Edward H. Davis collection

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2018
Descriptive Summary
Title: Edward H. Davis collection
Dates: (bulk 1903-1947)
Collection Number: C36
Creator/Collector: Davis, Edward H., b. 1862
Extent: 5,967 digital images
Online items available: http://sandiegohistory.pastperfectonline.com/photo
Repository: San Diego History Center (formerly San Diego Historical Society)
San Diego, California 92101
Abstract: Images in this collection pertain to Edward H. Davis' work as a field collector for the Museum of the American Indian and life as a rancher and lodge owner in Mesa Grande, California.
Language of Material: English
Access
Access to some culturally sensitive items and fragile materials is restricted, except by permission of the Director of the Photograph Collection.
Publication Rights
All requests for publication of images in this collection must be submitted in writing to the San Diego History Center. Permission for use is not granted until all fees are paid.
Preferred Citation
Edward H. Davis collection. San Diego History Center (formerly San Diego Historical Society)
Acquisition Information
In 1986, Nancy Davis Wilson donated the collection of photographs, negatives, postcards, as well as related letters, essays and field notebooks to the San Diego History Center (then known as the San Diego Historical Society). In 2010, Julianna Wilson Davis made an additional donation of Davis' collection of lantern slides and his camera.
Biography/Administrative History
Born in 1862 in New York, Edward Harvey Davis was the son of sea captain Lewis S. Davis and Christine Smith Davis. Educated in the Brooklyn public school system for grammar and high school, Davis went on to develop his drawing and drafting skills in art school. While in New York, he worked in the accounting office of Jonas Smith Co., his family's shipping company. In 1884, wishing to improve his health, Davis headed west by ship to California. Sailing through the Panama Canal, Davis eventually arrived in San Diego in January 1885. Davis soon found work as a surveyor with T.S. Van Dyke, running a survey from the San Diego River into El Cajon Valley. He also worked as a draftsman, drawing maps and house plans. He studied architecture in 1887 and helped to draw the plans for the Hotel del Coronado. In October 1885, Davis returned briefly to New York to marry Anna Marion (Anna May) Wells and bring her to San Diego. They eventually had four children, Harvey, Stanley, Marion, and Irving. In 1887, Davis made a considerable profit on the sale of land in downtown San Diego, which allowed him to purchase a 320 acre lot in Mesa Grande, located approximately 60 miles southeast of San Diego. In February 1888, Davis moved his growing family to a small cabin on the land. Davis learned various farm skills and eventually developed the land into a working ranch, raising cattle and growing fruit, notably cherries, on the ranch he named Cereza Loma. Davis also served as Deputy County Assessor in 1902 and Justice of the Peace in 1903. Fascinated by Indian life and culture, Davis became friends with his neighbors, the Indians of Mesa Grande. In 1907, he became ceremonial chief of the tribe. Due to Davis' interest in Indian culture, he began amassing Indian metates, mortars, bows, arrows, baskets, and other household items. His large collection of Indian artifacts eventually attracted the attention of the Museum of the American Indian. In 1915, a representative of the Museum purchased nearly his entire collection. In the same year, Davis began building the Powam Lodge, a summer-resort designed by Emmor Brooke Weaver. In 1916, George Gustav Heye, founder of the Museum of the American Indian (now part of the Smithsonian) hired Davis to work as a field collector of ethnological specimens. Working from 1917 to 1930 on behalf of the Museum, Davis' collecting duties focused on the Indian tribes of San Diego County/Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and northwestern Mexico. Davis eventually travelled thousands of miles and visited over two dozen tribes including the Kumeyaay (Diegueño), Luiseño, Cahuilla, Cuperío, Paipai, Kilwa, Cora, Huichol, Opata, Mayo, Seri, Apache, Cocopa, Tohono O'odham, Papago, Maricopa, Mojave, Hualapai, Yaqui, and Yuma Indians. He frequently photographed or sketched the tribes he visited as an additional form of documentation. His photography work appears to be based on his own interests in Indian culture. Davis operated the Powam Lodge, which also served as showcase of Indian arts and crafts, until it was destroyed by a fire in 1930. He continued to take short trips throughout southern California and to Arizona in his seventies and eighties. Edward H. Davis
Edward H. Davis collection

C36

3

passed away at the age of 89 in 1951.

Scope and Content of Collection
This collection contains photographs, negatives, lantern slides, and photographic postcards which primarily document the lives of Indians in San Diego County/Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Mexico. Tribes represented in the collection include the Kumeyaay (Diegueño), Luiseño, Cahuilla, Cupeño, Paipai, Kiliwa, Cora, Huichol, Opata, Mayo, Seri, Apache, Cocopa, Tohono O’odham, Papago, Maricopa, Mojave, Hualapai, Yaqui, and Yuma Indians. A large portion of the collection features Edward H. Davis’ family, friends, his ranch (Cereza Loma) and lodge (Powam Lodge) in Mesa Grande, California. Collection also includes 80 images taken by linguist and ethnologist John P. Harrington on a trip to Baja California, Mexico, ca. 1926.

Indexing Terms
Indians of Mexico
Indians of North America--Arizona
Indians of North America--California
Ranch life—California—Mesa Grande
Apache Indians
Cahuilla Indians
Chemehuevi Indians
Cochimi Indians
Cocopa Indians
Cora Indians
Cupeño Indians
Guaycura Indians
Hualapai Indians
Huichol Indians
Kamia Indians
Klamath Indians
Kiliwa Indians
Luiseño Indians
Maricopa Indians
Mayo Indians
Mohave Indians
Opata Indians
Paipai Indians
Pima Indians
Seminole Indians
Seri Indians
Tohono O’odham Indians
Yuma Indians
Davis family
Arizona
California
Mexico
Mesa Grande (Calif.)
Lantern slides
Negatives
Photographs
Photographic postcards