

The Havasupai and Their Land
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Senior Honors Thesis

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April 11, 1996

While I was riding an extremely old and very much blind horse down the side of the Grand Canyon and through the washbacks of a dry river bed, I had to wonder what made these people, the Havasupai, live in this isolated and desolate area. The area was beautiful in a dry sort of way. The guide I had was quiet, he barely spoke three words to me for the three-and-a-half hour ride to the campground between Havasu Falls and Mooney Falls. My two-and-a-half day stay at the bottom of Havasu Canyon, a part of the Grand Canyon, was an eye opening experience in what could almost be labeled a third-world village.

The one thing that stuck me upon entering the village was its resemblance to a third world village. All the homes were square, no bigger than many garages. Most had dirt floors, with the luxury of electricity and running water courtesy of the U.S. government. The school housed grades K-8 with each grade having its own prefabricated building.

The economy of the Havasupai was largely based on packing in tourists and the welfare provided by the federal government. I learned later, however, the other top money maker was bootlegging. Apparently, a pint of Jack Daniels was going for around thirty dollars at the time of my visit.

The most striking characteristic of the Havasupai was their hostility toward white people. This was ironic, however, since more than half of the money made by the Havasupai was through packing in white tourists. The only people of the village I could get to respond to my greetings were the children. Only one adult answered my good morning wish, and he did that with a nod and a muttered mumble.

The most hostile person I encountered in the village was the vice-chairman of the tribal council. He was extremely rude to my group for not making prior arrangements to meet with him. He refused to answer many of our questions about alcoholism, child abuse, drug abuse, the economy of the tribe, and other issues, and he even went so far as to berate our professor in front of the whole group.

The one person who was connected to the tribe who spoke frankly with our group was Kaze Godway, who was an administrative assistant to the vice-chairman. She was not a Havasupai, however. Ethnically, she was an Eastern Native American. She explained the peoples' hatred of whites was a result of the U.S. government's policies toward Havasupai land rights and holy places.

The Havasupai's history in the Grand Canyon area was a long one that stretched back to Pre-Columbian times. For six centuries they lived in an area from the South Rim of the Grand Canyon to the region of Flagstaff and Williams. Their language was traced to the Yuman branch of the Hokan language, a language traced to the first group of people to cross the Bering Straits. The Hokans were pushed into the Southwest region by the Athapascans who pushed the Shoshoneans south into the Hokans. The Hokans then split into different groups. The Colorado Plateau supported a people known as the Desert Culture dating back four thousand years, one of the first cultures documented in the area. It was dated by the tools and stick figurines left by the ancient inhabitants.¹

The next group of people to live in the area was the Anasazi, a transitional group from the nomadic Desert Culture to the stationary pueblo cultures. Then the Cohonina appeared in the area around 700 AD. This group could have been an off-shoot from the Anasazi, or they could have been pushed into the area from the south by other more numerous and violent peoples. The Cohonina settled in the area stretching from Havasu Canyon to Desert View because of the good water supply there. By 1100, however, a series of droughts forced the people to migrate and form temporary settlements. The first of these settlements was in Havasu Canyon, a significant source of water.²

By 1150, Cohonina construction had stopped. At about 1300 a Yuman speaking group, the Cerbats, entered the region. These people were the ancestors of the

¹Stephen Hirst, Havsum'Baaja: People of the Blue Green Water, Temle, AZ, Walsh and Associates, 1985, p. 28.

²Hirst, p. 28.

Havasupai, "the people of the blue green water," and the Hualapai. Some question remained as to the fate of the Cohonina. Stephen Hirst believed they were assimilated into the Cerbat's and based this theory on a sweat-lodge of the Cohonina connecting the Havasupai and the Hualapai to the Cohonina. Also, these two tribes retained the ability to read the petroglyphs that predate the Cerbat. John Martin also believed the Cerbat entered the area around 1150 AD. He, too, suggested the Cerbat intermarried with the Cohonina and/or pushed them out of the area. The Havasupai culture developed directly from the Cerbat, in any case.³

The Havasupai had a story of their own about their migration to the area. They claimed to have migrated from the Northeast originating at Moon Mountain near Blythe. They then moved through Kingman and stopped at Matwidita Canyon. It was here a dispute broke out among the people, and they decided to split into two groups, the Havasupai and the Hualapai. The Havasupai went east until they hit Havasu Canyon. Another dispute occurred among the Havasupai, and a few others split away from the tribe.⁴

Since the plateau lands became dry around 1400 and the people had no permanent settlements on the plateau, the Havasupai had an annual cycle they followed in order to extract the best from the fertile canyon bottom lands and the animal rich plateau of the rim lands. In the spring the wintering groups gathered and went to the garden plots in the canyon and plots were cleared of all winter debris. The previous years' ditches and dams were repaired and new irrigation works were constructed to deflect river water and to hold rain water. The garden plots were then planted.⁵

³Hirst, p. 29. John Martin, "The Havasupai," Plateau Magazine of the Museum of Northern Arizona, AZ, Museum of Northern Arizona, 1986, p. 3.

⁴Hirst, p. 30.

⁵Steven Weber and David Seaman, Havasupai Habitat: A.F. Whiting's Ethnography of a Traditional Indian Culture, Tucson, AZ, University of Arizona Press, 1985, p. 10.

After planting, the Havasupai went back to the plateau to hunt animals and collect wild fruits and plants. At this time, the people stayed together in one location. Small groups made occasional trips to the canyon to irrigate and weed the gardens. As the corn became green, they camped near the fields in earthen domes and caves to guard the crops with only occasional hunting and mining excursions.⁶

When the crops ripened, they gathered in the fields and invited the Hopi and Hualapai to the Harvest Festival. The corn, beans, and squash were harvested and some seeds were dried for the following spring's planting. As winter approached, the Havasupai went back to the plateau. There they broke into family units and departed for their winter camps, which were within a short distance of each other and the location of each family was known by surrounding families. They lived in conical huts of brush and earth. When food was low, they went to the storehouse caves to retrieve the fall's surpluses.⁷

Also, in the fall and winter months, some went east to help the Hopi harvest their crops and to visit. They maintained close relations with the Hopi even though there was no cross-cultural marriages. Hopi villages were also natural locations for peace talks between the Havasupai and their enemies.⁸

The Havasupai were a tribe organized on an informal and flexible basis and were able to maintain their traditional lifestyle until 1860. They spent the majority of their time in small groups of twenty-five to thirty with only a short time spent each year in larger groups. Each band was led by one man who became leader through his personality and courage. The two nineteenth century leaders who gained some fame were Navajo

⁶Weber and Seaman, p. 10.

⁷Weber and Seaman, p. 10.

⁸Weber and Seaman, p. 11.

and Wasakivama. All these leaders had limited power, but never had unrestricted power.⁹

In Havasu culture a young married couple first lived with the bride's family while the groom worked for her family. Then, the couple usually moved near the groom's family (especially true after the reservation was created). They were given unused land to farm by the groom's family or band, while the land the bride occupied fell fallow for her brothers. When the people started grazing herds of horses and cows after the arrival of whites, the fallow land disappeared and the idea of ownership became more personal. This was intensified by the creation of the reservation, and put a tremendous strain on the families. In order to live with the Havasupai one had to have land. If he had no land, he had to leave the tribe because one could only inherit land since there was none for sale. Non-farmland, including water sources and pasture lands on the plateau and Esplanade, if they were privately owned, were kept up by the individual for the use of the tribe.¹⁰

With the reservation and the reduction in farm and grazing land, family tensions began to rise among sons for land and horses. Many left to find wage work on Highway 66, and an emphasis for only one heir grew. By the 1960s three groups existed, the heads of households, welfare receivers and wage laborers, and the young trying to find a niche. In 1963 housing was inadequate with all but two families living in pre-fabs that were twelve foot by twelve foot. Sanitation was poor as were medical care and the water supply. Overcrowding was a major problem too, even though the population dropped from three hundred plus in the 1800s to one hundred and sixty-six in 1906.¹¹

The Havasupai's rapid decline to this sad state was a process that started with their contact with whites. Their first contact with the white population was with the Spanish, Catholic missionaries who were visiting Oraibi, a Hopi town. The second time

⁹Martin, p. 5.

¹⁰Weber and Seaman, p. 125.

¹¹Maritn, pp. 21-22. Weber and Seaman, p. 6.

the Havasupai encountered the Spanish was in 1776 when Father Francisco Garces came and visited the people in Havasu Canyon. The contact between the Havasupai and the Spanish ended in 1820.¹²

By the mid 1800s, the Havasupai were being squeezed between other tribes. The Hualapai were pressuring the Havasupai from the west because they were being pushed east by the growing white population. On the east the Navajo occupied the area between the Havasupai and the Hopi and were pushing against the Havasupai for land.¹³

Still, the Havasupai remained virtually unknown until after the American Civil War. By the 1860s the people were organized into thirteen bands. They lived in local groups of thirty to forty, and most still farmed. They still rotated uninterrupted on their annual seasonal cycle from the canyon to plateau lands.¹⁴

During the last half of the nineteenth century, white ranchers started moving into the area. They squatted on many of the Havasupai land use areas. They destroyed a lot of land used by the Havasupai for hunting and gathering. They also took over and/or destroyed water tanks belonging to the Havasupai. All told, the whites took, through force, over two million acres.¹⁵

The real infringement on Havasupai land began in the 1850s with the American railroad companies' search for a railroad right-of-way to the West Coast. Stephen Hirst said, "By the 1850s, the first groups of government surveyors and exploration teams had begun to move through Havasupai territory searching for a transcontinental railroad right-of-way. One man even proposed to locate a railroad along the floor of the Grand Canyon."¹⁶ In 1858 a topographer, Egloffstein, in the expedition led by Lieutenant Ives

¹²Weber and Seaman, p. 12. Martin, p. 8.

¹³Weber and Seaman, p. 12.

¹⁴Maritn, pp. 3-4.

¹⁵Unknown, *The Havasupai: Prisoners of the Grand Canyon*, Havasupai Nation, Association on American Indians Incorporated, date unknown, p. 4.

¹⁶Hirst, p. 42.

to Havasu Canyon rediscovered the Havasupai at the bottom of the canyon. This rediscovery was the starting point of the Havasupai loss of their traditional land use area.¹⁷

In 1863, a new set of missionaries, the Mormons, came to the region hoping to convert the native population of the area. These missionaries were escorted from the Havasupai village and threatened with death upon return. Two years later, a Congressional Act was passed that foreshadowed the creation of the Havasupai reservation. The act created a reservation in Arizona on the Colorado River which was made to house all the Native Americans in the area.¹⁸

To further the gloomy outlook of the Havasupai future, in 1863 gold was found in the Prescott area and the whites poured into the area. Lead was found later in Cataract Canyon, below the Havasupai farm lands. The Havasupai's land was being pinched away on all sides. The one positive aspect of the land crunch was the betterment of relations between the Havasupai and the Navajo. The Navajo were forced to stop raids on the Havasupai in 1864 because the Kit Carson raids were taking a heavy toll on them.¹⁹

On November 21, 1871 Major General Scofield, commander of the military division of the Pacific, declared that all natives not on reservations were hostile. This forced the Hualapai to flee into the canyons of the Havasupai. In 1874 the Hualapai were rounded up and placed on a reservation at La Paz. They walked off the reservation a year later and were finally given their own reservation on January 4, 1883.²⁰

A Havasupai reservation was first suggested by the army in 1877 to protect Havasu Canyon from the miners moving into the area. On June 8, 1880, President Hayes created a 38,400 acre reservation. The U.S. army said that was too much land on

¹⁷Hirst, pp. 42-43.

¹⁸Hirst, p. 43.

¹⁹Weber and Seaman, p. 12. Hirst, pp. 45-46.

²⁰Hirst, pp. 45-6.

difficult terrain to survey, so the reservation was shrunk to five hundred and eighteen acres. Things got even worse in 1882 when President Arthur made the reservation smaller upon the request of the Arizona governor, John Fremont, who wanted access to the iron ore found near the reservation. The Havasupai did not stop their use of the land which was not part of the reservation. The area the reservation included was a five mile by twelve mile parallelogram which only included the farms in Havasu Canyon and a few acres of headland. President Arthur went further in 1882 when he declared all the Havasupai winter range on the plateau lands public property. At the same time, the Havasupai were still fighting with white ranchers and other native groups for the same plateau area.²¹

During the nineteenth century, American Presidents alternated from being in favor of the natives to being against them. Grover Cleveland came to office on a platform in favor of homesteaders and Native Americans versus big business. The next President was Benjamin Harrison. He passed the Dawes Act of 1887 which gave each native head of household one hundred and sixty acres. The rest of the reservation lands, some twenty-six million acres, reverted back to the government who then gave it to homesteaders. Harrison's motives were to disband the tribes and stop the flow of public funds to the reservations.²²

As early as January 1888, some people were realizing the Havasupai did not have enough land. Lieutenant Colonel Brayton suggested the people's reservation should be extended, but the federal government paid no attention. Even in the 1800s a few white citizens objected to the treatment of Native Americans. One such person was Helen Hunt Jackson. She was a writer who advocated the protecting of native land bases. During her career she wrote books exposing the deplorable conditions of the reservations. Two of

²¹*Prisoners*, p. 6. Hirst, pp. 46-47.

²²Andrew Heinze, "The Morality of Reservations: Western Lands in the Cleveland Period 1885-1897," *Journal of the West*, July 1992, pp. 83-87.

her books were A Century of Dishonor and Romona. The social conscience of Jackson was not catching during this time of land hungry whites.²³

The Havasupai did have contact with the other Native American tribes. They were involved in the Ghost Dance movement that swept through the reservations in the late 1880s, though only for a short while. In 1889, they held a Ghost Dance but interest quickly died. "Enthusiasm seemed to have passed...rapidly among the Havasupai when the men who had contacted the dead during the dance themselves began to die, the initial popularity of the movement quickly evaporated."²⁴ The one hang-over from the Ghost Dance was the increased elaborateness of Havasupai funerals.²⁵

Starting in the 1890s, the U.S. government became more involved in the lives of the Havasupai. White governmental workers were sent to the reservation to teach the people how to farm, which was ironic considering the hundreds of years the people had farmed the area before whites landed in the Americas. With the whites came white architecture, including a school and a mission built in 1895.²⁶

New governmental institutions were being created in the area during the 1890s. In 1893, the Grand Canyon Forest Reserve was established which effectively stopped all good relations between the Havasupai and the government, who later wanted to move the whole reservation from the area. By 1898, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs ordered the tribe confined to the canyon. Henry Ewing, superintendent of the Havasupai, however, suggested the people needed more land, which they never received. Ewing later changed his plea in 1901 when a great epidemic occurred killing many women, saying the Havasupai did not use the land they had.²⁷

²³Hirst, pp. 53-55. Margaret Connell Szasz, Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker, Norman, Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, 1984, p. 141.

²⁴Weber and Seaman, p. 139.

²⁵Hirst, p. 57.

²⁶Hirst, p. 57.

²⁷Prisoners, p. 8. Hirst, p. 58.

The years between 1900 and 1910 saw the loss of even more Havasupai land. By 1900, they were restricted to Havasu Canyon, Indian Gardens (the traditional farm land), and the Grand Canyon village created by the whites for the Havasupai working in the Grand Canyon. They had lost up to ninety percent of their winter and hunting grounds, seventy-five percent of their economic base, and many became wage laborers for the government.²⁸

In 1905, President Teddy Roosevelt told Havasupai leader, Swedva (Big Jim), of the plans for Grand Canyon Park, a tourist attraction for whites. Roosevelt informed Swedva he must move from Indian Gardens. His move brought to the surface a division among the Havasupai between the accomodationists and the traditionalists. Noted also in the time before 1910, the National Forest Service did not allow the Havasupai to use or to cross the Cononino National Forest, created by the same Presidential order that created the Grand Canyon National Monument, even though some Indian officials wrote Washington explaining a need for grazing land by the Havasupai. These lands once belonged to the people, who built extensive water reserves on the land.²⁹

The Havasupai continued to use the plateau lands left unoccupied, which only included a few miles. In 1914, the Cononino National Forest decided to allow the Havasupai used some of the forest land they still used as winter plateau land. The Havasupai obtained 230,000 acres of land in 1916 through land permits from the Forest Service. The land was to be used as grazing land. But, as usual, twenty thousand acres were taken back from the people. The region of land taken back was referred to as the Pasture Wash.³⁰

The Grand Canyon National Park, previously the Grand Canyon National Monument, was created in 1919. Agent J.J. Taylor lobbied for the return of the plateau

²⁸Martin, p. 8.

²⁹Hirst, pp. 71-75.

³⁰Hirst, p. 74. Prisoners, p. 8.

to the Havasupai in 1914 when talk of a national park began. He was referred to the Forest Service for land. In 1917, two Congressmen from Arizona, Senator Henry Ashurst and Representative Carl Hayden, and H.F. Robinson, an Indian Service worker, asked for the return of the Pasture Wash to the natives. The plea was also taken up by the new agent to the Havasupai, C.H. Gensler, who suggested the land be granted when the park boundaries were drawn. It was not meant to be. The Pasture Wash, along with the Havasupai's water tanks in the area, had been taken over by the white ranchers moving into the area. This was an extremely bad time for the Havasupai. The act that created the park allowed the natives to keep their individual tracks of land for farming, and also stated the natives could rent the land from the Park Service to farm.³¹

Agriculture was not enough to sustain the Havasupai, however. Many of the natives resolved themselves to wage work in order to support their families. Some lived in the Grand Canyon Village in the park and worked for the Park Service. They labored repairing and building trails in and around the canyon. They also laid pipelines into the canyon. By 1912, wage labor among the Havasupai was much more common than food production. Most of the jobs were short term, though, and the workers were forced to follow work around the region.³²

Cattle herding was another possibility for the Havasupai. They were allowed, through land permits, to graze their cattle on Forest Service land. The people only had small herds because the land they used was small. Also, any extra cattle had to be slaughtered for food, so the herds did not grow.³³

It was during this era too the Bureau of Indian Affairs took control of almost every aspect of Havasupai life. Because of the loose organization of the people traditionally, the B.I.A. and its non-Havasupai staff organized the entire reservation by

³¹Hirst, pp. 86-88. *Prisoners*, p. 12.

³²Martin, p. 11.

³³Martin, p. 12.

creating and financing all social institutions. The B.I.A. controlled every aspect of the natives' life, considering the majority of the wage workers worked for or through the B.I.A.. The B.I.A. hired the police, controlled the mail and movement of the people, enforced laws and school regulations, and settled all disputes. They built a new school on the reservation, as well as, new homes. The Havasupai were completely dependent on the B.I.A.³⁴

The 1920s did not see an improvement in the plight of the Havasupai. The Forest Service revoked much of the land it had previously let them use. It meant the natives lost all the water tanks and holdings they built along with the fences they had made. The Office of Indian Affairs tried again in 1920 to acquire some land from the Grand Canyon Park while it reorganized its boundaries. The Havasupai got a contract for 150,000 acres. The natives fenced the land off to use as grazing land, but the contract was for one year.³⁵

It was soon apparent the park officials were hostile toward the Havasupai. The natives were prohibited from building any rain reserves on park land. The officials wanted to add Havasu Canyon to the Grand Canyon Park. They destroyed all the water works the Havasupai had built outside Havasu Canyon and attempted to limit the people to that canyon.³⁶

By 1926, the Havasupai had been confined to a one hundred and sixty acre plot in Havasu Canyon, the same plot where their village is located today. Some people were still found in the Grand Canyon Village, however, working for the Park Service as maids and maintenance workers. Most in the canyon village worked for the Park Service too, they built trails and ran sewer and water pipelines. With all this work, the Havasupai still

³⁴Martin, p. 13. Hirst, p. 76.

³⁵Hirst, p. 89.

³⁶Hirst, p. 90.

could not earn enough money to support themselves. Many poached on park land in order to eat.³⁷

It was in 1926, too, that the Grand Canyon National Park received more land from the government. Grazing land was still not issued to the Havasupai. By this time the nomadic people of the blue green water had been reduced to a 160 acre plot at the bottom of an isolated canyon. When that canyon was flooded in the summer of 1928, all the homes and buildings in the canyon village were swept away and destroyed, as were all the farmlands.³⁸

The next two decades saw a lot of change for the Havasupai but not much progress in their fight for the return of their traditional land use area. In 1930, Havasupai Superintendent, Patrick Hamley, contacted Arizona Senator Henry Ashurst regarding the people's need for more land. Hamley argued they needed more land for grazing since the Havasupai were herders, not farmers.³⁹

Senators Ashurst and Frazier met with the natives in 1931 to discuss this issue. They both responded favorably to the idea of giving the people more land. As so often happens in Washington, the plight of the Havasupai was a short lived concern for the Senators and nothing ever came of the petition for more land. In fact in 1932, President Hoover decided to make the unused land taken from the Havasupai for use in the transcontinental railroad public property.⁴⁰ This was nothing more than a major defeat for the Havasupai. Not only was the government not willing to give them land already given to the Park Service, but it did not even consider giving unused land to them.

The conflict between the Havasupai and the Park Service heated up in 1934. The park officials forced the people off the South Rim of the Grand Canyon by burning their

³⁷Hirst, p. 147.

³⁸Hirst, pp. 76, 147.

³⁹Hirst, p. 149.

⁴⁰Hirst, p. 150.

homes there. The natives who wished to stay were made to pay five dollars a month in rent to live in the cabins the park people built. This made the Havasupai there tenants to the Grand Canyon Park.⁴¹

Also, in 1934 the federal government passed the Indian Reorganization Act. This act was designed to create an elected government on the reservations that would then write individual constitutions for each tribe. The idea was that the federal government could then sign treaties with each tribe like it would a foreign country.⁴²

The Havasupai were organized on a clan system with leaders and sub-leaders, baa gmolyas. These leaders were chosen because of their personalities. In the tribe's constitution, created on March 27, 1937, a seven man council was created. Three of the seven were to be traditional Havasupai leaders and four were to be elected ones. The three traditional leaders were more concerned with the major issues the tribal government faced, like land rights.⁴³

Even with chairmen like, Dean Sinyella, who pressed land complaints and issues with the federal government and the B.I.A., the council had no real power until the 1960s. The tribe was supposed to be less dependent on the B.I.A. with the tribal council, but it was impossible. The council was not given any authority over its liquid wealth. So in essence, the government still controlled the health, education, and economy of the Havasupai.⁴⁴

The picture of the Havasupai was not much better in the 1940s. There were only three or four families living in Grand Canyon Village. Some lived on the plateau, and a few with the Hualapai. By this time, two trails reached to the village. One from the West Rim which was nine miles long, and the other from near Grand Canyon Village

⁴¹Hirst, p. 151.

⁴²Hirst, p. 152.

⁴³Hirst, p. 152.

⁴⁴Martin, p. 14.

which was thirteen miles long. The second was the most used. In 1941, the only non-Havasupais in the area were the nurse, agency staff, and the sub-agent and his wife the teacher.⁴⁵

The Forest Service was more willing to cooperate with the Havasupai in 1940, though. They were generous in giving the tribe land to use for grazing. The Park Service was a different story. They wanted to move the Havasupai to the Hualapai reservation and consolidate their reservation into the Grand Canyon National Park. By this time the Park Service people were treating the natives as property to move out of the way.⁴⁶

In 1941, the Havasupai received a ray of hope in their fight for land. The Hualapai went to the Supreme Court in their fight for land. They were fighting for the land the government gave the Santa Fe railroad that they did not use. Justice William O. Douglas found that even though the reservation was created, the land had never really legally been taken from the Hualapais, it was still their land.⁴⁷

The Interior Department investigated the Havasupai reservation in 1942 to see what land belonged to the natives and what did not. They determined the Havasupai still had rights to all their original land, even in the national parks and forests. They gave some land in Cataract Canyon back to the Havasupai reservation.⁴⁸

In 1943, land field agent Simington was sent by the Interior Department to survey the land and find out about the Havasupai need for plateau lands. He was to report to Congress on his finds. The Park Service, however, was against the survey. Simington reported getting all the land the Havasupai wanted was impossible because much of it was state and privately owned, including the South Rim lands. He did propose 264,959 acres from the Kaibab National Forest and from public and state lands and from other

⁴⁵Weber and Seamanp, p. 15.

⁴⁶Hirst, p. 154.

⁴⁷Hirst, p. 155.

⁴⁸Hirst, p. 156.

Forest Service lands be returned to the tribe. He knew the tribe needed more land for their cattle to graze if they were to ever support the tribe.⁴⁹

The Park Service was against the giving of land to the Havasupai. They got Arizona Representative Murdock to purpose giving the land in the Simington report to the state because the Havasupai "don't need it." The Park Service lied saying they were conducting surveys on the reservation which determined the natives did not need the land. The officials wanted the tribe and the Havasu Canyon within the park as an attraction. They even said they were willing to wait until the natives died to get the canyon.⁵⁰

By 1943, the Office of Indian Affairs backed off from helping the tribe get land because the Park Service was pressuring them. The Park Service said the lands the tribe wanted were no good, even though the natives had built water reserves on the land and could be used by the tribe. The Havasupai Superintendent John Crow wrote a letter to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "...it cannot be dangerous policy of any Government to restore rightful lands taken from a minority group-taken...without their consent or even their knowledge..."⁵¹ After this incident, the Office of Indian Affairs was not a supportive party to the Havasupai fight for land.⁵²

The Indian Claims Commission Act was passed in 1946. It was designed to settle claims made by the Native Americans on lands taken unjustly. It was developed to compensate the tribes through money. The Havasupai filed a claim with the commission, even though they were only interested in the return of their land.⁵³

⁴⁹Hirst, p. 158.

⁵⁰Hirst, p. 160.

⁵¹Hirst, p. 162.

⁵²Hirst, p. 163.

⁵³Hirst, p. 165.

The pressures on the Havasupai increased during the 1950s. In 1953, the Grand Canyon Park Superintendent, Harold Bryant wrote the National Park Service Headquarters in Washington. He asserted the native people of the Grand Canyon had rights to use much of the land in the park and nearby forests. Bryant retired three years later, though, and the situation worsened dramatically.⁵⁴

The new superintendent forced all non-working Havasupai out of the Grand Canyon Village. Then he fired nearly all the natives working for the Park Service at the Grand Canyon. He had the people loaded in to the back of trucks and hauled to the Hualapai Hilltop site and dumped in the bitter cold. The people had to hike the ten miles to the canyon village in the extreme weather.⁵⁵

Other events in this decade included the closing of the Havasupai day school, which had opened in 1912. The decision was finalized by Charles F. Allen of the B.I.A. He and the B.I.A. thought the children would be better off in mainstream white society. The kids were shipped three hundred and fifty miles away to Fort Apache, a native school for trouble makers, because no other schools nearby would accept them. Few ever graduated. This closing was followed by an attempted relocation program of the Havasupai to the cities by the federal government. All those who left returned.⁵⁶

In 1957, the mining claims between Havasu Falls and Mooney Falls were sold, without the Havasupai's knowledge to the Grand Canyon National Park. The mines, which were once owned by a series of white man, were originally part of the Havasupai land use area. A campground was built in the area. The building of the campground destroyed an ancient Havasupai burial ground, and the sacred site vanished forever.⁵⁷

⁵⁴Hirst, p. 166.

⁵⁵Hirst, p. 166.

⁵⁶Prisoners, p. 2. Hirst, p. 182.

⁵⁷Hirst, p. 183.

By 1958, all the B.I.A. jobs except the policemen were eliminated. The problem was a result of population pressures. After the all-time low population in 1906 of 166 Havasupai, because of the 1898 epidemic, the general health of the natives improved. The population rose rapidly which stretched the reservation resources greatly. After World War II, wage labor on the reservation decreased because Eisenhower's slowed support to the Native American special interest groups.⁵⁸

An increase in depression, suicide, violence, and hatred marked the 1960s. Morale was low and alcoholism was high in the canyon village. The B.I.A. encouraged the Havasupai to leave the area because they wanted the land incorporated into the park. The natives renewed their fight for grazing land in 1962, however, against the Grand Canyon Park and Forest Service. Two years later, they also asked for control of the campground to be given to the Havasupai council.⁵⁹

The year of 1965 was one of change. Arizona Representative, George Senner, said he would help the Havasupai in their fight for their land. That same year the Office of Economic Opportunity told the tribe if they proved a need for money they could have it for use at their own will. The previous year the tribe had been allowed to reopen the day school for grades kindergarten to second. A Headstart program was created on the reservation in 1966. And, the tribe had its own store and tourism enterprise, which was at first controlled by whites.⁶⁰

The plight of the Havasupai was becoming more known by other politicians. Congressman John Rhodes took up the fight in 1967 and wrote the Secretary of Interior on the subject. Arizona Congressman Steiger became involved also. He proposed a bill to obtain some plateau grazing land. There was never a hearing on the bill, however.⁶¹

⁵⁸Martin, p. 17.

⁵⁹Hirst, pp. 184-185.

⁶⁰Hirst, p. 186.

⁶¹Hirst, p. 187.

The Havasupai were allowed to vote federally for the first time in 1968. The same year the Park Service and Forest Service developed a joint grazing region for the tribe. The condition was the people had to meet certain regulations set by the agencies. They were also given \$1,240,000 for 2,257,728 acres (\$.55 per acre). The people still wanted the land but were told to take the money or receive nothing. It took until 1973 to obtain the money because Congress had to approve it. When they did, the funds were given in trust to the B.I.A.⁶²

After the natives got the money, the Grand Canyon park officials drew up plans to incorporate the reservation into the park. The plan was called "A Master Plan for Grand Canyon National Park." It gave the people sixty thousand acres of park land to use but no residences or the campground or forest lands. The Forest Service said they would provide no land when the tribe asked for the land and permits they requested in 1943.⁶³

In 1972, the Havasupai were officially given permission to use the land they were already using. The official declaration also included an explicate threat of revocation of the land at the government's will, and they received no plateau land. They were led to believe they would receive news from the government regarding permanent land return. They never did.⁶⁴

The next year the situation took a turn for the better. Senator Berry Goldwater met with the Havasupai and promised to propose their plan in Congress, even amid the heavy opposition by the Sierra Club, a so called environmentalist group, and the Grand Canyon park officials. The Sierra Club went as far as lying to prominent government officials saying the Havasupai planned on commercializing the South Rim. The truth was the Park Service was the one who had plans of commercializing the area.⁶⁵

⁶²Hirst, p. 190.

⁶³Hirst, pp. 205-206.

⁶⁴Hirst, p. 207.

⁶⁵Hirst, pp. 210-211.

The hearings on the bill determined a study was needed by the Park Service on the expansion of the reservation. Some of the members of the Sierra Club in late 1973 changed their position in favor of the Havasupai and suggested the natives staff the park facilities on the South Rim because they knew the area best.⁶⁶

March 1974 was the turning point for the Havasupai. They hired Joe Sparks to represent them in Congress. They wanted a comprehensive plan of use for the 251,000 acres they were fighting for. They also wanted access to the sacred and religious places they had lost. The land they did receive title to was a symbol of longevity to the Havasupai. The plateau land was to be used for building homes on as well as improving herds. They also hoped to keep their children at home instead of sending them to boarding schools for the last four years of their education.⁶⁷

At the end of March the members of the Sierra Club who changed sides suggested the tribe obtain some 251,000 acres of land, and President Nixon was in favor of this plan. After a compromise of the bill, it was passed by the House and the Senate by January 1975. It allowed the land to be given back to the Havasupai as trust title land. The 185,000 acres were returned on the condition the tribe would not commercialize or industrialize it in any way. They were allowed only small businesses and grazing on the land. After sixty-six years of battle, the Havasupai finally obtained what belonged to them all along.⁶⁸

The economy of the tribe steadily improved from the 1960s to the 1980s. The major reason for the improvement was the increase in tourism to Havasu Canyon. By 1975, the number of tourists reached ten thousand in one season. That same year the tribe made \$200,000 from its tourism enterprises, made up mostly of the packers bringing the white tourists. As more people came to the region the higher the rates went, which in

⁶⁶Hirst, pp. 215-218.

⁶⁷Prisoners, p. 14.

⁶⁸Hirst, p. 227. Martin, p. 28.

turn, equaled more money for the tribe. In 1976, the income made due to tourism was up to \$450,000.⁶⁹

The organization of the tribe changed too. Many of those who had left the reservation returned to the new government homes and profits from tourism. Extended families living together as one group did not exist anymore. Each family was given its own home, changing the traditional make up of the tribe. With this change came other changes, including a difference in the make up of the tribal council. In 1964, the three traditional "chiefs" of the council were excluded in favor of elected leaders. Also, the minimum age to be elected was lowered.⁷⁰

With this new younger tribal council came other significant changes. Through new federal government policies, the council was given direct control of some of its funds. This made the council an employer on the reservation. With the money, the Havasupai hired experts to help the natives in tribal enterprises and to keep the tribe's accounts. The new blood in the council combined with the ability to spend its own money and hire its own employees was a major driving force behind the campaign to expand the reservation.⁷¹

In review of the Havasupai land rights issue the first thing to be remembered was the size of the area they occupied. Before 1850, the tribe claimed to occupy an area as big as Delaware state. They claimed from the present eastern side of the Hualapai reservation to the Little Colorado River and south to present day Flagstaff. This was the region over which most of the wandering Havasupai groups traveled. They did not fight to defend this area, however. Most lived south of the Little Colorado River and farmed

⁶⁹Martin, p. 25.

⁷⁰Martin, p. 25.

⁷¹Martin, pp. 25, 27.

in Cataract Canyon and had grazing land on the Esplanade, a shelf between the canyon bottom and the plateau.⁷²

The Havasupai's land loss was complex. The federal government obtained the land officially through the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In this treaty it was stated that the land belonged to the various Native American tribes of the area. Also, by other legal acts the U.S. government passed, the land was the natives, but the government used loopholes to gain possession even though the Havasupai never sold any land to them.⁷³

Colonial law, in general, decreed the native people's land was protected and belonged to the tribes, not the colonial governments. By Royal Proclamation in October 7, 1763, the King of England said all Native American lands were protected by the English for them. J.E. Chamberlin wrote, "Now the Proclamation of 1763 was not a treaty in any sense, but it did attempt to establish a coherent policy which would determine the future course of relations between native and non-native inhabitants of North America...."⁷⁴ The Northwest Ordinance in 1787 stated, too, no land would be taken without the natives' consent. Chamberlin also said, "...the assumptions upon which it was effectively based all but obliterated whatever guarantee it might have claimed to provide."⁷⁵ The loophole was the government could take of the land if they were asked by the tribes or if the land was not properly cared for. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs claimed the guardianship of the land was historic precedent through the loopholes. The Indian Claims Commission responded that the Havasupai's land was wrongfully taken by the executive branch, and only Congress had the power to take native land.⁷⁶

⁷²Weber and Seaman, pp. 7-9.

⁷³Prisoners, p. 4.

⁷⁴J. E. Chamberlin, The Harrowing of Eden, New York, Seabury Press, 1975, p. 144.

⁷⁵Chamberlin, p. 160.

⁷⁶Chamberlin, p. 98.

What will happen to the Havasupai now? What plans do they have to develop the land they received? Will they become a migrating tribe again, or will they remain in the bottom of the canyon? Do they want more land? What will happen culturally to the Havasupai?

Some Havasupai, and even some anthropologists, hoped and believed there was a chance the Havasupai would rekindle the annual migration cycle they once had. Hirst wrote, "By 1974 only one determined young couple was still able to continue winter-long residence on the uplands, but Congress' restoration of the winter lands holds hope that the Havasupai will once again take up their age-old cycle."⁷⁷ This idea was a naive hope many of the Havasupai shared. In The Havasupai: Prisoners of the Grand Canyon, a document sponsored by the Havasupai, the unknown author stated:

The Tribe's equitable interests in the land are certain. With the security of trust title, the Havasupai feel they will be free from arbitrary and abusive actions of government and will be safe to rebuild their homes on the plateau. With trust title, they will improve their range land and increase their herds of cattle and horses, subject to sound environmental safeguards. They will lead longer, healthier lives; the children will be able to stay with their parents and go to school; and the people who have scattered will come home again.⁷⁸

In the twelve years since the return of the land to the Havasupai, their lives have changed little. Dr. Miguel Vasquez, an anthropologist from Northern Arizona University who has spent time with the Havasupai, said there are two reasons why the people's lives have changed little. First, the land the Havasupai were given is not land well suited for grazing animals. Each cow needs two hundred and twenty acres per year to survive on the dry and desolate land.⁷⁹

⁷⁷Hirst, p. 11.

⁷⁸Prisoners, p. 14.

⁷⁹Miguel Vasquez, Dr., Telephone Interview, April 1, 1996.

Some talk has circulated about farming projects, but the lack of water on the plateau is a major deterrent to the idea. A few water tanks are still being built at low points, though the resources of the tribe are stretched because of the other problem the tribe has been dealing with for years, floods and legal battles over mining.

The tribe has no plans to wage any more battles for land, but within the last few years, the Havasupai have fought the mining companies to stop the uranium mining at Red Butte. Red Butte is not on the Havasupai reservation. The people, however, consider it a sacred area because they believe it is the place of their emergence. It is also the location of a large and, so far, unopened uranium mine. The tribe has used much of its money to fight the mining company. The case went to the Supreme Court who ruled in favor of the mining company.

The Havasupai fought on the grounds Red Butte is a Havasupai holy area. Godway and Vasquez both agree the tribe lost its fight because it fought on a religious ground and not an environmental one. If they had argued the uranium mine could contaminate the Colorado River during a flood, and consequently contaminate the water source for millions of Americans, then the tribe might have won the battle to stop the mine from opening. As it is, if the price of uranium rises again the mine will open and produce uranium, most likely to sell to the former Soviet Union.

The Havasupai have also been spending their funds on recovery efforts from the two most recent floods. Both of these floods occurred in this decade, and both completely washed the Havasupai out of the canyon. The people lost everything they had including homes, animals, and newly planted gardens. With the tribe's concentration on flood recovery and the uranium mine, they have no funds or energy left to give to developing the plateau land for better grazing or farming.

The one avenue of economic significance that could provide the Havasupai with additional income is tourism. Even though the tribe resents whites and the U.S. government, the majority of their money is generated through white tourism to their area.

Some people have talked about creating a more tourist like environment on Hualapai Hilltop, the parking lot at the top of the foot trail to Supai Village.

The tribe could increase their profits greatly if Hualapai Hilltop was made more comfortable. Anyone who has hiked into the canyon does not mind paying the elevated prices for beverages in the village. Anyone who has hiked out of the canyon, especially in the squelching midday Arizona sun, would be willing to pay a fortune and several body parts for any kind of beverage. The money the Havasupai could make by making Hualapai Hilltop more serviceable to the returning tourist would be tremendous. Even if the number of tourists did not increase, the tribe would still increase their profits.

What will happen to the Havasupai culturally once they recover from the floods and legal battles? The hope that they will once again become a migrating tribe is not realistic. Dr. Vasquez almost describes the situation on the reservation as hopeless. He remembers being advised, when he first started work with the Havasupai, by another anthropologist, the Havasupai are a "cultural sink."

The social problems of the Havasupai are too many to list and too great to describe. The rate of alcoholism and drug abuse by the natives is outstanding. The white teachers on the reservation see students every day who are drunk or high. The oldest of these children is around twelve or thirteen. With the problems of the Havasupai, it is no wonder there is not much of a sense of cultural identity. And without cultural identity, the Havasupai can never become the migrating farmers and herders they once were.

The future of the tribe is not a bright one. The likelihood is great they will remain isolated in the canyon with little contact with the outside world. The Havasupai children will continue to be poorly educated, not attending high school because it is too far from the world of corruption and drugs they know. The Havasupai will probably continue to rely heavily on the federal government's funding to survive.

It is possible, however, to imagine a different Havasupai. If some of the tribe were to realize they could profit by being on the plateau and developing the Havasupai

tourism industry, then a split might occur in the tribe. Some may choose to remain isolated and remote on the canyon floor, while others may decide to live on the plateau.

A division in the Havasupai like the one described would have lasting effects. A group living on the plateau would have many advantages. They would not be as isolated from the world as they are now. On the "top," as they refer to it, they would be more likely to have their own school that included all grades so the older children would not have to leave home. More Havasupai would graduate high school and be eligible for higher education. With more educated Havasupai, the tribe would stand a better chance of winning any future court battles. A school on the plateau would also benefit those who would choose to stay in the canyon, because it would be a day school for those children.

The economy of a plateau Havasupai would be considerably better than it is now. The tourism industry could be developed to include the selling of the famous, and now almost extinct, Havasupai baskets. The sense of isolation and hopelessness would decrease among the people too, and, hopefully, drug and alcohol abuse would follow.

A division of the tribe into an Upper and a Lower Havasupai would have serious cultural ramifications. Within a few generations the first language of the Upper Havasupai would most likely be English, instead of Havasupai. The first language of the Lower Havasupai would probably remain Havasupai, though. The Havasupai language itself might splinter into two dialects, one of Upper and one of Lower Havasupai.

A possibility exists, however, if the Havasupai were to split, they might regain their cultural identity. The Upper Havasupai would be under pressure to commercialize their culture for the tourists. To be successful, they would have to refamiliarize themselves with their own culture.

A migrating population is not feasible, however. The plateau cannot provide the economic base needed by the Havasupai for hunting, gathering and herding. Without that base the Havasupai would have no reason to migrate. There is no drive within the

community to migrate either. The general will of the people is to stay in the canyon and remain in their little world of drugs, alcohol and corruption. They have no wish to be in touch with the outside world.

The Havasupai lost all but five hundred acres of their land by the 1900s. It took decades of fierce fighting with the Grand Canyon National Park, the Forest Service, and the federal government to regain their land. Once they had their land returned they were too occupied with flood recovery and legal battles to develop any comprehensive plans for use of the lands. The future of the tribe is uncertain. If the Havasupai continue to develop in the same pattern they have been, their future is at best bleak and at worst hopeless. They have an opportunity in tourism, though, and if they take advantage of this, it could possibly be the difference between hopelessness and survival.

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Appendix

THE SUPAI GROUP—SUBDIVISION AND NOMENCLATURE

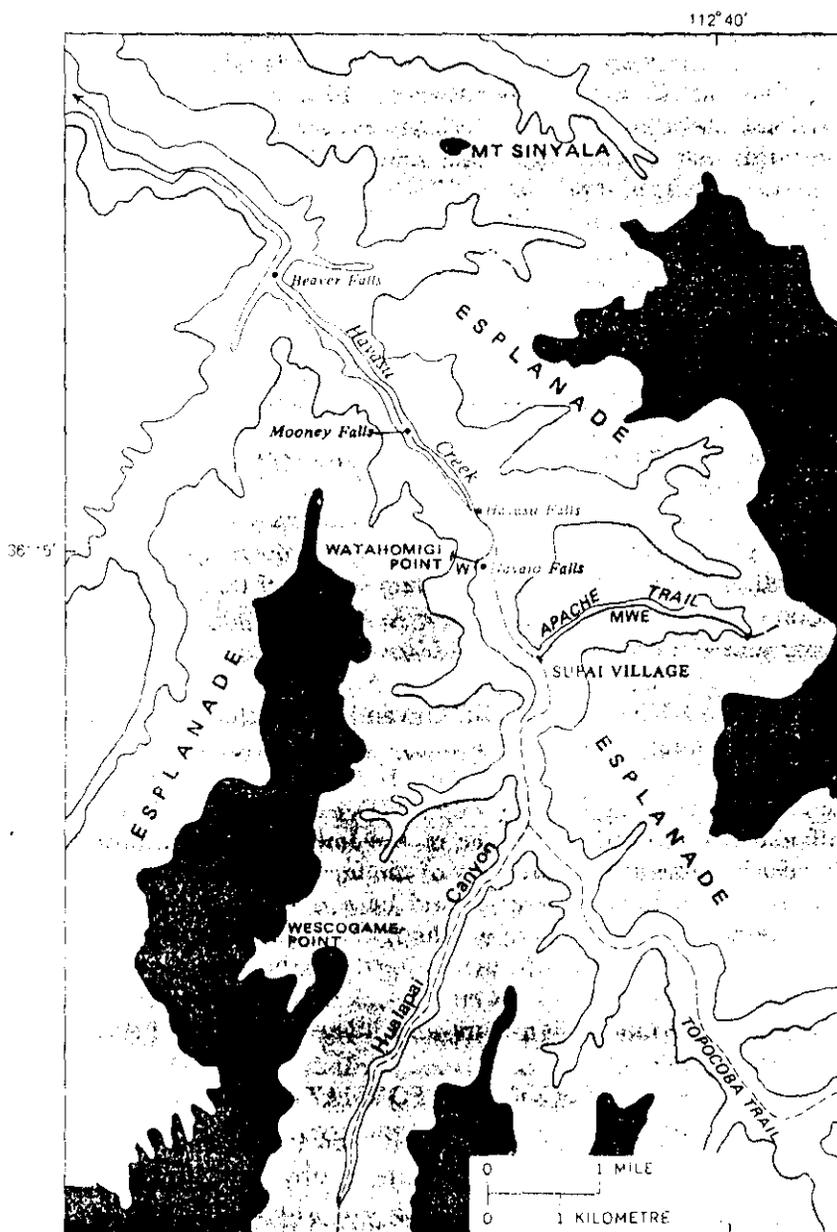
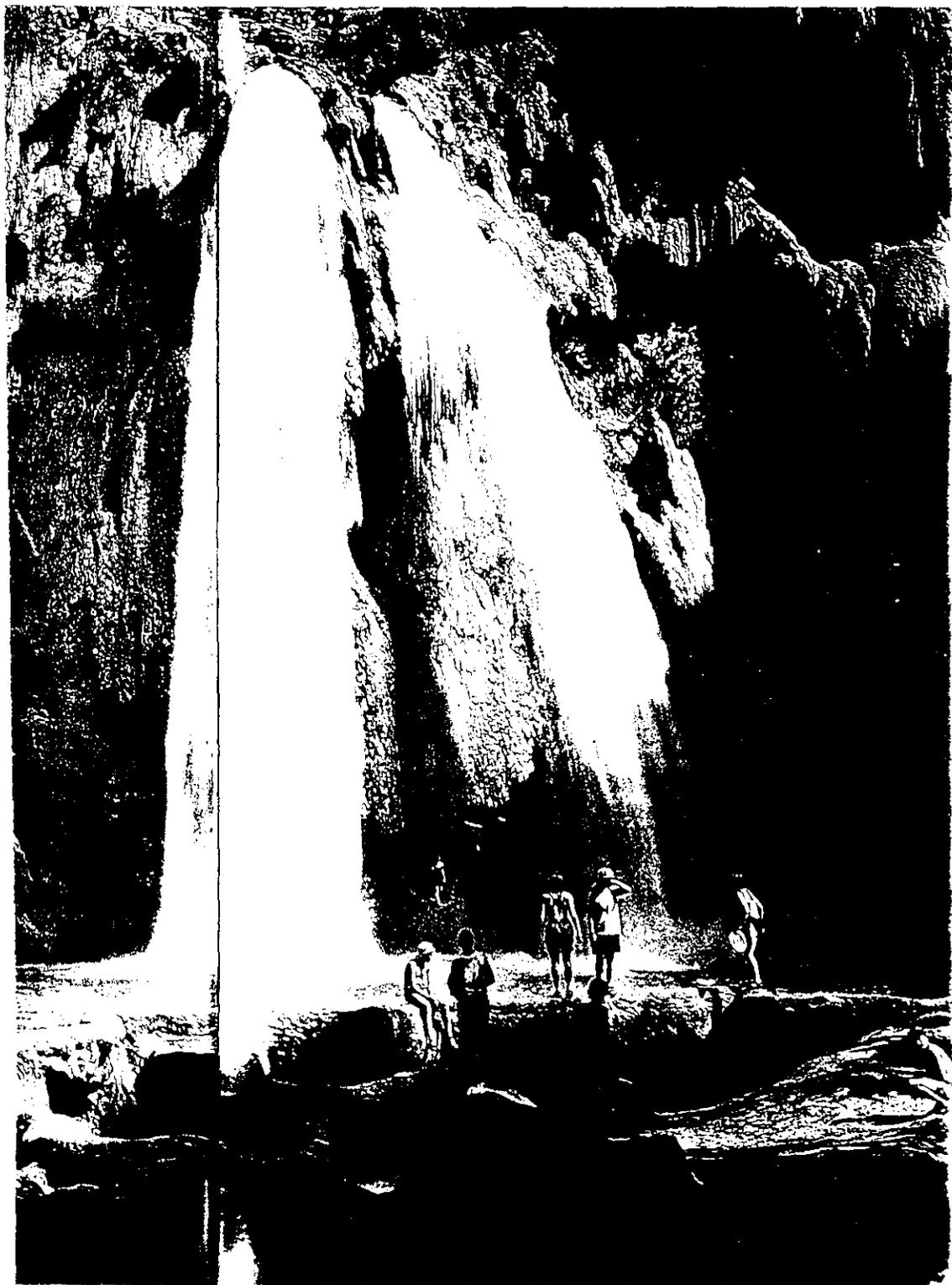


FIGURE 1.—Havasu Canyon, northern Arizona, showing Supai village and points on canyon walls from which the Watahomigi, Manakacha, and Wescogame Formations derive their names and the erosional bench (shaded) for which the Esplanade Sandstone is named. Location of type sections: MWE, Manakacha, Wescogame, and Esplanade; W, Watahomigi.

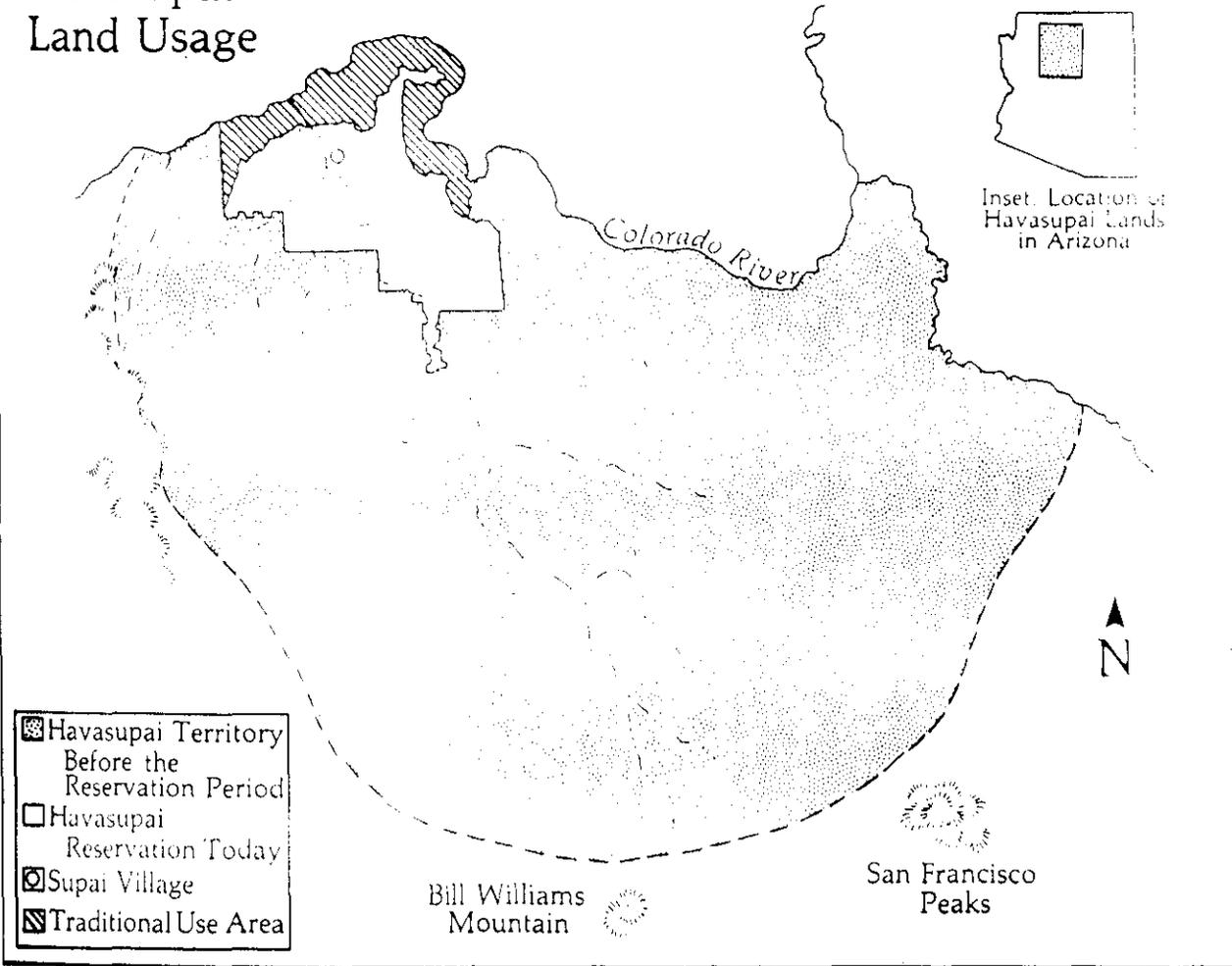
Edwin McKee, *The Supai Group—Subdivision and Nomenclature*, Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, p. J3.



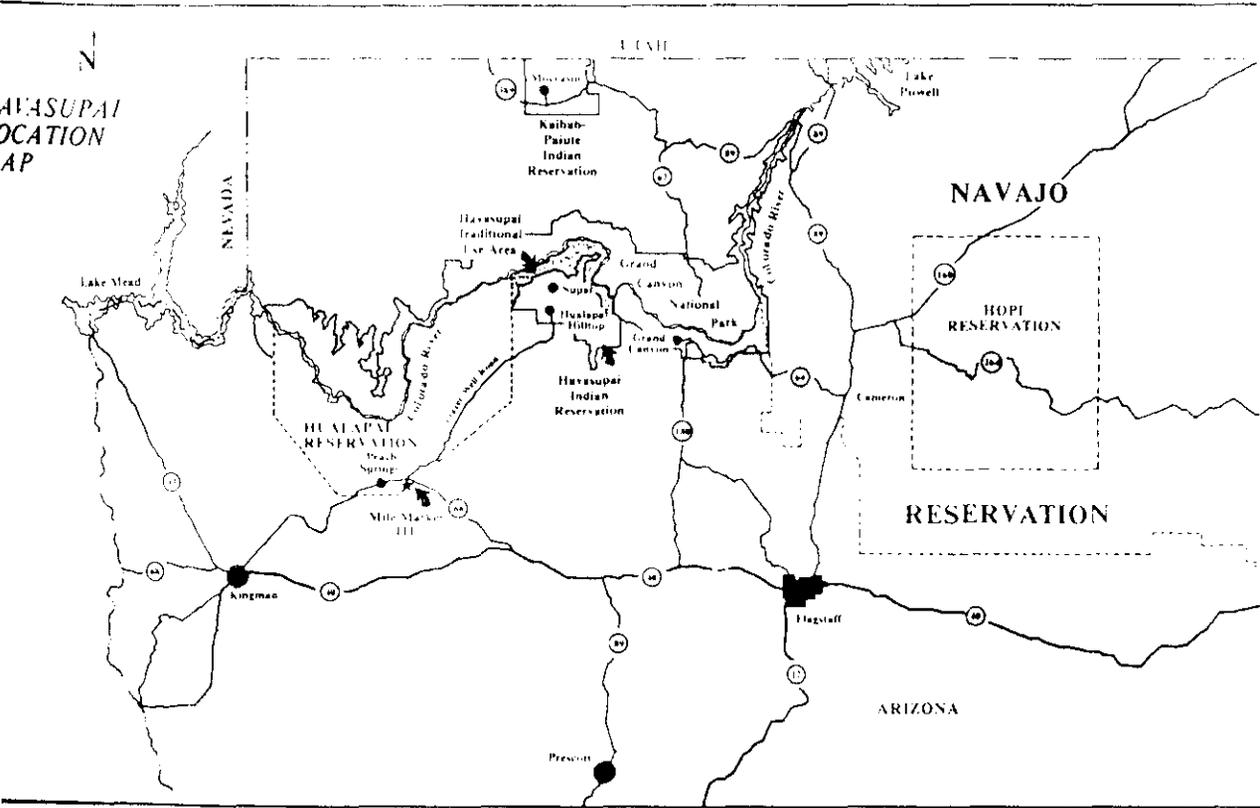
Havasü Falls

Kreutz, Douglas. "Havasü Canyon: Land of the Blue-Green Water." Arizona Highways, April 1996, p. 30-31.

Havasupai Land Usage



John F. Martin, "The Havasupai," Plateau Magazine of the Museum of Northern Arizona, 1986, p. 5.



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