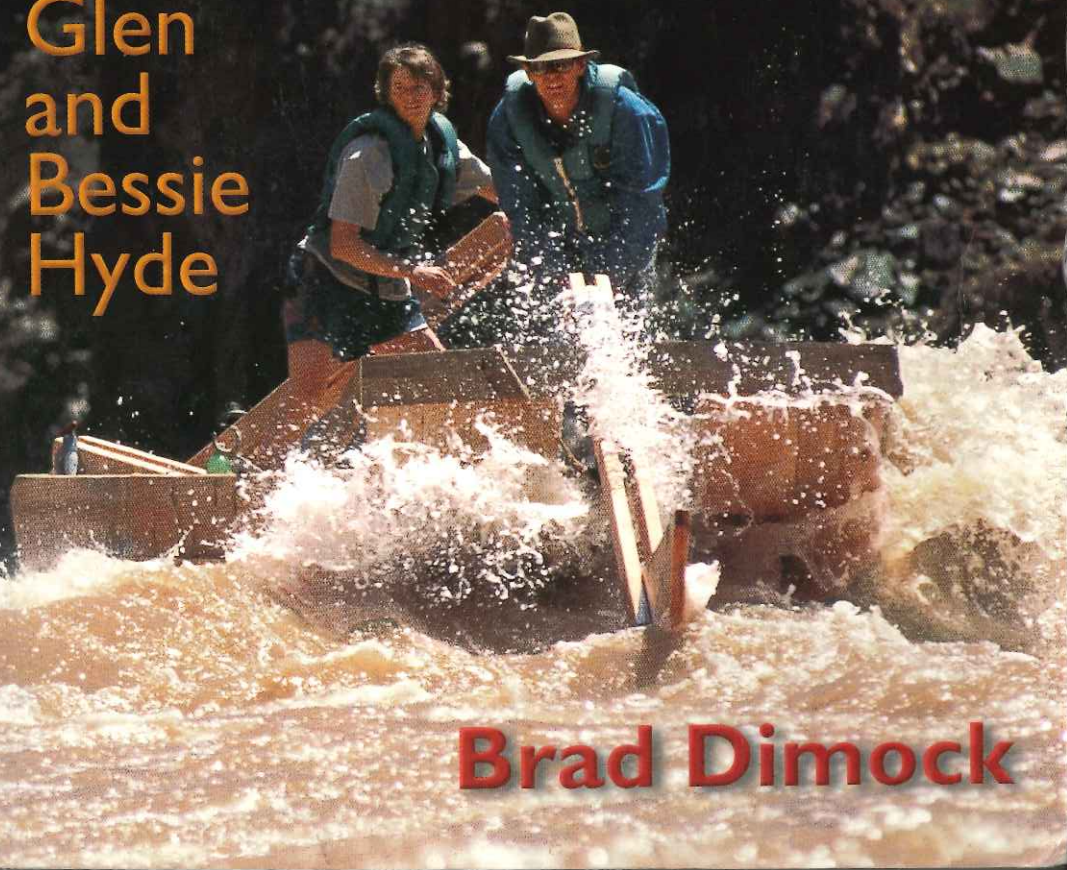


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# Sunk Without a Sound

The Tragic  
Colorado River  
Honeymoon of

Glen  
and  
Bessie  
Hyde



Brad Dimock

Seagulls; endlessly  
Flying high and far  
With strong wings made for adventuring.  
Can it be that they  
Too are in search of dreams,  
Or is it just from the joy of living?

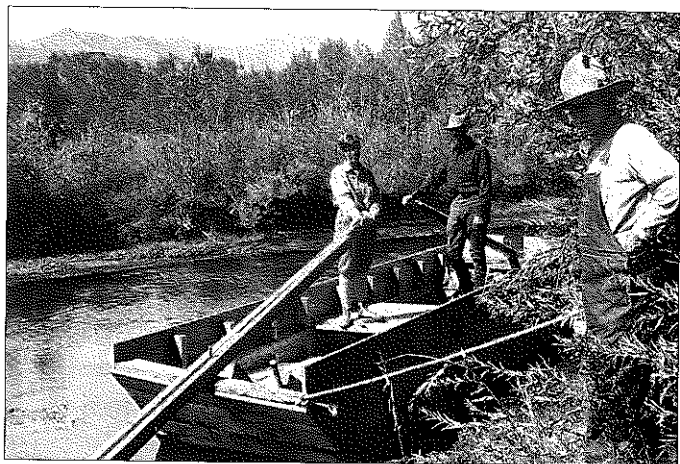
— *Bessie Haley*

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~ 1926 ~

**G**LEN AND JEANNE HYDE arrived in Salmon, Idaho, in late August of 1926 to float the River of No Return. They went straight to the river to look up Glen's old friend Harry Guleke. Guleke, known as Captain, or "Cap," was the unquestioned king of Salmon River boatmen. He had arrived in Idaho in the 1890s and gone to work for the Sandiland brothers, George and Dave, who were running sweepboats on the river. First as a bailer and camp hand, then as a boatman, Guleke soon mastered the craft and took over the business.

Sweepboats were little more than large wooden boxes, crudely built from planks and steered with long, ponderous oar-like sweeps extending from bow and stern. The heritage of the boats and those who ran them dates back to the 1840s when flatboats began to take over downstream trade from the keelboats on the Ohio and Mississippi. Flatboats, too, were just giant wooden boxes, about eighteen feet wide and up to ninety feet long that floated the rivers from Pittsburgh to New Orleans. Hammered together from rough cut lumber, the flatboat was a floating general store and trade center, manned by the scourge of every port, the hard-drinking, hard-fighting, jolly, young flatboatman. Like the scowmen that descended from them, flatboatmen led captivating lives. "There is no wonder that the way of life which the boatmen lead," wrote flatboatman Timothy Flint, "in turn extremely indolent, and extremely laborious; for days together requiring little or no effort, and attended with no danger, and then of a sudden, laborious and hazardous beyond



Jeanne and  
Glen Hyde,  
Cap Guleke

Atlantic navigation; generally plentiful as it respects food, and always so as it regards whiskey, should always have seductions that prove irresistible to the young people that live near the banks of the river.”

The flatboatman steered his craft with a tremendous sixty-five-foot steering rudder, or “sweep,” and occasionally propelled the boat with long “broadhorn” oars. Arriving in New Orleans, the flatboatman would liquidate his remaining cargo, sell his boat for lumber, squander his earnings in a dissolute spree, then tramp overland back to the upper reaches of the river to start again. “There is a charm about it that one can hardly account for,” wrote another flatboatman, Thomas C. Collins, “unless it is because one is on the move nearly all the time. Almost every trip I took I would say, ‘This is my last,’ but, soon as I got home and rested a few days, I wanted to go again, and so it was with most of those who tried it.”

On the Salmon, the first sweepboats, or scows as they were called, appeared in the 1870s. They were a scaled down, high-walled version of the flatboat. Like their predecessor, they were crudely built from rough-hewn planks, but only ranged from five to ten feet wide and sixteen to thirty-five feet long. The sidewalls rose three to four feet, and the bow and stern cantilevered up and out over the water. There were no broadhorn oars to propel the craft—instead the scowmen added a forward sweep to pry the bow of the barge into the proper thread of current.

The speed of the river provided the only propulsion, and the rear sweep aided in maintaining the proper heading.

The smaller sweep scows could be run by one man; the mammoth scows required two, one man for each sweep. The Salmon River was swift and shallow enough that the sweepboats excelled. Many were the miners that built scows and worked their way down the Salmon. The most prominent of the early Salmon scowmen was Johnny McKay, a Scottish hermit who worked the Salmon for more than twenty years beginning in 1872. After building a new boat in Salmon, Idaho, he would spend up to two years working from placer bar to placer bar, ending in Lewiston, Idaho, where he would sell his gold, scrap the scow, sell the lumber, and work his way overland back to Salmon.

By 1900 Harry Guleke had adopted sweepboating as his trade and, like the old flatboatmen, would work his way downstream buying, selling, trading, and delivering many tons of goods, always selling the boat for lumber at the end of the journey. Guleke took the trade a step farther by taking tourists through the gorge. One of them, a novelist named Caroline Lockhart, described him in 1911:

There was Guleke, big as a bear and as strong, and with a bear's surprising agility as I afterwards learned—low-voiced, deliberate, with a slow, pleasant smile and a droll fashion of shaking his head and saying: "Well, well, I declare!"

Many are the tales they tell of his strength—how, in an emergency, he broke a sweep in two, a tough green fir tree, to save a girl's life, and they chuckle over the story of how, upon an occasion, when attacked because he would not drink, he knocked the belligerent down three times and then said plaintively: "What's the matter with you? I don't want to fight," not being conscious that the fight had started.

Guleke was glad to help the Hydes build a scow, coaching and aiding them wherever he could. Guleke supplied the lumber from his small sawmill. Glen, an accomplished carpenter, had little trouble assembling the boat—the average time to build a scow was three days. On the afternoon of August 30, 1926, Glen and Jeanne Hyde launched on a paltry 650 cfs. (*Cubic feet per second*—the standard measurement of streamflow, as recorded by the United States Geological Survey, indi-