Finding aid to Stereographic Views from the Eugene Compton Collection by Carleton E. Watkins, 1870-1885

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Finding aid to Stereographic Views from the Eugene Compton Collection by Carleton E. Watkins, 1870-1885

Collection number: BANC PIC 1965.027--STER

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Collection Summary

Collection Title: Stereographic Views from the Eugene Compton Collection by Carleton E. Watkins
Date (inclusive): 1870-1885
Collection Number: BANC PIC 1965.027--STER
Collector: Carleton E. WatkinsEugene Compton
Extent: 37 stereographs; b&w: 9 x 18 cm.37 digital objects
Repository: The Bancroft Library.
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Abstract: The Stereographic Views from the Eugene Compton Collection consists of 37 stereographic prints taken by Carleton E. Watkins during the years 1870-1885.

Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Stereographic Views from the Eugene Compton Collection by Carleton E. Watkins, BANC PIC 1965.027--STER, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley
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Title: Miscellaneous Stereoviews from the Eugene Compton Collection,
Identifier/Call Number: BANC PIC 1965.030 -- STER

Title: Yosemite Stereoviews,
Identifier/Call Number: BANC PIC 1965.028 -- STER

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog
Compton, Eugene. Associated name CU-BANC
Harris, W., photographer.
Online Archive of California.
Hetch Hetchy Valley (Calif.) -- Pictorial works.
Indians of North America -- California -- Yosemite Valley -- Photographs.
Mechanics' Institute (San Francisco, Calif.) -- Pictorial works.
Park, T. W. (Trenor William), 1823-1882 -- Pictorial works.
Tuolumne Meadows (Calif.) -- Pictorial works.
Wharves -- California -- Oakland -- Pictorial works.
Yosemite National Park (Calif.) -- Pictorial works.
Yosemite Valley -- Photographs.
Stereographs.

Acquisition Information
The Eugene Compton Collection was donated by Eugene Compton circa 1965.

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 Galley 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 Stereographic Views from the Eugene Compton Collection consists of 37 stereographic prints taken by Carleton E. Watkins during the years 1870-1885. The collection consists of views in California, for the most part in Yosemite, encompassing views of El Capitan and Cathedral Rocks, the Yosemite and Vernal Falls, camping in Yosemite, etc. A number of the scenes in Yosemite have been tinted. Also included is a view of Watkins' Exhibit at the Mechanics' Institute, houses and ranches and other views. The collection also contains one view of Carson City, Nevada. The stereographs are distributed into three Series: "Watkins' Pacific Coast," Watkins' "Central Pacific Railroad," and "Watkins New Series," some of which bear the photographer's number.

Printed captions are reprinted in the containers listing. Captions in parentheses appear in manuscript on the stereographs. Captions in brackets have been supplied.

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**Cathedral Rocks, 2,600 feet, Yosemite Valley, Mariposa County, Cal.**

BANC PIC 1965.027:01--STER [ark:/13030/tf8290132]

**Additional Note**

Photographer's number: 1008

Place of Publication: San Francisco.

Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.
Indian Camp, Yosemite Valley, Mariposa County, Cal. BANC PIC 1965.027:02--STER  
ark:/13030/tf3z09p3w6
   
   Additional Note
   Photographer's number: 1064
   Place of Publication: San Francisco.

Yosemite Falls, 2,630 feet, Yosemite Valley, Mariposa County, Cal.  
BANC PIC 1965.027:03--STER  
ark:/13030/tf6x0nb892
   
   Additional Note
   Photographer's number: 1071
   Place of Publication: San Francisco.
   Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.

El Capitan and Cathedral Rocks. View down the Valley. Yosemite Valley, Mariposa Co.,  
Cal. BANC PIC 1965.027:04--STER  
ark:/13030/tf8x0nc0fb
   
   Additional Note
   Photographer's number: 3012
   Place of Publication: San Francisco.
   Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

Pohono; the Bridal Veil 900 feet, Yo Semite. BANC PIC 1965.027:05--STER  
ark:/13030/tf7199p5mc
   
   Additional Note
   Photographer's number: 3055
   Place of Publication: San Francisco.
   Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

Dead Giant, Tuolumne Grove; 30 ft. 8in. diam. Big Oak Flat route to Yo Semite.  
BANC PIC 1965.027:06--STER  
ark:/13030/tf6p3010v9
   
   Additional Note
   Photographer's number: 3088
   Place of Publication: San Francisco.
   Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

The Yo Semite Falls, 2,634 ft. BANC PIC 1965.027:07--STER  
ark:/13030/tf909nb97j
   
   Additional Note
   Photographer's number: 3106
   Place of Publication: San Francisco.
   Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

Piwyae; the Vernal Fall, 300 ft. Yo Semite. BANC PIC 1965.027:08--STER  
ark:/13030/tf409nb6d4
   
   Additional Note
   Photographer's number: 3117
   Place of Publication: San Francisco.
   Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.
Upper Yo Semite Fall, 1600 ft. From Eagle Point Trail. BANC PIC 1965.027:09--STER

Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3144
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

Yowiye; the Nevada Fall, 700 ft. Yo Semite. BANC PIC 1965.027:10--STER

Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3162
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

The Vernal Fall from the top. Yo Semite. BANC PIC 1965.027:11--STER

Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3169
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

Sunday School Chapel. Yo Semite. BANC PIC 1965.027:12--STER

Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3173
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

Camping in the Yo Semite. BANC PIC 1965.027:13--STER

Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3175
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

St'r Oakland leaving Oakland wharf with Lightning Express. BANC PIC 1965.027:14--STER

Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3322
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

St'r Oakland leaving Oakland wharf with Lightning Express. BANC PIC 1965.027:15--STER

Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3323
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.
Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3503
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

View from the Residence of Chas. Crocker, Esq., S. F. California St. BANC PIC 1965.027:17--STER [ark://13030/tf6489p3k7
Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3642
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

At the Mechanics' Institute. BANC PIC 1965.027:18--STER [ark://13030/tf367nb5xd
Additional Note
Photographer's number: 3785
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

Street View in Carson City, Nev. BANC PIC 1965.027:19--STER [ark://13030/tf0f59p0th
Additional Note
Photographer's number: 4074
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.

Sea Aquarium, Farallone Islands, Pacific Ocean. BANC PIC 1965.027:20--STER [ark://13030/tf0h4nb3mt
Additional Note
Photographer's number: 2069
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.

[Watkins' travelling van: wagon on dock, with sign painted on side: "C.E. Watkins, Landscape Photographer. Yosemite Gallery 22 & 26 Montgomery St...."]
BANC PIC 1965.027:21--STER [ark://13030/tf0k40076w
Additional Note
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.

[Wall display of framed Yosemite mammoth plate photographs taken by Watkins exhibited at a fair or exposition, probably a Mechanics' Institute Fair of the 1860s.]
circa 1865 BANC PIC 1965.027:22--STER [ark://13030/tf8p3011wx
[View from granite high point into river valley with meadows, mountains in background. Yosemite vicinity.] c1867 BANC PIC 1965.027:23--STER [ark://13030/tf638nb76s
Additional Note
Date: c1867.
Photographer's series: Pacific Coast.
[Possibly Hetch Hetchy Valley] [1867?] BANC PIC 1965.027:24--STER  ark:/13030/tf6r29p4qq
  Additional Note
  Date: c1867.
  Photographer's series: Pacific Coast.
 Merrill
  Additional Note
  Possibly a Hetch Hetchy view taken by W. Harris, 1867.

[Sierra Nevada mountain valley, probably in the Yosemite or Hetch Hetchy vicinity] [1867?] BANC PIC 1965.027:25--STER  ark:/13030/tf6v19p500
  Additional Note
  Date: c1867
  Photographer's series: Pacific Coast.
  Additional Note
  Attributed to W. Harris by Peter Palmquist (personal communication, circa 1997).

[Hetch Hetchy Valley, from among trees on valley floor] [1867] BANC PIC 1965.027:26--STER  ark:/13030/tf6c6010vb
  Additional Note
  Date: c1867.
  Photographer's series: Pacific Coast.
  Additional Note
  Attributed to W. Harris by Peter Palmquist (personal communication, circa 1997). From the 1867 season of the Geological Survey of California (known as the Whitney Survey.)

[Hetch Hetchy Valley, with river in foreground] [1867] BANC PIC 1965.027:27--STER  ark:/13030/tf8v19p65p
  Additional Note
  Date: c1867.
  Photographer's series: Pacific Coast.
  Additional Note
  Attributed to W. Harris by Peter Palmquist (personal communication, circa 1997).

[Hetch Hetchy Valley: narrows] [1867] BANC PIC 1965.027:28--STER  ark:/13030/tf3b69p2pp
  Additional Note
  Date: c1867.
  Photographer's series: Pacific Coast.
  Additional Note
  Attributed to W. Harris by Peter Palmquist (personal communication, circa 1997).

[Santa Clara Valley from W.C. Ralston's, Belmont. Home or stables in the hills, San Mateo County.] BANC PIC 1965.027:29--STER  ark:/13030/tf20000832
  Additional Note
  Place of Publication: San Francisco.
  Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.
  Additional Note
  Watkins' number: 2135, from another copy.
[Santa Clara Valley from W.C. Ralston’s, Belmont. Home or stables in the hills, San Mateo County.] BANC PIC 1965.027:30--STER ark:/13030/tf7c6011x5

  Additional Note
  Place of Publication: San Francisco.
  Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.

[Side view of home exterior, probably W.C. Ralston's Belmont estate.] BANC PIC 1965.027:31--STER ark:/13030/tf7b69p53k

  Additional Note
  Place of Publication: San Francisco.
  Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.

[Residence of W.C. Ralston, Belmont] BANC PIC 1965.027:32--STER ark:/13030/tf3p3009c1

  Additional Note
  Place of Publication: San Francisco.
  Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.

  Additional Note
  Identified by comparison to Watkins' number 2107, also of Belmont.


  Additional Note
  Place of Publication: San Francisco.
  Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.

  Additional Note
  Watkins' number: 2101, from another copy.

[Residence of W.C. Ralston, Belmont. Vineyard or young orchard at left.] BANC PIC 1965.027:34--STER ark:/13030/tf5580102t

  Additional Note
  Place of Publication: San Francisco.
  Photographer's series: Central Pacific Railroad.

  Additional Note
  Watkins' number: 1387, from another copy. Cropped differently.

[Chinese standing on pier] BANC PIC 1965.027:35--STER ark:/13030/tf2z09p1pt

  Additional Note
  Place of Publication: San Francisco.
  Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.

[Crowd of men, boys, and wagons near a tall wooden structure. Possibly Telegraph Hill or the Russian Hill Observatory, San Francisco?] BANC PIC 1965.027:36--STER ark:/13030/tf0c6007bn

  Additional Note
  Place of Publication: San Francisco.
  Photographer's series: Watkins' Pacific Coast.
[In Camp, Camp Grove. Trenor Park party at Yosemite, eating at table] [1861], printed circa 1880. BANC PIC 1965.027:37--STER ark:/13030/tf638nb779

Additional Note
Place of Publication: San Francisco.
Photographer's series: Watkins' New Series.