



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Gregory Mason photographs and films

2011

National Museum of the American Indian
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Gregory Mason photographs and films
Date:	1916-1931
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.001.029
Creator:	Mason, Gregory, b. 1889 Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation
Extent:	86 Negatives (photographic) (black and white; 4 x 6 inches.) 3 Videoreels (1 inch)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection contains 86 black-and-white negatives taken by Gregory Mason from 1916-1931. The images depict scenes of Belize, Guatemala, Colombia and Mexico, including Mexico City, Cozumel, Chichén Itzá and other sites in Quintana Roo. There are also video copies of Mason's original films shot in 1925-1928 in British Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Historically, the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation managed all photographic and related manuscript collections separately. This collection description represents current management practices of organizing and contextualizing related archival materials.

Processing Information

NMAIA Review

Preferred Citation

Gregory Mason negatives, National Museum of the American Indian Archives, Smithsonian Institution (negative, slide or catalog number).

Restrictions

Access is by appointment only, Monday - Friday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Copyright: National Museum of the American Indian.

Biographical Note

Born in 1889, Gregory Mason was an American journalist with a keen interest in anthropology. Early in his career, he traveled widely as a reporter for the newspaper New York Evening Sun and the news

magazine The Outlook. In 1926, he and Herbert Spinden led the Mason-Spinden expedition to explore Mayan ruins in Mexico. Funded in part by Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, Mason led four additional expeditions to Central and South America. He wrote several books, including "Silver Cities of Yucatan" (1927), "Columbus Came Late" (1931), and "Remember the Maine" (1939). From 1941 to 1954, he was chairman of the Department of Journalism at New York University. Mason died in Greenwich, Connecticut, in 1968.

Scope and Contents

The Gregory Mason collection contains negatives made from 1916 to 1931 by Mason. The 1916 negatives depict the streets in and suburbs of Mérida, Mexico, and of people bundling fibers on a nearby plantation. The negatives dating from 1922 were made in Chichén Itzá. In 1928, Mason made negatives in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico. The Belize negatives depict Mayan antiquities, various street scenes, and native peoples gathering leaves and chicle, spinning fiber, and canoeing; the Quintana Roo, Mexico, negatives depict Isla Cozumel and other Mayan sites; and the Guatemala negatives Quiriguá. The 1931 negatives made in Colombia primarily depict individuals from the Kogi, Ika, and Wayuu culture groups. Mason made some of these negatives on behalf of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation.

Gregory Mason also shot films between 1925 and 1928 in British Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico. The original nitrate negatives of the films were sent to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation by Mason in the 1930s but were transferred to 1 inch videoreels in 1993.

Arrangement

Arranged by negative number (N20447-N20532)

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Ika (Ica/Arhuaco)
- Kogi (Kagaba)
- Maya
- Maya (archaeological culture)
- Wayuu (Guajira/Goajiro)

Cultures:

- Ika (Ica/Arhuaco)
- Kogi (Kagaba)
- Maya
- Maya (archaeological culture)
- Wayuu (Guajira/Goajiro)

Types of Materials:

- Black-and-white negatives

Places:

- Belize

Chichén Itzá Site (Mexico)
Colombia
Guatemala
Mexico
Quintana Roo (Mexico : State)