



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Byron H. Gurnsey stereograph collection

Nathan Sowry

2020

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Byron H. Gurnsey stereograph collection
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.359
Date:	1865-1870
Extent:	0.05 Linear feet 9 Stereographs
Creator:	Gurnsey, B. H. (Byron H.), 1833-1880 Hamilton, C.L. Hamilton, J. H. (James H.)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection consists of nine stereographic images depicting individuals from Ho-Chunk (Winnebago), Nakota (Yankton Sioux), and Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux) communities in the vicinity of Sioux City, Iowa, between approximately 1865 and 1870.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift from the Historical Society of Washington, DC, in 2003.

Related Materials

Byron H. Gurnsey, Charles L. Hamilton, and James H. Hamilton images of Native American communities photographed between approximately 1865 and 1870 in the vicinity of Sioux City, Iowa, exist in many archival collections throughout the U.S. and Europe, including in the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives, Newberry Library, the Library of Congress, and the British Museum in London.

Processing Information

Processed by Nathan Sowry, Reference Archivist, in 2020.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Byron H. Gurnsey stereograph collection, NMAI.AC.359; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

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Biographical / Historical

Byron H. Gurnsey was born in New York state in 1833. After serving with the Union Army from 1861 until 1866, Gurnsey set up a photo studio in Sioux City, Iowa, primarily photographing non-Native soldiers at local forts and Native communities living in the area around Sioux City. Partnering with W.H. Illingworth in Sioux City, Gurnsey shot studio portrait photographs of Native community members and delegations passing through the area on their way to and from Washington, DC. During this time Gurnsey reportedly advertised his photo studio as Sioux City's "Headquarters for Stereoscopic Views and Indian Pictures." On at least one occasion he also traveled to the Winnebago Reservation in Nebraska to document the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) peoples living there.

In 1871 Gurnsey decided to sell his Sioux City photo studio along with many of his previous Native American portraiture shots to the brothers Charles L., James H., and Grant Hamilton, who also operated a photo studio in Sioux City. By the following year Gurnsey and his family were living in Colorado, where he set up photo studios first in Pueblo and then later in Colorado Springs. While living in Colorado for the remainder of his days, Gurnsey continued to take stereographic views of the local scenery and neighboring Native communities, much as he had done earlier in Iowa. Byron H. Gurnsey died in 1880, and his widow, Delilah Simpson Gurnsey, thereafter briefly operated his studio until approximately 1882.

Scope and Contents

The Byron H. Gurnsey stereograph collection consists of nine stereographic images taken between approximately 1865 and 1870 near Sioux City, Iowa. The stereographic photos depict men and women from Ho-Chunk (Winnebago), Nakota (Yankton Sioux), and Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux) communities, and include studio portraits as well as less formalized photographs shot outside of the studio on Native reservations. Some of the more notable photographs include images of Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) leaders Gray Wolf and Standing Buffalo.

While several of the images in this collection lack attribution or even list Charles L. Hamilton or his brother James H. Hamilton as the possible creators of these photographs, evidence points to Byron H. Gurnsey as the original photographer. The Hamilton brothers operated a photo studio in Sioux City at this time, as did Gurnsey, and after Gurnsey sold his studio in 1871 and relocated to Colorado, the Hamilton brothers continued to reproduce many of Gurnsey's photos with their own imprint.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into folders by cultural group.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
- Nakota (Yankton Sioux)
- Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux)

Cultures:

- Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
- Nakota (Yankton Sioux)
- Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux)

Types of Materials:

- Stereographs

Geographic Names:

- Sioux City (Iowa)

Container Listing

- Photo-folder 1 P28567: Thunder Storm, Winnebago, 1865
1 Stereograph
[Image\(s\)](#)
Studio portrait of Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) woman Thunder Storm. Photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey in his Sioux City, Iowa, photo studio.

Culture: Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
- Photo-folder 1 P28568: Gray Wolf, Chief of Winnebagos, 1865
1 Stereograph
[Image\(s\)](#)
Studio portrait of Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) leader Gray Wolf. Photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey in his Sioux City, Iowa, photo studio.

Culture: Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
- Photo-folder 1 P28569: Irongu or Tonnuga, Winnebago, 1865-1870
1 Stereograph
[Image\(s\)](#)
Studio portrait of Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) man possibly named Irongu or Tonnuga. Probably photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey in his Sioux City, Iowa, photo studio.

Culture: Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
- Photo-folder 1 P28572: Winnebago woman and child, 1865-1870
1 Stereograph
[Image\(s\)](#)
Studio portrait of unidentified Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) woman and child. Probably photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey in his Sioux City, Iowa, photo studio.

Culture: Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
- Photo-folder 1 P28573: Standing Buffalo, Winnebago, 1865-1870
1 Stereograph
[Image\(s\)](#)
Portrait photo of Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) man Standing Buffalo. Probably photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey on a visit to the Winnebago Reservation in Thurston County, Nebraska.

Culture: Ho-Chunk (Winnebago)
- Photo-folder 2 P28565: Unidentified Sioux individuals, 1865-1870

1 Stereograph

[Image\(s\)](#)

Photograph of unidentified individuals, possibly from either Nakota (Yankton Sioux) or Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux) communities. Probably photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey or Charles L. Hamilton in the vicinity of Sioux City, Iowa. Reverse of photo includes the following writing: "Ebhoni ba tent Awoha."

Culture: Nakota (Yankton Sioux)
Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux)

Photo-folder 2

P28566: Unidentified Sioux man and two women, 1865-1870

1 Stereograph

[Image\(s\)](#)

Studio portrait of unidentified Sioux man and two women. Possibly from the Nakota (Yankton Sioux) community, and man may be named Crazy Dance. Probably photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey or Charles L. Hamilton in the vicinity of Sioux City, Iowa. Reverse of photo includes the following writing: "Mo wa de na. Crazy Dance. Sioux man and women."

Culture: Nakota (Yankton Sioux)

Photo-folder 2

P28570: Sioux Indians traveling, 1865-1870

1 Stereograph

[Image\(s\)](#)

Photograph of unidentified individuals, possibly from either Nakota (Yankton Sioux) or Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux) communities. Probably photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey or Charles L. Hamilton in the vicinity of Sioux City, Iowa.

Culture: Nakota (Yankton Sioux)
Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux)

Photo-folder 2

P28571: Santee Sioux women, 1865-1870

1 Stereograph

[Image\(s\)](#)

Studio portrait of two Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux) women. Probably photographed by Byron H. Gurnsey in his Sioux City, Iowa, photo studio.

Culture: Wahpetonwan Dakota (Wahpeton Sioux)