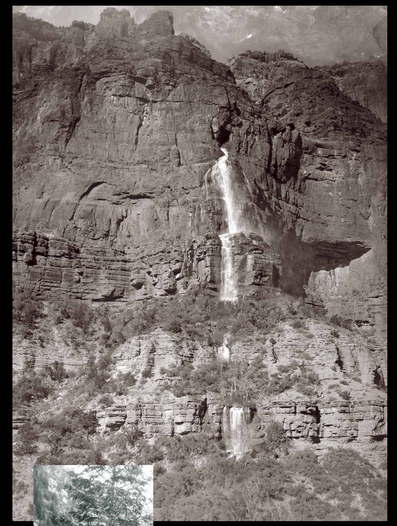
Antics and Adventures

The Kolb brothers began exploring their new home immediately upon arrival. Hauling bulky camera equipment and heavy glass plates, they found their way to remote side canyons to photograph parts of the Grand Canyon that few people, if any, had seen.

Though they were largely unacquainted with boating, they could not resist the Colorado River's powerful draw. Within a few years they had acquired enough experience to establish their reputation as capable river guides. By 1917 Ellsworth had also run and photographed the Colorado's major tributaries—the Green, Grand, and Gunnison Rivers.

Ellsworth moved to Los Angeles in 1924, but he came to the canyon on occasion to join his brother's expeditions, including the search for Glen and Bessie Hyde, who had disappeared during their honeymoon in the canyon. Emery continued to pursue his adventures well into old age. Just two years before his death he floated a section of his beloved river for the last time.

Ellsworth dares to traverse a section of the Hummingbird Trail. NAU.PH.568.3056



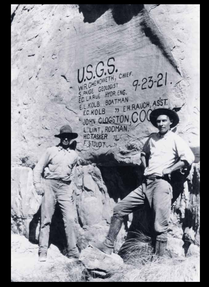
Cheyava Falls. NAU.PH.568.6152

Emery Kolb. NAU.PH.568.10493

September 1930 found the brothers in a successful, but harrowing, trip to explore the cave from which Cheyava Falls emanated. Using found timbers as supports, they rigged a rope and pulley to reach the opening. Ellsworth was caught dangling from the rope when a hail storm moved through. Emery took refuge in the cave.

Ellsworth Kolb. NAU.PH.568.1595

Ellsworth Kolb, Julius Stone, N. B. Stern and John Shields (not necessarily in that order) beneath a railroad bridge on the Gunnison River, 1916. NAU.PH.568.3722



Ellsworth (left) and Emery assisted the U.S. Geological Survey in their 1921 survey of the Colorado River. NAU.PH.568.1314

The Kolb brothers' reputation as river runners resulted in invitations to assist on a number of river surveys and expeditions. They took photographs everywhere they went. Given the technology of the day, candid shots were difficult to capture. Most pictures were carefully posed.

Weather conditions were not always conducive to river running.
ABOVE: NAU.PH.568.3009; BELOW: NAU.PH.568.3832

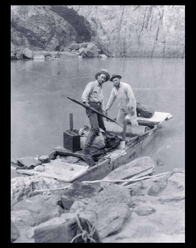
Ellsworth filmed Shoshone Falls on the Colorado River. The print was later tinted by hand. NAU.PH.568.8991

Ellsworth, dressed (and undressed) for adventure.
ABOVE: NAU.PH.568.3470;
LEFT: NAU.PH.568.3362

Emery photographed Ellsworth on top of Rainbow Bridge near Glen Canyon, 1913. The waters of Lake Powell now lap at its base when lake levels are high. NAU.PH.568.6922

Newlyweds Glen and Bessie Hyde planned to honeymoon on the Colorado River in 1928. After a stop to visit with Emery, they continued downriver but were never seen again. Ellsworth came from California to help his brother search for them. They eventually located the Hyde's boat with camera and other personal belongings still inside, but failed to find Glen and Bessie. The mystery of their disappearance was never solved.

Glen and Bessie Hyde days before they disappeared. NAU.PH.568.4837



Emery (left) and Ellsworth patched together an old boat to use in the search for the Hyde couple. NAU.PH.568.3384

A line from the Hydes' scow was caught mid-river on a submerged rock. NAU.PH.568-5387

Emery posed with an Army Air Corps pilot and plane that helped search for the Hydes from the air. NAU.PH.568.3596

At age 93 Emery was still game for adventure. NAU.PH.568.10813

On one of their hikes, the skeleton of a miner was found near the river.
NAU.PH.568.8203

Harold Anthony, a curator at the American Museum of Natural History, planned an expedition to Grand Canyon's Shiva Temple in 1937. He wanted to be the first to climb it, and rebuffed Emery's offer of guide services. So the photographer got even by forming his own team, including daughter Edith (left), and planting a makeshift flag visible from Kolb Studio. Anthony later climbed Shiva and reported his "first ascent," but was puzzled by Kodak film wrappings and lipstick-stained tissues found on the summit. NAU.PH.568.512