

FROM THE A.C. VROMAN COLLECTION

AT THE

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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DWELLERS AT THE SOURCE

Southwestern Indian Photographs
of A.C. Vroman, 1895-1904
by William Webb and Robert A. Weinstein

- 1856 Born April 15, at La Salle, Illinois.
- 1872 Left home, went to work.
- 1874 Employed by Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad in capacities of operator, ticket-seller, dispatcher, agent.
- 1883 Begins collection of Japanese netsuke.
- 1892 Begins to make landscape photographs around Rockford, Illinois, using 5 x 7 plate camera. Traveled to and made photographs at Natural Bridge, Virginia. Married Esther H. Griest and moved to Pasadena, California.
- 1894 In August photographs at Niagara Falls, Gettysburg, Salt Lake City. Death of Mrs. Vroman in September, at Flora Dale, Pennsylvania. On November 14 opens bookstore with J. S. Glasscock at 60 E. Colorado Street, Pasadena.
- 1895 Acquires 6½ x 8½ plate camera and begins photography around Pasadena: Mt. Wilson, Sturdevant Camp, Altadena, Tournament of Roses Parade. Began series of *Ramona* illustrations at Camulos Rancho. In August made first visit to Hopi village of Walpi, photographing snake ceremony. Also photographed at Sichimovi, Tewa (Hano); Navajo hogans at Bitahoochee; Petrified Forest. Members of party: H. N. Rust, Mr. Crandall, and Mrs. Love. Print exhibition in Pasadena.
- 1896 Photography at Guajome Rancho for *Ramona* series; missions in Southern California; pack-trip to Mt. Wilson, Rubio, and Eaton Canyons.
- 1897 Extended tour, beginning May 15 and ending about September 4, up the California coast to San Francisco by buckboard and stagecoach, photographing all of the missions en route and miscellaneous views around Monterey and San Francisco; thence by rail to Illinois and Pennsylvania, photographing around his family home in Rockford, Illinois, and at Media, Pennsylvania; returning to Chicago and inviting Mr. H. E. Hoyt to accompany him to snake ceremony at Walpi. By August in Arizona, joined with Mr. S. L. Munson of Albany, New York. Photographing around First Mesa Hopi villages, including snake ceremony on August 21. Made first visit to Hopi Second Mesa villages, photographing in Mishongnovi for a single afternoon. Later toured Walnut Canyon; Grand Canyon; Petrified Forest; pueblos of Zuñi, Laguna, Acoma; making extensive series of photographs. At Laguna met Dr. Frederick Webb Hodge and was invited to accompany Hodge as photographer on expedition to make first climb of Katsimo.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1898 Led tour for eleven days to Hopi villages, visiting Second Mesa, photographing snake ceremony at Third Mesa village of Oraibi. Navajo Gallo Races photographed. In party: Dr. M. R. Harned from Illinois; Professor Burton Holmes, the travel lecturer and writer; Miss Duggan (Rattlesnake Jack); Mr. Studd; Mr. Kizley; Mr. DePew; and Mrs. H. H. Cole.
- 1899 Spent seven weeks in Rio Grande pueblos, making photographs of the missions on a special assignment from Dr. F. W. Hodge. Photographed ruins in Frijoles Canyon. In party: Dr. Hodge, George Parker Winship, Dr. Elliot Coues. In California continued with *Ramona* photographs.
- 1900 Visited East Coast, photographing in Library of Congress, and in Media, Pennsylvania. In summer visited all three Hopi mesas, photographing snake ceremony at Oraibi and flute ceremony at Mishongnovi. Additional photography at Walpi and Shipaulovi. Photographed again around Katsimo, but did not climb the mesa. Visited and photographed in Zuni, Acoma, Isleta. In party: John Gunn, J. W. O'Hara, Dr. M. R. Harned, D. H. Kendall, J. E. Pectu.
- 1901 Joined the Museum-Gates Expedition, under leadership of Peter Goddard Gates, from July 17 to August 30. Photographs of archaeological digs in Navajo country. Visited Oraibi, Sichimovi, and photographed snake ceremony at Walpi and Mishongnovi. Many photographs of Navajos. Made series of photographs of Yosemite Valley, including small Indian colony. Publication of articles in *Photo-Era* about making photographs in the Southwest.
- 1902 Visited all Hopi villages, photographing flute ceremony at Mishongnovi and snake ceremony at Oraibi. Toured Isleta, Acoma, Zuni. Long series of cloud pictures made on way to Grand Canyon and Petrified Forest. Members of party: H. E. Hoopes and G. J. Kuhrts, of Pasadena, and Homer (?).
- 1903 New Year's Day made photographs of Navajos at home of Charles Lummis in Los Angeles. Traveled to Orient, visiting both China and Japan.
- 1904 Visited all Hopi villages, Zuni, Acoma, Laguna. Photographed inscriptions at El Morro. First trip to Cañon de Chelly. Members of party: Mr. B. O. Kendall, Miss Kendall, Dr. and Mrs. M. R. Harned, Lora Harned.
- 1909 Traveled to Orient with stop in Hawaii. Also trip to Canadian Rockies.
- 1910 Trip to Canada.
- 1911 Traveled to East Coast, visited John Burroughs.
- 1912 Trip to Europe, sailing on S. S. *Rotterdam*, in party with F. N. Finney of South Pasadena and Milwaukee, Miss Ranold, and Miss Ranold's niece. Toured valley of the Loire, photographing village scenes and the châteaux, Switzerland, and the Rhine Valley, all by automobile.
- 1914 Trip to Canadian Rockies with F. N. Finney; trip to East Coast, making his last photographs at Cape Cod.
- 1916 On July 24 died at home of George Howell in Altadena, of intestinal cancer. Survived by his mother, two sisters, and three half-sisters.

Throughout the ten-year period of his most serious work in photography, Vroman made principal use of a 6½" × 8½" plate camera, fitted with several top-quality anastigmatic lenses. He supplemented this basic equipment with a 5" × 7" back, and a 5" × 8" back for the 6½" × 8½" camera, and also seems to have carried a 4" × 5" view camera using film-based negative material or plates. From time to time he also used hand cameras.

On the trip to Mishongovi about 1901 he photographed parts of the snake ceremony with a panorama camera using roll film and a rotating lens. The inventory of the collection in the Los Angeles County Museum shows a series of 10" × 12" plates of California missions and of the Library of Congress, undated. These negatives have been lost.

In general it can be said that Vroman's equipment differed very little from that used today by the large format worker. He had the obvious handicap of the glass plate negative, which increased weight and bulk. But his camera was complete with swings and tilts and interchangeable lens boards and backs, and except for minor inconveniences would have been a very acceptable instrument in the hands of an Edward Weston.

VROMAN'S TECHNIQUE

Vroman did all his own processing in a darkroom in his upstairs apartment at 168 East Colorado Street in Pasadena. On the roof of this building he exposed his platinum and solio papers to the sun, using as many as three 9" × 12" printing frames at one time, each masked down to 6" × 8". He rarely cropped any of his plates, though this does not seem to have been a matter of strict discipline with him. When he had his work published, much cropping—often to odd shapes—and vignetting was done, without evidence that Vroman raised much protest. He also sent out his lantern-slide plates for hand-coloring. However, for his own use and for the prints that he gave away, he adhered to the "straight" print, sharp with a full scale of tones. There is no evidence that he made enlargements, though enlarging was a well-established, if laborious, technique during his time. Even his 4" × 5" images were contact-printed, though the main use for negatives of this size seems to have been to make lantern slides. On most of his trips to Indian country he carried not only his 6½" × 8½" view camera, but the 4" × 5" as well, and on many occasions a 5" × 7" camera. He often duplicated his subjects, using as many as three sizes for some. Thus, if for any reason one negative failed, he very often had backup with another.

Vroman did his plate developing in a then popular Eikonogen-

Pyro formula, timing by inspection. The plates used were M.A. Seed Dry Plates and Cramer Isochromatic. These were orthochromatic in sensitivity and permitted cloud photographs, to which Vroman was much devoted, by the use of fairly deep yellow color screens.

Some years after he had discontinued using the large plate camera, favoring instead a small hand camera for his journeys to the Orient and Europe, Vroman undertook a massive project of copying all of his plates onto 5" × 7" sheet film, creating a set of transparent positives on film of all his work up through 1904. It is presumed this was done to preserve the collection, since there had already been some casualties among the glass plates. For the purpose of making these copies, he secured a special enlarging and copying camera. These positives are now in the Los Angeles Museum collection. For the most part they are of good quality and have made it possible at times for us to recover images that have been lost due to missing or broken original plates.

In presenting the selection in this book we have had to rely on modern prints, since any original prints suitable for reproduction are extremely rare. In making these prints we have been guided less by the platinotypes than by the solio prints that we have been able to examine, largely because the extra-long range and softness of the platinum print is difficult to reproduce well, and because of the surfaces of the solio paper are more compatible with modern reproduction processes. We have taken many liberties with cropping, and in a handful of cases may have done unintentional violence to Vroman's concepts—if he had them—of doing all the cropping on the ground glass. We feel justified in this practice since now and then we think we've come up with a stronger print. The Appendix indicates the source of each reproduction print.

AS OF JANUARY 1:

Equipment:

Carlton camera, tripod, 1 plate holder, case	\$45.00
five 6½" × 8½" plate holders	12.00
four 5" × 8" plate holders	8.00
one 5" × 8" back for 6½" × 8½"	6.00
six kits	1.80
one leather case	2.00
one tripod case	1.25
one 6½" × 8½" Zeiss series IIa lens	54.00
one B & L shutter for above lens	15.00
one 6½" × 8½" Zeiss series V lens	28.00
one 5" × 8" Zeiss series IIIa lens	35.00
one B & L shutter for same	15.00
one 4" × 5" Stenheil lens No. 21704	20.00
one B & L shutter for same	12.00
one 4" × 5" wide-angle lens	10.00
three Buch flanges	1.00
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	\$266.05

**WROMAN'S INVENTORY
OF EQUIPMENT AND
SUPPLIES, 1895**

Printing and Developing Fixtures:

two 10" × 12" printing frames	\$2.00
two 8" × 10" printing frames	1.50
two 6½" × 8½" printing frames	1.20
three 5" × 8" printing frames	1.65
one 8" × 10" tray	1.25
two 6½" × 8½" trays	1.80
one 6½" × 8½" PM tray	.70
two glass PM trays	.50
one 9" × 14" iron tray	.60
200 6½" × 8½" negative preservers	1.00
100 5" × 8" negative preservers	.50
100 5" × 7" negative preservers	.50
100 4" × 5" negative preservers	.30
one Negative rack	.40
one 8-oz. graduate	.40
one 4-oz. graduate	.30
one 1-oz. graduate	.15
one 1-min. graduate	.20
one Robinson trimmer	.40

DWELLERS AT THE SOURCE

one LS mat shaper .40
 one dark lantern 1.50
 one LS wash box 1.00
 \$18.25

Chemicals, supplies, etc.:

Chemicals, etc., on hand \$5.00
 five doz. Exc. plates 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" 5.00
 two doz. Exc. plates 5" x 8" 1.50
 three doz. Exc. plates 4" x 5" 1.20
 one doz. Seed NH 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" plates 2.10
 ten doz. Eastman LS plates 5.00
 \$19.80

AS OF APRIL 1:

Lumber for tables and shelving in darkroom \$5.00

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT ADDED AFTER JANUARY 1:

one canvas plate holder \$2.00
 six 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" plate holders 14.40
 one level 1.00
 one 3" Carhett color screen 2.00
 one focusing glass .80
 one focusing cloth .75
 one Light Anthony 4 fold tripod 5.00
 \$25.95

Chemicals, supplies, etc.:

two doz. Seed 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" plates \$2.80
 one doz. Seed 5" x 8" plates 1.00
 one gross BP Red Label 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" plates 4.00
 C. L. Crandall devel. print, Tone 3.00
 \$10.80

AS OF APRIL 27:

Chemicals, supplies, etc.:

one gross 6" x 8" BP paper \$3.00
 one doz. 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" WK platinotype

one doz. 4" x 6" WK platinotype _____
 one doz. 4" x 6" plat mounts _____
 one doz. 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" plat mounts _____
 \$3.00

AS OF JULY 1:

Chemicals, supplies, etc.:

three doz. Seed 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" plates \$3.75
 one doz. BP Mat paper 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" .50
 one doz. Aristo plat 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" .50
 200 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" mts. 2.50
 100 5" x 7" mts. 1.00
 100 5" x 8" mts. 1.00
 100 4" x 5" mts. .50
 twelve plat mts. 1.50
 blotters .25
 blue print .20
 plain Saxe paper .50
 one doz. platino paper .60
 Crandall developer for platinotype .50
 Crandall doz. cab photos 1.00
 \$14.30

AS OF JULY 25:

Chemicals, supplies, etc.:

one gross 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" Aristo paper \$3.25

During his lifetime Vroman's photographs were fairly well distributed and known by the public. He had published a few articles, which he illustrated with his own photographs; he sold prints to companies, such as the Detroit Photographic Company, that published tourist views and brochures, usually hand-coloring the prints and retouching them extensively before reproducing them; he used his photographs to illustrate an edition of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*; he published a deck of playing cards featuring Indian subjects, which he hoped would win sympathy for Indian rights among the white socialites; he lectured widely on Indians and the West, using lantern slides of his own making; and from time to time he mounted various exhibitions of his platinum prints. Contemporary newspaper announcements often referred to him as the "artist-photographer."

Upon Vroman's death in 1916 this extensive body of work passed into near oblivion. In spite of the fairly widespread circulation of his output, he never came to be recognized on the East Coast by the photographic-artistic establishment. He had not published in the magazines or the several annuals promoting photography as "art." He belonged to no organized groups of photographers outside of a small and informal "camera club" that he had himself started in Pasadena. In short, there was no one nor any group prepared to continue the presentation of his photographs.

His personal collection of negatives was sold to the Audio-Visual Department of the Los Angeles County Board of Education. It is possible that at the time the collection was in some state of disarray, for the school system undertook a complete renumbering and cataloging of the negatives. This process was perhaps more damaging than helpful, serving to confuse the chronological ordering that Vroman's numbering system achieved and the identification of many of the subjects, and causing the loss of much valuable information and annotation of the collection.

Because the school system was ill-equipped to manage the collection some serious breakage of the glass plates occurred and deterioration from chemical residues and fungus set in. Had it not been for the discovery of the collection by Lawrence Clark Powell in the late 1950s and its subsequent transfer to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History the collection would perhaps have finally disintegrated and been thrown out as so much useless glass.

Ruth I. Mahood, who was, at the time of the transfer of the plates, in charge of the Department of History at the Museum, took a great interest in the discovery of the old plates. She had a number of them

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printed and opened a permanent Vroman gallery at the museum, where many fine enlargements of the negatives are on view and where various pieces of Vroman memorabilia have now been gathered, including cameras and other equipment that he used.

The first modern publication of Vroman's work was the issuance in 1961 of *Photographer of the Southwest*, Adam Clark Vroman, 1856-1916, by Ruth I. Mahood, with an introduction by Beaumont Newhall. (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press).

On several of the expeditions that Vroman accompanied as photographer he made duplicate sets of negatives, one for his personal collection, one for the expedition archives. The negatives made in 1901 for the Museum-Gates Expedition are now, in part at least, in the collection of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles.

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Publications of the Bureau of Ethnology have from time to time made use of Vroman photographs that are in its collections. It is not known whether original negatives exist there.

Some negatives of the European trip of 1912 and the Canadian trip of 1914 were among Vroman's personal effects that were removed from the bookstore in later years. Plans are now being made to have these negatives accessioned in a collection where use can be made of them. A fairly large collection of small roll-film negatives on nitrate-base film, possibly made in 1903, has deteriorated so severely that it cannot be used any longer. This collection turned up in the possession of a commercial photographer in Pasadena.

The Vroman negatives are of special importance since few of his own prints are known today. A single, more or less complete collection of his prints, all platinumypes, bound in sixteen leather volumes, are in the possession of the Pasadena Public Library. This set was printed by Vroman in his last years, long after he had ceased his travels in the Southwest. As a result, the set suffers from omissions of information and errors in identification and negative numbering, but nevertheless is invaluable for the information it does provide and for insight into his approach to printing. This collection offers the only opportunity for seeing the Vroman oeuvre intact for the ten-year period 1895-1904.

Occasional prints that can be safely attributed to Vroman appear in various other collections. Some platinum and solio prints, a few scrapbooks of small prints from the Canadian and European trips, and

lantern slides used in his lectures are part of the Vroman material held by Mrs. Hazel Wiedmann, Vroman's niece.

Collections of modern prints of many of the Vroman negatives have been deposited at George Eastman House, Rochester, New York, and at Friends of Photography, Carmel, California.