

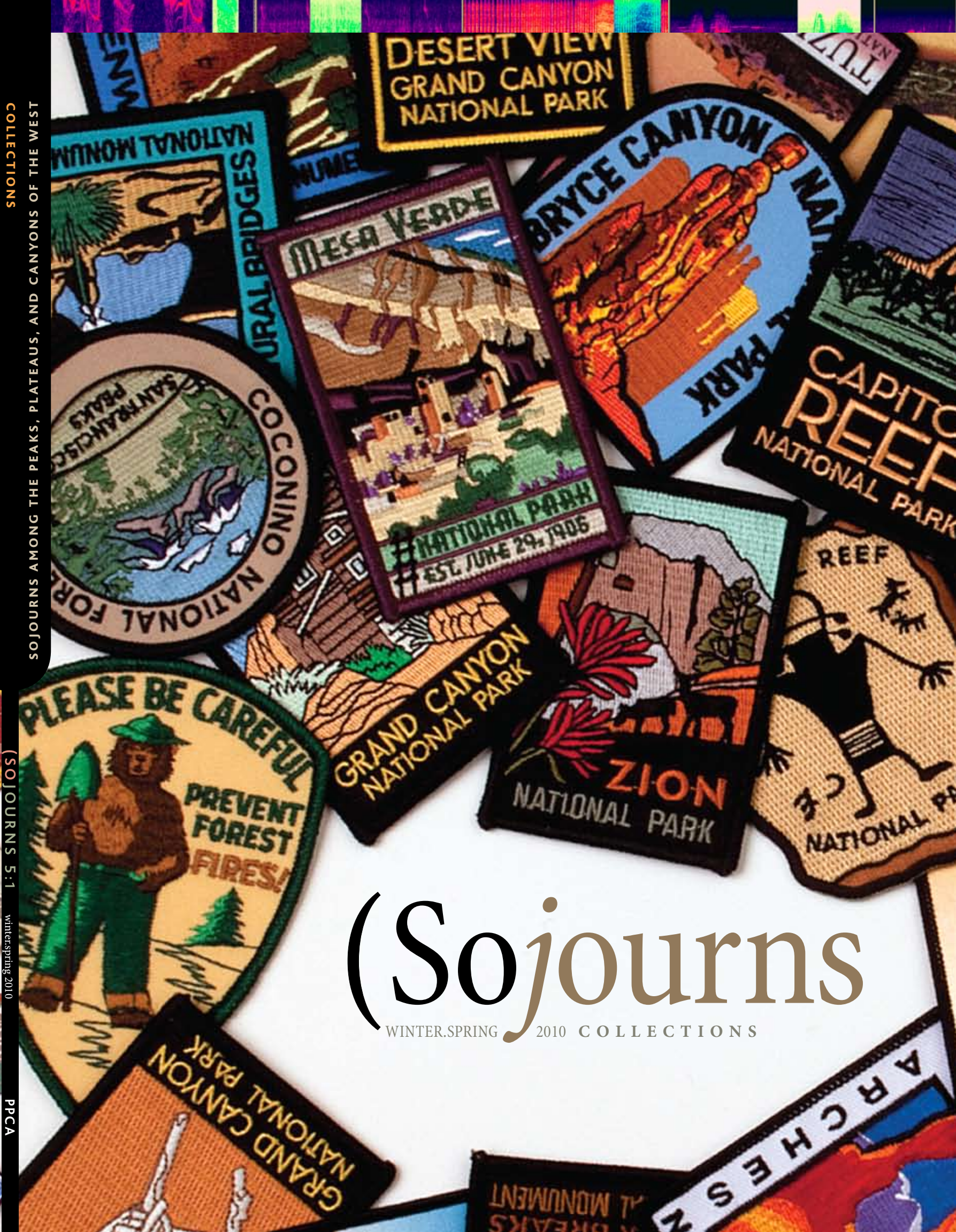
SOJOURNS AMONG THE PEAKS, PLATEAUS, AND CANYONS OF THE WEST
COLLECTIONS

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WINTER/SPRING 2010

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WINTER/SPRING 2010 COLLECTIONS



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AROUND THE PLATEAU ON PUBLIC LANDS

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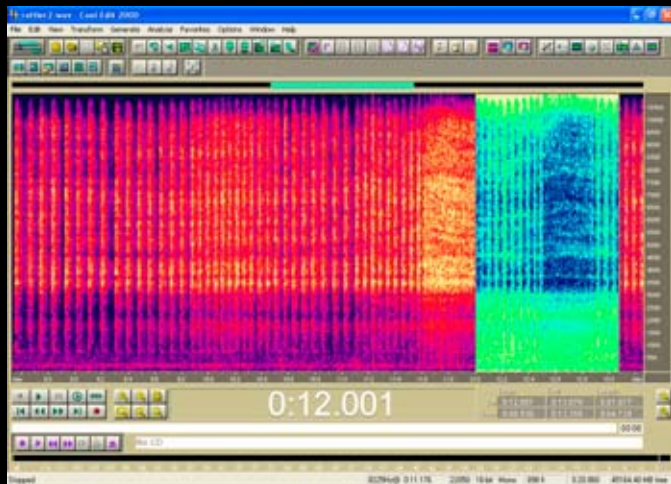
JOAN BACHARACH

John Muir's saddle. Abraham Lincoln's rocking chair. Jurassic dinosaurs. Thomas Edison's handwritten notes. Frederick Douglass' library. Prehistoric pottery. George Washington's inauguration day suit. Civil War uniforms. Carl Sandburg's Presidential Medal of Freedom. Everglades tree snails. American Red Cross founder Clara Barton's first aid kit. Scat of extinct ice-age mammals. Mamie Eisenhower's hats.

The National Park Service is one of the world's largest museum systems. It preserves not only places of grandeur and national significance, but also nearly 41 million natural, historic, and prehistoric objects and 50,600 linear feet of document archives. These collections tell powerful stories of this land—its diverse cultures, varied habitats, flora and fauna, significant events, and innovative ideas that continue to inspire the world. And they mirror the unique story of each unit within the National Park System.

Facing: Carl Sandburg's guitar, made by Washburn. Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site (NHS), CARL 111681. Above: Footstool made by Augusta Kohrs, ca. 1870. Grant-Kohrs Ranch, NHS, GRKO 553. Below: Abraham Lincoln's rocker. Lincoln Home NHS, LIHO 1468.





The Ear is an Eye

MICHAEL ENGELHARD

The Sound
Collectors

From some crevice below the rim, a wren cascades song into the gorge. The descending notes stutter to a standstill like a music box winding down, or time deep in the canyons.

The aural character of any landscape is unmistakable. For the Colorado Plateau, signature sounds include the rustling of cottonwood leaves, the sougling of wind in ponderosa pines, the bone rattling of dried yuccas, the booming of rapids, and the whipcracks of monsoon thunderstorms. Silence itself here seems not an absence but rather a substance from which sound and thus meaning are born. Among the most expressive and remarkable sounds—at least for our kind—are the sounds of wild animals: the castanet clacking of a riled diamondback. The Morse code of nuthatches tapping tree bark for insects. Whirring sphinx moth wings, easily confused with hummingbird flight. Frog serenades, which suggest robot sheep or Tibetan monks chanting, depending on the species...

Many animal sounds qualify as communication, and linguists have proposed that language began as squeaks, warbles, and bellows when human ancestors mouthed birdsong or hyena laughter to attract game or slip into altered realities. As onomatopoeia, bits of natural sound mimicry still enrich our vocabulary. An omnivore with stereoscopic vision, *Homo sapiens* is hardwired to pay attention to acoustic phenomena as well as to visual stimuli, eager to prey and to avoid being preyed upon. Environmental psychologists agree that sounds feed acoustic memory and as such are integral to our attachment to place.

Beneath the white noise of civilization, some individuals remain more attuned to “soundscapes” and are driven to gather and inventory the calls of the wild. Such collecting embodies the least intrusive of acquisitive instincts. While pothunters or lepidopterists diminish a landscape, sound collectors only add to our knowledge, reminding us of our part in creation’s polyphony.

T H E
E A R
I S
A N
E Y E

WALLACE STEVENS

1879–1955

Facing: Western diamondback rattlesnake and a sonogram of its rattle. Photo by Doug Von Gausig. Top: Leopard frog. Photo by Bruce MacQueen/Shutterstock 1155874

Sonograms throughout the essay are courtesy of Doug Von Gausig, www.naturesongs.com, unless otherwise noted.



What is this urge to accrue, especially in categorical sets (geodes, medieval woodcuts, Facebook friends, Aunt Hattie’s miniature teacups that so mesmerize the grandkids)? One thing is certain: Without it there would be no libraries, no Louvre, no local historical museum with its old photographs and nineteenth-century farm equipment. And there would be fewer of the scientific discoveries that come from comparing collections of similar phenomena, whether they be genes, core samples, or orchids. In sum, there would be less opportunity to revel in that multiplicity that exposes the delicate nuance between individuals and allows each to shine in its particularity. Maria Melendez explores aspects of the psychology of collecting.

favorites

Hunters and Gatherers | a brief psychology of collecting

MARIA MELENDEZ

The 1990s nearly killed Patrice Moore. Mr. Moore hit the pages of *The New York Times* in 2003 after he was trapped for two days under magazines, newspapers, books, catalogues, and junk mail accrued over a decade. Rescue workers spent more than an hour removing the paper avalanche in order to reach Moore, who sustained leg injuries requiring hospitalization. Was Moore simply overwhelmed by the daily flood of postal ephemera or was he an extreme collector on a continuum that includes aficionados of bric-a-brac and collectors of museum quality masterworks?

Surely members of Candy Container Collectors of America or the National Toothpick Holder Collectors’ Society (both actual associations) could be passing their time in worse ways than doting on glass dog containers and searching online for a vintage Vaseline uranium glass toothpick holder complete with eerie green glow. And yet, amid abundant stories of wealthy collectors who have donated their priceless acquisitions to worthy institutions, there is the occasional story of the extreme collector for whom the line between quaint affection and dangerous obsession has blurred or disappeared. Take, for instance, the story of Dennis Masellis who, in 2000, pleaded guilty to stealing a robust \$7 million from the law firm where he worked. The money went to support the cultivation of a Bakelite costume jewelry collection. At the time of his arrest, Masellis had acquired the largest collection in the world of Bakelite pieces—4,000 in all. The jewelry, made from a synthetic resin invented in 1909, had been especially popular during the 1930s and 1940s; pieces produced in limited numbers are considered collectible today. What was behind Masellis’s obsession? Was he trying to osmotically connect with some aspect of Depression-



Salt and pepper shakers modeled after Independence Monument, Colorado National Monument, were giveaways from Fruita National Bank in the 1950s. Photo courtesy of Denise Hight. Facing: Replica 1934 national park postage stamps published by Lonewolf Publishing.

Photos of Grand Canyon memorabilia accompanying the essay are by Michael Quinn.



Facing: Vault 2, Indian Arts Research Center.
Inset: Water jar, ca. 1720. Ashiwi polychrome.
Zuni Pueblo. Maker unknown. Photo
by Addison Doty. First piece collected by the
Indian Arts Fund. IAF 1. All photos courtesy
of the School for Advanced Research.

O

n an autumn evening in 1922, legend has it, writer Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant was preparing for a small dinner party at her Tesuque home outside Santa Fe when she heard the sound of shattering pottery. Someone on her staff had dropped a fine old Zuni water jar. Later that evening she lamented the lost jar to her guests, who included amateur archaeologist Harry Mera and others concerned with the preservation of Indian arts and crafts. When Mera suggested that perhaps the vessel could be repaired, the guests rose from the table at once to rescue the shards from being tossed into the Tesuque River. Back

in the dining room, lit by candles in tin sconces that sent shadows dancing across the walls, the party reflected on the need for a systematic collection of historic Pueblo pottery. The reassembled vessel, an Ashiwi polychrome jar, became “Pot #1” of the Pueblo Pottery Fund founded shortly thereafter by Sergeant, Mera, and Kenneth Chapman. The group would later incorporate as the Indian Arts Fund (IAF) with a mission to preserve southwestern Native American art by collecting the finest examples available of historic and contemporary pottery, rugs, jewelry, baskets, and other genres. A main motivation was the wish to preserve works for the inspiration of their makers’ descendants.

Eighty-five years later, the works acquired by the IAF are at the heart of the renowned collection of the Indian Arts Research Center (IARC) at the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where there are now more than 12,000 pieces spanning 450 years. Walking into IARC’s vaults for the first time often inspires awe. Because the works are not behind glass but rather on tiers of open shelves, there is an immediate sensation of intimacy and, according to some visitors, the palpable presence of the sacred. In the original spirit of the Indian Arts Fund, the non-exhibiting research collection is made unusually accessible to artists, families, scholars, and collectors. “If you can’t handle a Pueblo pot, you’ll never get a full sense of what it is,” said art historian and author J. J. Brody. “You can feel the hands of the potter as you caress a pot. . . . You can feel the finger marks the potter has burned in, . . . and all the decisions that the artist makes about form. If you can’t touch these things, you’re only part way there. And that’s what the IARC does that an ordinary museum doesn’t.”



The Eye in the Weave

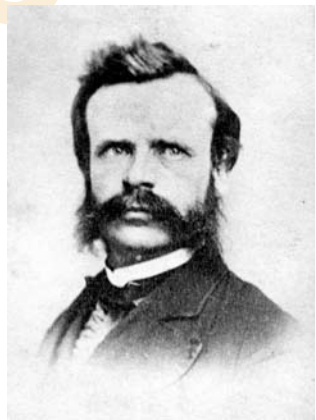
KAY LEIGH HAGAN

These are not objects but living things. . .

CYNTHIA CHAVEZ LAMAR, DIRECTOR, INDIAN ARTS RESEARCH CENTER



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Top left: The cockpit of the *WEN*.
NPS photo. Above: John Wesley Powell.

The Colorado Plateau was first described from the bottom up.

When Major John Wesley Powell launched his 1869 expedition down the Green and Colorado rivers, he was crossing a tremendous amount of unmapped terrain. From

Wyoming to Nevada, it was his country to name and define from the deck of his wooden boat. He

and his men looked up and out across a bizarre, barren landscape as they toiled a thousand miles

through the desert.

From that time forth, exploration of the plateau was largely land-based. But Powell, in addition to opening the topography of the arid West to visitation, exploitation, and settlement, inadvertently launched a century and a half of whitewater adventure that took twists and turns he could never have foreseen. To him whitewater boating was a foolhardy way to explore the terrain, done only because there was no more practical way to travel through the canyon-riddled country. The thought that such a voyage would someday become a prized vacation adventure never would have entered his mind. But that, in fact, did happen, and the story of whitewater adventure on the Colorado Plateau is magnificently documented by a series of boats in the collection of the National Park Service at Grand Canyon. Many of these craft are the seminal vessels of their style, and provide an unparalleled view of the evolution of one of America's modern homegrown adventure sports.

The tale begins with a fragment of the *Nellie Powell*, one of the boats Powell used on his second expedition to the Grand Canyon in 1871. Abandoned at Lees Ferry that winter, the *Nellie* lay moldering in the fields for decades before a brush fire ravaged her hull. One lone, charred chunk of the boat's side survives in the ark collection to tell how whitewater was first attempted on the Colorado.

The *Nellie Powell*, like the boats of the major's first expedition, was a complex "Whitehall" hull designed in New York Harbor in the 1800s for speed and stability in choppy water. Powell, having little experience upon which to base his choice, picked these boats. They were round-bellied with a thin keel strip, four feet abeam and more than twenty feet long, with a graceful wineglass transom. Rowed by two men pulling hard with their backs facing downstream, and steered by one oarsman in the stern, Whitehalls indeed went fast. But missing the rocks and navigating the shallows—two essentials on the Colorado—were far trickier. In the end, Powell and his men ended up portaging most of the major rapids or lowering the boats along the shore with ropes ("lining").

With modern hindsight, some fault the major for his inappropriate choice of boats. But the art and skill of rowing rapid water did not exist in his day—he and his men were inventing it as they went.

The next expedition to cross the Colorado Plateau made few advances in boating. In 1889 Frank Brown and Robert Brewster Stanton launched their hapless journey in Colorado on the Grand River (later renamed as the upper fork of the Colorado). Like Powell, they used Whitehall-style boats for their attempt to survey a proposed railroad route along the river's course. Things went poorly. Brown and two others drowned and the boats were horribly damaged, but Stanton retooled to finish the survey to the Sea of Cortez the following year. Fortunately for posterity, Stanton found no investors to build his railroad. Although their expeditions made no progress in whitewater navigation, major change was already brewing across the plateau.

Beginning in the mid-1890s, placer miners on the San Juan River and Nathaniel Galloway, a trapper on the Green, were concurrently designing boats that handled rapid water far better. These new designs were an organic outgrowth of experienced men living and working on these rapid, rocky streams. Although Galloway was not the only man to come up with the new system, he was the one who passed on his lore. Today both his style of boat and his techniques of rowing them bear his name.

The *Esmeralda II* developed engine trouble midway through a trip in 1950, and was set adrift. A week later, a passing river party "rescued" her from a cobble bar, repaired the motor, and drove her on through. Photo by P. T. Reilly, courtesy of Northern Arizona University, Cline Library Special Collections and Archives (Cline SCA), NAU. PH.97.46.122.46.