arizona are the Colorado, Gila, Salt, Chiquito Colorado, or Little Colorado, Verde, Bill Williams, San Pedro, Santa Cruz, White, Black, and some others of lesser note, which are mostly branches of the main rivers. Many of the mountain streams, which in Arizona are called rivers, would in most other parts of the United States be called creeks, brooks, or rivulets.

The great Colorado River is formed by the Green and Grand rivers, and other streams far to the north. The Grand River rises in Colorado, in the western declivities of the Rocky Mountains, and runs a south-westerly course to its junction with the Green. The Green rises far up in Wyoming, near Fremont's Peak, and runs a southerly course to where it unites with the Grand, in Utah, from which point of union it is called the Colorado. The Colorado is navigable for steamers of four hundred tons at all seasons of the year, as far as Hardyville, five hundred and thirteen miles above its mouth, and steamers have been as far

up as Callville, six hundred and forty-one miles from the Gulf of California. From its mouth to the foot of the Grand Cañon, a distance of seven hundred miles, the river at low water has an average width of about six hundred feet, and a depth of five to twenty feet. From the extreme head waters of its upper branches, the Colorado River has a total length including its windings of some three thousand miles, and it is the largest and longest river that enters the Pacific Ocean, south of the Sacramento River, on the American continent. The Colorado River region presents some of the grandest scenery on the globe. For nearly three hundred miles, in Northern Arizona, its waters, during the untold ages of the past, have worn through great mountain chains, and mountain plateaus, cutting out for itself a channel many hundreds and thousands of feet deep in the hard granite, slate, porphyry, sandstone, limestone, and volcanic rocks, thus forming the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, the grandest cañon the eye of man ever saw. This cañon can in no way be fully explored, except by entering it with boats from its upper part in Utah, as Lieutenant Powell and party did, in 1869; and then it is a Herculean task, requiring a large degree of energy, perseverance, and indomitable courage. For a full description of this wonderful cañon, the reader is referred to Major Powell's reports of his expedition down the river, all of which will be found exceedingly

interesting in its description of the scenery, and of hair-breadth escapes from dangers and death, which exceed in interest the wildest imaginations of the most fertile brain. Many lateral cañons enter the main one, in its long and tortuous course, all of exceeding interest to the admirers of the grand and sublime in nature. Between the Grand Cañon, where it opens out from its rocky inclosure, down to Yuma, there are several other deep, abysmal cañons, from five to twenty miles long, through which the great volume of waters of the Colorado, collected from a thousand mountain streams, rush with whirlpool velocity, bearing onward, ever onward, in its mass of waters, a thick sediment of alluvium, which is deposited along its banks, and in the upper portion of the Gulf of California, adding year after year large tracts of rich alluvial land to the tens of thousands of acres heretofore deposited by the river in the long eras of the past.

The Gila River, the largest tributary of the Colorado, rises far to the east in New Mexico to the north-east of Silver City, pursues a general westerly course, enters Arizona near the rich Clifton Copper Mines, passing through the beautiful Pueblo Viejo Valley, the San Carlos Indian Agency, and the mountains below, and emerging into the lower, or great Gila Valley, some twelve miles above Florence, the county town of Pinal County, and thence west for nearly

three hundred miles to its junction with the Colorado at Yuma. The total length of the Gila, including its many windings, is fully six hundred and fifty miles. For four hundred miles, at low water, the Gila has an average width of about one hundred feet, and a depth of one to two feet.

Salt River rises well up towards the eastern part of the Territory, in the White Mountains, its head waters being the White and Black rivers. It has numerous large branches, coming in mostly from the north, draining the country far to the north, including the Tonto Basin, the Sierra Ancha, White, San Francisco, and other mountains. Its course is west and southwest, and it unites with the Gila below Phoenix some thirty miles. This river was named the "Rio Salido," by the early Spanish and Jesuit explorers, on account of its waters being highly impregnated with salt, which is easily noticed at low water. This is caused by a heavy salt formation through which the river passes about one hundred miles above Phoenix. At low water it is a clear, beautiful stream, having an average width of two hundred feet for a distance of one hundred miles above its junction with the Gila, and a depth of two feet or more.

The Verde River is one of the largest northern branches of Salt River, its upper branches rising at different points to the east, north, and northwest

from Prescott. It becomes a fine river of eighty feet in width about fifty miles northeast from Prescott, and thence runs a southerly course to its junction with Salt River near Camp McDowell. Its whole course is about one hundred and fifty miles. The Tonto, Sipicue, Cherry, Agua Frio, and other large creeks, are also tributaries of Salt River, coming in from the north. The main upper branches of Salt River, the White and Black rivers, are both swift running mountain streams, and rise in the White Mountains. They are well stocked with the real speckled mountain trout, affording rare sport to the followers and devotees of Izaak Walton.

The Little, or Chiquito Colorado, which has by some been called Flax River, rises in the northeastern declivities of the White Mountains, near the line between Arizona and New Mexico, runs in a northwesterly direction, and enters the main Colorado in Northern Arizona, about fifty miles south of the southern line of Utah, and near the head of the Grand Cañon. The lower part of the Chiquito Colorado runs through a cañon second only to that of the Grand Cañon of the main Colorado.

Bill Williams Fork is an eastern branch of the Colorado, with which it unites at Aubrey, 235 miles above Yuma. Its different branches rise, some in the mountains fifty miles southwest from Prescott, some near Mount Hope, and some in the Hualapai

Mountains in Mohave County. In its whole course it is not far from one hundred and fifty miles long, which is about the same as the Chiquito Colorado. The Santa Maria is its main eastern branch, and the Sandy its main northern. These two streams unite some fifteen miles south from Greenwood, from which point the Bill Williams Fork flows west to its junction with the Colorado.

The San Pedro rises near the line between Arizona and Sonora, and runs a general northerly course a distance of over one hundred miles, and enters the Gila River near old Camp Grant.

The Santa Cruz River rises also near the Arizona and Sonora line, southeast from the Patagonia Mountains, making a long detour into Sonora to the southwest, thence to the north into Arizona, and finally sinking in the great plain or valley some twelve miles to the north from Tucson. The whole length of the Santa Cruz is not far from one hundred and fifty miles, to the point where its waters finally sink. It must have formerly run far to the northwest and perhaps entered the Gila River below Maricopa Wells, as its old bed is now distinguishable at different places. One fact connected with most of the mountain streams of Arizona, and which is applicable to most of the streams west of the Rocky Mountains, is this: The volume of water in the mountains is much greater than in the valleys and plains below,

which is principally owing to the character of the soil, — generally a disintegrated granite, which is open and porous, permitting the waters to sink in, and percolate through it to a great depth, — and, to a less extent, to evaporation in a dry and hot climate. Some of the larger rivers, such as the Gila, are at times during extreme hot and dry weather dry in their beds for many miles, rising and sinking at intervals as the bed rock comes near the surface. Nearly all of the smaller streams that enter the great valleys and plains present this peculiarity.

The Colorado River drains the western and extreme northern parts of the Territory, the Chiquito Colorado the northeastern part, the Gila and Salt Rivers the central part east and west, and the San Pedro and Santa Cruz the southern part of the Territory.