



Smithsonian
National Museum of Natural History

Cyrus Thomas photograph collection relating
to Mayan and Aztec carvings, circa 1880-1910

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National Anthropological Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Cyrus Thomas photograph collection relating to Mayan and Aztec carvings
Identifier:	NAA.PhotoLot.169
Date:	circa 1880-1910
Extent:	35 Mounted prints (albumen and silver gelatin)
Creator:	Thomas, Cyrus, 1825-1910
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Provenance

Photographs probably donated by Cyrus Thomas to the Bureau of American Ethnology.

Location of Other Archival Materials

This collection has been relocated from Photo Lot 123.

Location of Other Archival Materials

Additional Cyrus Thomas materials relating to Mesoamerica held in the National Anthropological Archives are in MS 103, MS 1328, MS 3705, MS 3956, MS 3530, MS 3941, MS 3260, MS 2337, and MS 3920-b.

Location of Other Archival Materials

Correspondence from Thomas is held in the National Anthropological Archives in MS 4821, the J. C. Pilling papers, and records of the Bureau of American Ethnology.

Other Finding Aids

Folder list available in repository.

Preferred Citation

Photo Lot 169, Cyrus Thomas photograph collection relating to Mayan and Aztec carvings, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Access to the collection requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Cyrus Thomas (1825-1910) was an archeologist for the Bureau of American Ethnology best known for his work on American Indian burial mounds in the American Midwest. Born in Kingsport, Tennessee, Thomas was educated in law and served as Deputy County Clerk under his brother-in-law, the County Clerk of Jackson County, Illinois (1850-1853). In 1858, Thomas helped found the Illinois Natural History Society, through which he met John Wesley Powell. Thomas served for a brief period as an Evangelical Lutheran minister (1864-1866) before becoming an entomologist for the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories (1869-1873), Illinois State Entomologist (1874-1876), and a member of the US Entomological Commission (1876-1882). In 1876, he also worked as a professor of natural history at Southern Illinois Normal College and founded the school's Museum of Natural History (now the University Museum). During this time, Thomas also became interested in Mesoamerican ethnology, publishing articles about Mesoamerican codices and writing systems. In 1881 Thomas joined the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian and served as the Director of the Division of Mound Exploration, a position he maintained until his death in 1910.

Scope and Contents

The bulk of the photographs document Mayan reliefs and hieroglyphics at ancient sites, including Chichen Itza, Palenque, and Yaxchilan. Additional photographs depict items in the Museo Nacional de Antropologia in Mexico, including a necklace, the Stone of Tizoc, and a stone altar disk to Tlaltecuhltli. The collection includes photographs made by Alvarez y Medina, Kildare y Cia, and a photograph of a drawing by Frederic de Waldeck.

Local Call Number(s)

NAA Photo Lot 169

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Indians of Mexico -- Languages -- writing
Mayas
Mexica (Aztec) (archaeological culture)

Cultures:

Mayas
Mexica (Aztec) (archaeological culture)

Names:

Alvarez y Medina
Kildare y Cia
Museo Nacional de Antropología (Mexico)
Waldeck, Frédéric de, 1766-1875

Geographic Names:

Mexico -- Antiquities