

MARY-RUSSELL'S ART CAREER

"Mary R.F. Colton, who makes her home in Arizona, delights in sharing through her paintings the joy she takes in the scenery of that impressive part of our country," stated a newspaper clip from the 1935 "The Ten Philadelphia Painters" show that featured paintings of its members. Mary-Russell remained a member of this group and exhibited her pieces regularly in its shows from 1910 to about 1940, when she stopped painting.

Upon graduation with honors from the Philadelphia School of Design, Mary-Russell opened a studio in Philadelphia with a classmate. She would forever after have a studio at her home. Petite and dainty Mary-Russell was seemingly more interested in scenery and exploring than in people. She doted on her family, loved dogs and other animals, and liked to fish.

Wherever she went, her sketch box accompanied her. She would stop and make quick drawings of scenes that interested her, later transferring them to canvas in her studio. These scenes became the exquisite, finely tuned Southwest landscapes and portraits we have today. Her work concentrated upon Southwest subjects, but she also created works that featured Balinese, Hawaiian, Californian, and New Mexican landscapes. In addition, she painted portraits, sculpted wood, and made linoleum prints.

Plaudits include mention in *The Christian Science Monitor* of September 2, 1920, that printed her painting *Sunset on a Lava Field*. The author wrote:

"In her Arizona canvases, Mrs. Colton gives full sway to her love of color. One is impressed by the sense of vast remoteness that she manages to capture for these western paintings that are bringing her ever-increasing recognition."



MARY-RUSSELL FERRELL COLTON AND FRIEND ON A CAMPING TRIP
PREPARING FOR A DAY OF PAINTING IN THE NORTHERN ARIZONA
DESERT. (MNA COLLECTIONS MS 207-211-3(33-1))

A 1933 press release about "The Ten" describes Mrs. Colton:

"To Arizona now where Mary R.F. Colton lives and paints. She, of the 'Valley of the Painted Hills,' whose neighbors are the Hopis and the Navajos. Here she sees that fine combination of nature's elements, a dry climate and rarefied air that produces on one's vision colors that do not seem real...the vivid reds and oranges, the vibrant blues and purples of the desert, and huge massive banks of clouds hanging motionless over brilliantly dyed hills. Reflecting all that color in their honest weatherbeaten faces are the portraits she does of the Indians, her neighbors."

Of tremendous pride to Mary-Russell was the purchase of her painting *Rock of Walpi* in 1925 by