

August 2022



Vol. 7, No. 3

ZANE GREY EXPLORER

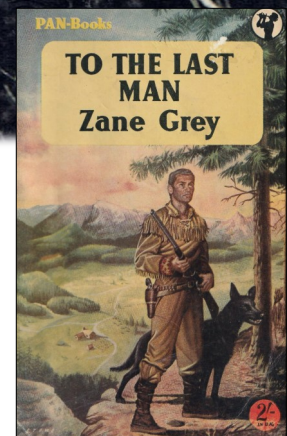
THE JOURNAL OF ZANE GREY'S WEST SOCIETY

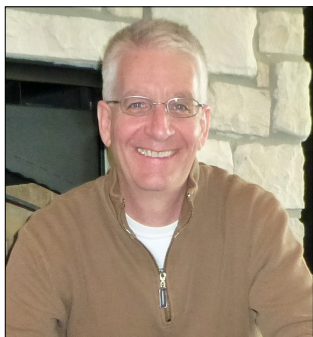
The Geography of *To the Last Man*

by Dr. Kevin Blake



Also:
**ZG's 1920 Diary,
Part Two**





The Geography of Zane Grey's *To the Last Man*

by Kevin Blake, Professor of Geography, Kansas State University

To the Last Man was Zane Grey's first book set in Arizona's Tonto Basin and along the section of the Mogollon Rim that he popularized as the Tonto Rim (Fig. 1). Like *The Mysterious Rider*, Grey's adventures in the American West influenced how and when he was able to write *To the Last Man*. To get this story, Grey made three hunting trips to the Tonto Rim in the autumn of 1918, 1919, and 1920, and wrote the book between November 1920 and February 1921. When Harper and Brothers published it in 1922 it became the # 9 bestseller. 1922 was a big publication year for Grey as Harpers also published *The Day of the Beast* and *Tales of Lonely Trails*.

At first glance, the geography of *To the Last Man* seems quite simple. In the Foreword, Grey states the book is about the feud known as the Pleasant Valley War in the Tonto Basin of Arizona. Grey also details his effort to win the trust of the Tonto Basin

residents so that they would share their tales of the famous feud. Since the Pleasant Valley War is historical fact, it would be easy, but incorrect, to say that the geographic setting is Young, Arizona, in the Tonto Basin.

The geography of this book is, however, complex and far-reaching. It also features several surprisingly thorny issues. For example, why does Zane Grey place much of the action in Grass Valley, and where is that? Is Grass Valley the same place as Pleasant Valley? Why is most of the book set north of the Tonto Basin near the Tonto Rim? When did the feud occur? How closely does Grey's fiction parallel the actual Pleasant Valley War?

In this article I address the geography of *To the Last Man* by focusing on its place settings, including the Tonto Rim and Tonto Basin. I also highlight places where *To the Last Man* parallels actual events in the history of the Pleasant Valley War, a feud that is also historically known as the Graham – Tewksbury Feud, with a history that is much debated (Fig. 2).

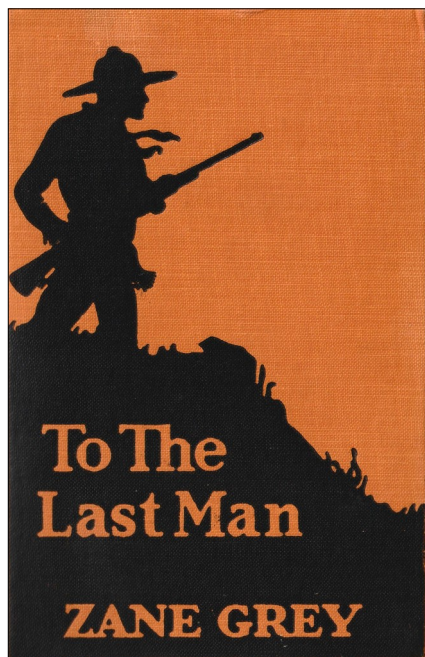


Fig. 1. The Grosset and Dunlap hard-back, circa 1923.

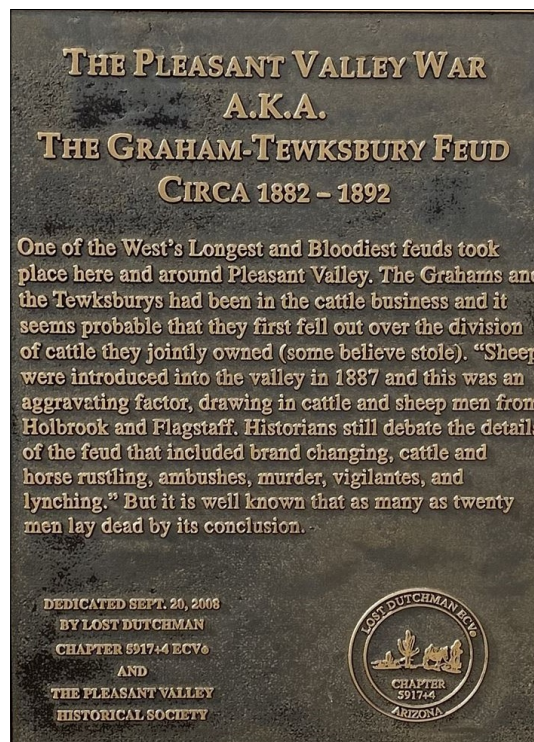


Fig. 2. Pleasant Valley War historical marker in Young, AZ.. All illustrations courtesy of Kevin Blake, except as noted.

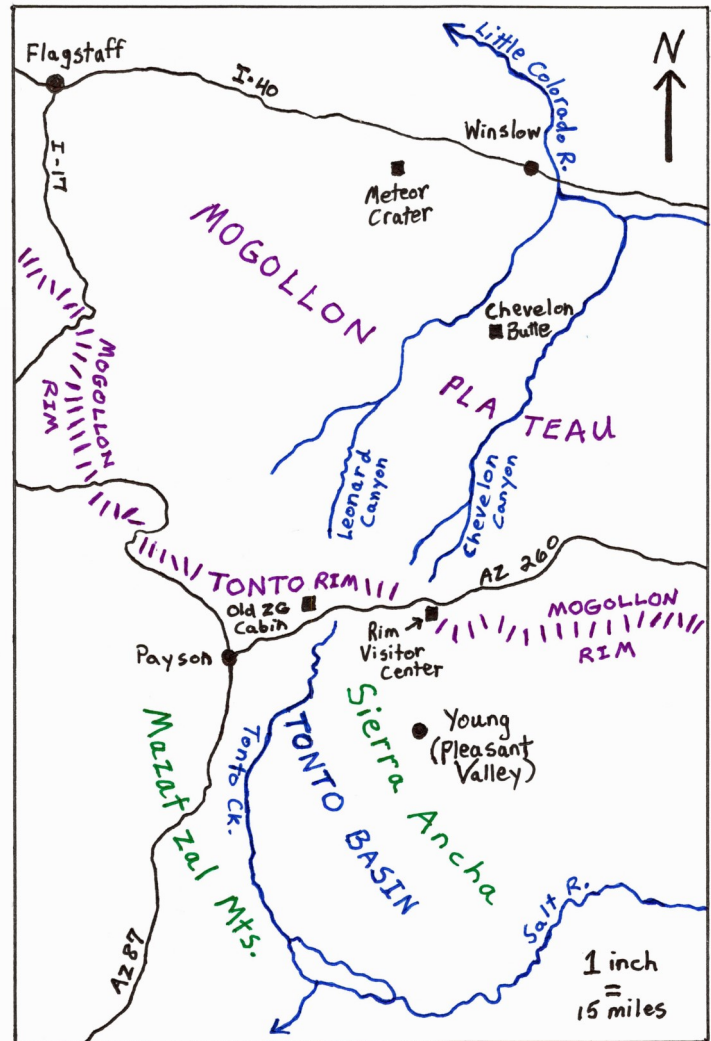
Unlike romance novels that may also be considered historical fiction, such as *The U. P. Trail* and *Western Union*, Grey used great literary license to write *To the Last Man* as a romance novel. Grey borrowed a few plot elements from the historical events of the feud, but not characterizations. His fictional Jorth and Isbel clans were not literal substitutes for the Graham and Tewksbury clans.

As told in the Foreword, Grey learned that no two versions of the feud were the same. He also spun his own drama so he would not betray the trust of his informants. Tensions were still high when Grey was learning the tale, even though the killings had ceased thirty years earlier. Grey heard many of the details from Elam Boles, a local rancher who bought his land from Jim Roberts, the supposed “last man,” the only male survivor of the feud (Ehrhardt 2008).

Grey tried to write about the feud’s origins in nuanced terms. He knew that conflicts between sheep and cattle ranchers were important, but that cattle rustling was a key flashpoint, as were old hostilities brought into the Tonto Basin by settlers. Harpers, though, wanted the conflict portrayed in black-and-white terms rather than painted in shades of gray, so they deleted a few words here and there (Tuska 2004). Thus, Grey’s exact original manuscript was not published until 2004 as *Tonto Basin*.

When I compared *To the Last Man* with *Tonto Basin*, the only significant variation was that Harpers omitted the year in which Grey set the conflict, 1887 (Ch. 3, p. 66, of the Five Star version). The real-life events of the feud that Grey fictionalized, such as the shootout at the Isbel ranch and the killings at the general store in Young, also occurred in 1887, thus there is no doubt that 1887 is the temporal setting of *To the Last Man* (Pfeiffer 2019, 29).

The geography of *To the Last Man* centers around the Mogollon Rim, Mogollon Plateau, Tonto Rim, and Tonto Basin. The Mogollon Rim cuts right through the middle of the book’s geography (Map,



seen above). The Rim is a northwest – southeast trending escarpment that extends over two hundred miles from just west of Flagstaff all the way to New Mexico. In physiographic terms, it divides the Colorado Plateau to the north from the Basin and Range to the south.

The sub-section of the Colorado Plateau north of the Mogollon Rim that gently slopes down toward Winslow and the Little Colorado River is called the Mogollon Plateau. Thus, the Mogollon Rim is the southern escarpment of the Mogollon Plateau. The Rim’s steep cliffs – over 2,000 feet in places – drop into the Tonto Basin (Fig. 3). The Mogollon Rim is also simply called the Rim. The focus of this book, however, is on the central section of the Rim, just north and east of Payson, which is also called the Tonto Rim (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. Zane Grey (seated on left), R.C. Grey (standing), and (probably) Lee Doyle (seated in middle), hunting for bear on top of the Tonto Rim, circa 1922. Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

The Rim's official place name is Mogollon Rim, named for Juan Ignacio Flores Mogollon, governor of the Nuevo Mexico territory of New Spain in 1712-1715. There are many different pronunciations of Mogollon; the most accepted is "Muggy-own." Grey calls it the Rim in *To the Last Man*, but in his later books he calls it the Tonto Rim. Tonto (Spanish for "fool") as a place name came from the so-called Tonto Apaches in the 1800s.

That was an inappropriate name applied to several Apachean linguistic families, and it is no longer used to describe these people. As a place name, however, Tonto persists in the name of a national monument, national forest, creek, basin, and natural bridge, among other features.

Grey nicely summarizes the differences in the landscape between the north and south sides of the Tonto Rim in Chapter 6: "there were many cañons, all heading up near the Rim, all running [north-northeast] and widening down for miles through the wooded mountain [of the Mogollon Plateau], and vastly different from the deep, short, yellow-walled gorges that cut into the Rim from the [Tonto] Basin [south] side." Leonard Canyon

and Chevelon Canyon are two of the largest canyons that flow north-northeast across the Mogollon Plateau toward the Little Colorado River. The Mogollon Plateau is densely forested on the high elevations close to the Rim and in the upper reaches of its canyons. This thick vegetation eventually gives way to a cedar and sage shrubland in the lower elevations to the north near Winslow.

The precipitation that falls on the south-facing cliffs of the Tonto Rim flows southward into the Tonto Basin, which is an irregularly shaped basin or valley of Tonto Creek and many other streams that flow south toward the Salt River. Payson is located at the northwestern edge of the Tonto Basin. The Tonto Basin is crisscrossed by rugged mountains including the Sierra Ancha and the Mazatzal Mountains (pronounced "Matazal"). Dense forests cover the higher elevations, just below the Rim and on the mountain summits, and scrubland and desert dominate the lower elevations (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4. View northwestward toward the Tonto Rim section of the Mogollon Rim from the original Zane Grey hunting cabin site, 2015.



Fig. 5. Lee Doyle points the way in the Tonto Basin for Zane Grey, who is seated on the white mule. R. C. Grey may have taken this photo, circa 1922. Photo Courtesy of Zane Grey's West Society.

The variability of Tonto Basin is striking. Its elevation changes from nearly 8,000 feet atop the highest mountains to 2,000 feet along the Salt River. In fact, while driving into the Tonto Basin from Phoenix, some visitors may be surprised that this saguaro-cacti studded Sonoran Desert landscape is part of Tonto National Forest, the largest national forest in Arizona (Fig. 6). How can a

desert be a national forest? The purpose of the Forest Reserve Act of 1891 was not to protect forests, per se, but to ensure a steady supply of timber and to *protect watersheds*. The concern was that erosion of steep slopes sparsely covered with desert vegetation could foul the agricultural irrigation works in the valleys below. Thus, steep and highly erodible desert lands throughout the Southwest are often included in national forests.

The lead male protagonist in *To the Last Man* is Jean Isbel (Fig. 7). Jean is Gaston Isbel's youngest son, is part Nez Perce, and hails from the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. Jean Isbel is another of Grey's characters whose name he borrowed from his real-life adventures. Grey met Joe Isbel on his first trip to the Tonto Basin in late September 1918. Al Doyle guided Grey on this trip, and Lee Doyle, Al's son, hired Joe Isbel as the cook.



Fig. 6. Painting by Marian Letton of saguaro cactus in Tonto National Forest and Four Peaks at the southern end of the Mazatzal Mountains, 1969. This is an idealized view from northeast of Phoenix, Arizona, along the Beeline Highway, (AZ 87).

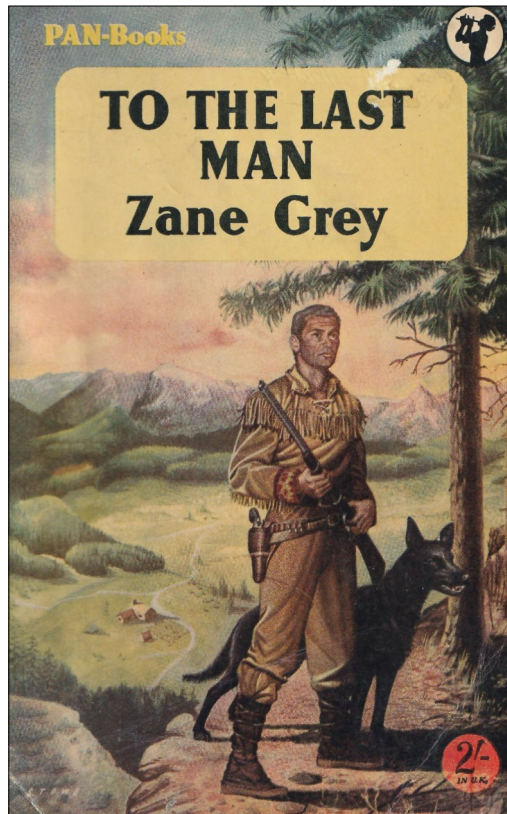


Fig. 7.
Pan Books
paperback,
1956,
depicting
Jean Isbel
and his dog,
Shepp.

Grey described Isbel in *Tales of Lonely Trails* (1922, 170) as a “tall, lithe cowboy, straight as an Indian, with powerful shoulders, round limbs, and slender waist, and Isbel was what westerners called a broncho-buster. He was a prize-winning rider at all the rodeos. Indeed, his seat in the saddle was individual and incomparable. He had a rough red-blue face, hard and rugged like the rocks he rode over so fearlessly, and his eyes were bright hazel, steady and hard.” Ironically, Grey recounts later in *Tales of Lonely Trails* (pp. 224-225) that he fired Joe Isbel after he accused him of wasting the camp’s food supplies.

In Chapter 1, Jean is near Winslow, Arizona, riding south. He had set out for Arizona after receiving a letter from his father, Gaston Isbel, who wanted Jean’s help at his Tonto Basin cattle ranch. Though Gaston Isbel had foreseen looming conflicts with sheepmen and rustlers, he did not put those details in his letter, only encouraging his son to bring plenty of rifles and ammunition. In Chapter 2, there are more details of how Jean had reached this point. He boarded a ship in Oregon, sailed to San Francisco and then San Diego. Next, he went

east by stage from San Diego and crossed the Sierra Madres (the Peninsular Ranges). Jean rode a burro to Yuma, a steamboat up the Colorado River to Ehrenberg, Arizona, and a stage to Phoenix. Finally, Jean rode a horse from Phoenix to Flagstaff, then rode east toward Winslow before turning south to cross the Mogollon Plateau.

Why did Jean Isbel take such a circuitous route to the Tonto Basin? The answer lies in how Grey used his own wilderness experiences to add authenticity to his romances. Grey went to the Tonto Rim Country for a hunting trip most every autumn from 1918 to 1929, except in 1924, 1925 and 1928. On his first three trips to the Tonto Basin, Grey approached it from the north. As challenging as that was, it was still more feasible than attempting to cross the wild and steep mountains and valleys of the Tonto Basin from the south or southwest. The only other option at that time would have been to travel into the Tonto Basin from the south, but that would result in many miles of desert to cross. A good highway to enter the Tonto Basin from the west or southwest did not exist until 1958 with the completion of the Beeline Highway (Arizona 87).

In 1918, Grey’s party rode southeast from Flagstaff toward the Tonto Basin, but it was the 1919 trip route that became the model for Jean Isbel’s journey in *To the Last Man*. The Doyles (Al and his son, Lee) and the Haughts (Babe and his sons, Edd and George) guided the group in 1919. The party also included R. C. Grey (Zane Grey’s brother), George Takahashi (Grey’s cook), and Sievert Nielsen (Grey’s trekking companion across Death Valley the previous March).

On September 15, 1919, the Grey party rode east from Flagstaff. As related in *Tales of Lonely Trails* (1922) and in the *Country Gentleman* serialization of “Arizona Bear” in November and December of 1920, Zane Grey rode Don Carlos on this trip. On September 17, 1919, they camped at Meteor Crater, about fifteen miles west of Winslow. Next, they rode toward Winslow before turning south toward Chevelon Butte. Continuing south, they reached the Tonto Rim near the headwaters of Chevelon Canyon on September 21.

During Jean Isbel's journey in Chapter 1 along this same route, he meets an antagonistic man named Colter. Colter is allied with the sheepmen and warns Isbel that they range "this Rim from Black Butte to the Apache country." Apache country refers to the White Mountain Apache lands farther east on the Mogollon Rim, and to the Fort Apache country to the southeast. Black Butte is hard to identify because there are at least fifteen such place names in Arizona, but none that I can find in along the Rim or in the Tonto Basin.

In Chapter 12 Ellen refers to Colter as a rustler in the Hash Knife Outfit. This outfit was an actual cattle ranching operation formally called the Aztec Land and Cattle Company, with a brand known as the hash knife. They came to Arizona from Texas in 1884 and set up operations in the Little Colorado River basin near Winslow and Holbrook. Some cowboys in the Hash Knife Outfit (or Gang) became embroiled in the Pleasant Valley War, a minor example of actual facts that Grey wove into his tale. Grey mentions the Hash Knife Outfit and the Pleasant Valley War in at least three of his later books, *The Drift Fence* (1933), *The Hash Knife Outfit* (1933) and *Shadow on the Trail* (1946).

The vegetation of the national forests in Arizona fascinated Grey and he expressed this in *To the Last Man*. As Jean ascends the Mogollon Plateau toward the Rim in Chapter 1, the changes in vegetation reflected the increase in elevation: "low, scraggy cedars gave place to more numerous, darker, greener, bushier ones, and these to high, full-foliaged, green-berried trees. Sage and grass in the open flats grew more luxuriously. Then came the piñons, and presently among them the checker-barked junipers [cedars]. Jean hailed the first pine tree with a hearty slap on the brown, rugged bark. It was a small dwarf pine struggling to live. The next one was larger, and after that came several, and beyond them pines stood up everywhere above the lower trees."

Most of Grey's books include geographic details that he could only obtain by being there. He wrote accurately about the wildlife, too, such as his reference to the large, gray, white-tailed squirrels in

Chapter 4. This is the Abert's squirrel, or tassel-eared squirrel, which is common in the ponderosa pine forest of the Rim. It is a stunning squirrel, given its large size, striking white tail, and long tufted ears. Not all reviewers in 1922 appreciated such commentary, however, as one took Grey to task for his greater interest in wild natural settings than in characterizations, saying Grey would "make a better essayist than he does a novelist" (Scott 1979, 59).

In Chapter 1, just before he reaches the Rim, Jean Isbel meets Ellen Jorth by happenstance at a sheep camp. Neither knows the others last name, so they meet as young people who share an attraction for each other, rather than as rivals of feuding clans. When they walk together to the Rim and look south, Jean admires his first view of the Tonto Basin: an "immense abyss ... a black basin of timbered country, the darkest and wildest he had ever gazed upon, a hundred miles of blue distance across to an upflung mountain range, hazy purple against the sky. It seemed to be a stupendous gulf surrounded on three sides by bold, undulating lines of peaks, and on his side [the north side] by a wall so high that he felt lifted aloft on the rim of the sky" (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Dell comic book, *Zane Grey's To the Last Man*, number 616, 1955, p. 1.

The Rim is particularly impressive to Jean. As he looks westward in Chapter 1 “he grasped this remarkable phenomenon of nature. For leagues and leagues a colossal red and yellow wall, a rampart, a mountain-faced cliff, seemed to zig-zag westward. Grand and bold were the promontories reaching out over the void.” This point on the Rim where Jean and Ellen meet is today where Arizona Highway 260 crests the Rim. If you are driving along AZ 260, it is well worth a stop at the Mogollon Rim Visitor Center to take in the view that Ellen and Jean shared.

This powerful view from the Rim, combined with the portentous meeting of Jean and Ellen, becomes the scenic climax of the book and the nexus point of its geography, with the Isbel faction to the south in the Tonto Basin and the Jorth faction to the north of the Rim in the canyons of the Mogollon Plateau. This point is also where Ellen and Jean first kiss (Chapter 1), where they agree to later meet in secret (Chapter 4), and where Ellen realizes that she loves Jean (Chapter 10). At the end of Chapter 1 it is also the place where Ellen dismisses any chance of friendship with Jean after she hears his last name (Fig. 9).

At the Rim, Jean Isbel sees his destination, Grass Valley, about fifteen miles away. To the readers of *To the Last Man* it is apparent that Grass Valley must be a euphemism for Pleasant Valley. Young in Pleasant Valley was the center of the feud, even

though the violence took in much of central Arizona. But why did Grey use the name Grass Valley instead of Young or Pleasant Valley? Perhaps it was to deflect attention away from Young, where the emotions from the feud might still run hot. Or Elam Boles may have referred to it as Grass Valley. That was a place name in use in the Tonto Basin in the late 1800s as the original name for the small village of Gisela, which is located about twenty miles straight west of Young and fifteen miles southeast of Payson (Barnes and Granger 1960, 103). Gisela lies along Tonto Creek and is in the heart of the Tonto Basin. Young, on the other hand, lies in the Cherry Creek watershed (a tributary of the Salt River), in Pleasant Valley, a much larger and more open expanse that was more easily visible from the Rim (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Young, Arizona, 1995.

Courtesy Jeanne and Paul Morton, Zane Grey's West Society.

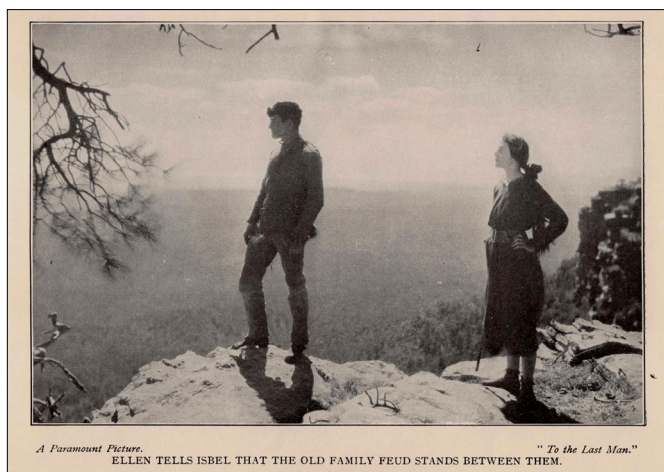
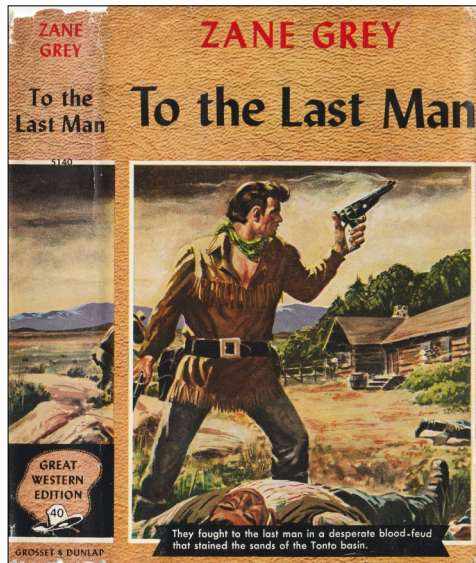


Fig. 9. Grosset and Dunlap photoplay edition movie still from the 1923 film.

Richard Dix as Jean Isbel and Lois Wilson as Ellen Jorth.

To get into the Tonto Basin in Chapter 2, Jean descends the south-facing escarpment of the Rim. He dismounts his horse and walks down a narrow, steep trail that was “clogged with stones, and as full of sharp corners as a crosscut saw.” This is a description of the Tonto Trail that Grey used to travel back-and-forth from the Haught cabin to his favorite camping areas up on the Rim. The trail was far too steep for wagons; they had to detour many miles around to the east, following the alignment of what is today AZ 260 to surmount the Rim.

Fig. 11. Grosset and Dunlap Great Western edition dustjacket, circa 1960, portraying Jean Isbel at his father's ranch during the shootout with the Jorth faction.



After Jean descends the Tonto Rim and travels south to Grass Valley, he sees widely scattered cabins and houses, with one store made of stone – “not exactly like a fort,” but it gives the impression as a good structure for defense.

The Isbel ranch is described in Chapter 9 as being located a bit over a mile outside of town, and in Chapter 2 the ranch is described as having a “big, low rambling log structure standing well out from a wooded knoll at the edge of the valley. Corrals and barns and sheds lay off at the back” (Fig. 11).

Jean learns more about the feud while visiting with his family. Cattle are plentiful in the Tonto Basin, but sheepmen use both the Rim Country in the summer for grazing and the Tonto Basin in the winter, and they drive their flocks to market in Phoenix and Maricopa through Reno Pass, which is mentioned in Chapters 3, 4, and 6. Jean learns the first settlers came into the Tonto Basin over the rough Reno Pass that crossed the Mazatzal Mountains.

Reno Pass is about the mid-point of the Mazatzals. The U. S. Army built it as a supply route for the short-lived Camp Reno, which was established



Fig. 12. Zane Grey knew from personal experience how a mass of dark riders would appear. In this view of men and women riders at the beginning of a Tonto Rim bear hunt, circa 1922, Zane Grey and Babe Haught are behind the two light-colored dogs and in front of a large ponderosa pine. Photo courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

by the 1st Cavalry in 1867 and abandoned in 1870. It was far too rugged to ever be suitable for regular wagon or auto traffic, and now is accessible only to ATVs. Even though the pass is briefly mentioned three times in *To the Last Man*, it never develops into a prominent place.

There are two places in the Tonto Basin that serve as settings for violent acts in *To the Last Man*: the Isbel ranch and the stone building in Young. When Jean sees a “dark moving mass” of riders (Fig. 12) in Chapter 7 he intuits its menace, and indeed it is Lee Jorth and his allies riding to accost the Isbel faction at the ranch. Once the Jorths arrive, they



Fig. 13. Harper and Brothers illustration by Frank Spradling. The book often mentions Jean’s fearsome knife that he wore on his belt, but it is not portrayed in the cover art of any of the various book editions.

quickly gun down two men of the Isbel faction, including Guy Isbel, one of Jean’s brothers, who leave the protection of the cabin to move their horses to safety. A furious gunfight ensues for the rest of the day. After dark, Jean Isbel sneaks out from the cabin and knifes several of the Jorth faction before returning to safety (Fig. 13).

At daybreak in Chapter 8, the gunfight resumes. During a lull in the action, Esther, Guy Isbel’s widow, looks out a window and sees that several black hogs have broken into the pasture where her dead husband and his friend still lay after being murdered the previous day. Panic consumes everyone in the Isbel ranch cabin as they debate whether the hogs will eat the human flesh (Fig. 14). They watch the hogs draw closer and closer, and then one man swears a “mighty oath” and shouts, “Isbel, we cain’t stand heah an’ watch them hogs eat our people!” Finally, the two widows venture out to bury the bodies, guessing that surely the Jorth faction would not be “so low” as to shoot women. The widows reach the pasture at the same moment that the lead hog scents one of the bodies and races up to it. Mercifully, the screams of the women drive the hogs away at the last instant and they quickly bury their men with no shots fired.

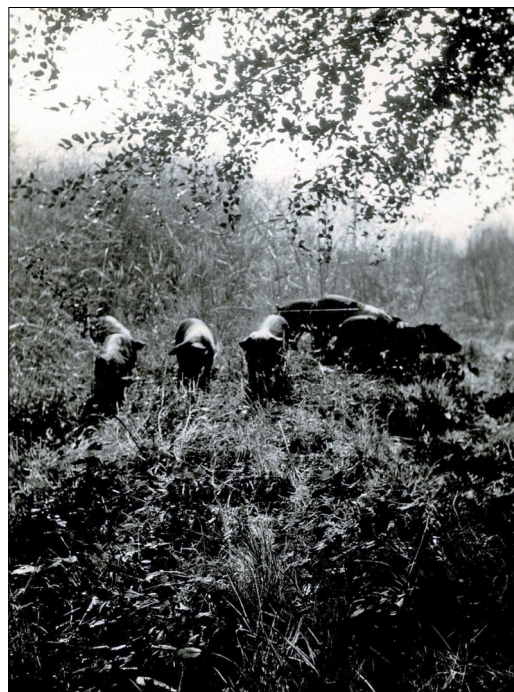


Fig. 14. Photo by Zane Grey of black hogs rooting for food in the Tonto Basin, circa 1922. Courtesy of Zane Grey’s West Society.

This scene is another actual event of the feud, but one of the book reviewers in 1922 did not realize the hogs were part of the real feud. The reviewer wrote that the book was the “usual dreary product of a fiction mill,” but that the scene with the hogs was the only instance of “original conception and execution . . . a better writer could have done wonders with it” (Scott 1979, 60). Conversely, I argue this is one of the most memorable scenes in the book and Grey’s writing places his readers right amidst this gruesome affair.

After the Jorth faction finally withdraws from their siege of the Isbel ranch, the Isbels gather their allies and decide they must wipe out the Jorths. They ride into Young in Chapter 9 since the Jorth faction has holed up in the stone store. But first, the Isbel women shame Gaston Isbel into realizing that he and Lee Jorth should decide the feud face-to-face, before any other men die senselessly. In front of the store Gaston Isbel and Lee Jorth face off for a duel, but first one of the Jorth gang members from inside the store shoots Gaston Isbel.

One of the Isbel allies, an old Texas gunman named Blue, decides to avenge the cowardly shooting of Gaston Isbel by bracing the Jorth gang inside the store. Blue shoots Jorth, but Queen, a gunman in Jorth’s gang, kills Blue. Before he dies, Blue reveals that he is King Fisher, the famous Texas gunslinger (Fig. 15). Though some details were different, the shootout at the stone store in Young is another historical detail of the feud that Grey borrowed for his novel.



Even though these scenes in the Tonto Basin have a compelling and grisly vividness, most of the remaining pages of *To the Last Man* are set on the Rim or in the canyons of the Mogollon Plateau. The Tonto Rim is thoroughly described in *To the Last Man*, whereas the Pleasant Valley is primarily a plot device. Indeed, I wonder if Grey visited Young prior to writing *To the Last Man*. He certainly would have been able to write these general descriptions of Pleasant Valley from what he had heard and what he had experienced farther north in the Tonto Basin.

Ellen Jorth’s movements in *To the Last Man* are like those of Grey’s trips, when he rode back-and-forth between the Haught cabin below the Tonto Rim and the hunting camps above the Rim. At times Ellen is at the sheep camps right on the Rim. She also visits a friend named John Sprague, whose cabin is at the head of Chevelon Canyon on a little, level grassy meadow. And she also spends time at her father’s ranch farther down in Chevelon Canyon at a place called the Knoll:

“The Knoll was a symmetrical hill situated at the mouth of the three cañons. It was covered with brush and cedars, with here and there lichened rocks showing above the bleached grass. Below the Knoll was a wide, grassy flat or meadow through which a willow-bordered stream cut its rugged boulder-strewn bed. Water flowed abundantly at this season [May] and the deep washes leading down from the slopes attested to the fact of cloudbursts and heavy storms. This meadow valley was dotted with horses and cattle, and meandered away between timbered slopes to lose itself in a green curve. A singular feature of this cañon was that a heavy growth of spruce trees covered the slope facing northwest; and the opposite slope exposed to the sun and therefore less snowbound in the winter, held a sparse growth of yellow pines.”

Fig. 15. Grosset and Dunlap photoplay edition movie still from the 1923 film. Frank Campeau as Blue and Richard Dix as Jean Isbel.

This exceptional level of descriptive detail indicates how Grey based this setting on a place he knew well. The geographic problem is that the Knoll is actually in the upper reaches of Leonard Canyon, not Chevelon. Perhaps Grey was mixed up on the canyon names; he had hunted in both. Knoll Lake, dammed since Grey's time in Arizona, now inundates the Knoll, so it is not possible to know if Grey's description matches the Knoll in Leonard Canyon. Or perhaps Grey intentionally re-located the Knoll to Chevelon Canyon since he had already established the head of that canyon as where Jean met Ellen. Or perhaps he used the Knoll place name and gave it traits of his favorite camps north of the Rim, in Barbershop Canyon (just west of Leonard Canyon) or in Beaver Canyon (between Leonard and Chevelon canyons) (Fig. 16).



Fig. 16. Photo by Zane Grey of what he called "Beaver Dam Camp" in Beaver Canyon, circa 1920s. Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

In Chapters 11 and 12, after a gunfight with the Isbel faction who pursued the Jorth faction up onto the Rim, Colter spirits Ellen away from the Knoll under false pretenses (Fig. 17). They make a hard horseback ride straight northwest, up and down ridges and canyons, trying to hide their tracks. The streams carry more water as they travel northwest into deeper reaches of the canyons. They take refuge at two old cabins in the pocket of a secluded canyon, where Ellen learns of Colter's lies from her uncle, Tad Jorth. Ellen also learns from a dying

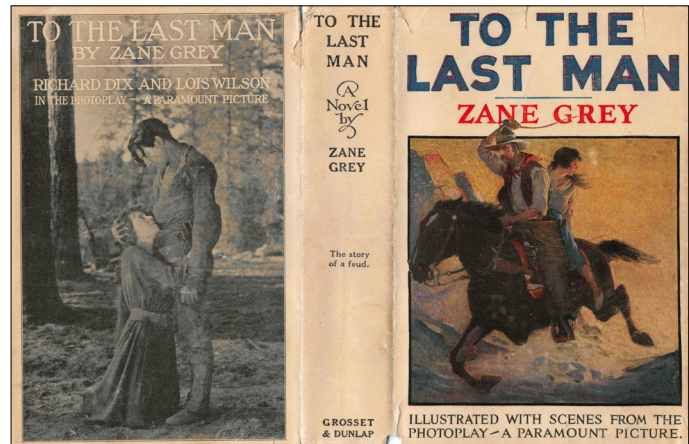


Fig. 17. Grosset and Dunlap photoplay edition dustjacket, circa 1923. The front cover illustration by Frank Spradling depicts Jim Colter and Ellen Jorth on horseback.

man, Bill Isbel, one of Jean's brothers, that Jean never killed a Jorth. This is important to Ellen since she loves Jean but could never accept him if had he killed a Jorth.

The action in Chapter 13 continues along the summit of the Rim. At this point, Jean is the sole surviving member of the Isbel clan, and he is tracking the gunman Queen, who the Isbels had wounded in a gunfight. Queen later dies from his wounds, but other men in the Jorth gang corner Jean and wound him. To escape, Jean leaps down into a canyon running north from the Rim, landing in spruce trees (Fig. 18).



Fig. 18. In Chapter 13, Jean Isbel leaps into a canyon with dense spruce and pine trees like these. View southwest from the Mogollon Rim Visitor Center along AZ 260, 2007.

Grey does not name this canyon, but as Jean stealthily descends the thick vegetation, heading northward, he figures he is about twenty miles west of Chevelon Canyon. That would place Jean in Leonard Canyon or a smaller one just west of there, such as Barbershop Canyon. Descending farther, Jean suddenly hears the two remaining men of the Jorth faction, Springer and Colter, and seeking refuge, Jean dashes into an empty cabin.

The book concludes in Chapter 14 at this canyon hideout. With blood dripping from his wound, Jean Isbel hides in the loft of the cabin, but it turns out to be the same one where Jim Colter hid Ellen. Colter and Ellen come inside the cabin and Ellen denies Colter any chance of ever earning her love. When Ellen sees blood on the ladder to the loft, both she and Colter realize Jean is hiding there. In the ensuing melee, Ellen shoots Colter and Jean knifes Springer, leaving Jean as the last man standing.

Though Grey borrowed few historical events from the feud, this book is undoubtedly the best-selling version ever of the Pleasant Valley War. *To the Last Man* is not only one of Zane Grey's top-ten western romance bestsellers from 1917 to 1924, but also still highly regarded. The eminent Zane Grey scholar Chuck Pfeiffer (2019, 29) rated it number twelve on his list of personal favorites, and it is one of only eight Zane Grey westerns reprinted by Easton Press in their fine leather bindings.

There are two movie versions of *To the Last Man*. In 1923, Richard Dix played Jean Isbel and Lois Wilson played Ellen Jorth in a Famous Players – Lasky production with Paramount. Grosset and Dunlap published a photoplay edition to accompany this 1923 film release, one of the few Zane Grey films featured in photoplay editions. In 1933, the same studio produced a greatly altered version of *To the Last Man*, starring Randolph Scott and Esther Ralston.

Zane Grey's first trips to the Tonto Basin and Tonto Rim cemented his love for Arizona and changed the trajectory of his writing career. They also introduced him to the Babe Haught family, who became his guides, friends, and in 1921,

neighbors, after they built Grey's hunting cabin under the Tonto Rim (Fig. 19). Grey so admired the Haught family that for his next book set along the Tonto Rim, *Under the Tonto Rim* (1926), he used the Haughts as leading characters. Counting *To the Last Man*, Zane Grey eventually set ten full-length novels along the Tonto Rim. No other similarly sized region, not even Grey's beloved Navajo land, was the source for so many of his western romances (Blake 1995).



Fig. 19. Photo by Zane Grey of his newly constructed hunting cabin below the Tonto Rim, 1921. Zane Grey's friend and fishing companion, J.A. 'Doc' Wiborn, is waving his hat. Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.

References

- Barnes, Will C. and Granger, Byrd H. 1960. *Will C. Barnes' Arizona Place Names*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Blake, Kevin S. 1995. Zane Grey and Images of the American West. *Geographical Review* 85(2): 202-216.
- Ehrhardt, Tim. 2008. *Zane Grey's Forgotten Ranch: Tales from the Boles Homestead*. Payson (AZ): Git a Rope!
- Pfeiffer, Charles G. 2019. *Pfeiffer's Little Books, Volume 1: So You Want to Read Zane Grey and Don't Know Where to Start and Conestogas to Kanab*. Zen Ervin, ed. Zane Grey's West Society.
- Tuska, Jon. 2004. Foreword. In *Tonto Basin: A Western Story*, 7-12. Waterville (ME): Five Star.

