

FLAGSTAFF AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MNA



"A happy accident... would take me...to and through Arizona..." said forester Bernhard E. Fernow in 1897, writing about his trip with biologist C. Hart

Merriam to explore Arizona. Fernow told the National Geographic Society about his delight at the unique environs of Arizona and desire to return as often as possible. He was not alone in this thinking as heightened awareness of the area brought more and more researchers. Scientific study of northern Arizona had begun in the 1850s with government-sponsored road and railway surveyors who preceded the settlers. The surveyors' reports to Washington, D.C., describing the natural wonders of the Flagstaff area and the Colorado Plateau, prompted other scientists to explore the area.

Construction of the transcontinental roads and railroads brought the first settlers to Flagstaff in the 1870s. Laborers, shopkeepers, and saloon owners

RAINBOW BRIDGE/MONUMENT VALLEY EXPEDITION
ARCHAEOLOGISTS D.W. CONNELL, E.P. HUNT, AND S.B.
CHANDLER EXAMINING POTTERY FROM AN EXCAVATION.
PHOTO BY ROBERT B. BRANSTEAD, 1933. (MNA COLLECTIONS
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liked its scenic location at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, which offered a permanent water supply. The town's remoteness caused less-than-desirable residents

to appear, providing Flagstaff with its share of rough-and-rowdy early days. Additional settlers moved in and earned a living from the natural resources of the area, including timber and grazing land.

By the time of the Coltons' arrival in 1926, the 4,000 Flagstaff residents were encouraging the newly arrived educators, scientists, and artists to help steer their town away from its wild-west beginnings. In Flagstaff, the Coltons sought avenues to pursue their respective interests of science and art. Both believed that they should help others and use their time and money for the accomplishment of lasting contributions. In Flagstaff, they saw propitious opportunities for all of their interests.