

Center for Creative Photography

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Finding aid for the
Edward S. Curtis collection, 1903-1925

AG 7

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Creator

Curtis, Edward S., 1868-1952

Abstract

122 steel-plated, copper photogravure printing plates used in the production of *The North American Indian* by Edward S. Curtis (20 volumes plus portfolios. Volumes 1 – 5, The University Press, Cambridge, Mass.: Volumes 6 – 20, Plimpton Press, Norwood, Conn. 1907 – 1930). Ten of the plates (each approximately 12 x 18 in.) were used to produce the illustrations included in the portfolios that accompanied each of the twenty volumes of text, and 112 of the smaller steel-plated copper plates (each approximately 6 ½ x 9 in.) were used to illustrate the text volumes.

Quantity/ Extent

8 linear feet

Language of Materials

English

Biographical/ Historical Note

Edward Sherriff Curtis was born February 16, 1868 on a farm in rural Wisconsin. His father was a minister, farmer, and American Civil War veteran and they lived in poverty. Curtis left school in sixth grade and soon after built his own camera. He became an apprentice photographer in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1885, at the age of 17 and became well versed in photography. After moving to Seattle, Washington, he had a photography studio: Curtis and Gupstill, Photographers and Photoengravers.

A pivotal moment for Curtis was when he photographed Princess Angeline, the daughter of Chief Sealth of Seattle, in 1895, and it was his first portrait of a Native American. In 1898, three of Curtis' images were exhibited by the National Photographic Society, which included two portraits of Princess Angeline, "The Mussel Gatherer" and "The Clam Digger" as well as a photograph of the Puget Sound, "Homeward," which was awarded the exhibition's grand prize.

By 1896, Curtis was receiving a lot of recognition as a studio photographer, but also from the photographic community and public for his American Indian photographs. By 1900, he was extremely celebrated and exhibited internationally, earning several awards. He traveled extensively spending many seasons with the American Indians around the United States, including the Pacific Northwest and the Southwest. In 1904,

Curtis won a national portrait contest, which earned the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt. He was invited to photograph Roosevelt's children and they forged a close relationship. Roosevelt wrote a letter of recommendation on Curtis' behalf, which was given to J.P. Morgan, who ultimately funded the first stages of *The North American Indian* project.

Curtis was extremely successful at creating a photo-ethnographic study with the limited edition book, *The North American Indian*. Over the thirty-year project, he created up to 50,000 negatives of 80 different Native communities, and produced 10,000 was cylinder recordings of Native languages and music – not just to photograph but document the traditional way of life in every aspect possible. The goal was to create 20 volumes with 1,500 photographs and in the end, a total of 222 complete sets were published (lower than his initial goal).

After *The North American Indian* project ended, Curtis worked with motion picture and created a silent feature film depicting the Native American life, known as *In the Land of the Head Hunters*. He sold the rights to this film in 1924 to the American Museum of Natural History.

Around 1922, Curtis moved to Los Angeles and opened a photography study with his daughter Beth. He worked as an assistant cameraman on various projects. Curtis struggled financially during this time, and was arrested in 1927 for failure to pay alimony to his ex-wife. In 1928, Curtis was desperate for income so he sold the rights to *The North American Indian* to J.P. Morgan. In 1935, the Morgan estate sold the rights to *The North American Indian* to the Charles E. Lauriat Company in Boston, which included 19 complete bound sets, thousands of prints, copper printing plates, unbound printed pages, and the original glass-plate negatives. The remaining material that was not sold off was found in 1972.

Curtis died from a heart attack on October 19, 1952 at the age of 84. He died in the Los Angeles home of his daughter Beth and was buried in Glendale, California.

Bibliography

Cardozo, Christopher. *Edward S. Curtis Biography*. Christopher Cardozo Fine Art. Retrieved from <https://www.edwardcurtis.com/curtis-biography/>

Scope and Content Note

This collection represents several steps used in the creation of *The North American Indian*. Curtis (1868-1952) took more than 40,000 photographs for his project to publish *The North American Indian*. There are two series: Portfolio plates, which contain 10 plates and Volume plates, which contain 112 plates. Both sizes of plates at the Center for Creative Photography have been selected from volumes 1, 2, 12, 16 and 17 of *The North American Indian*. Volume 1 treats the Apache, Jicarilla Apache, and Navaho people;

volume 2 treats the Pima, Papago, Qahatika, Mohave, Yuma, Maricopa, Havasupai, and Apache-Mohave; volume 12 deals exclusively with the Hopi; volume 16 treats the Tiwa and Keres people; and volume 17 deals with the Tewa and Zuni people.

The photogravure plates themselves were made by two engraving firms, both of them located in the Boston, Massachusetts area. John Andrew & Son of Cambridge made the plates for volumes 1 – 11, while Suffolk Engraving Company made them for volumes 12 – 20.

Arrangement

The plates have been grouped into two series, the first comprising the larger plates used to produce the portfolios that accompanied the printed textual volumes, the second comprising the smaller plates that made the illustrations included in the text volumes. The titles and dates have been taken from the plates themselves. The larger plates are housed in groups of five; the smaller plates are in groups of eight, and the paper sleeves that wrapped the large plates are in a separate box.

Names and Subject Terms

Curtis, Edward S. [<http://vocab.getty.edu/ulan/500018219>]

Curtis, Edward S., 1868-1952. North American Indian
[<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/names/n2003075483.html>]

Indians of North America [<http://id.loc.gov/authorities/subjects/sh85065184.html>]

Photogravure [<http://vocab.getty.edu/aat/300053207>]

Restrictions

Conditions Governing Access

Access to this collection requires an appointment with the Volkerding Study Center.

Conditions Governing Use

It is the responsibility of the user to obtain permission from the copyright owner (which could be the institution, the creator of the record, the author or his/her transferees, heirs, legates or literary executors) prior to any copyright-protected uses of the collection.

The user agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Arizona Board of Regents, the University of Arizona, Center of Creative Photography, including its officers, employees, and agents, from and against all claims made relating to copyright or other intellectual property infringement.

Provenance

This collection was given to the Center for Creative Photography by Steven and Arlene Kern in 1984.

Related Materials

There are two complete copies of *The North American Indian* at the University of Arizona. The set housed in Special Collections at the University library has the photogravures in the earlier volumes printed on tissue, but the later volumes have photogravures printed on a combination of the heavier papers. The same is true for the copy at the Arizona State Museum.

There are additional Curtis materials in the Center of Creative Photography's Fine Print collection, including 25 cyanotype prints and 258 vintage prints among others. The Library at the Center has twenty titles by Edward Curtis.

Other organizations owning similar plates from other volumes include the National Museum of the American Indian, The Smithsonian Institution, and the Seattle Art Museum. Other Curtis materials can be found at the Library of Congress, the Curtis collection at the National Museum of the American Indian, Peabody Essex Museum, Indiana University, Northwestern University, and the University of Wyoming.

Preferred Citation

Edward S. Curtis collection, 1903-1925. AG 7. Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Processing Information

Processed in 2001 by Shaw Kinsley. Finding aid was updated by Alexis Peregoy in 2016.

Container List

Series 1: Portfolio Plates

Arrangement is numerical. Quantity: 10 plates.

Box

- 1A The Apache Reaper – 1906 – plate 8 – John Andrew & Son
 Pima Ki – 1907 – plate 45 - John Andrew & Son
 Antelopes and Snakes at Oraibi – 1921 – plate 404 - John Andrew & Son
 Flute Dancers at Tureva Spring – 1921 – plate 431 - John Andrew & Son
 The Piki Maker – 1906 – plate 432 - John Andrew & Son
- 1B Cochiti Pottery – 1925 – plate 554 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
 Replastering a Paguate House – n.d. – plate 576 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
 Zuni Street Scene – 1925 – plate 605 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
 A Zuni Man – 1903 – plate 612 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
 A Load of Fuel – Zuni – n.d. – plate 608 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
- 1C Paper envelopes for large plates.

Series 2: Volume plates

Arrangement is numerical. Quantity: 112 plates.

Box

- 2 Nayenezgani – [Navaho] – 1904 - vol. 1, plate 2 – John Andrew & Son
 The Fire Drill – Apache – 1905 – vol. 1, plate 5 – John Andrew & Son
 A Noonday Halt – Navaho – 1904 – vol. 1, plate 6 – John Andrew & Son
 Tenokai – Apache – 1906 – vol. 1, plate 9 – John Andrew & Son
 The Bathing Pool – Apache – 1906 – vol. 1, plate 11 – John Andrew & Son
 Apache Still Life – 1903 – vol. 1, plate 19 – John Andrew & Son
 Among the Oaks – Apache – 1903 – vol. 1, plate 20 – John Andrew & Son
 Medicine Cap and Fetish – Apache – 1907 – vol. 1, plate 27 – John Andrew & Son
- 3 Das Lan – Apache – 1907 – vol. 1, plate 28 – John Andrew & Son
 Apache Maiden – 1906 – vol. 1, plate 32 – John Andrew & Son
 Lone Tree Lodge – Jicarilla – 1904 – vol. 1, plate 33 – John Andrew & Son
 A Drink in the Desert – Navaho – 1904 – vol. 1, plate 42 – John Andrew & Son
 Tobadzisqhini – Navaho – 1904 – vol. 1, plate 57 – John Andrew & Son
 Navaho Women – 1906 – vol. 1, plate 79 – John Andrew & Son
 Yuma Girl – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 1 – John Andrew & Son
 Pima Land – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 4 – John Andrew & Son

- 4 Antonio Azul – Pima – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 7 – John Andrew & Son
Pima Granaries – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 9 – John Andrew & Son
Ceremonial Ki – Pima – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 10 – John Andrew & Son
Joseph Head – Pima – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 12 – John Andrew & Son
Casa Grande Ruin – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 15 – John Andrew & Son
Mission San Xavier del Bac – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 17 – John Andrew & Son
Hokak – Papago – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 18 – John Andrew & Son
Kiho Carrier – Qahatika – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 19 – John Andrew & Son
- 5 Qahatika Man – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 26 – John Andrew & Son
Qahatika Home – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 27 – John Andrew & Son
The Mohave – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 29 – John Andrew & Son
Primitive Mohave – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 30 – John Andrew & Son
A Yuma Type – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 39 – John Andrew & Son
Havchach – Yuma – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 40 – John Andrew & Son
An Old Mohave – n.d. – vol. 2, plate 44 – John Andrew & Son
Hipa – Maricopa – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 49 – John Andrew & Son
- 6 Havchach Weaving – Maricopa – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 52 – John Andrew & Son
Walapai Winter Camp – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 53 – John Andrew & Son
Walapai Hunter – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 55 – John Andrew & Son
Havasupai Basket Maker – 1903 – vol. 2, plate 58 – John Andrew & Son
Havasupai Matron – 1903 – vol. 2, plate 59 – John Andrew & Son
An Apache-Mohave Woman – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 63 – John Andrew & Son
A Papago – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 65 – John Andrew & Son
Stone Maze – 1907 – vol. 2, plate 73 – John Andrew & Son
- 7 Return of a Trading Party – 1921 – vol. 12, plate 4 – Suffolk Engraving Co.
Hotavila – 1921 – vol. 12, plate 7 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Gossip at the Waterhole – 1906 – vol. 12, plate 9 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
On a Housetop – Walpi – 1906 – vol. 12, plate 12 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
The Delights of Childhood – 1900 – vol. 12, plate 17 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Walled Gardens at Middle Mesa – 1921 – vol. 12, plate 23 – Suffolk Engraving Co.
Hopi Farmers, Yesterday and Today – 1906 – vol. 12, plate 25 – Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Hopi Woman – 1905 – vol. 12, plate 26 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
- 8 A Hopi Mother – 1906 – vol. 12, plate 28 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Pele – Tewa – 1921 – vol. 12, plate 34 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Tsetsanu – Tewa – 1921 – vol. 12, plate 35 - Suffolk Engraving Co.

- A Load of Wood – 1921 – vol. 12, plate 37 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Shipaulovi Snake Kiva – 1906 – vol. 12, plate 45 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Walpi Snake Chief – 1921 – vol. 12, plate 48 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
The Prayer – 1907 – vol. 12, plate 50 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Guarding the Snake Kiva – 1907 – vol. 12, plate 52 – Suffolk Engraving Co.
- 9 A "Catcher" Picking up a Snake – 1906 – vol. 12, plate 58 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Oraibi Snake Dance – 1921 – vol. 12, plate 62 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Snake Jars in the Kiva – 1906 – vol. 12, plate 64 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Flute Dancers Returning to Walpi – 1905 – vol. 12, plate 71 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Cave Dwellings near Jemez – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 3 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
An Isleta Boy – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 5 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
An Isleta Woman – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 6 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Corner of Taos and a Kiva Entrance – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 13 – Suffolk Engraving Co.
- 10 Pecos in Ruins – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 14 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Old House and Kiva at Picuris – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 15 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Jemez Houses – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 16 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Threshing Wheat – Taos – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 18 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Picuris Harvest Dance – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 21 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Taos Girl – 1905 – vol. 16, plate 23 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Santa Ana and Jemez River – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 26 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Old Cochiti – 1925 – Vol. 16, plate 27 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
- 11 Partially Excavated Kiva, Old Cochiti – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 28 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Timu – Cochiti – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 32 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Tsiyone ("Flying") – Sia – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 33 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Santa Ana Man – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 35 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Kayati – Sia – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 37 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Sia Man – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 38 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Cochiti Woman – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 40 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Santo Domingo Man – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 43 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
- 12 Sotsana ["Fox" – Santo Domingo] – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 44 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Pishkutiy ["Cornsilk"] - Santo Domingo – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 45 – Suffolk Engraving Co.
Crumbling Walls of the Old Church-Acoma – 1904 – vol. 16, plate 49 - Suffolk

Engraving Co.

Acoma from the Churchtop – 1904 – vol. 16, plate 52 – Suffolk Engraving Co.
Mission and Church at Acoma – 1904 – vol. 16, plate 59 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Turivio Waconda-Paguete – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 66 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Hiyoritsa-Paguete – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 67 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Laguna Architecture – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 70 - Suffolk Engraving Co.

- 13 Paguate Watchtower – 1925 – vol. 16, plate 73 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A San Juan Man – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 3 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Tsle-ka Cacique [Caciove] of San Juan [Ts `e-ka (“Douglas Spruce Leaf”)] –
1905 – vol. 17, plate 4 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Good Luck Dance by San Juan Hunters – 1925 – vol. 17, plate 5 – Suffolk
Engraving Co.
The Harvest-San Juan – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 11 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Cleaning Wheat - San Juan – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 13 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Kiva at Santa Clara – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 14 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Puye – 1925 – vol. 17, plate 15 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
- 14 Peach Harvest - San Ildefonso – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 19 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Pojoaque – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 20 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
In Santa Clara – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 24 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Ovi-sawi-Santa Clara – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 29 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Tablita Dance-San Ildefonso (b) – 1925 – vol. 17, plate 31 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Tablita Dancers - San Ildefonso – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 35 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Kiva at Nambe – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 36 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Yan-tse ("Willow Yellow") – Nambe – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 37 – Suffolk Engraving
Co.
- 15 Pose-Aye Profile-Nambe – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 38 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Pose-aye ("Dew Moving") – Nambe – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 39 - Suffolk Engraving
Co.
Zuni Village at Ojo Caliente – 1925 – vol. 17, plate 48 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Siyotiwa, Zuni Kyaqimasbi – 1925 – vol. 17, plate 57 – Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Zuni Girl – 1903 – vol. 17, plate 58 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
Laitsanyasitsa-Zuni – n.d. – vol. 17, plate 59 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A San Juan Matron – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 63 - Suffolk Engraving Co.
A Santa Clara Man – 1905 – vol. 17, plate 70 - Suffolk Engraving Co.