Stephen H. Willard Photography Collection & Archive

Finding aid created by Palm Springs Art Museum staff using RecordEXPRESS
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2018
Descriptive Summary

Title: Stephen H. Willard Photography Collection & Archive
Dates: Bulk 1908-1947
Collection Number: 54-1999
Creator/Collector: Stephen H. Willard
Extent: 43 linear feet plus Permanent Collection
Repository: Palm Springs Art Museum

Abstract: Stephen Hallet Willard (1894-1966) was born in Illinois and grew up in Corona California. He photographed the deserts and mountains of the West for 58 years. His mastery of the black and white photograph, combined with his passion for the landscape, translates into a body of work documenting remote areas of the West few Americans had seen or visited, yet he remains largely unknown. By the time Willard graduated from Corona High School in 1912, he had developed the skills needed for a career in photography. During the next few years, he made several important photographic trips through the wilderness areas of the Sierra Nevada. In 1921, Willard married Beatrice Armstrong, and after a year of traveling and photographing the deserts of the Southwest, they settled permanently in Palm Springs and opened a studio and gallery. For the next twenty-five years he traveled throughout the Colorado and Mojave Deserts and developed a passion for photographing the desert. To escape the summer heat, he and his wife established a second gallery in Mammoth Lakes and seasonally worked in both locations photographing the mountains in the summer and the desert in the winter. Willard regarded photography as a fine art and himself as an artist. His choice of subjects, composition, and use of sharp contrasts combine to make his photographs not only valuable artistic masterpieces but also a historic record of the desert and mountain environments.

Language of Material: English

Access
The collection is open to qualified researchers by appointment only and requires approval.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
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Acquisition Information
In 1999, Dr. Beatrice Willard donated her father’s life’s work to the museum (then called the Palm Springs Desert Museum) #54-1999. This gift of over 16,000 items includes original glass and film negatives; vintage photographs; hand-colored lantern slides; photo-paintings; postcards; stereographs; cameras, lenses and other photographic equipment; and personal papers and memorabilia including maps, traveling cases, correspondence, and publications.

Scope and Content of Collection
An extensive finding aid is available for consultation. Attached is the Summary Version of the aid. There are 19 series in this collection. Series I: Exhibition Prints; Series II: Photograph Albums; Series III: Non-Exhibition Prints; Series IV: S.H. Willard Archives (dated to 1966); Series V: Note Cards and Postcards; Series VI: Lantern Slides; Series VII: Glass Transparencies; Series VIII: Glass Negatives; Series IX: Black & White Transparencies; Series X: Film Negatives; Series XI: S.H. Willard Posthumous Records/Files (circa 1967 to 1999/2000); Series XII: Family & Documentary Photographs; Series XIII: Color Transparencies; Series XIV: Prepared Photos for Painting; Series XV: S.H. Willard Museum Records/Files (post 1999/2000 gift); Series XVI: Photographic Equipment; Series XVII: Misc. original envelopes, boxes, etc.; Series XVIII: Posthumous Prints and Negatives; Series XIX: Colored Photographs;

Indexing Terms
Landscape Photography – Southwest
Willard, Stephen H. (Hallet) (1894-1966) - Archives
Palm Springs, California
American Southwest
Photographers – California - Palm Springs