Adam Clark Vroman (1856-1916) Collection, 1895-1912

Finding aid created by Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County staff using RecordEXPRESS
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2015
Descriptive Summary

Title: Adam Clark Vroman (1856-1916) Collection, 1895-1912

Dates: 1895-1912 (glass negatives)/1920s-1930s (film positives)

Collection Number: P-001

Creator/Collector: Vroman, A. C. (Adam Clark), 1856-1916

Extent: 54.7 linear feet (Boxes: letter, 5x7, 19 ov)

Online items available at http://collections.nhm.org/seaver-center/

Repository: Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Los Angeles, California 90007-4057

Abstract: Adam Clark Vroman was an amateur photographer and bookstore owner. He made several expeditions to the Southwest from his home in Pasadena, California, to photograph the American Indians living in Arizona and New Mexico at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Included is a visual account of these expeditions which were led by the late Dr. Frederick Webb Hodge to the pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona. Over half of this collection deals with the ruins of ancient cliff dwellings and with the life, customs, and activities of the American Indians of the Southwest. Many are pictured in "Photographer of the Southwest" and "Dwellers at the Source." The rest of the collection is primarily concerned with Yosemite Valley, the California missions before restoration, Pasadena and surrounding areas. There are also negatives of a trip taken by Vroman to the Eastern United States. These images include Illinois, Pennsylvania, and the Library of Congress. Vroman photographed in Japan in 1909 and in Europe in 1912.

Language of Material: English

Access

Research is by appointment only.

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Preferred Citation

Adam Clark Vroman (1856-1916) Collection, 1895-1912. Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Acquisition Information

The bulk of the collection was purchased from the estate of A. C. Vroman by the Los Angeles County School District before 1920, for use in the Audio-Visual Division. The collection was later transferred to the Los Angeles County Museum.

Biography/Administrative History

Adam Clark Vroman (1856-1916), a native of LaSalle, Illinois, moved to Pasadena, California, in 1892. He was an amateur field photographer who worked primarily with glass plate photography and was the founder of Vroman’s Bookstore located in Pasadena. His impressive body of photographic work from the late 1890s and early 1900s documents his multiple expeditions to the pueblos and mesas of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, several of these trips alongside Dr. Frederick Webb Hodge with the Bureau of American Ethnology. Vroman’s close friendship with the natives, notably the Zuni, Hopi, and Navajo, allowed him to capture intimate images of their daily lives and customs as well as the lands that they inhabited. These photographs provide a stark contrast from common depictions of the time period that portrayed American Indian peoples as either exotic subjects or as savages. His work during this period also reflects his extreme fondness of the glowing, superior quality of light found in the Southwest region. During these expeditions he worked primarily with a 6 ½” x 8 ½” view camera as well as with 4”x5” and 5”x7” cameras. Between 1895 and 1905, Vroman documented the interiors and exteriors of the Spanish missions in California prior to the restoration of the buildings. He photographed areas in California such as Pasadena, Yosemite National Park, as well as the eastern region of the United States, including Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Vroman was also an avid art collector with an interest in the crafts of Native Americans and treasures from Japan and the Far East. He spent the last years of his life traveling to the East Coast and Canada, as well as to Japan and to countries in Europe. He died in Altadena, California, in 1916 of intestinal cancer.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection numbers approximately 2,200 negatives made between 1895-1912 by Vroman. Much of the collection came from the Visual Education Division of the Los Angeles County Schools, thus the notation of the V.E.D. number on the
The collection is numbered and housed according to the original Vroman numbers. The finding aid is organized primarily by geographic region, with a small section organized by subject. Photographs taken by Vroman from 1895-1904 during his Southwest expeditions capture the daily lives and customs of American Indians living in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and areas of the Navajo Indian Reservation. These images include portraits of members of these communities as well as photographs of pueblos, mesas, cliff dwellings, the overall landscape of these regions, and photographs of stone carvings in Mexico. There are photographs taken by Vroman between 1895-1912 of many well-known sites in California such as Yosemite National Park, the Spanish missions, as well as buildings and scenes of nature in Los Angeles, Pasadena, San Diego, and other areas throughout the state.

**Indexing Terms**

Arizona.
Art objects, Japanese.
California.
Cliff dwellings–Arizona–1890-1930.
Colorado.
Hopi Indians.
Illinois.
Indian arts–United States.
Indians of North America.
Indians of North America–Antiquities.
Indians of North America–Dwellings.
Indians of North America–Portraits.
Landscapes–Southwestern States.
Massachusetts.
Mesas–Arizona.
Mexico.
Missions–California.
Monuments–Washington (D.C.)
Navajo Indian Reservation.
Navajo Indians.
Navajo textile fabrics.
New Mexico.
Pennsylvania.
Pueblos–Southwestern states–Pictorial works.
Spanish mission buildings–California.
Utah.
Virginia.
Washington (D.C.)
Yosemite National Park (Calif.)
Zuni Indians.

P-001 Series