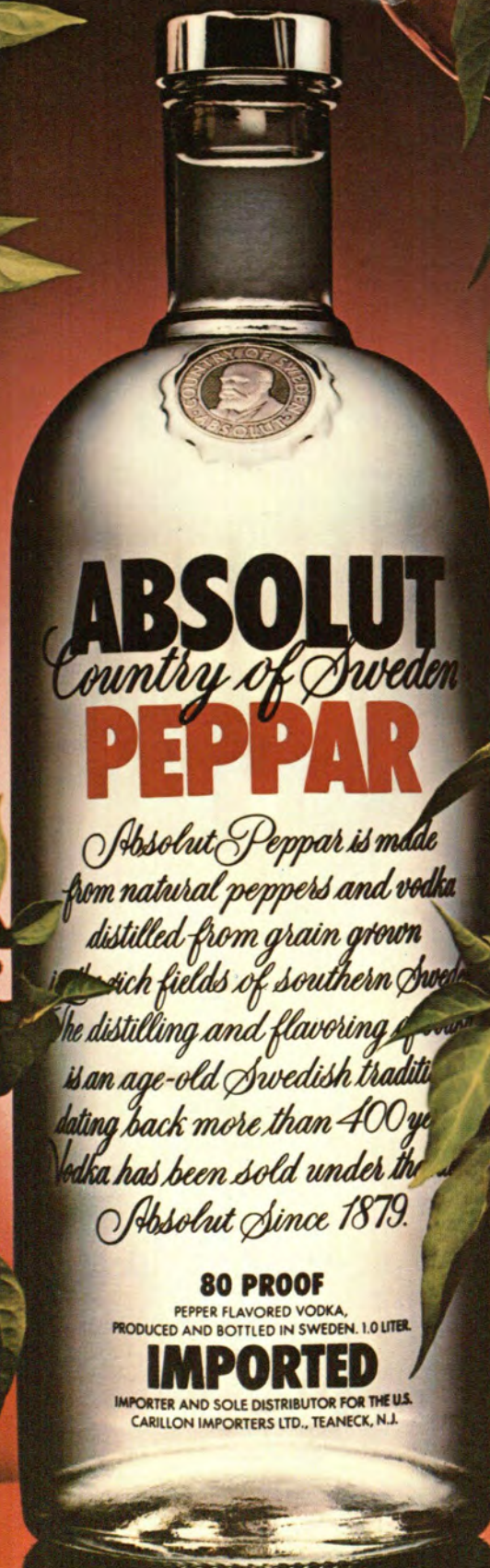


ALMANAC

A PUBLICATION OF THE FRANKLIN MINT



JULY/AUGUST
1987



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COVER & CONTENTS IMAGE
Courtesy of Elaine Horwitch Galleries.

JULY/AUGUST 1987

*Detail of acrylic & oil on Photo linen
by Bob Wade, 4' x 10', 1982.*

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 4

by Tony Hillerman

CITY OF COLLECTORS

"I don't collect things," I said. "You will," Cata told me. "Everybody here collects things."

My second day as a Santa Fean brought my first awareness of that odd old city's tendency to collect collectors. I met Dennis Cata, a Pueblo Indian who catered to such folks. Cata had watched me inspecting the wares of the vendors at the Indian Market, thriving then as now under the block-long portal of the Palace of the Governors on the Santa Fe Plaza. He showed me one of the Navajo blankets he carried over his shoulder, and told me how much he wanted for it.

"Sounds like a lot," I said, but Cata assured me it was a bargain. "Worth twice that in ten years," he told me. "They're something people collect."

"I don't collect things," I said.

"You will," Cata told me. "Everybody here collects things."

Cata was only partly wrong. He missed on the appreciation of the small Two Grey Hills blanket. We settled on \$46. In 1962, ten years later, I turned down \$120. Today it's worth \$600. But I did become a collector — of Indian pottery. And Santa Fe indeed is a city of collectors.

The elderly gentleman from whom Marie and I rented our first Santa Fe home showed us first the view — the lights of Los Alamos thirty miles across the valley glittering against the dark shape of the Jemez Mountains. And above the mountains, the immense sky red with sunset. Second he showed us his collection of Studebaker hubcaps. The young man I worked with in the two-man United Press office always invested \$50 from his paycheck in pennies and spent an evening sorting them for rarities to add to his cases. The director of the radio station down the hall from our bureau had a twenty year collection of weird, funny and often obscene errors and misprints from newspapers

and the newswires. His boss displayed an array of campaign pins of losing candidates on his wall. (Winners bored him.) The butcher Marie came to trust collected Coca-Cola bottles, trays and other such Coke memorabilia. The baker collected kachina dolls. Our mailman hunted fossils.

Perhaps this town has a collective effect on inhabitants. Perhaps something in the air caused collectors to collect here.

The reason is nebulous but the results highly visible. The treasure of Navajo ceremonial art collected by

Mary Cabot Wheelwright has become the basis for the Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian. Florence Bartlett built Santa Fe's Museum of International Folk Art to display the world's premier collection of folk art. Just across the driveway from this great museum is the Laboratory of Anthropology. The rooms of this beautiful old adobe structure hold the best collection extant of ceramics of the cultures that flowered in and vanished from the American Southwest. Nearby students of Conan Doyle come to the home of John Bennet Shaw to inspect his Sherlock Holmes collection. Over the ridge in Pojoaque, Robert McKinney collected statues of the Roman goddess of the hunt. The list could go on and on. It is a city of fine coin collections, stamp collections, artifact collections.

I can only guess at the why of this. Unlike seaports, rail hubs, farm centers or mining towns, Santa Fe lacks the economic base on which cities thrive. It has grown remarkably little — taking 350 years to expand beyond the square King Carlos of Spain marked out in 1610. Its only attractions are a cool, dry mountain climate, dazzling cloudscapes, and a setting of stirring beauty. Add to that its dedication to preserving a kind of architectural antiquity at its center and a well-deserved reputation for tolerating eccentrics.

With little to draw the ambitious, it draws instead those who love beauty. Santa Fe will always attract us as collectors.

Tony Hillerman is a collector of Indian pottery and an award-winning mystery novelist. His most recent book, Skinwalkers, was just published by Harper & Row.

