

MEN ON BOATS

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THE MEN ON THE BOATS

Aboard the EMMA DEAN – the boat named after Powell's wife

John Wesley POWELL—one-armed leader of the expedition

William DUNN—hunter and trapper

John Colton SUMNER—former soldier, current explorer

Aboard the KITTY CLYDE'S SISTER – the boat named after Kitty Clyde's sister

OLD SHADY- Powell's older brother, Civil War vet

BRADLEY—lieutenant, manic with youth

Aboard the NO-NAME – the boat named after nothing

O.G. Howland—printer and hunter

SENECA Howland—OG's quiet little brother

Frank GOODMAN —British, so excited

Aboard the MAID OF THE CANYON – the party boat

HALL—mapmaker, old soul

HAWKINS—the cook

THE OTHERS ON LAND

TSAUWIAT- a Ute chief (doubles with OG HOWLAND)

THE BISHOP- Tsauwiat's wife (doubles with SENECA HOWLAND)

MR. ASA- a desert settler (doubles with GOODMAN)

Setting

On boats in 1869. Traversing the Green & Colorado Rivers from Wyoming to a Big Canyon on the government's first Sanctioned Expedition.

Notes on the Play

-This play is based largely on John Wesley Powell's journals of his 1869 expedition, published as *The Exploration of the Colorado River and its Canyons*.

-Rapid sections will be divided by boat assignment (MAID, KITTY CLYDE, etc.) or orientation of the character in space on the river (WATER, ROCK, etc.), so that groups of actors are talking to each other based on where they are rather collectively rather than individually. This also comes into play with lines demarcated "ALL"—when a line inside a boat is given to ALL, it is only those in that boat, etc.

-The word ASHLEY sometimes means DANGER

-Ute is pronounced "Yoot"

Note on Casting

The characters in MEN ON BOATS were historically cisgender white males. The cast should be made up entirely of people who are not. I'm talking about racially diverse actors who are female-identifying, trans-identifying, genderfluid, and/or non-gender-conforming.

S.1 L1	Pre show	
S.5 L2	House half, crew enters	
L3	House out, crew take away sanctions	
S2 L4	Blackout, when crew leaves	The next set of cues 5 sec. each
S2.5 L6	Bad ass pose	
L6.1	Transition	
S3 L7	Tableau 1	
S4 L8	Transition	
S5 L9	Tableau 2	
S6	Transition	
S7 L11	Tableau 3	
L15 S8	Lights up start of the show	

ACT ONE

Prologue. The Men On Boats take their places in their boats.

EMMA DEAN

L17 S9

POWELL. We're on the river now, crew
There will be churning, there will be swells
Keep your bearings
Steady! On!
Oars up!
Oars out!

ALL BOATS

S10

ALL. Oars up!
Oars out!
Annnnnnnnd

WE TRULY BEGIN!

1.1 The boats on the water. The Men on Boats, rushing a rapid.

EMMA DEAN

L21

POWELL. Left! Keep Left! Rocks!
DUNN. Rocks Right! Keep Left!
SUMNER. Hug the wall, Dunn
Oars hard left
Rocks! Rocks!
POWELL. Passing rocks!
DUNN. Clear?
SUMNER. Clear. Forward. Swelling
DUNN. Swelling? I see swelling! Major rush!
ALL. Whoa!
POWELL. Steady. Steady, Dunn.
Sumner: Keep an eye on the swell
L23 S11 I'll warn the boats.

EMMA DEAN INTRO

POWELL. My name's Major John Wesley Powell. I'm the leader of this expedition.
I'm aboard the Emma Dean- the boat named after my wife.

DUNN. My name is William Dunn.
I'm a hunter. A trapper. An innovator.
I am aboard the Emma Dean.

SUMNER. I'm John Colton Sumner.
Last winter I went snowshoeing in the Rocky Mountains
Obviously I survived.

L25 S12 I am aboard the Emma Dean.

EMMA DEAN

POWELL. BOATS! ROCKS!

ALL BOATS

ALL. Rocks! Rocks!

EMMA DEAN

POWELL. No-Name! watch for rocks
And Swelling up ahead!

NO-NAME

O.G. Swell. Swell. Rocks?

SENECA. Almost through

O.G. And hold Hold keep left

GOODMAN. How are they doing back there-

SENECA. Eyes to the front Keep your eyes in front of you Don't worry about them.

O.G. Go around the swell! Round it.

SENECA. Rounding!

GOODMAN. Shouldn't we portage?

SENECA. Keep your eyes to the front We won't portage unless we can find a bank

GOODMAN. No bank I see no bank

SENECA. Row Row Keep rowing. Hard. HARD!

O.G. HARD! Keep rowing!

GOODMAN. I'm ROWING

O.G. Through! /

L27 S13

NO-NAME INTRO

O.G. My name's Oramel Howland.

My friends call me O.G.

laughs to himself

Nah, I'm kiddin

I don't have any friends.

This is my little brother

SENECA. Seneca Howland.

People think we're twins but we're not.

O.G. and SENECA. We are aboard the No-Name

GOODMAN. My name is Frank Goodman.

I'm here and I'm quite thrilled to be here in the American West!

I am aboard the No-Name! /

L29

NO-NAME

GOODMAN. Kitty Clyde's Sister!!

Watch the Swell!

KITTY CLYDE'S SISTER

BRADLEY. Swelling! Swelling! Didja hear that?
SHADY. Rocks. Swelling.
BRADLEY. Use our oars, right? Row hard, right?
 I mean right like “right” not like turn right
 Keep straight! Keep straight!
 Should I call for a line?
SHADY. No lines unless we need em
BRADLEY. Swelling swelling rushing fast!
 Swelling! Swelling!
 Should I call for line?

L31 S15

SHADY. No. /

KITTY CLYDE’S SISTER INTRO

BRADLEY. My name’s George Young Bradley!
 This is my first expedition!
 I’m a little nervous but I’m also excited!
 Did I forget anything?
 Oh!

I am aboard the Kitty Clyde’s Sister!

OLD SHADY. .

BRADLEY. Introduce yourself, Old Shady!

OLD SHADY. No.

L33 S16

BRADLEY. Old Shady is Major Powell’s older brother. /

KITTY CLYDE’S SISTER

SHADY. THROUGH! Kitty Clyde is Through!

BRADLEY. We’re through! Oh no. Maid of the Canyon? Watch out!

The other boats have passed danger, and they are watching the Maid of the Canyon struggle now.

EMMA DEAN, KITTY CLYDE’S SISTER, & NO-NAME

ALL. Hug the wall. Hug the wall! HUG THE WALL

MAID OF THE CANYON

HAWKINS. Here’s the swell Here it comes

HALL. Stay to the side

HAWKINS. Hug the wall

HALL. Huggin the wall!

HAWKINS. We got this Hall! We got this! Left!

HALL. Don’t get caught Don’t get caught

L35 S17

HAWKINS. We won’t get caught /

MAID OF THE CANYON INTRO

HAWKINS. Hi. I’m William Robert Hawkins.

I can make eggs all styles!
I am aboard the Maid of the Canyon.

S18 **HALL.** I'm Andrew Hall and I don't have time for this shit!

MAID OF THE CANYON

L37 **HAWKINS.** HALL We're getting caught We're getting caught

HALL. It's pulling, it's pulling

HAWKINS. Left! Left! We need help-

HALL. Line

BOTH. Line!

KITTY CLYDE'S SISTER (to MAID)

BRADLEY. Line?

SHADY. Need a line, Maid of the Canyon?

MAID OF THE CANYON (to KITTY CLYDE)

HAWKINS. Line, Kitty Clyde's Sister

HALL. Hold your oar Hawkins

HAWKINS. Grab the line, Hall
Grab it when they pass it over

KITTY CLYDE'S SISTER (to MAID)

BRADLEY. Line, Maid! Line!

SHADY. Passing line!

MAID OF THE CANYON (to KITTY CLYDE)

HAWKINS. Line caught, Kitty Clyde!

HALL. We got it! Shady, Pull!

KITTY CLYDE'S SISTER (to MAID)

ALL. Pull

Pull

MAID OF THE CANYON

HAWKINS. Pull

HALL. Pull, almost there

HAWKINS. One more time! and

ALL. Line Pull Pull

HALL. Almost to the- Clear! We're out!

ALL. Clear

HAWKINS. There

NO-NAME

ALL. Clear?

MAID OF THE CANYON

ALL. Clear! Thank you!

EMMA DEAN

L39 S19 POWELL. Bank! All boats! Bank!

ALL. Bank

NO-NAME

ALL. Bank

MAID OF THE CANYON

ALL. Bank

KITTY CLYDE'S SISTER

ALL. Bank!

ALL BOATS

ALL. *breathing*

EMMA DEAN

POWELL. No Name

NO-NAME

ALL. Here

EMMA DEAN

POWELL. Maid of the Canyon

MAID OF THE CANYON

ALL. Here

EMMA DEAN

POWELL. Kitty Clyde's Sister

KITTY CLYDE'S SISTER

ALL. Here

EMMA DEAN

POWELL. Emma Dean

SUMNER. Here, but

DUNN. We lost a thing of bacon

MAID OF THE CANYON

HAWKINS. Well sh-

EMMA DEAN

L41 S20 POWELL. A rapid expertly run!

1.2 THE EMMA DEAN

John Wesley POWELL is our leader- a one-armed crazyface with a fiery temper and an excitable soul. Powell hates suits and loves adventures. William DUNN is a hunter with long black hair. Dunn wears beaverskin always. SUMNER is widely known to be the Bear Grylls of the 1860s. Sumner will just go snowshoeing through the Rocky Mountains in winter because “no one had done it yet.”

Dunn and Powell sit on land next to the EMMA DEAN while Sumner ties it off. The rapids rush.

Top of scene

DUNN. So what should we name that mountain?

SUMNER. You have an idea?

DUNN. I have a few ideas!

POWELL. And I have a few ideas

DUNN. I just have a few ideas

POWELL. Sumner, do you have any ideas?

SUMNER. No

POWELL. So Sumner has no ideas and you have a few ideas and I have a few ideas.

DUNN. Should I do my ideas?

POWELL. Yeah let's hear your ideas

DUNN. Okay. Here they are!

- Dunn Mountain
- Mount Dunn
- Craggy Range
- Volcano Of Dunn

POWELL. So you want to name it after yourself?

DUNN. No, there's Craggy Range, that has nothing to do with me.

POWELL. Volcano of Dunn, huh?

DUNN. Yeah I was thinking, you know? If I'm gonna name something after myself, I want it to pop.

L43 S30

POWELL. You know the Unwritten Rules.

DUNN. Well, yeah, but they're Unwritten, we only follow them half the time.

POWELL. Let's go through em. Just to make sure we're covering some of the bases

DUNN. The Unwritten Rules for Getting Something Named After You ARE:

1. You are the sole discoverer of the thing
2. You Accomplished Something directly in relation to the thing
3. No one objects and everyone agrees

POWELL. Can you prove those points?

DUNN. Yup! 1. I remarked on the strange colors and jagged edges of that mountain before either of you

SUMNER. Wait no, that was me.

POWELL. What did you say, Sumner?

SUMNER. I said "Would ya Look at That"

DUNN. But yeah Sumner you just said Look at That then I said "Hey Wow. I've never seen a mountain with such jagged edges cutting up the sky like that!"

POWELL. Great line.

SUMNER. What about Rule 3? I object.

DUNN. To what?

SUMNER. It's not Dunn's mountain, it should be my mountain. But I don't want it.

POWELL. Dunn, we're the only three who can see this mountain. It's pretty, sure, but it was hard to place from any other vantage point. Do you really want a legacy like that?

DUNN. Hmm.

SUMNER. Boat's tied.

POWELL. You'll have your mountain, Dunn.

SUMNER. Let's call the mountain Knife's Peak. Cause it looks like a knife

POWELL. Or...Knife's Point. I like that better.

DUNN. That's super literal though

POWELL. "I hereby name this mountain Knife's Point."
There. Where's my journal?

SUMNER. There's your journal.

POWELL. Thank you, Sumner.

Powell writes. Quill. Awkward. One hand. Dunn watches this.

DUNN. I thought Flaming Gorge was our best name yet.

POWELL. That was good.

DUNN. I think we should all work as a team to find more poetry for these names.

POWELL. Yeah

DUNN. I'm going to work at that for the future. Sumner?

SUMNER. Sounds good.

L45 **DUNN.** I just want to make sure we're doing the best we can./

Powell continues to write. Sumner unloads the necessary equipment. Dunn looks at the scenery, probably for other things to attempt to name.

1.3 THE MAID OF THE CANYON

Campfire, middle-morning. HAWKINS is cooking sausages and HALL is working on a map.

L47 S50 Top of scene

HAWKINS. Hall, get up! Dunn ain't fishin today, so this may be all you get

HALL. Hawkins, wait, why isn't Dunn fishin?

HAWKINS. You wanted Dunn on your map team today, so Powell is fishin.

HALL. Powell's fishin?? We're gonna starve. Quick, give me two sausages.

HAWKINS. Everybody only gets one sausage. I'd have to rat you out. Sorry about that, but I'm not that sorry. Sausage UP.

HALL. Why can't you fish today, Hawkins?

HAWKINS. I have to do inventory. And lemme tell ya. At supper, some heads are gonna roll.

HALL. Wait why? Wait whose heads?

HAWKINS. The Howlands.

HALL. Wait what? Wait what about the Howlands?

HAWKINS. Okay so you know how Seneca starts in with a story EVERY night when we're all eating dinner, and then O.G. is always like "I gotta take a leak," right?

HALL. Yeah. Yeah like every night.

HAWKINS. O.G.'s not taking a leak. He's filching tobacco.

HALL. Wait what?? How do you know?

HAWKINS. I have my theories. He doesn't go where the rest of us go. I'm gonna bring it the FUCK up at dinner.

HALL. That SUCKS. The Howlands are like—

HAWKINS. Who was their mother? And why was she not a more discerning person?

HALL. How was she okay with raising total assholes?

HAWKINS. Missus Howland. “MEESSSUS HOWLANT, OH-LA-LAAAA I AM MEESSUS HOWLANT”

HALL. I mean I get it though. Their dad died like right in front of them.

HAWKINS. Yeah

HALL. And they have to like, put up with Goodman, who is

HAWKINS. *(British)* “I DO PROCLAIM.” So British.

HALL. SO British.

HAWKINS. I feel like there is like one dud in every boat. Like Old Shady has to deal with Bradley who can’t stop talking—

HALL. Who’s the dud in our boat?

HAWKINS. Not me, I make sausage!

Hall looks offended

Nah, no I was, I was kidding. You’re cool. You make maps. You pack light. You’re not like...weirdly defensive or anything. No seriously seriously. We won the lottery with our boat. Party boat!

BOTH. PARTY BOOOOAT

HALL. Maid of the Canyon for the win! OK. I’m going for a bath in the river.

HAWKINS. There’s a calm patch that way

HALL. Don’t tell the map guy where the calm patches are.

HAWKINS. Awright awright awright

HANDSHAKE.

L49 S60 **BOTH.** Friendship! /