



From the Inquisition to Peaceful Contemplation

BY CYNTHIA BAUGHMAN

Our cover image by photographer David Robin comes from the *Contemplative Landscape* photography exhibition at the New Mexico History Museum. We were captivated by the sight of the pearly egg secreted in a chamber of an abandoned hornet's nest; in this image we saw something we had never seen before. Robin says that he did not notice the egg when he first regarded this hornet's nest—he too discovered it through the photograph, a fact that tells us something about the power of the medium to make us perceive the world with fresh eyes.

Curator Mary Anne Redding says of this image and the series from which it comes, “David Robin has an extensive and award-winning body of work as a commercial and fashion photographer; in his *Fragile Faith* series he uses all the tools of the fashion world to document talismans and *memento mori* that he has found or that people have brought to him. These symbols of faith, life, and community are isolated and held up larger than life—carrying layers of meaning and memory. The abandoned hornet's nest containing an egg evokes thoughts of home, community, and the cycles of life and death.” Those themes are also present in the work of two other photographers from *Contemplative Landscape* that we examine in this issue. Tony O'Brien explores the community of faith at the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, and photographer Kirk Gittings finds powerful records of faith along roadsides and in aging structures. We are fortunate to look at them through the lenses of these contemporary artists.

And we are happy to pair the peaceful images of *Contemplative Landscape* with a harrowing tale of the abuse of religious and state power that unfolded in this same landscape three hundred and fifty years ago. Frances Levine and Gerald González tell the story of Doña Teresa de Aguilera y Roche, wife of colonial Governor Bernardo López de Mendizábal, and the only woman from New Mexico ever to be tried under the Spanish Inquisition on charges of practicing Judaism. Arrested in her

chambers at the Palace of the Governors, she endured an ordeal that took her down El Camino Real to imprisonment in Mexico City where, with her pen, she fought back, leaving a rare record of life in Santa Fe in the seventeenth century as seen by an educated and eloquent woman.

In his essay “Life and Learning in Seventeenth-Century New Mexico,” Carroll L. Riley draws on household inventory records from the arrest of Doña Teresa and Governor Mendizábal to help us understand what every day life was like in the early colonial era. Riley is, in the words of Frances Levine, a “preeminent ethnohistorian,” and author of important books on the history and culture of the Southwest. We are delighted to be publishing this essay sixty-one years after Riley's first appearance in this magazine and also reprinting the opening of Riley's first *El Palacio* essay (see page 78). The biographical note that accompanied his 1950 essay reads, “Carroll L. Riley has been a Park Ranger at Hovenweep National Monument for the past three years. In 1948, on request of the National Park Service, he wrote an archaeological survey of the area. Mr. Riley, at present engaged in ethnological research (South America) as a Fellow of the Social Science Research Council, Washington, DC, is a graduate student at the University of New Mexico.”

Riley recently told us, “I remember receiving my copy of the article. I was in Caracas, recovering from fieldwork in the upper Orinoco region. I had contracted amoebic hepatitis, amoebic dysentery, and malaria (at the same time, would you believe?). I found it all a bit depressing (not to mention debilitating) and getting the article helped cheer me up some.”

The 1950 issue that saw this young grad student's *El Palacio* debut also included essays by the distinguished Southwest archaeologists and scholars E. Boyd, Bertha Dutton, Florence Hawley, and Bruce Ellis (Hawley and Ellis married that year). Carroll L. Riley launched his *El Palacio* career in fine company, and so, we believe, it continues, sixty-one years later. ■