



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

John Wetherill lantern slides, 1892

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | National Museum of the American Indian |
| Title: | John Wetherill lantern slides |
| Identifier: | NMAI.AC.106 |
| Date: | 1892 |
| Extent: | 42 lantern slides |
| Creator: | Wetherill, John |
| Language: | English |
| Summary: | This collection contains glass lantern slides shot by rancher and explorer John Wetherill (1866-1944). The photographs depict Ancestral Puebloan sites in southwestern U.S., as well as photos of Diné (Navajo) and Ute men and women. |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Donated to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation by Agnes Cowing in 1934.

Related Materials

History Colorado in Denver, Colo. holds a John and Richard Wetherill photographs collection (2000.129), a Richard Wetherill manuscripts collection (Mini-MSS #3035), and a large collection of objects collected by the Wetherills. The Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives holds a collection of photographs collected by H. Jay Smith (NAA MS 2420).

Processing Information

Processed by Emily Moazami, Assistant Head Archivist in 2017.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); John Wetherill lantern slides, Box and Photo Number; National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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Conditions Governing Use

Some images restricted: Cultural Sensitivity

Biographical / Historical

John Wetherill (1866-1944) was a cattle rancher, explorer, and amateur archaeologist in Colorado. Born in Kansas in 1866 to Benjamin Kite Wetherill and Marion Tompkins Wetherill, the family moved to Mancos in southwestern Colorado in 1879. In December 1888, Richard Wetherill (John's older brother) and Charles Mason (brother-in-law), were credited with having discovered Cliff Palace, Spruce Tree House, and Square Tower House sites at Mesa Verde, although the cliff dwellings were already known to some Native Puebloan communities in the southwest at the time. Additionally, several non-Native explorers had visited other Ancestral Puebloan sites in the region prior to the Wetherills' discoveries including Mexican-Spanish missionaries Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante in 1776; prospector John Moss in 1873; and photographer William Henry Jackson for the Hayden U.S. Geological Survey in 1874.

After the discovery, Richard and his brothers John, Clayton, Winslow, and Benjamin continued exploring and found other Ancestral Puebloan sites in the region. In 1891, the Wetherill brothers worked with amateur Swedish archaeologist Gustaf Nordenskiöld excavating Cliff House. Nordenskiöld taught them the basics tenants of archaeological excavation and trained them to keep detailed provenance records and to label objects.

From 1888-1893, the Wetherills collected more objects from Mesa Verde and eventually sold many of their collections, including a large collection to the Colorado State Historical Society (History Colorado). By 1900 John Wetherill moved to New Mexico and then Utah with his wife Louise Wade Wetherill. John continued serving as a guide and trained archaeologists and anthropologists in the region. He died in 1944.

Agnes Cowing (1880-1965), the collector of the glass lantern slides, was a librarian in New York. She most likely obtained them from her brother Herbert L. Cowing (1877-1956) or her sister Julia R. Cowing (b. 1857) who were both friends of the Wetherill family and visited the Wetherill Ranch in Mancos, Colorado in the 1890s.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of 42 glass lantern slides that were shot by John Wetherill (1866-1944) circa 1892. The bulk of the photographs depict Ancestral Puebloan sites at Mesa Verde and Hovenweep in southwest Colorado. Wetherill may have been escorting the H. Jay Smith Exploring Company around the region as they collected objects for a Mesa Verde exhibit at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

The glass lantern slides depict cliff dwellings in a state of pre-archaeological preservation including the sites of Cliff Palace, Spruce Tree House, Square Tower House, Kodak House, Sandal House, and Spring House at Mesa Verde; and Square Tower at Hovenweep. The photographs also depict Oraibi Hopi Village, Montezuma Castle, and Casa Grande Ruins sites in Arizona.

A few photographs depict Ute and Diné (Navajo) men and women. One photograph of note depicts an outdoor group portrait photographed at a Ute wedding in Mancos, Colorado. The individuals depicted include George Bowles (Harvard student), Mancos Jim (Ute) and his wife, Herbert L. Cowing (1877-1956), Elmer Coston, Benjamin Kite Wetherill (1832-1898), and Richard Wetherill (1858-1910).

Several photographs in this collection also depict objects such as pottery, yucca baskets, stone axes, manos, and metates alongside Ancestral Puebloan human remains. These photographs are restricted.

John Wetherill is listed as the photographer, however, his brother Richard Wetherill (1858-1910) may have shot some of the photographs as well. The lantern slides feature handwritten labels that describe the photographs and were probably written by a Museum of the American Indian employee. Additionally, "Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation, Broadway at 155th ST. N. Y. City" is printed on the back of the masking paper, which indicates that the lantern slides were most likely assembled by MAI staff.

Some lantern slides may be the reverse or mirror images of the actual scenes.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in photo number order.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Cultures:

- Diné (Navajo)
- Indians of North America -- Antiquities & archaeological sites -- Colorado
- Indians of North America -- Colorado
- Pueblo (Anasazi) (archaeological)
- Pueblo Indians -- Antiquities & archaeological sites -- Colorado
- Ute
- cliff dwellings -- Colorado -- Mesa Verde National Park

Types of Materials:

- Lantern slides

Geographic Names:

- Cliff Palace (Mesa Verde, Colorado) -- archeology
- Colorado -- Antiquities

Container Listing

Lantern slides, 1892

- Box 1 L01089, 1892
[Image\(s\)](#)
Glass lantern slide depicting an outdoor portrait of a man and woman (Ute) in traditional clothing.
- Box 1 L01090, 1892
[Image\(s\)](#)
Glass lantern slide depicting an outdoor group portrait photographed at a Ute wedding in Mancos, Colorado. The individuals depicted are (from left to right): George Bowles (Harvard student), unidentified man, Mancos Jim's wife (Ute), possibly Teddy Whitmore, Mancos Jim (Ute), Herbert L. Cowing (1877-1956), Elmer Coston, unidentified (Ute), Benjamin Kite Wetherill (1832-1898), Richard Wetherill (1858-1910).
- Box 1 L01091, 1892
[Image\(s\)](#)
Glass lantern slide depicting a group of men on the Diné (Navajo) Reservation with pack animals carrying supplies.
- Box 1 L01092, 1892
[Image\(s\)](#)
Glass lantern slide depicting Navajo men in a formation described as the "pulling game."
- Box 1 L01093, 1892
[Image\(s\)](#)
Glass lantern slide depicting the Ancestral Puebloan site Spruce Tree House (pre-restoration) at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).
- Box 1 L01094, 1892
[Image\(s\)](#)
Glass lantern slide depicting the south end of the Ancestral Puebloan site Spruce Tree House (pre-restoration) at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).
- Box 1 L01095, 1892
[Image\(s\)](#)
Glass lantern slide depicting the north end of the Ancestral Puebloan site Spruce Tree House at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later in established as Mesa Verde National Park)..
- Box 1 L01096, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting a portion of the Ancestral Puebloan site Spruce Tree House at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01097, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting a mesa top and valley in Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park). The site is identified as Cliff Canyon.

Box 1

L01098, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting the Ancestral Puebloan site of Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01099, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Ancestral Puebloan site Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01100, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Ancestral Puebloan site Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01101, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Ancestral Puebloan site Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park). An unidentified man stands on top of a wall.

Box 1

L01102, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting the north end of the Ancestral Puebloan site Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01103, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Ancestral Puebloan site Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01104, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting a wall with a painted motif at the Ancestral Puebloan site Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01105, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting an unidentified Ancestral Puebloan site probably at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park). The caption on the slide indicates, "Inaccessible house, Cliff Canyon, Mesa Verde Colorado."

Box 1

L01106, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Ancestral Puebloan site Square Tower House at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01107, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Ancestral Puebloan site of Spring House at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 1

L01108, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting the Ancestral Puebloan site of Kodak House at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 2

L01109, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting an Ancestral Puebloan site possibly at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park). The original catalogue description describes the scene as "Tower on cone, Navajo Canyon, Colorado."

Box 2

L01110, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Ancestral Puebloan site Spruce Tree House at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 2

L01111, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Ancestral Puebloan site described as "Fortified House" at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 2

L01112, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting the Ancestral Puebloan site Sandal House (pre-restoration) at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park). The site includes painted line motifs.

Box 2

L01113, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting the Ancestral Puebloan site of Balcony House at Mesa Verde, Colorado (later established as Mesa Verde National Park).

Box 2

L01114, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting an Ancestral Puebloan site at Hovenweep, Colorado (later established as Hovenweep National Monument). The original catalog description misidentified the location as Mesa Verde, Colorado.

Box 2

L01115, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting an Ancestral Puebloan site at Hovenweep, Colorado (later established as Hovenweep National Monument). The original catalog description misidentified the location as Mesa Verde, Colorado.

Box 2

L01116, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Square Tower Ancestral Puebloan site at Hovenweep, Colorado (later established as Hovenweep National Monument). The original catalog description misidentified the location as the nearby Mesa Verde, Colorado.

Box 2

L01117, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting an Ancestral Puebloan site most likely at Hovenweep, Colorado (later established as Hovenweep National Monument) near Mesa Verde.

Box 2

L01118, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting an Ancestral Puebloan site most likely at Hovenweep, Colorado (later established as Hovenweep National Monument) near Mesa Verde.

Box 2

L01119, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting an Ancestral Puebloan site at Hovenweep, Colorado (later established as Hovenweep National Monument) near Mesa Verde.

Box 2

L01120, RESTRICTED, 1892

Glass lantern slide depicting human remains.

Box 2

L01121, RESTRICTED, 1892

Glass lantern slide depicting human remains in situ.

Box 2

L01122, RESTRICTED, 1892

Glass lantern slide depicting human remains.

Box 2

L01123, RESTRICTED, 1892

Glass lantern slide depicting human remains.

Box 2

L01124, RESTRICTED, 1892

Glass lantern slide depicting the museum at Alamo Ranch with displayed human remains and objects; objects include painted black-on-white and corrugated

pottery cups, bowls, and pitchers, woven baskets, and birds, bobcats, rabbits, and deer taxidermy.

Box 2

L01125, RESTRICTED, 1892

Glass lantern slide depicting a room with displayed human remains and objects collected from various sites at Mesa Verde; objects include large pottery vessels and cups, yucca baskets, manos, metates, spears, stone axes, stone tools, yucca fiber bundles, and more.

Box 2

L01126, RESTRICTED, 1892

Glass lantern slide depicting a room with displayed human remains and objects collected from various sites at Mesa Verde; objects include large pottery vessels and cups, yucca baskets, manos, metates, spears, stone axes, yucca fiber bundles, and more.

Box 2

L01127, RESTRICTED, 1892

Glass lantern slide depicting a room with displayed human remains and objects collected from various sites at Mesa Verde; objects include large pottery vessels, manos, metates, spears, stone axes, stone tools, yucca fiber bundles, and more.

Box 2

L01128, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide overlooking Oraibi village on the Hopi Reservation in Arizona.

Box 2

L01129, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting Casa Grande ruins (later established as Casa Grande Ruins National Monument) in Arizona.

Box 2

L01130, 1892

[Image\(s\)](#)

Glass lantern slide depicting the cliff dwelling site Montezuma Castle in Arizona (later established as Montezuma Castle National Monument).

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