

## 7 Wonders of Mount St. Helens

by Lloyd & Doris Anderson

**Introduction:** *The 7 Wonders, summarized below, are seven geological features resulting from the eruptive activity of the '80's and displayed at the MSH Creation Information Center. Because they were formed rapidly they challenge evolutionary thought which assigns long ages to such formations. We call them "wonders" because of the awe they produce. In fact, it is our persuasion that these wonders are a message from God to remind man of the speed in which He created the world.*

**1. Mountain rearranged beyond recognition in nine hours.** MSH was acclaimed the most beautiful of the Cascade peaks. Cone-shaped and snow-covered, it towered over heavily-forested deep ravines with a crystal clear lake to its north. In March of 1980, magma began moving up into the mountain wedging it apart. A powerful earthquake at 8:32 a.m., on May 18, caused the north slope to plunge into the valleys below, releasing the pressure within with a lateral, northward, fan-shaped explosion. This initial eight minute blast destroyed 230 square miles of forest.

The mountain continued to erupt until evening, expending the power of 20,000 Hiroshima-class atomic bombs. In those nine hours, the top 1/4 and entire center of the mountain disappeared, leaving a vast, gaping, horseshoe-shaped crater. Deep ravines were filled, 250' of material was deposited on the bottom of the lake, and the river that drained the north and northwest sides of the mountain was buried under an average of 150' of deposit. In just nine hours the region had become a hideous, lifeless moonscape.

For 150 years geological evolution minimized the role of catastrophic events. Yet the enormous geological change produced by this nine-hour eruption of a minor volcano would take a million years of gradual change.

**2. Canyons formed in five months.** In the five months following the eruption two canyons were formed by mud and pyroclastic flows, establishing drainages for the 1.5 x 2.0 mile crater. The primary drainage, Step Canyon, is up to 700' deep. To its east is Loowit Canyon. Both canyons cut through 100' of solid rock. Creeks flow through each canyon. The typical evolutionary explanation is that a creek slowly forms a canyon over vast ages. In this case we know that the canyons were formed quickly; then a stream began to run through them. Textbooks say the most spectacular canyon in the world, the Grand Canyon, was formed by stream erosion over a hundred million years. Now scientists who specialize in geological erosion believe it was formed rapidly just like these canyons at MSH.

**3. Badlands formed in five days.** Badlands topography is found in the Southwest and in South Dakota. It occurs where loose material has been eroded in areas of rock structures, leaving a jagged but picturesque landscape. The standard explanation for such landforms is that water, over the centuries, washed away the loose materials, leaving free-standing towering rock patterns.

At MSH the massive landslide carried huge amounts of ice and snow with it, burying them in the deep valley to the north. Throughout the day 30' of 550 degree F. ash was also deposited, which quickly melted that ice, causing it to "flash" to steam. This is the same energy process that caused the explosions up in the mountain throughout the day. Water expands 1700 times when it turns to steam. When this happens instantaneously, it is an explosion. Eventually through similar explosions all the water was used up.

When the red hot ash covering the buried ice and snow in the valley caused that ice to melt and "flash" to steam, something called "steam explosion pits" (up to 125' deep) were formed. They had nearly vertical sides until gravity collapsed them to produce a "rill and gully" effect, one of the features of badlands topography. (Rills are small gullies). The great badlands features in the US could also have been produced by catastrophic forces and some by volcanic action.

**4. Layered Strata Formed in Three Hours.** On June 12, 1980 a third explosive eruption produced 25' of stratification that amazed geologists. Successive layers are traditionally thought to require long periods of time to form; yet upwards of 100 layers accumulated mostly between the nighttime hours of 9 and 12. While a plume swiftly ascended nine miles above the mountain, wave after wave of pyroclastic flows began hurtling out of the crater and down the north slope, each dusting the valley below with another lamination. Measuring from a fraction of an inch to over a yard in thickness, each took from a few seconds to a few minutes to form.

Geologist Steven Austin described these pyroclastic flows as ground-hugging, fluidized, turbulent slurries of fine volcanic debris. They moved down the mountainside at hurricane speeds and left deposits of 1000 degrees F. One would expect each deposit to be homogenized & thoroughly mixed. Remarkably these high-velocity slurries of red-hot ash and pumice separated into coarse and fine particles of perfectly defined layers. Such features follow laws governing flows demonstrated in laboratory sedimentation tanks.

Similar thin layering appears in the Tapeats Sandstones of the Grand Canyon. Conventional wisdom says they were formed by slow and continuous sedimentation over long ages. Both gas-charged slurries which formed the MSH strata and water-charged slurries which formed the Tapeats strata follow the same laws of physics. The volcano has demonstrated that such formations can be formed rapidly. A global flood would have produced Tapeats in a brief time.

**5. River System Formed in Nine Hours.** The landslide of May 18 had buried the river and highway to Spirit Lake to an average 150'. It also buried most other drainages in the 23 square miles of the Upper Toutle Valley and plugged the valley's mouth. For twenty-two months no established path for water to the Pacific Ocean existed.

Then, on March 19, 1982, an eruption melted a large snow pack that had accumulated in the crater over the winter. The waters mixed with loose material on the slopes of the mountain creating an enormous mudflow. In nine hours while no eye watched, the mudflow carved an integrated system of drainages over much of the valley and reopened the way to the Pacific Ocean. The drainages included at least three canyons 100' deep.

One was nicknamed “The Little Grand Canyon of the Toutle” because it is a 1/40th scale model of the Grand Canyon.

Much water (or mud) accomplishes rapidly what a little water (or mud) takes an eternity to accomplish.

Evolutionary geologists assigned long periods of time to the formation of the 16,000 square mile Channeled Scablands of Eastern Washington. In the ‘70’s they finally acknowledged that this vast geologic formation which includes the Grand Coulee was formed mostly in two days as a result of a catastrophic event. Catastrophic events best explain the great erosional formations on the earth’s surface. The histories of nearly 300 people groups speak of an event adequate to the job--the Global Flood.

**6. Sinking Logs Look Like Many Aged Forests in Just Ten Years.** A million trees were washed into Spirit Lake the day of the main eruption. As the years go by one by one they become waterlogged and sink to the bottom. Dense root wood is still a part of 10% of the logs. Those logs sink to the bottom in an upright position and their roots quickly become covered by the continuing sedimentation washing into the lake. They give the appearance they grew and died where they are deposited, one forest on top of another over long periods of time.

Such formations are found in other places, including Specimen Ridge in Yellowstone National Park. There, geologists found forests “rooted” in 27 different layers in the ridge and concluded they were observing 27 successive forests. The interpretive sign at Specimen Ridge expressed their error. It read: “Buried within the volcanic rocks that compose the mountain are twenty-seven distinct layers of fossil forest that flourished 50 million years ago.”

Today the truth is out and the sign is gone. Scientists realized that the Spirit Lake phenomena explains Specimen Ridge. The trees floated on a lake, became waterlogged and sank to the bottom over a period of time, giving the appearance of multiple forests that grew one on top of another. The 50 million year formation could have formed in just a few years plus the time necessary for petrifying the logs (100 to 1000 years).

**7. A New Model for Quicker Coal Formation.** Dr. Steven Austin wrote his doctoral dissertation at Penn State University on a new model for coal formation based on his study of a coal field in Kentucky. While geologists have used a peat swamp model to explain coal formation for over 100 years, Austin argued that explanation doesn’t fit because coal is coarsely textured like bark, not finely textured like swamp peat. Swamp peat contains root material; coal does not. Swamp peat rests on a layer of soil; coal often rests on a rock layer. No swamp peat has been found partly formed into coal.

Austin advanced a floating mat model--that a watery catastrophe stripped away millions of acres of forest and tangled them into mats. The mats floated on an ocean over Kentucky, bumping against one another and dropping their bark to the bottom. Subsequent volcanic activity provided heat and pressure, the final ingredients used in laboratories to produce coal. The result was rich seams of coal in Kentucky and a Ph.D. for Austin.

Just ten months later Mount St. Helens erupted, dumping vast amounts of vegetation into Spirit Lake including a million logs. Dr. Austin found the logs on the lake stripped of their bark. The bottom of the lake was strewn with up to three feet of bark mixed with other vegetation and sediment. To this day the material remains as merely slowly decaying vegetation. But if a catastrophe supplies the right amount of heat and pressure, the material will quickly change to coal. Dr. Austin's research indicates that the idea of coal formation requiring millions of years is highly questionable.

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