
Finding Aid to Yosemite Views Photographed by Carleton E. Watkins, ca. 1876

Processed by Padma Rubiales.

The Bancroft Library

University of California, Berkeley

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Collection number: BANC PIC 1905.16220-.16241--A

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Finding Aid Author(s):
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Collection Summary

Collection Title: Yosemite Views Photographed by Carleton E. Watkins

Date: ca. 1876

Collection Number: BANC PIC 1905.16220-.16241--A

Photographer: Carleton E. Watkins

Physical Description: 22 mounted photographic prints, albumen, 14 x 22 cm. 22 digital objects

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Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English

Access

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Preferred Citation

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Digital Representations Available

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Related Collections

(Viewing prints only)

The Bancroft Library has a large collection of work by Carleton E. Watkins. Search the pictorial file under Watkins for more listings.

Identifier/Call Number: 1905.17175--PIC:

Title: Hearst Mining Collection of Views by C. E. Watkins.

Identifier/Call Number: 19xx.197--PIC:

Title: Photographic views of the Golden Feather and Golden Gate Mining Claims by Carleton E. Watkins.

Some of the photographs in this series are also included in the Hearst Collection of Mining Views.

Identifier/Call Number: 19xx.194--PIC:

Title: Photographs of the Mariposa Estate by Carleton E. Watkins.

Identifier/Call Number: 1974.019--PIC:

Title: Photographic Views of El Verano and vicinity, Sonoma Valley, California.

Photographed by Carleton E. Watkins.

Identifier/Call Number: 19xx.198--PIC:

Title: California Scenes [1860's-70's] by Carleton E. Watkins.

Identifier/Call Number: 19xx.199--PIC:

Title: Photographs of Yosemite and Oregon by Carleton E. Watkins.

Acquisition Information

The Yosemite Views are part of the Zelda Mackay collection.

Biography

Carleton E. Watkins was born in Oneonta, Oswego county, New York, on November 11, 1829. He was the youngest of five children of a Scottish innkeeper. During his youth he became acquainted with Collis P. Huntington, who frequented his father's hotel. Soon after the discovery of gold, both young men went to California, where Huntington later became one of the Big Four who built the Central Pacific Railroad.

In 1854, while working as a clerk in a store on Montgomery Street, Watkins met R. H. Vance, the daguerreotypist who had studios in San Francisco, San Jose and Sacramento. The employee at Vance's San Jose studio had suddenly quit and Vance asked Watkins if he would fill in until a permanent replacement could be found. Although he knew nothing of photographic processes, Watkins agreed. For the first few days he was simply the care-taker of the studio, but when Vance could not find a new operator, he instructed Watkins in coating the daguerreotype plates and making exposures. With only the briefest instructions, Watkins was able to make portraits and completely operated the gallery for a short period. In 1857 or 1858 Watkins returned to San Francisco where he established his own photographic studio for portraits and view photography.

Watkins usually spent a large portion of the summer traveling throughout California, leaving his gallery and studio in the hands of an assistant. In 1858 or 1859 he visited the Mariposa Grove and was the first person to photograph the "Grizzly Giant." In 1861, Watkins visited the Yosemite Valley and made the first 18" x 22" landscape photographs in California (and possibly the world). He made many more trips to Yosemite during the 1860's and 1870's.

In 1868 Watkins made his first trip to Oregon, where he made the first photographic reproductions of the Columbia River. Five years later, Watkins went to Utah with his wagon, team and photographic equipment on railroad cars. Thanks to his friend Collis P. Huntington, he traveled free. He was accompanied on this trip by close friend and artist William Keith, who made extensive use of Watkins' photographs for many of his oil paintings.

During the winter of 1871-72, Watkins expanded his San Francisco gallery (the Yosemite Gallery), which put an extra strain on his finances. When the Bank of California went under in 1874, Watkins lost his Yosemite Art Gallery to competitors J.J. Cook and I.W. Taber. Not only did his competitors take over his Gallery, they took all of his negatives as well. Watkins then began the task of rebuilding his collection, which meant rephotographing many of the sites he had visited earlier in his career. "Watkins' New Series" of views replaced those lost in the foreclosure. Watkins did become reassociated with the Yosemite Gallery, first as a photographer, and later as manager, but never as the owner.

Watkins went to the Comstock Lode, near Virginia City, Nevada, in 1876. Here he made many of the photographs that comprise the Hearst Collection. It was probably during this trip that he met Frances Sneed, who later managed his Montgomery Street studio and became his wife on November 11, 1880 (Watkins' fiftieth birthday). They had two children : a daughter, Julia and a son, Collis.

In 1880, Watkins went to Southern California for the first time and traveled along the line of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Later he went to the "End of the Track" and as far as Tombstone, Arizona. The photographs taken by Watkins on this trip

represent some of the earliest views of San Bernardino, San Gabriel, Pasadena, Los Angeles and San Diego. On the way back to San Francisco, he followed the old overland stage road, traveling the greater part of the way in his wagon and photographing most of the Franciscan missions. These pictures constitute the earliest photographic collection of California Missions.

On a second trip to the Northwest in 1890, Watkins made a series of stereoscopic views in Victoria, B. C. He extended this trip into Montana where he made 18" x 22" views of the Anaconda copper mines and other properties. His last large commercial job and long country trip was to photograph the development work of the Kern County Land Company near Bakersfield. He made seven hundred views using 8" x 10" dry plate negatives. In the late 1890's, Watkins began to photograph the Hearst Hacienda near Pleasanton for Phoebe Apperson Hearst, but ill health prevented him from completing the assignment.

Watkins was in the process of negotiating with Stanford University for the sale of his plates, photographs, etc. when the 1906 earthquake struck San Francisco. By this time, Watkins was partially blind, in poor health and experiencing financial difficulties. He had been living with his family in his studio on the top floor of a building on the southeast corner of Ninth and Market Streets. Immediately following the quake, Watkins' wife and daughter went to the refugee camp at the Presidio. Watkins was led by his son to the home of his old friend, C. B. Turrill, who had assisted Watkins financially in the past. Watkins' entire collection was destroyed in the fire which followed the quake. He was shocked by the loss of his life's work and shortly thereafter retired to his small ranch near Capay in Yolo County. The ranch had been deeded to Watkins through the offices of Collis P. Huntington of the Southern Pacific Railroad for his faithful, but unpaid, service to the railroad.

Watkins never recovered from the shock of losing his entire collection in the San Francisco fire. He managed to live at the ranch with his family until it became necessary to have him committed to the Napa State Hospital at Imola, California in 1910. He died on June 23, 1916 at the age of eighty-seven and was buried on the hospital grounds.

(From : *The Early Pacific Coast Photographs of Carleton E. Watkins*, by J. W. Johnson, Professor of Hydraulic Engineering, University of California Berkeley, and "The Life and Photography of Carleton E. Watkins", by Peter E. Palmquist.)

Scope and Content

The Yosemite Views collection includes 22 mounted albumen prints taken by Carleton E. Watkins circa 1876. The prints are part of "Watkins' New Boudoir Series Yo Semite and Pacific Coast." These general landscapes of Yosemite Valley include Cathedral Rocks, Vernal Fall, Nevada Fall, Sentinel Dome, Glacier Point, Half Dome, Agassiz Rock, Union Point, El Capitan and others.

Cathedral Rocks, Mirror View Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 60. BANC PIC 1905.16220--A 

[ark:/13030/kt558028dn](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt558028dn)


Piwyac, The Vernal Fall, 300 Ft., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 3170. BANC PIC 1905.16221--A

 [ark:/13030/kt6k40288h](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt6k40288h)

"Style" in the Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 54. BANC PIC 1905.16222--A 

[ark:/13030/kt30002514](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt30002514)

The Domes From the Sentinel Dome. Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 32. BANC PIC 1905.16223--A

 [ark:/13030/kt6h4nd4s0](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt6h4nd4s0)

The Vernal and Nevada Fall from Glacier Pt., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 37.

BANC PIC 1905.16224--A  [ark:/13030/kt2p30244x](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt2p30244x)

Vernal and Nevada Fall From Glacier Pt., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 38.

BANC PIC 1905.16225--A  [ark:/13030/kt209nd1jd](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt209nd1jd)

The Half Dome From Glacier Point, Yo Semite, [Yosemite] 5000 Ft., B 30.

BANC PIC 1905.16226--A  [ark:/13030/kt267nd1k7](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt267nd1k7)

Glacier Point, 3200 Feet, Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 18. BANC PIC 1905.16227--A 

[ark:/13030/kt3c6024rk](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt3c6024rk)

Agassiz Rock, Union Pt., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 33. BANC PIC 1905.16228--A 

[ark:/13030/kt4x0nd2hw](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt4x0nd2hw)


Tacoye; The North Dome, 3729 Ft., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 28. BANC PIC 1905.16229--A

 [ark:/13030/kt0w1024gs](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/kt0w1024gs)

Cathedral Spires, 2200 Ft., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 3062. BANC PIC 1905.16230--A 

[ark:/13030/tf8x0nc0gv](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/tf8x0nc0gv)

Tissayac, The Half Dome, 5000 Ft., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 25. BANC PIC 1905.16231--A

 [ark:/13030/tf867nb8n8](https://nnpa.ark:/13030/tf867nb8n8)

- Yowiye, The Nevada Fall, 700 Ft., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 3163.** BANC PIC 1905.16232--A
<ark:/13030/tf1w1007wh>
- Picnicing [sic] At Camp Taylor, N. P. C. R. R. "Such Lovely Ferns And Things.", B 227.**
BANC PIC 1905.16233--A <ark:/13030/tf5580103b>
- Yo Semite [Yosemite] Falls From Glacier Pt., 2634 Ft., B 23.** BANC PIC 1905.16234--A <ark:/13030/tf15800841>
- Yo Semite [Yosemite] Falls From The Cosmopolitan Walk., B 50.** BANC PIC 1905.16235--A
<ark:/13030/tf7v19p54c>
- Views Down The Valley From Camp Grove, Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 17.**
BANC PIC 1905.16236--A <ark:/13030/tf9j49p6c4>
- El Capitan, 3600 Ft., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 56.** BANC PIC 1905.16237--A <ark:/13030/tf138nb4jz>
- Pohono, The Bridal Veil, 900 Ft., Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 6.** BANC PIC 1905.16238--A <ark:/13030/tf7h4nb8qb>
- Down The Valley From Ferry Bend, Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 57.** BANC PIC 1905.16239--A
<ark:/13030/tf4j49p40x>
- View Down The Valley From The Ferry Bend, Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 45.**
BANC PIC 1905.16240--A <ark:/13030/tf187008c9>
- Pohono, The Bridal Veil; From The Oak Flat Road, Yo Semite [Yosemite], B 8.**
BANC PIC 1905.16241--A <ark:/13030/tf9779p5xz>