

The Kolb brothers established their business in a tent near the canyon rim. NAU.PH.568.5625



ON THE FRONTIER



Ellsworth (left) was soft-spoken but fearless. Emery was aggressive, frugal but fair, always putting family and business first. NAU.PH.568.75

Ellsworth was adventurous, sometimes foolishly daring. By contrast, Emery was more cautious and put family and work first. Their success over the years may have been the result of this combination of personalities; Ellsworth established the business at Grand Canyon while his brother ensured its continued success. But over time, the brothers' relationship grew more quarrelsome. By 1924 Emery and Ellsworth concluded that they could not work together any longer. They resolved to flip a coin to determine who got the business. Emery won the toss and stayed at Grand Canyon; Ellsworth left for California. He received a monthly payment of 150 dollars for the rest of his life. Dependable Emery continued to run the studio until his death in 1976.



The Kolb brothers explored their new backyard at every opportunity. NAU.PH.568.9299

WANDERLUST brought Ellsworth Kolb to the Grand Canyon in 1901, just weeks after the first passenger train arrived at the South Rim in September of that year. He had left Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with only two dollars in his jeans and took jobs chopping firewood and serving as bellhop for the fledgling hotel business on the canyon rim. His younger brother Emery joined him a year later.

Emery learned about a photography studio for sale in Williams, Arizona, and they purchased it on an installment plan for 425 dollars. For a year, Emery ran the studio while he and Ellsworth explored and photographed Grand Canyon on weekends. By the end of 1903 they had moved their photography business to the head of the Bright Angel Trail, near where Kolb Studio stands today.



Early 20th-century Grand Canyon photography required carrying bulky equipment and heavy glass plates into untamed terrain. NAU.PH.568.3504



ABOVE: Cataracts of the Little Colorado River. Can you find a person in the image above to provide a sense of scale? NAU.PH.568.3741

LEFT: Kolb Studio was built at the head of the Bright Angel Trail, the most popular route into the abyss. NAU.PH.568.1203

RIGHT: Long before computer technology, the Kolb brothers experimented with composite images. For example, this image combines foreground rapids from one photograph with the background of another. NAU.PH.568.1075

