



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Edward W. Nelson photographs from New Mexico

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2023

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Edward W. Nelson photographs from New Mexico
Date:	September 1888
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.311
Creator:	Nelson, Edward William, 1855-1934 (Photographer)
Extent:	19 Photographs
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection contains 19 photographs of the A:shiwi (Zuni) reservation in New Mexico, September 1888. The photographs may have been shot by field naturalist Edward W. Nelson.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Edward W. Nelson photographs from New Mexico

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of Robert F. Hale, 1956.

Separated Materials

Handwritten notes by the photographer are in the Museum of the American Indian/Heye Foundation Records (NMAI.AC.001) in [box/folder B297.13a](#)

Related Materials

The National Anthropological Archives and Smithsonian Institution Archives also hold Edward W. Nelson collections.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Emily Moazami, Supervisory Archivist, 2023.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Edward W. Nelson photographs from New Mexico, image #, NMAI.AC.311; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

It is uncertain if Edward W. Nelson is photographer of this collection or if E. N. Nelson is. Additional research is required.

Below is a biography of Edward W. Nelson from the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives (collection ID: NAA.PhotoLot.171).

Edward William Nelson (1855-1934) was an explorer and naturalist for the United States government known for his studies in Alaska, California and Mexico. Born near Manchester, New Hampshire, Nelson grew up with an ardent interest in birds and the outdoors. With the help of Henry W. Henshaw and Smithsonian Assistant Secretary Spencer F. Baird, he gained a post as a weather observer with the Signal Corps in 1877. Nelson was stationed in St. Michael, Alaska, for the next four years, during which time he collected ethnological data and natural history collections for the Smithsonian Institution. In 1890, Nelson joined the Bureau of Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture as a Special Field Agent on the Death Valley Expedition of Clinton Hart Merriam. After this Expedition disbanded in 1891, Nelson continued to work in California under orders from the Bureau and met his future expedition partner Edward Alphonso Goldman. A three month field survey in Mexico in 1892 evolved into fourteen years of research by the pair, during which they made extensive investigations of Mexican mammalogy, ornithology, and ethnology. Following these studies, Nelson moved into an administrative role in the Bureau, holding appointments as Chief Field Naturalist, 1907-1912; Assistant in Charge of Biological Investigations, 1913-1914; Assistant Chief, 1914-1916; Chief, 1916-1927; and Senior Biologist, 1927-1929.

Scope and Contents

P18754-18772

This collection contains 19 photographs believed to have been shot by Edward W. Nelson in September 1888. The photographs depict scenes from the A:shiwi (Zuni) reservation and surrounding areas in western New Mexico. The photographs include landscapes and flora; activities such as carrying water and husking corn; scenes of the village including gardens and multi-level adobe buildings; and portraits.

The original acquisition paperwork lists E. N. Nelson as the photographer. However, after further research, it is believed that the photographs may have been shot by Edward William Nelson, who was a field naturalist for the U.S. Government and was living in Arizona at the time these photographs were shot. The photographer's handwritten notes that accompanied this set of photographs, indicate that they conducted a previous survey in 1886, which indicates that these images were most likely photographed for professional purposes. Additionally, the handwriting in the NMAI note appears to match the handwriting in Edward W. Nelson's fieldnotes held by Smithsonian Institution Archives. Further research will be required to positively identify the photographer.

Arrangement

Photographs arranged in folders by catalog #.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

A:shiwi (Zuni)

Cultures:

A:shiwi (Zuni)