

# THE TALE OF A DONKEY

It's hard to stand out in a place that's bigger than Rhode Island. Nevertheless, there have been a handful of colorful characters in the history of the Grand Canyon, including John Hance, Mary Jane Colter and a burro named Brighty, whose life is immortalized in a children's book, a feature film, and the pages of *National Geographic*, *Sunset* and *Arizona Highways*.

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**T**he most famous animal in national park history isn't a Yellowstone grizzly or some majestic Grand Teton moose. It isn't a black bear at Yosemite or a shaggy white mountain goat roaming the granite of Glacier. Those animals have their appeal. But none of them ever became an icon like Brighty, the little gray burro who ranged wild and free at the Grand Canyon, from the Colorado River to the North Rim, for more than 30 years.

Brighty's legend was born a century ago and went on to inspire Marguerite Henry's classic children's novel, *Brighty of the Grand Canyon*, and a 1966 feature film of the same name. Although fondly remembered, with captivating Wesley Dennis illustrations that range from biological precision to Pooh-like whimsy, Henry's book is no happily-ever-after bedtime story. The author, sweet-voiced and with the gentle mien of a favorite teacher, didn't spare Brighty from menace.

Mountain lions maul Brighty — twice. His companion, Hezekiah Appleyard, the grizzled prospector known as "Old Timer," is murdered, and Brighty survives a harrowing

