



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Arthur R. Sanger photographs from
the California Channel Islands

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Arthur R. Sanger photographs from the California Channel Islands
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.001.056
Date:	1920-1926
Extent:	16 Photographic prints
Creator:	Sanger, Arthur R.
Language:	English
Summary:	Photographs by Arthur R. Sanger from excavations on the Channel Islands, California, around 1926.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Sold to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation by Arthur R. Sanger along with field collections in 1926.

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Processing Archivist, in 2019.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Arthur R. Sanger photographs from the California Channel Islands, Item Number; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Access to NMAI Archive Center collections is by appointment only, Monday - Thursday, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. Please contact the archives to make an appointment (phone: 301-238-1400, email: nmaiarchives@si.edu). Photographs with burials, human remains or any other cultural sensitivity are restricted.

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Arthur Randall Sanger (1880-1971) was born in Palmer, Massachusetts, but later moved to California where he spent the rest of his life. Sanger was a founder of the Catalina Island Yacht Club and owner of the yacht Dreamer which he used to access the California Channel Islands where he excavated an untold number of Native burials. He also claimed to have excavated stone pipes and effigies from various island sites. Sanger maintained a long term relationship with George Gustav Heye and the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation selling multiple collections of these excavated California materials to the Museum between the years of 1926 and 1951. It was later discovered that Sanger, along with Orville T. Littleton, knowingly sold many fraudulent materials to the museum, as well as to other institutions and private collectors. It is believed by several scholars that Sanger made many of the effigies himself. For more information about the controversy see;

Lee, Georgia. Fake Effigies from the Southern California Coast? Robert Heizer and the Effigy Controversy in *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 15(2): 195-215, 1993

Koerper, Henry C. and Paul G. Chace. Heizer, Strandt, and the Effigy Controversy in *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 17(2):280-284, 1995

Koerper, Henry C., and Sherri Gust. Additional Revelations Concerning Arthur Sanger and Archaeological Fakery in *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly*

Koerper, Henry C. More on Arthur Sanger's Skullduggeries in *Pacific Coast Archaeological Society Quarterly*. Volume 52, Number 2. 2016

Scope and Contents

The collection contains 16 photographic prints shot by Arthur R. Sanger on the San Nicholas, San Miguel, and Santa Rosa Islands in Southern California. The majority of these photographs contain images of human remains and are therefore restricted due to cultural sensitivity. The photographs are undated, but likely accompanied Sanger's first collection sold to the Museum of the American Indian in 1926, so were likely shot sometime before that date. In addition to photographs of the excavation of burials, there are a handful of landscape shots of the islands themselves.

Scope and Contents

P07766 - P07781.

Arrangement

Arranged by catalog number.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Archeology -- frauds
Excavations (Archaeology) -- California
Physical anthropology -- skeletal remains

Names:

Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation

Geographic Names:

Channel Islands (Calif.)